

Beef cattle can typically be divided into two groups- maternal breeds and terminal breeds. Maternal breeds, known for their excellent milking and mothering ability, are often used in operations where replacement females are produced. Terminal breeds, however, are well known for their excellent growth and meat producing ability, and are typically used in operations where cattle produced are targeted for feedlots. This week we will discuss one of the most common terminal breeds, and how it contributes to the beef cattle industry.

Before their introduction to the United States in the 1930s, Charolais cattle were greatly depended upon for drafting purposes in France. To achieve this, French breeders stressed the importance of rapid growth, heavy muscling, and adequate bone size when producing Charolais cattle, and sought to select for those characteristics. Years later, Charolais continue to be well known for possessing these traits, which make them one of the most popular breeds in the industry. Many producers find the high weaning and yearling weights that Charolais possess to be very profitable. Combined with their good finishing ability, these desirable qualities have resulted in a great demand, and even premiums for Charolais cattle in grow yard and feedlot operations.

Charolais are also widely used to create hybrid vigor when they are mated to cattle of maternal breeds, such as Angus. Implementing hybrid vigor by taking advantage of the genetics of both breeds of cattle is a great way to create high performing, well rounded progeny. Keep in mind that terminal breeds known for high weaning and yearling weights are also known for having high birth weights. If you plan to use a terminal breed sire, such as Charolais, in a crossbreeding situation it is wise to pay close attention to his birth weight EPDs. When crossbreeding cattle, remember to take into consideration the breed-specific characteristics that each breed used is known for. For example, because the Charolais breed itself is known for good growth rates, it is not necessary to put as much emphasis on those EPDs when selecting a herd sire. Rather, an ideal Charolais bull would be one that has low birth weight, average growth rates, and moderate milk EPDs.

It is wise to carefully evaluate the goals of your operation throughout the year. What is the current production status of your cattle, and how does that align with where you would like for the cattle to be? How would the implementation of Charolais genetics benefit your operation? Please contact us, or visit charolaisusa.com if you have any questions about the Charolais breed, or if you would like to be connected to a Charolais breeder in our area.

Please keep in mind that the voting for the State Beef Checkoff Program is scheduled to take place June 2nd through 6th. Eligible producers may vote at any Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service county office during regular business hours. For more information about the Texas Beef Checkoff, visit www.texasagriculture.gov.

Thanks,
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