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Lowline Breeders Change Name to Aberdeen

To more accurately reflect the heritage of the Aberdeen breed, the American Lowline Registry has changed its name to American Aberdeen Association. The Aberdeen breed is known for calving ease, docility, efficient grass or feed conversion and meat quality.

Aberdeen cattle in the United States descend from a closed herd formed at the Trangie Research Centre in New South Wales, Australia, in 1929. The foundation stock was purchased from Canada's historic Glencarnock Estate that bred the leading genetics of that time.

Neil Effertz of Bismarck, N.D., imported the first Aberdeen cattle to the United States in 1996. He had learned of Aberdeen ribeye sizes posted at the largest show in Australia, and did his own study of breed comparisons.

"The cattle had a 30 percent larger ribeye per hundred weight than typical Angus. When I first went to Australia and saw that they were getting considerably more beef production per acre than bigger cattle, it just made sense to me since the No. 1 variable cost in ranching is maintenance and feed," he said.

"Aberdeen cattle are like the 1960-model Angus cattle your grandfather had," Oklahoma cowman Kirk Duff described. "They have the same heritage as Angus and retain the polled genetics in a good-uddered, fertile cow in a more moderately framed, more efficient package with greater longevity," Duff added.

Numerous studies have shown that a 1,200-lb. cow is more efficient, Duff said. "It flat doesn't take as much energy in terms of grass, feed or hay because Aberdeens convert feed more efficiently. They maintain body condition score on grass and they achieve finish with less days on feed."

Due to the breed's efficiency and better grass management, Effertz has doubled his stocking rates since 1996, and is selling the Aberdeen calves at a 10 to 15 cent premium over the bigger calves he used to sell.

"Aberdeen cattle are incredibly low input cost cattle," he said. "We don't treat for scours or pneumonia anymore. When you take the expense out of vaccines, treating sick calves and death loss, it takes much of the work and expense out of the cattle business."

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Calving ease is a primary attribute of Aberdeen cattle.

“I was tired of staying up all night and working so hard calving,” Duff explained of his decision to start using Aberdeen bulls on all his Angus and Red Angus heifers. “The low birth weights of Aberdeen calves were definitely one key advantage, but Duff said the calves grow and have marketability as replacement heifers or feeder calves that other low birth weight breeds can't offer. Birth weights from his Aberdeen bulls typically fall within a 60- to 70-lb. range. Beyond ranch profitability, Aberdeen cattle also have maintained the tender, flavorful beef of the original Angus genetics. “When we first started selling Aberdeen beef to customers, we had an immediate response asking us what we were doing differently,” Aberdeen breeder and feedlot operator Brian Walters of Ft. Lupton, Colo., said. “They noticed the tenderness, but also the lighter, leaner texture. The Aberdeen beef was not so dense and coarse and the response was more positive than for the composite breeds we had been using.”

Aberdeen breeders hope that the name change will reflect this heritage of Aberdeen cattle as rugged, hardy, low-input cattle that were the foundation of the Angus breed. The American Aberdeen Association is headquartered in Parker, Colo. For more information about the breed, visit www.americanaberdeen.com/.

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