

Breeds of Beef Cattle

Beef cattle had to be imported to the United States. Importation began in the late 1400s and continues through the present. The purpose of importing new breeds is to add to the genetic stock available to improve herds.

Beef Species

The two species of cattle are *Bos indicus* and *Bos taurus*. *Bos indicus* breeds originated from Zebu cattle from India. They have loose skin, large ears, and humps over their shoulders. *Bos indicus* cattle are resistant to heat and insects and are well suited to hot, humid climates. They are more rarely used than *Bos taurus* breeds. *Bos taurus* cattle originated in Europe. In comparison to *Bos indicus* species, they have tight hides and small ears. *Bos taurus* cattle do not have humps. They are more tolerant of cold weather. Most cattle raised in the United States are *Bos taurus* breeds. Examples include Angus, Simmental, and Limousin cattle. Breeding cattle from these two species has created several breeds of cattle, such as the Brahman and Brangus.

Beef Breeds in Missouri

Many breeds of beef cattle are found in Missouri. The major breeds of importance in the state are Angus, Red Angus, Beefmaster, Brahman, Brangus, Charolais, Chianina, Gelbvieh, Hereford, Limousin, Longhorn, Maine Anjou, Salers, Santa Gertrudis, Shorthorn, and Simmental.

Angus - Angus cattle were first imported from Scotland by George Grant of Kansas in 1873. The cattle are black and polled. The breed is known for its maternal ability and the production of high-quality carcasses with a large degree of marbling. Angus are the most numerous breed of cattle in the United States.

Red Angus - Some Black Angus cattle carry a recessive gene for red coat color. Red Angus were developed by selecting the red individuals from Angus herds. They have the same characteristics as Black Angus cattle.

Beefmaster - Tom Lasater is credited with the original development of this breed in Texas in 1931. The cattle are approximately 1/4 Hereford, 1/4 Shorthorn, and 1/2 Brahman. Color varies from red to almost white. Both

horned and polled animals are registered. Beefmasters are selected for their good growth rate, hardiness, maternal ability, and fertility.

Brahman - American Brahman cattle were developed from Zebu cattle from India. Zebu cattle were brought to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and crossed with several European breeds to create the American Brahman. Brahman cattle range in color from gray to black. Like *Bos indicus* breeds, they have loose hides, large ears, and a hump over their shoulders. Brahman cattle are horned. The resistance of this breed to heat and insects has made it popular in the Southwest, where it was originally developed. Brahman cattle have been used to produce many new American breeds.

Brangus - Brangus cattle were developed in the early 20th century by crossing Angus and Brahman cattle. They are 5/8 Angus and 3/8 Brahman. This breed is black and polled. Brangus are maternal, have a high growth rate, and yield thick carcasses with a minimum of excess fat.

Charolais - The King Ranch in Texas introduced the Charolais breed into the United States during the 1930s. The breed was originally developed in France. It was one of the first exotic breeds of cattle to be used in the United States. Charolais cattle are white in color and can be horned or polled. They are large, heavily muscled, and fast growing, which makes them popular in crossbreeding programs.

Chianina - Chianina cattle originated in Italy and were first used in the United States in the early 1970s. They have been used to produce show steers and as a terminal breed. (With a terminal breed, producers sell all the offspring of the bull or cow as slaughter animals, with none being kept as replacements.) They can be almost any color. The cattle may be horned or polled. They are fast-growing and extremely large. Bulls may be up to six feet tall at the shoulder.

Gelbvieh - This breed originated in Germany and was imported in the early 1970s. Gelbvieh can be red to golden or black. They may be horned or polled. Gelbvieh are gentle and very maternal.

Introduction to Beef Production

Hereford - Henry Clay of Kentucky first imported this breed of cattle from England in 1817. Herefords are red with a white face and chest. White is also found on the neck, feet, and switch (tail). They are horned, but the Polled Hereford breed was developed from animals that were naturally polled because of a mutation. Herefords are excellent foragers and can tolerate cold weather, which makes them popular in the western United States.

Limousin - Limousin cattle originated in France and were first introduced into the United States during the late 1960s. They can be light red to dark red or black. Both horned and polled animals can be registered. The breed is noted mainly for their carcass traits. They are lean and heavily muscled.

Longhorn - Longhorn cattle were developed from cattle brought to North America from Spain. In the early 1500s, Spanish explorers brought Longhorns to Mexico and then to Texas, where they escaped and ran wild until being rounded up by cattlemen. Longhorn cattle are extremely hardy, which made them well suited to the long cattle drives of the 19th century. Longhorns were nearly extinct by 1900, but measures have been taken to save the breed. Animals can be almost any color or combination of colors. Their horns may spread to four or more feet. They are noted for their lean meat, adaptability to harsh environmental conditions, and resistance to many diseases and parasites.

Maine Anjou - Maine Anjou cattle originated in France in the 1840s from crosses between Shorthorn cattle and a French breed. The breed was introduced into the United States around 1970. The cattle can be red and white, solid red, black, or black and white. They may be horned or polled. Maine Anjou cattle are generally heavily muscled, gentle, and fast growing. This breed has been used extensively in producing show steers.

Salers - Salers originated in France and were imported to the United States in the mid-1970s. Animals can be black or dark cherry red in color. They are a horned breed. Salers are known as an easy-calving, high-growth breed.

Santa Gertrudis - This breed was developed on the King Ranch in Texas in the early 10th century. Santa Gertrudis cattle are 5/8 Shorthorn and 3/8 Brahman. They are dark

red in color and can be horned or polled. The breed is known for easy calving and good foraging ability.

Shorthorn - Shorthorn cattle originated in England. The breed was first imported during the late 1700s and was one of the first breeds to be crossed with Longhorns. Shorthorns can be red, white, red and white, or roan in color. They may be horned or polled. Shorthorns are generally regarded as highly maternal, gentle cattle that produce high-quality carcasses.

Simmental - Simmental cattle are originally from Switzerland. They were first imported in 1969. Simmentals can be solid red, red and white, yellow, black, or black and white in color. Both horned and polled Simmentals are registered. Simmental cattle are large and fast-growing. They are known for being maternal and for high milk production.

Selecting a Breed

Of the breeds discussed, all have strong and weak points; no one breed is superior to another. Each producer must look at his or her needs, what breeds were used in the past, available feed and labor resources, the goals of the operation, market trends for a particular breed, and the traits of the breeds. The producer must select the breed or breeds that would be best for him or her. Producers need to evaluate how to improve the profitability of their operations by increasing the value of the cattle that they sell. They need to follow current and future market trends and select breeds that best fit the markets. For example, breeds such as the Simmental and Gelbvieh may not be a wise choice for a producer with a limited amount of feed available because these larger, more maternal breeds have higher maintenance requirements and call for more feed resources.

Summary

Numerous breeds are used in beef cattle production in Missouri. Many breeds look similar physically but have different characteristics. Producers need to select breeds of cattle that fit the requirements of their operations and current and future market trends.

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