



Miniature Lowline Angus may be

By Kellie Chichester

Miniature cattle breeds have generated a lot of interest over the years.

These breeds of cattle seem to be gaining in popularity as 4-H projects and as a meat source for those wanting to raise their own food on a few acres.

History of the Lowline Angus Breed

The Lowline breed began in 1974 in Australia. They were developed as part of a research project examining the genetics of growth rates of Angus cattle. The original Lowline group consisted of 85 cows bred to yearling bulls selected for their low growth rate from birth to yearling. From 1974 to 1992, the herd remained closed, and all heifer and bull replacements were selected from within the herd.

Years of selection for low growth rates led to mature Lowline bulls that measure 40-48 inches at the shoulder and weigh 900-1,500 pounds. Mature cows measure 38-46

inches and weigh 700-1,100 pounds. Along with their smaller stature, these docile cattle are predominantly black in color; however, genetic work has shown the cattle can also have red color through gene expression. After the research project was completed in 1992, the herd was released to the public.

Wyomingites Raise and Promote the Breed

Two Casper-area producers are working hard to get the cattle breed more attention through direct marketing and expositions. Janis Black has found a market for her cattle in the breeding cattle arena. Black was a long-time 4-H'er in Casper but was never involved in animal projects. After she moved to a small acreage outside of town, her daughter, Jessica, began 4-H projects in rabbits, goats, and eventually steers.

Through these experiences, Black discovered a love of working with animals that eventually led to the purchase of her first Lowline Angus in 2001. Black is a member of the American Lowline Registry Board of Directors (their Junior National show will be in Laramie next summer).

Black breeds her cattle and then markets the heifers and bulls to other breeders. Descendants of her cattle are now scattered across the U.S.

She claims one hurdle in the industry is that not everyone is willing to castrate their bulls. Realizing there is only a need for a select number of bulls is important, she says. Her board members are interested in the development of a market meat animal due to their belief in the product's quality and possible consumer preferences.

Black believes that the Lowline breed naturally has a finer meat texture.

"You can tell a difference side by side," she says. Lowline cattle will reach a market-ready point at a lighter weight than other cattle breeds. As size can be an issue when marketing to traditional markets, a twist on the Lowline cattle is that many breeders are starting to cross them with other breeds such as Shorthorns. Crossbreeding may increase the ability to market slightly larger cattle to commercial packers by meeting industry standards of carcass size for the processing plants.



Janis Black of rural Casper purchased her first Lowline Angus in 2001 and is now a member of the American Lowline Registry Board of Directors.



opportunity for small-acreage owners

Artificial Insemination, Embryo Transfers

Artificial insemination (AI) has been a tool some Lowline cattle owners use. Keeping a bull on site year-round for seasonal breeding may not always be possible. AI allows for superior genetic selection without the need to feed a bull year-round.

Embryo transfer is also being used to enhance herds. The lighter carcass lends itself to less meat, which can appeal to those with space limitations and a limited food budget.

4-H'ers Exhibit Lowline Angus

Lowline producer Bill Reed of Casper is using Lowline cattle to keep 4-H youth involved in the cattle industry. Reed has a long interest in Angus, traveling to Billings in his youth to purchase "the biggest, roughest, registered Angus heifers I could find" for an FFA range project.

Years passed and Reed once again found himself buying Angus – this time at the other end of the size spectrum. After studying Lowline Angus for several years, Reid purchased three half-blood Lowline heifers in 2007 at the National Western Stock Show and then added six more full bloods in February that year.

Reed said he loves the breed and that his interest in them has kept him vital and healthy.

A long-time 4-H supporter, Reed has allowed 4-H members to select and exhibit one of his heifer calves. As part of their contract, the youth are required to take part in their county and state fairs the first year with the heifer calf.

They have to exhibit the cow/calf pair at the county and state fairs the second year. He then has given them the calf to keep, with the first full-blood heifer calf born going back to Reed to remain in his herd.

Two youth participated in the program this past year: Ben Campbell from Casper and Emma Rademacher of Kiowa,



Bill Reed of Casper lets 4-H'ers select and exhibit Lowline Angus heifers from his herd.

Colorado. They received ribbons at shows around the region.

Those interested in raising these smaller-statured animals for home meat production may need to search to find suitable animals and may want to investigate animals that are less than 100-percent Lowline as these crossbreeds are becoming more common as meat production animals.

The accompanying article on page 10 is a case study economic analysis of raising Lowline Angus for locker beef. Although breeds with full-sized carcasses will likely continue to dominate the general U.S. meat market for some time, the Lowline Angus breed may continue to find its niche with producers and small-acreage residents.

For more information on Lowline cattle, visit www.usa-lowline.org.



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