

What traits do you select for when choosing the breed of cattle for your operation? Do you use the breed that produces the heaviest calves at weaning, or the lightest calves at birth? Or, do you choose the breed that fulfills *both* of those specifications? In order to create a profitable operation it is important to know what characteristics various breeds have to offer, and how they can be used to help the producer meet his production goals. This week we will continue our four-part discussion on breeds, and discuss the characteristics that may make the Brahman breed desirable for your operation.

Often, the first trait producers think of when describing Brahman cattle is their environmental adaptability. This can be greatly attributed to the fact that the Brahman breed belongs to the *Bos indicus* group of cattle, which originated from India. Due to years of exposure to inadequate food supplies, pests and parasites, and extreme weather conditions in India, Brahman cattle developed an extraordinary ability to adapt for survival. This continues to hold true today. Brahman are able to flourish in areas of hot, dry climates, and in areas where inconsistent grazing is present. Further, their increased physical stamina makes them even more thrifty and adaptable to their climate. The Brahman breed is extremely heat tolerant due to their short hair coat, skin pigmentation, loose skin, sweating ability, and the fact that they produce less internal body heat in warm weather. This helps Brahmans be more productive, especially in warm climates like those found in our region of the state. This environmental adaptability further helps the animal live longer, resulting in increased productivity for the span of the animal's life.

Brahman cattle are also widely used to create hybrid vigor in cattle. Hybrid vigor is a way to take full advantage of the genetics of two very different types of cattle, such as breeds from the *Bos taurus* and *Bos indicus* groups. Mating these two types of cattle creates a production advantage because it usually results in high performance progeny. Brahman cattle are used to create the F₁ group of cattle that tends to be very popular in our region due to their hybrid vigor and inheritance of many of the Brahman's desirable traits. Some Brahman influenced breeds that are prevalent in our region include Brangus, Santa Gertrudis, Simbrah, and Braford. These cattle also tend to exhibit great hybrid vigor and do very well from a production standpoint. Although they are a little later maturing than other breeds, Brahman cattle often perform exceptionally well from a maternally. The females often prove to be good mothers with excellent milking abilities. Brahman calves are usually small at birth, and grow rapidly- yet another reason producers may find this breed desirable.

If you are hoping to create a more environmentally adaptable herd, you may want to consider introducing Brahman genetics to your operation. As before making any management decision, first consider your goals and what can be done to meet those goals. If your goal is to sell feeder cattle either at weaning or as yearlings, they are typically more valuable if they are $\frac{1}{4}$ or less Brahman. This can be achieved by producing half blood Brahman females that wean $\frac{1}{4}$ blood Brahman calves. If your goal is to produce replacement females, the opposite is true. Females that have more than $\frac{1}{4}$ Brahman influence are usually more valuable due to their maternal abilities mentioned above. If you have any questions about the Brahman breed, or want to be connected to a Brahman, or Brahman cross producer, please contact us.

Thanks,
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