

Exotic Breeds For Crossing

by Ralph E. Macartney
Within the past few years, several breeds of cattle have been imported into Canada. Semen from all of these co-called exotic breeds is available to commercial cattlemen.

Crossbred bulls produced from a cross of an exotic and our native beef cattle are available to farmers who may wish to take advantage of a new breed without getting involved in artificial insemination.

As in our native stock, breed differences occur within the exotic breeds. Some breeds are superior for certain traits while inferior in others. Thus it is important to define the

traits which deserve attention and then to select a breed and finally an animal within that breed which will improve those traits. The following is a summary of various breeds for several economically important traits.

Charolais cattle have been imported from France in large numbers recently although they have been present in North America for a number of years. When crossed to the native beef breeds, Charolais cross calves are heavier at birth and at weaning and grow at a faster rate.

When slaughtered the carcass contains more lean meat and less fat than the

native breeds. A disadvantage with Charolais is their lower fertility rate plus losses at calving time because of the large muscular calves. For this reason Charolais bulls should not be bred to yearling heifers.

Recent research indicates that some sires will produce calves smaller at birth and thus losses will be minimized. The Charolais is an ideal sire breed in a crossing program because of the growth potential but Charolais cross females should be bred to another breed to minimize fertility problems.

The Simmental breed originates in Switzerland

where they are maintained as a dual purpose animal for the production of meat and milk. Simmental cattle are generally red and white spotted with a white face similar to Hereford.

Simmental sired calves are above average in birth weight, and exhibit a rapid growth rate similar to Charolais. Likewise their carcass contains a greater proportion of lean meat and less fat.

Simmental are superior to Charolais in fertility and conception rate but similar to Charolais in calving difficulties. Simmental could be used to advantage in any crossing program because of their milk production and growth.

The Limousin breed originated in France where they are considered as a beef, draft type breed. These animals are a dark red in color, relatively fine boned but very muscular.

Limousin sired calves are similar in birth weight to our native Herefords and thus few problems arise because of excessive weights. The calves have a high growth rate and produce a carcass similar to Simmental. The milk production of Limousin females is less than Simmental and similar to a Charolais.

The Maine-Anjou breed also originated in France where they are a dual purpose breed, maintained for meat and milk. The Maine-Anjou are higher in milk production than a Limousin.

These cattle are a dark red in color with some white spots and are quite upstanding. They exhibit a growth rate similar to Charolais or Simmental and produce a similar carcass.

Chianina are a large white breed being imported from Italy. Little information is available to date, however since they are a large very upstanding breed, growth rate will likely be high.

Because of their shape, calving problems might be minimal. The Chianina will likely be used in the terminal or final cross of a crossbreeding program to produce a market animal.

Lincoln Red cattle are being imported from England where they are maintained as a beef breed. These cattle are dark red in color and are somewhat similar to our Shorthorn. Little comparative data is

available but it is expected that their growth rate would exceed the Shorthorn. Information from England shows that the Lincoln Red cattle have the highest growth rate compared to the British beef breeds.

There are a great many other breeds which have been developed and would be useful in crossbreeding programs. The Canadian dairy breeds certainly have something to offer both in milk production and growth rate. More accurate information will be available in the near future on the advantages and disadvantages of the exotic cattle.

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Feeding The Ewe

by Don J. Stevenson

These are:

The production cycle of the ewe divides her feed requirements into five general areas.

- Flushing and breeding, 1+ months.
- Early gestation, 3 months.
- Late gestation, 6 weeks.
- Lactation, 8-12 weeks.
- Maintenance

Flushing and Breeding: Flushing is the practice of increasing the ewes' energy intake just before and during the breeding season. The ewe fed in this way is gaining body weight. For some reason as yet unexplained by the scientist, she ovulates more eggs, allowing for a greater conception, resulting in a larger lamb crop.

Some sample flushing rations are:

- Lush hay aftermath.
- Supplementary crop such as rape of kale.
- Ordinary pasture + 1-2 lbs. grain/head/day.
- Hay + 1-2 lbs. grain/head/day.

Flushing should be restricted if the ewes are already in good condition. In this case it is of doubtful value and if the ewes become too fat, it will do more harm than good. The feed intake can be decreased somewhat after breeding but not too abruptly because some of the extra conceptions may be reabsorbed by the ewes.

Early Gestation: During this stage, after breeding and up to six weeks before lambing, the aim is to maintain the body weight of the ewe. She should be prevented from becoming too fat during this time.

A sample ration for a 140 lb. ewe is (feed/day):

- 3-4 lbs. average quality mixed hay (12%).



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— 7 lbs. corn silage.

— 1 lb. alfalfa hay.

Late Gestation:

The final six weeks are the critical stages for the in-lamb ewe. Her feed requirements increase greatly and at the same time her capacity to handle bulky feeds decreases.

Sample rations for 140 lbs. ewe (feed/day):

- 4 lbs. average quality hay plus
- ½ lb. grain increasing 2 lbs.

— 5 lbs. corn silage plus 2 lbs. alfalfa hay plus ½ lb. grain increasing to 2 lbs.

Lactation: The ewe's milk production peaks about eight weeks after lambing. Ewes with twins will produce more milk than those with singles therefore their feed requirements are greater.

Sample rations for 140 lb. ewe (feed/day):

- 5 lbs. average quality hay plus
- 2 lbs. grain.
- 10 lbs. corn silage plus 1 lb. alfalfa hay plus 2 lb. grain.
- Excellent pasture.

During this time the ewes should have all the roughage (hay or silage) which they will eat without wastage.

Maintenance: At this time the objective is to feed the ewe as cheaply as possible. She can lose body weight at this time without harming future production.

Sample rations:

- average — poor pasture.
- 3-4 lbs. poor quality hay.

Minerals: A mineral mixture recommended for beef cows will be satisfactory for sheep.

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