

A Knack for Black

Why the Black Hereford has arrived

White faces with black hides are familiar herd members on cattle operations all across America. Herefords are frequently used for crossbreeding, but in the last several years a growing number of producers have begun following a stricter breeding program that produces Herefords that are reliably black. This breed, the **Black Hereford**, is now the

fastest growing breed in the United States.

“The only reason the breed was started was to qualify for market premiums based on hair color,” says Joe Hoagland, President of the **American Black Hereford Association** and owner of J&N Ranch. “We used the same methodology as the Salers, Gelbviehs, Simmentals and others. All red breeds that turned their hair color to black used Angus genetics; breeding to a 5/8 blood then slowly breeding the Angus back out leaving the breed black in color.”



BLACK HEREFORD

Hoagland has been in the cattle business his whole life. J&N Ranch is the largest and oldest producer of Black Herefords in the U.S. This February they will be holding their 20th production sale offering 80 bulls at the ranch in Leavenworth, Missouri.

The American Black Hereford Association (ABHA) was started in 1994. Hoagland bought the association and all its recorded cattle in 1999. The association was opened to new members in 2004 after the first Black Hereford sale in 2003.

FADE TO BLACK

A registered Black Hereford bull used on black cows will eliminate red baldie calves that result from cross breeding with traditional Herefords. The black coat color gene (ED) is dominant over the red gene (e). Black animals are either *homozygous* (two black genes) or *heterozygous* (one black gene). Homozygous black animals will have all black offspring, even when bred to red, while the offspring of heterozygous black animals bred to red will have both red and black offspring (50:50, on average).

Black Herefords are made up of at least 62.5 percent registered Hereford blood, sired by a registered Black Hereford bull. To be recognized by the ABHA, Black Herefords must:

- 1 Have an ABHA registered sire and an American Hereford Association registered dam
OR
- 2 Have both ABHA registered sire and dam
OR
- 3 Be the product of a pairing described in 1 - which was not eligible to register due to hair color - and an ABHA registered sire.
- 4 Be an American Hereford Association sire approved for admission by a 2/3 vote of the ABHA pursuant to Article II of the By-Laws
OR
- 5 Be the product of an ABHA sire and an F1 dam whose parentage is registered in the American Angus Association and the American Hereford Association.

As you might expect, Black Herefords are much like traditional Herefords.

BREED: Black Hereford

COLOR: Black hide, typically with traditional white markings of Hereford.

ANCESTRY: Black Herefords are cattle made up of at least 62.5 percent registered Hereford blood, sired by a registered Black Hereford bull. In Europe, the name Black Hereford refers to the hybrid offspring of a Holstein-Friesian cow and Hereford bull, and is not considered its own breed. In America, however, the offspring of Angus and Hereford have become the registered Black Hereford breed.

HISTORY: Both Hereford and Angus cattle originated in the British Isles. Herefords first came to America in 1817, but numbers did not significantly increase until the 1840s and 1850s, then primarily in the eastern United States. Demand for the Hereford increased in the late 1800s when they proved able to survive tough ranching conditions in the opening West while providing quality beef. Herefords were crossed with other local cattle throughout their history including Angus, who first arrived in America in 1873. The formal breeding that developed the modern Black Hereford didn't occur until more than a century later.

The ABHA was established in 1994 in Lawrence, Kansas by the late John Gage. The first Black Hereford calves were born in 1997 and recorded in the ABHA registry. The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office made the Black Hereford name a registered trademark in 2002, and the National Association of Animal Breeders recognized them the following year with an international breed designation.

BREED CHARACTERISTICS: May be polled or horned. Black Herefords are known for excellent meat quality, feed efficiency, fertility, and calving ease. Like tradition-

al Herefords, they are also known for having docile temperaments and for their adaptability to difficult climates and environments.

REGISTRY / NATIONAL

ORGANIZATION: American Black Hereford Association, Kansas City, Missouri. The ABHA registers and transfers Black Hereford seedstock, while maintaining Black Hereford pedigree records. According to the ABHA, all Black Herefords are free of known genetic defects and potential carriers are required to be found free of defects via DNA testing in order to complete registration. In addition, traditional red Hereford bulls must be above average in six out of eight EPDs for calving ease, gainability, fertility, as well as marbling, and they must be below average for fat in order to qualify for use.

In addition to EPDs, Black Hereford breeders use DNA testing for the following traits, including reproductive traits (heifer pregnancy rate, maternal calving ease, stayability or longevity), growth traits (average daily gain, residual feed intake or feed efficiency), convenience traits (docility, coat color for homo or heterozygous, horned / polled), carcass composition traits (ribeye area, fat thickness, yield grade), and carcass quality traits (marbling score, percent choice or quality grade, tenderness).

QUALITY: Black Hereford sired steers have been shown to grade 71 percent choice and 29 percent select.

BIRTH AND

WEANING WEIGHTS: Average birth weight EPD for 2010 Black Herefords was 3.1 and weaning weight was 42.0.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Contact the American Black Hereford Association by calling 816-842-8998 or visiting www.blackhereford.com.



J&N RANCH

A recent study completed in Howells, Nebraska, with Cedar Hill Cattle, Inc. and the ABHA showed that Black Hereford sired steers enrolled in the program had an average daily gain of 3.93 lbs.

However, there are more ways than just color in which the Angus influence is evident.

“We have done a generic carcass study in Nebraska which indicated that Black Herefords have bigger rib eyes, more marbling and less trim fat than traditional Herefords,” says Hoagland. “These superior carcass traits are a side benefit from the influx the Angus genetics used to turn the hair color black. We want to maintain these traits by using only high marbling, large rib eye, low fat Herefords while keeping the traditional Hereford qualities of docility and feed efficiency.”

The 2011 study to which Hoagland referred was completed in Howells, Nebraska, with Cedar Hill Cattle, Inc. and the ABHA. The study showed that

Black Hereford sired steers enrolled in the program had an average daily gain of 3.93 compared with 3.65 of Hereford sired steers, and 3.28 with the Angus sired steers, suggesting the advantage of heterosis. In addition, the Black Hereford sired steers showed evidence of increased performance characteristics by rating 71 percent choice and 29 percent select. The same study also showed that the Black Hereford carcasses had an average rib eye area of 15.4 square inches, and an average of 0.64 inches of back fat.

Like traditional Herefords, Black Herefords are known for fertility, feed efficiency and the ability to adapt to different environments. The USDA reports that between 1995 and 2010

the percentage of black fed cattle doubled in the U.S., and it’s expected that increase will continue. The number of Black Hereford producers has increased to 30 since the ABHA began just a few years ago.

“We have sold cattle from Florida to California and from Texas to Montana,” says Hoagland. If you want more information on this relatively young breed, contact the ABHA at 816-842-8998 or visit www.blackhereford.com. **WR**

According to the ABHA, all Black Herefords are free of known genetic defects and potential carriers are required to be found free of defects through extensive DNA testing in order to complete the breed registration.



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