

Why Hereford?

It is estimated that 70 per cent of the commercial cows in the province of Alberta are crossbred, and of these, 90 per cent are one-quarter Hereford to three-quarter Hereford in their genetic makeup. Of the estimated 30 per cent of commercial cows that are straight bred in their genetic makeup, more than 80 per cent are straight bred Hereford. The reason is simple - pure economics. If you are involved in the management of a cow-calf operation, then you obviously enjoy it because, as we all know, there are easier ways to make a living. Nevertheless, it is also your BUSINESS, and as such, it is absolutely necessary that you design your breeding program to be as efficient and profitable as possible.

The "New Hereford"

The long standing inherent traits of the Hereford breed, coupled with tremendous genetic advancements in recent years, lend it a great advantage over its competitors in helping to improve the profit picture for commercial cattlemen. The most important economic traits in any cow herd are the percentage of cows settled in a 60 day period and the percentage of calves weaned. The ability of the Hereford cow to give birth easily to a 90 pound calf, breed back readily, and wean a healthy calf that is at least 45 per cent of her own body weight, makes her profitable. That she can repeat this consistently over a long life span makes her an even better investment.

The longevity of production that Hereford cattle are well known for, greatly reduces the cost of replacement bulls and females and gives the cow-calf producer more production to convert to cash. The big community pasture managers in southeastern Alberta freely point out that Hereford bulls, on average, work one to two years longer than bulls of continental breeds.

Alberta Herefords are widely known for their thick hides and thick hair coats that give them a tremendous advantage in terms of winter maintenance costs. This ability to maintain their condition on less feed not only reduces expense, but is also a major reason for reduced problems at calving time.

The vast majority of Alberta farms and ranches involve responsibilities by the entire family, making it essential that cattle can be handled easily and safely with the least amount of stress possible incurred on the handlers and cattle themselves. The natural docility of the Hereford breed creates this extra margin of safety and ease of handling that makes every aspect of managing cattle more enjoyable.

Current trends in the marketplace also heavily favour the predictable genetics of good Hereford cattle. Wholesale and retail purveyors of beef are demanding high quality and consistency from all North American beef packers, and here again, the Hereford breed is filling that demand. Throughout North America, packing houses are receiving the best price for well marbled beef without excess finish from an animal

that meets these criteria at a reasonable slaughter weight. In order to meet the demand of their customers, packer buyers are instructed to purchase cattle that are at least 50 per cent British blood. It has not taken long for feedlots to adjust their buying habits and so too, the commercial cow-calf operator, as always must be able to supply what the market is willing to pay the most for. The excellent demand for good Hereford replacement heifers is indicative of the strong desire today's commercial cattlemen have for greater uniformity and predictability in their own herds.

It is a pleasure to work with Hereford cattle, but just as importantly, they have a proven ability to maximize your profit.

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