

Over the past few weeks we have explored three breeds that have greatly shaped the growth of the cattle industry. By focusing on each breed individually, we have presented producers with the opportunity to evaluate their operation and determine how each breed may benefit his/her operation. This week we will conclude our four part series by discussing a breed that has made a name for itself in the cattle industry and may help you meet your production goals if incorporated in your operation.

The Hereford breed of cattle was first introduced to the United States 200 years ago from England. As with many cattle breeds, the traits that Hereford cattle are most well known for can be greatly attributed to the early breeders of these cattle. Cattle producers in England understood the importance of having cattle that could convert native grass to beef efficiently and profitably. They worked to produce cattle that would meet that need, and the Hereford breed was created. To this day, Hereford cattle are known for having high beef yields, docility, good foraging ability, and longevity, all while maintaining a high efficiency of production.

Herefords are also widely used in crossbreeding operations to create hybrid vigor. Perhaps one of the most common ways Herefords are used in crossbreeding is to create black baldies. This can be achieved by mating a Hereford with an animal from a solid black breed such as Angus. Black baldy progeny created from this mating are often valuable, as they typically perform well, regardless of whether they are used for terminal or maternal purposes. Black baldy steers often excel in feed lots due to their high muscling, and production efficiency. Females may be used as replacements, where they develop into exceptional dams, and are often mated to a terminal breed bull in order to create a terminal cross. Crossbreeding operations like this are typically best suited to take full advantage of hybrid vigor, and many producers find that those crossbred cattle possess a higher quantity of desirable qualities compared to purebred animals.

For several weeks we have discussed the importance of thinking about your goals for your operation, and how the breed of cattle used can greatly affect whether or not those goals are met. Before choosing a breed for your operation, the wisest thing you can do as a producer is to think about what your goals are. Will you try to raise replacement females to keep or sell? Or, will you have a terminally based operation that focuses on producing calves that will thrive in a feedlot situation? Once you have established your goals, you can then be better equipped to decide which breed to use in your operation. If you already have a breed in place, we encourage you to still think about your goals, and evaluate whether or not your operation may be more successful if a different or an additional breed is implemented. If you have any questions about the Hereford breed, or any of the other breeds discussed in this series, please contact us.

Thanks,

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