

Procter Farms Ltd.

The Shorthorn breed has promoted itself as a breed that crosses well with many other breeds, and it has done this for many years. This was one of the main reasons that Shorthorns were used in the formation of over 40 other breeds over the years. In the early part of the 20th century, Shorthorns were the main breed that was raised through most of the North American continent. By the 1940's, crossbreeding became more commonplace and many of



these Shorthorn cattle were crossed with Hereford and Angus sires to produce some excellent crossbred mother cows. This article is based on an operation who is once again producing these Shorthorn cross F1 females, and having much success in doing it. This operation is Procter Farms Ltd. at Brussels, Ontario.

Many people associated with the Shorthorn breed are probably very familiar with the Procter name. The Procter's have been a prominent farming family in the Brussels area for many years and they continue to be today. Procter Farms Ltd. is just one of the Procter operations in this area, and it is owned and operated by Don Procter.

In Shorthorn circles, most people will automatically think of Bodmin Limited when thinking of the Procter name and Shorthorn cattle. Bodmin Limited was a farming corporation originally owned by Charles, George and Ross Procter. Besides raising Shorthorn cattle, Bodmin was involved in producing broiler chickens and purebred and F1 swine breeding stock. Bodmin was a large operation involved in many areas of livestock production and they were very successful in them all. Ross Procter says that when they started to feed out their Shorthorn bulls for slaughter, they decided to compare them to cattle from other breeds as well. He says that feeding their cattle with cattle of other breeds on their own farm was a great way to compare the breeds. Each and every year their best

Shorthorns compared very favourably with the best from the other breeds. Because of this he says they never had any reason to change their cowherd to another breed.

Ross Procter is known by most Shorthorn breeders through his involvement with the Canadian Shorthorn Association. He served for many years on the CSA board of directors, and served as its President. He travelled extensively throughout Canada for the breed during these years. When the World Shorthorn Conference was formed, Ross and Mary decided that they would travel to the second World Conference. At the time, they had no idea what this trip would lead to, but they have attended every World Shorthorn Conference since that first trip. Ross says they have now attended 13 of these conferences which have been held in many parts of the world over the past 40 years. He served as President of the World Shorthorn Society for a three year term and was Chairman of the Conference that was

held in South Africa. In his opinion, the World Shorthorn Conference has served an important role in allowing Shorthorn breeders around the world to form friendships and exchange ideas as well as breeding stock.

In the early 1990's, Charles and Ross decided to retire, so George bought out their shares in the company and continued to operate Bodmin Limited. Bodmin still maintains a herd of Shorthorn cattle and is most widely known for their production of quality purebred and F1 swine breeding stock. There are a couple of large 1000 sow breeding herds owned and maintained at Bodmin.

Don Procter, who is a son of Ross and Mary Procter, decided to form Procter Farms Ltd. when his father and Charles decided to retire. Procter Farms not only has a beef herd, but also produces crops such as corn, soybeans, white beans and wheat. There is also hay and pasture land to maintain the beef herd. Don has two sons, Dennis and Scott, who both help out on the farm whenever they can. Dennis works in construction, and Scott has just started at the University of Guelph working towards a Bachelor of Science degree.

Don had been working at Bodmin and he had seen the cattle that were working for the operation, so it was only natural that he decided to use Shorthorns for his cow herd. Many of his original cows came from the Bodmin

Shorthorn herd. Don had also seen how quality crossbred cattle had excelled in the Bodmin herd so he decided that he would try to establish a program that would produce quality F1 females for commercial producers. He decided to maintain purebred Shorthorn cows and to develop F1 females that were a composite of two British breeds. This was done as he felt most producers would then use a sire from a terminal breed to produce three-way cross feeder cattle. This has been working extremely well for him.

The first breed Don used to produce these F1 females was Angus. While he really liked many of the things the Angus breed brought to their offspring from the Shorthorn cows, he was getting some variations in color and some issues with temperaments in the F1 offspring. He says the Angus cross females certainly had excellent udders and were excellent mother cows. All the males produced in his herd were fed out to slaughter, and these cattle worked well for him. After a few years of trying this genetic combination, he decided to try Horned Hereford sires. Don was extremely pleased with the results as it produced a more consistent color pattern and the offspring are extremely docile to work with. The red brockle faced F1 females he is producing have been extremely easy to sell. He sells them all off the farm as bred heifers, and they have many customers who leave standing orders for females each year. Don reports that he is able to sell these females at premium prices. He says that there are several commercial producers who buy replacement females on an annual basis, and one producer now has over 100 females that he has produced. The F1 females are wintered through their first year on high roughage rations, and then ran on grass where they are bred to Gelbvieh sires.

Both Don and Ross wonder why more Shorthorn producers have not specialized in producing these F1 females. Both agree that this practice is a compliment to the purebred producer, and is not antagonistic at all. The crossbred steers that have been produced have also been well accepted by the packer buyers as they have been easy fleshing with good gains. They also say that there also some very economical reasons to use a planned crossbreeding program such as this. It has been proven many times that there is a 10 -15% increase in productivity achieved from crossing two pure breeds together. If you add a sire from a third breed to these F1 females, another 5-10% increase in productivity can be achieved on a consistent basis. Both Procter's say

that they know of no other place where they can get a 15 - 25% increase in productivity basically free, and that this is extremely important for producers to consider, especially in time like these when markets are very volatile.

The Procter Farms Ltd. cow herd is maintained at around 120 purebred Shorthorn females. One of the most important components to producing a good F1 product is the continued production of good pure genetics to add to their base herd. For this reason, Don breeds around one third of his purebred females to purebred Shorthorn herd sires in order to produce the purebred replacements he needs each year. He feels it is important that these females be similarly bred so that they will produce a consistent F1 product. Some of the purebred bulls are also sold for breeding purposes, and the rest are fed out with the F1 bulls. Udders are extremely important in this operation, so Don is using a linebreeding program to increase the influence of one of the very best females ever produced in the Bodmin herd. This female was Bodmin 14S Selena 73X. Selena had a flawless udder and always raised one of the very best calves in the herd every year. She produced until she was 17 years old, and her udder at even this extended age was as good as many younger females. The main herd sire



in the Procter Farms herd is a son of Selena 17X, named Bodmin Gold Spear 15N. He is a red, polled, extremely long bodied son of Byland Gold Spear and he is putting great udders on his daughters. Don is using this bull on his half sisters to try to produce a set of replacement females that have immaculate udders. He says it is working extremely well and it is also resulting

in more consistency in the F1 offspring these females produce. It is interesting to note that perfecting the mother cow has been a long time goal at Procter Farms. When Don registered his herd letters with Canadian Livestock Records Corporation, he chose the letters "BMC" which stands for "Better Mother Cows."

All in all, this is a program with a plan and by all accounts, it is working very well. The fact that Don Procter sells his F1 females off his farm for premium prices, is more than enough proof. This is a breeding program that is planned and is successful.

Anyone interested in visiting with the Procter's about their breeding program is invited to contact them or visit the farm anytime. ♦