

# EVALUATION OF THE BRAHMAN BREED AS STRAIGHTBRED AND CROSSBRED FOR BEEF PRODUCTION IN SOUTH CENTRAL FLORIDA

## INTRODUCTION

The American Brahman breed was developed in the southern part of the United States from various strains of humped cattle originating in India. Thus, Brahman had its beginning in areas where the specialized European breeds were not adapted and the indigeneous cattle were not sufficiently productive. The Brahman is classified in the genus and species *Bos indicus*, whereas breeds originating in the British Isles and Continental Europe are *Bos taurus*.

The Brahman's unusual appearance sets it apart from all European breeds. Distinctive characteristics of the breed are the hump over the shoulders, long legs, large pendulous ears, abundance of loose folds of skin under the neck, and smooth hair coat.

Bonsma (2) stated that the thick, muscular hide of the Zebu aids in resisting attacks of external parasites, and the high vascularity of the hide (profuse blood flow) make it well adapted to high temperatures. Research in Missouri (3) showed that the European breeds were most comfortable at temperatures ranging between 30° and 60°F, whereas the Brahman were most comfortable at 50° to 80°F. The higher heat tolerance of the Brahman, compared with European breeds, is primarily because of its lower basal heat production (3, 6).

The purpose of this bulletin is to present results from research on the Brahman breed conducted at the Agricultural Research Center, (ARC), Ona, Florida.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Reproduction

Reproductive performance of Brahman cows at the ARC, Ona generally has been low, but higher than contemporary Shorthorn cows (14). Research in Louisiana (19) showed that Brahman cows compared favorably with Angus and Hereford cows, whereas Texas (5), Brooksville Beef Cattle Research Station (4), and AREC, Belle Glade, Florida (7) research showed that reproduction was lower in the Brahmans than in the British breeds.

A study (17) at the ARC, Ona, on reproductive behavior of Brahman females indicated that low pregnancy rates were due