

SOUTHERN AFRICAN BRAHMAN DOCILITY SCORING METHOD

After various consultations within the Southern African Brahman Breed Improvement Forum and BREEDPLAN it was decided that the scoring method for Docility is summarized as follows.

The scoring system will now be 1 – Aggressive and 9 - Docile, and the trait code will be TN.

“Bad temperament in cattle is an occupational health issue and most beef producers are becoming more aware of needing to remove stirry or aggressive animals from the herd – both from handling the animals themselves and their effect on the rest of the herd. Livestock producers certainly do not want to buy cattle with poor temperament.” Bob Dent – Bob Dent Cattle Services.

Docility in cattle is the way cattle behave when being handled by humans or put in an unusual environment such as being separated from the mob in a small yard. What we define as poor docility is a survival trait in the wild – fear of anything unusual and the desire to escape. In domesticated cattle, it is exhibited as flightiness. Importantly, docility is a highly heritable trait and can be improved genetically.

Docility EBVs are expressed as differences in the percentages of progeny that will be scored with acceptable temperament. Higher, more positive Docility EBVs are more favourable. E.g. a bull with an EBV of +20 would be expected to, on average, produce more progeny with acceptable docility than a bull with an EBV of -10.

Docility is scored between 80 and 300 days of age. The recommended time of scoring is at weaning or shortly afterwards. The advantage is that all calves should have had similar treatment and variation in handling prior to scoring should be minimal. Of fundamental importance is:

- The animal to be scored should be observed alone without the company of its contemporary group or dam.
- The scoring should preferably be done shortly after weaning (not on the day of weaning with all the stress associated with it)
- The method of scoring should entail the minimum of handling and it must be similar for every animal.

Docility and sheath/navel could be scored simultaneously.

SA BRAHMAN DOCILITY SCORING METHOD (YARD)

1. WHEN

At weaning (*preferably thereafter to eliminate weaning stress*). The whole contemporary group must be scored and **mark show animals or any animals not with the same treatment with a management code**. If it is done before weaning it is even more stress because the calves have to be separated from the cows anyway for the scoring to be uniform.

2. FACILITIES

- A smallish holding pen to prevent too much movement of weaners, and from which they can be separated easily one by one.
- A larger kraal adjacent to the above gives weaners room to move.

3. TECHNIQUE

- Appraiser (or any other person) stands in the larger kraal +- 8 meters from interleading gate and +- 4 meters away from a fence such that the weaner has to pass between the fence and the appraiser.

- With no noise and minimum labour, let each weaner (one at a time) leave the holding-pen and pass the appraiser.

Score	Code	Description
9-8	Docile	Weaner walks or trots past showing no anxiety. Follow it with your eyes and see its reaction at the end of the kraal, if it walks and stands passively.
7-6	Restless	Weaner moves faster past you showing signs of restlessness.
5-4	Nervous	Weaner moves faster past you showing signs of nervousness. Follow it with your eyes, if it runs to the furthest corner and hides behind the other scored animals (standing head up and peeping under them).
3-2	Flighty	Weaner passes you at speed turning its head towards you and may blow at you. It will probably bowl over the 9 scored animals in its effort to get behind the 9 and 8 scored animals.
1	Aggressive	Weaner passes at speed, showing signs of aggression towards appraiser, threatens to charge.

SA BRAHMAN DOCILITY SCORING METHOD (CRUSH)

This scoring method is similar to the Yard scoring method except that under **FACILITIES** we use a **crush** with a neck clamp for the calves to exit one by one (if possible do not catch the calves in the neck clamp prior to exit). Again, the calves should exit from the crush into a larger kraal. The appraiser (or other person) positions himself as in the yard scoring method. They should be handled calmly and quietly. The advantage of this method is that the IDs of the calves can be determined more easily. The same tabulated scoring criteria as the Yard test should be applied.

SUBMISSION OF DOCILITY DATA

Docility can be submitted electronically via HerdMASTER or the adjusted Breedplan template.

In HerdMASTER (please update to latest version), make sure the test type and score range is set up prior to recording and generating Docility data. For more information on these procedures, contact the HerdMaster Office at 012-667-5258.

TN	Docility	[1:9]
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Set-up in HerdMASTER:

The template for submitting Docility data contains 3 spreadsheets – 1. Instructions for completing and submitting the information, 2. Examples of what it should look like and 3. A blank sheet to use for completing your own data.

Download the adjusted Brahman Template from:

www.brahman.co.za/
Breed Improvement / Templates

Contact the Society Office if you have any questions.

	U	V	W	X
Position	Docility		Extra Trait # 1	
Number	Score	Grp	Code	Value
	8			

Docility Score
Record the docility score of the animal. Animals should be scored by either a crush or yard test. Scores are entered as 1 to 9.