

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 6 000 breeders of registered Herefords in Canada, and annual registrations are about 43 000. Canadian Herefords have been exported to several countries, including the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Bulgaria, Denmark, U.S.S.R., Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil and the United Kingdom.

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 37 kg (81 lb). In 1989, Canadian Herd Performance Program records show that males on test had an average yearling weight of 388 kg (854 lb) and 308 kg (678 lb) for females. In the same year, animals on test had a post yearling average daily gain of 1.08 kg (2.4 lb) for males and 0.73 kg (1.6 lb) for females.

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.