

Simmental cattle originated in the Simme Valley of Switzerland centuries ago. As the breed spread throughout Europe it acquired a variety of names such as Pie Rouge, Fleckvieh, Austrian Fleckvieh, and Red and White. Canadian Simmental breeders selected seedstock from several European countries where performance testing has been practised for many years. Sires from this large genetic pool were bred to beef cows in Canada to produce the foundation animals for the Canadian Simmental breed.

Founded in 1968, the Canadian Simmental Association has registered over 300 000 head of cattle. In 1988 there were about 4 000 breeders of registered Simmental cattle in Canada and pedigrees issued annually now exceed 17 000. While exports have primarily been to the United States, recent shipments have been made to South America, including Brazil, Colombia and Mexico.

The Canadian Simmental Association's Simmental Industry's Reproductive Expectation System or SIREs directory is published annually and is based on all performance data in the herdbook. All purebred Simmental bulls are compared on the basis of the progeny performance. This comprehensive summary shows the EPD of each sire in key economic traits (weaning weight, yearling weight, calving ease, etc.). The SIREs book identifies promising young sires and reports com-

pletely on all active sires in the breed.

Through upgrading and selection, Canadian breeders developed a pool of quality polled purebred Simmental which have demonstrated increased weaning weights on the first cross and offer early sexual maturity, ease of calving, fertility and generous milk for the growing calf. Simmental sired calves grow well on grass or feedlots and produce a carcass of lean, tender meat with desirable carcass weight and grade.

Birth weights of Simmental calves average about 44 kg (97 lb) for males and about 41 kg (90 lb) for females. In 1989, Canadian Herd Performance Program records show that males on test had an average yearling weight of 481 kg (1 058 lb) and 365 kg (803 lb) for females. In the same year animals on test had a post yearling average daily gain of 1.32 kg (2.9 lb) for males and 0.84 kg (1.9 lb) for females.

Following are the characteristics for which the Simmental in Canada is most noted:

- 1) large size and docile nature;
- 2) heavy muscle structure;
- 3) high growth rate and high milk production; and
- 4) easy adaptability to wide variations in environmental conditions.