

Herefords were first imported into Canada in 1860. There was a need to develop a type of beef animal that was hardy, prolific and able to graze wide areas efficiently. From the original imports, only those strains which possessed the necessary vigour and hardiness survived. From this foundation the modern Canadian Hereford has been developed.

There are currently more than 7 000 breeders of registered Herefords in Canada, and annual registrations are about 42 975. In 1985, more than 976 Canadian Herefords were exported to several countries, including the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Bulgaria, Britain and Denmark.

The current overwhelming popularity of the Canadian Hereford is sound testimony to its adaptability and usefulness. In addition to purebred cattle, many large herds of straightbred but unregistered cattle are excellent sources of high-performance and practical female stock. Herefords are widely used in crossbreeding with dairy cows, and excellent semen is readily available.

Of particular interest to Hereford breeders throughout the world has been the development of an outstanding natural hornless strain in Canada. The great size and excellent performance of these animals have placed them among the most sought-after beef cattle in the world.

An increasing proportion of both showing and performance test winners in Canada are of the polled strain.

The birth weight of Hereford calves is about 36 kg (80 lb). In 1984, Canadian ROP records show that animals on the Home Test Program had an average yearling weight of about 386 kg (858 lb) for males and 317 kg (700 lb) for females.

Test station bulls have recorded yearling weights of more than 544 kg (1 200 lb). In 1984, animals on the ROP Home Test Program had an average daily gain of 0.95 kg (2.10 lb) for males and 0.66 kg (1.45 lb) for females. However, on the high-protein and high-energy rations at test stations, exceptional animals gained up to 2.0 kg (4.5 lb) per day. These figures become even more significant considering that the Home Test Program feeding rations are restricted almost exclusively to forage feeds.

The following are the characteristics for which the Canadian Hereford is most noted:

- 1) natural hardiness and excellent foraging ability over wide areas and rough terrain;
- 2) unusual adaptability to a variety of climatic and forage conditions; and
- 3) ability to reproduce effectively with a minimum of care, attention or calving difficulties.