



**New breed of cattle boasts leaner meat**

**1** TWIN BRIDGES — A rancher near this southwest Montana town hopes his rare breed of cattle will appeal to the health-conscious consumer.

While most Montana ranchers raise Angus and Herefords, Dick Gooby has been raising Piedmontese cattle since 1991. And so far, the investment has paid off.

"Everyone is willing to pay a premium for them," said Gooby, who recently got 12 percent over market prices for a truckload of Piedmontese crossed with Angus. "We've received calls from several feeders and packers looking to buy more."

What makes the Piedmontese so special?

A 3.5-ounce portion of Piedmontese beef generally has just 32.1 milligrams of cholesterol, less than half the 74 milligrams found in select beef or the 70 milligrams in a similar portion of skinless chicken. Even Piedmontese crossbreeds generally register between 38.6 and 62 milligrams of cholesterol.

Gooby said Piedmontese are lower in cholesterol because of an unusual characteristic called double-muscling, which makes for leaner meat.

And while more muscle and less fat usually make the meat less tender, that's not the case with Piedmontese, said Harlan Ritchie, animal science program leader for Michigan State University Extension.

"We all know that the beef market is changing and cattle breeders are trying to raise beef to meet the demands of that market," Gooby said. "That's what attracted us to the Piedmontese."

Piedmontese are relatively new in the United States, with just 5,000 registered nationwide, and Gooby said most ranchers cross Piedmontese with other breeds of cattle.

Originally from the Piedmont valley of Italy, the breed was im-

ported into Canada in 1983 and first made its way into the United States about three years later.

**Study shows breast-fed babies are smarter**

**2** CHICAGO — A new study suggests that youngsters who were breast-fed as babies do better in school and score higher on standardized math and reading tests.

The study, which tracked more than 1,000 New Zealand children through age 18, bolsters evidence that breast-feeding helps make smarter kids. It appears in January's Pediatrics, the journal of the suburban Chicago-based American Academy of Pediatrics.

The authors, Professors David M. Fergusson and L. John Horwood of Christchurch School of Medicine, subscribe to the theory that fatty acids that are present in breast milk but not in formula promote lasting brain development.

The breast-fed children in the study tended to have mothers who were older, better-educated and wealthier. Skeptics say those factors rather than the breast milk itself could explain the findings.

But the authors wrote that they adjusted for those factors and still concluded: "There were small but consistent tendencies for increasing duration of breast-feeding to be associated with increased IQ, increased performance on standardized tests, higher teacher ratings of classroom performance and better high school achievement."

Those who were breast-fed for less than four months scored slightly higher from ages 8 to 13 on standardized tests. The differences increased the longer children breast-fed.

The American Academy of Pediatrics just last month urged mothers to nurse longer — for at least one year, instead of the recommended six months — for numerous reasons, including the presumed mental benefits.

**Irish military groups debate return to war**

**3** BELFAST, Northern Ireland — Accused of random killings despite a cease-fire, the commanders of Northern Ireland's largest pro-British paramilitary group admitted Monday they are debating "a return to war."

The declaration came as rising violence threatened stalled peace talks on Northern Ireland's political future.

At Monday's funeral for the latest victim, Roman Catholic Bishop Patrick Walsh appealed for an end to the political jockeying.

"Do not dispirit us with any further petty shows of rancor, bitterness, ill temper. There is so much at stake — lives are at stake," Walsh implored at the funeral for Eddie Treanor.

Treanor, 31, was shot to death by two masked gunmen as he sat beside his girlfriend in a north Belfast pub on New Year's Eve. Five other Catholics were wounded in the attack claimed by a renegade gang opposed to the peace talks, the Loyalist Volunteer Force — but blamed in many quarters on the Ulster Defense Association, a party to the talks.

The Loyalist Volunteers, who also killed a Catholic at a rural hotel last week, said they were punishing Northern Ireland's minority Catholics for the Dec. 27 assassination of its founder, Billy "King Rat" Wright.

An IRA splinter gang opposed to the talks, the Irish National Liberation Army, killed Wright inside the high-security Maze prison.

Treanor's funeral came amid intense political activity in Belfast and London aimed at keeping as many parties as possible involved in the negotiations on Northern Ireland's future. They are supposed to resume Jan. 12 and conclude by May.

— Compiled from AP wire reports

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