

FLORIDA CRACKER CATTLE (United States)

Cracker Cattle Bull



Cracker Cattle Cow



Origin: Florida Cracker cattle descended from Spanish cattle brought to the New World in the early 1500s, and were raised in low-input, extensive cattle ranging systems. The Florida Cracker and other breeds which developed under these conditions are called criollo cattle, meaning “of Iberian origin but born in the new World”. By the mid-1900s the majority of Cracker cows had been crossbred to Brahmans and then to British and European breeds, and faced extinction until some Florida families resurrected the breed.

Characteristics: The breed was shaped by natural selection in an environment that is generally hostile to cattle, including the heat and humidity of subtropical Florida. The resulting breed is heat-tolerant, long-lived, resistant to parasites and diseases and production on the low-quality forage found on the grasslands and in the swamps of the Deep South. Cracker cattle can live 25 or more years. The Cracker cow provided the maternal ability and hardiness necessary for crossbreeding programs to succeed and the genetic variety to produce exceptional hybrid vigor. Cracker cattle are small with cows weighing 600-800 lbs and bulls 800-1,200 lbs. They exhibit angular conformation adapted to

harsh conditions. Horn style and shape vary, and the breed also includes polled cattle. Colors include all colors known to cattle, but solid red, dun, black and brindle colors predominate in South Florida herds, while in the north, herds contained spotted, roan and linebacked patterns.

Products: Primarily beef animals, Cracker cattle produce meat, milk and hides. Due to their foraging behavior and low impact on the environment, Cracker cattle have great potential value for the timber industry because their brush-clearing, foraging and fertilization improves tree growth and wildlife habitat.

Population: As of 2010 there were fewer than 2000 Cracker cattle and their status is considered critical.

Bibliography: The American Livestock Breeds Conservancy, <http://www.albc-usa.org/cpl/florida-crackercattle.html>.

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