

# A PRELIMINARY EVALUATION OF THE SALERS BREED IN A COMMERCIAL BEEF HERD

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## Story in Brief

The Salers breed has been recently introduced into North America. In an effort to evaluate the breed as a component of a commercial cow herd a study was initiated comparing Salers x Hereford females to Hereford x Angus and Hereford females. Fifty females from each breed group were identified for use in the study at a large commercial ranch in Wyoming. Two-year old Salers x Hereford females had substantially heavier calves at weaning than two-year old females from the other breed groups. Calving difficulty in the three groups showed the Salers x Hereford females in the middle. Despite fairly low average body condition at weaning all Salers x Hereford females were diagnosed as pregnant to calve as three-year old cows. These results provide preliminary evidence that the Salers breed should be considered for use in the commercial beef industry as a component of a crossbred cow herd.

(Key Words: Crossbreeding, Salers, Birth Weight, Weaning Weight.)

## Introduction

Numerous breeds of beef cattle have been introduced into North America in the last three decades. As each has been introduced careful consideration of its general merits has been important in establishing appropriate use in the commercial beef industry. A relatively recent import has been the Salers (pronounced Sah-lairs) from France. It is a dark red breed that was formed in a mountainous region where conditions are relatively severe. The breed has been studied as a terminal sire (Tinker et al., 1988), but little information to date has been reported on its utility as a component of a commercial cow herd.

This study was initiated to investigate the efficiency of Salers crossbred cows in a relatively harsh location (northwest Wyoming).

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## Materials and Methods

Pregnant females representing three breed groups were set aside from the herd at the Pitchfork Ranch near Meteteetsee in northwest Wyoming. Fifty females each of Hereford, Hereford x Angus and Salers x Hereford were identified for this study and were managed together. Calves were sired by Salers and Angus bulls. The year in which results for this report were obtained was characterized by low rainfall which was a common problem throughout much of the Northern Plains during 1988. All Salers x Hereford females were two years of age while some of the females in the other groups were three- or four-years old and had calved previously.

Calves were born in January, February and March. Each calf was weighed within 24 hours of birth and a calving ease score was assigned (1 = no difficulty, 2 = minor difficulty, 3 = major difficulty). Calves were weaned at approximately 8 months of age. A weaning weight was obtained and all weights were adjusted to 205 days. At weaning, pregnancy status of each cow was determined and cow condition score was evaluated (1 = emaciated to 9 = obese).

Data were analyzed by ordinary least squares procedures with breed of female, sire breed, sex, age of the dam and appropriate two way interactions in the model.

This study will be continued through three years. Open cows will be culled according to the usual management procedures followed in this herd.

## Results and Discussion

The results of this study are shown in Table 1. The primary comparisons of interest are between the Salers x Hereford females and the two-year old females from the other two breed groups. Salers x Hereford and Hereford x Angus cows had their calves earlier in the calving season than did Hereford cows ( $P < .05$ ). Salers x Hereford cows had calves that were heavier ( $P < .05$ ) and resulted in more calving difficulty ( $P < .05$ ) than Hereford x Angus two-year old females. Differences with the Hereford females for birth weight and calving difficulty were not significant. Salers x Hereford cows weaned much heavier calves ( $P < .01$ ) than two-year old cows from the other two breed groups. Calves from Salers x Hereford two-year old cows were similar in size to calves out of older cows from the other breed groups.

Two-year old Hereford x Angus cows had higher ( $P < .05$ ) body conditions scores at weaning than either two-year old Hereford or Salers x Hereford cows. Despite the lower average body condition score and the heavy calves at weaning all of the Salers x Hereford cows were diagnosed as pregnant.

Table 1. Performance of cows (and their calves) representing three breed groups.

Breed of dam	Age of dam	N	Birth date <sup>a</sup>	Birth weight	Calving ease score	Weaning weight	Cow condition score	% Pregnant
Hereford x Angus	2	29	35.3	59.5	1.2	362.5	5.6	90
Hereford x Angus	3	21	39.6	68.5	1.1	413.8	5.0	100
Hereford	2	29	48.5	65.5	1.8	354.4	4.5	97
Hereford	3	12	57.9	72.2	1.2	401.5	5.2	100
Hereford	4	9	66.2	68.9	.9	393.4	5.4	100
Salers x Hereford	2	50	33.6	66.0	1.5	400.2	4.7	100

<sup>a</sup>Birth dates calculated as days from January 1.

These preliminary results suggest that the Salers may have a role in the commercial beef cattle industry as a component of a crossbred cow herd. They weaned heavy calves as two-year olds and had little apparent trouble establishing a new pregnancy. Additional data from this study will yield important information pertaining to the continued productivity of these females.

### Literature Cited

Tinker, E.D. et al. 1988. Limousin vs Salers as a terminal sire: Birth and weaning characteristics. Okla. Agr. Exp. Sta. Res. Rep. MP-125:7.