

The Charolais is an ancient breed popularized in France. The first importations to Canada occurred in 1955 with a few animals from the United States. The major importation period commenced in 1965 with pure seed stock from France. From the original triple-purpose meat, draft and milk type, Canada has developed the Charolais into a specialized beef breed displaying growth, high-yielding carcasses and exceptional muscling.

In 1988, Canadian breeders of registered Charolais numbered 2 500, and registrations reached 20 000 animals. Exports have been mainly to the United States and South Korea.

In 1968, the Canadian Charolais Association introduced the "Conception to Consumer" progeny test program. It is designed to evaluate the breeding performance of Charolais sire and to make progeny information available. It stresses economically important traits such as ease of calving, pre-weaning gain, post-weaning gain, and carcass merit. The program has produced an animal that has an unassisted calving rate of 98.4 percent for normally presented calves and improved weaning weights.

In addition the Canadian Charolais Association has developed the Charolais Herd Analysis and Records Management Program (CHARM). CHARM is a computer analysis program designed to simplify record keeping, provide performance information and enable comparison of specific herd performance data with the overall breed averages. CHARM allows collection and analysis of data from birth to yearling along with registration proce-

dures. This operation, along with the Conception to Consumer Program, has enabled the Canadian breeder to more accurately select superior animals and produce breeding stock that the foreign buyer can purchase with confidence.

The resultant strain of Canadian Charolais has contributed to the efficiency in beef production. Offspring resulting from the use of Charolais sires on other Canadian beef-breed females have demonstrated superior growth rates and carcass characteristics. Carcasses have minimal fat covering but dress well because of exceptionally good muscling. Charolais cattle grow well on grass and in feedlots.

Birth weights for calves average 43 kg (95 lb) for males and 40 kg (88 lb) for females. In 1989, the Canadian Herd Performance Program records show that Charolais males had an average yearling weight of 459 kg (1 010 lb) and 367 kg (807 lb) for females. In the same year animals on test had a post yearling daily gain of 1.30 kg (2.9 lb) for males and 0.88 kg (1.9 lb) for females.

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

- 1) large size and docile temperament;
- 2) rapid growth with exceptional muscling;
- 3) production of high-yielding carcasses having a minimum of fat cover; and
- 4) ease of calving.