

CARACU CATTLE

Caracu bull



Origin: The bovine Caracu was formed from Portuguese breeds. According Athanassof (1957) the origin was native breeds Minhota and Alentejo (*Bos taurus aquitanicus*) while Bicalho (1985) affirms that the breed Mertolenga also participated in its formation. For Cousin (2000) the breeds Alentejo, Arouquesa, Barroso, Minhota and Mirandesa were responsible for the formation of Caracu. This breed was set initially in the state of Minas Gerais, and later in Sao Paulo.

Characteristic: What else attracts attention in Caracu, despite of European origin (*Bos taurus*), is the extraordinary adaptation to tropical and subtropical climates (Anon, 1989; Cerri, 1993). Natural selection caused anatomical and physiological alterations that gave him the characteristics of short hair, acclimatization to hot climates, resistance to disease and parasites, ease of movement (good aplombs), resistant hoofs for both hard floors as wet, short prepuce and without prolapse, ability to digest rough forage and calving ease. In an exclusive grazing, the average weight of cows varies from 550 to 650 kg. The bulls weigh around 1,000 kg and can reach 1,200 kg. The production in dairy cattle selection, is around 2,100 kg per lactation (includes first-calf heifers) on pasture with little supplementation (Lima et al., 1990). The milk has high fat, about 5 (Anon, 1989). Females are placed to reproduce after 14/15 months. The cows can be kept on playing until the 16/17 years and those more fertile, 11-13 deliveries. Caracu bull in a typical breeding season serves about 50 or more females, with high pregnancy rate (ABCCARACU, 2013).

Caracu cows



Population: In the early twentieth century, the breed had good expression in Brazilian agriculture. In 1900 had the largest effective population among the local Brazilian breeds (Lima et al., 1990). In 1965, with the closure of the Breeders Association, which was created in 1916, and the shutdown of studies to improve the breed in Nova Odessa, in 1970 the Caracu almost came to extinction (Day, 1948; Trovo and Duarte, 1981; Bicalho, 1985). In 1976, the Instituto de Zootecnia of Department of Agriculture and Supply of São Paulo, began a program of restoration and study of this population, which resulted in the creation of a new association in 1980, which was officially recognized by the Ministry of Agriculture in 1983 (Anon, 1989). The Brazilian Association of Breeders Caracu (ABCCARACU) is headquartered in Palmas (PR) and serves 200 members active in 13 different states with a population of animals recorded in the order of 85,500 heads (the largest herd in the tropicalized world).

Authors:

Eliandra Bianchini

Ricardo Spacagna Jordão

Maria Clorinda Soares Fioravanti

Pictures:

<http://www.infoescola.com> and Dra. Rita M. L. Pires (IZ/SP)