

Taking advantage of hybrid vigour

Hybrid vigour is the production advantage that can be obtained from crossing breeds, or strains, which are genetically diverse. The new combinations of genetic material can lead to production advantages over and above the average of the two parent breeds or strains. To be of economic advantage, the new production levels need to be above those of either parent strain or breed – otherwise you are better off sticking with the superior parent line.

Hybrid vigour tends to be greater for traits – such as fitness or fertility traits – which are less likely to respond to conventional selection. For example, the level of hybrid vigour achievable for fertility traits is likely to be double that which might be obtained for growth or carcass traits.