**History of the Bonsmara:**

*Any* *breed of cattle can survive and produce under ideal conditions*. It is only when the summer heat appears or drought strikes when fertility and growth is influenced. This is only one stress that puts an animal under pressure. Along with our typical climate, parasite-related illnesses and diseases are another risk for cattle ranchers. The Bonsmara was bred to excel even under these harsh conditions and rough climates

Bonsmara was created in South Africa at the Mara and Messina Research stations from 1937 to 1963 by scientists under the watchful eye of Professor Jan Bonsma. No other individual has contributed so much to cattle breeding as Professor Jan Bonsma, the father of the Bonsmara breed. In short, the outcome of this scientific experiment is a cattle breed that incorporates the hardy Afrikaner, crossed with a European breed (Hereford x Shorthorn), called Bonsmara.

The name Bonsmara was derived from Professor Bonsma’s surname and Mara, where the first crossbred calves were born. Professor Bonsma and his colleagues constantly exercised crossbreed experiments in about 20 commercial herds in different parts of South Africa, to finally come across the best performing crossbreed sample, 5/8 Afrikaner and 3/8 Exotic Hereford/Shorthorn.

The main problem of livestock production in South Africa, as well as the world over, was what became known as the degeneration syndrome among the *Bos taurus* breeds of cattle. The British beef breeds, namely the Shorthorn, Hereford, Angus and to a lesser extent, Sussex and Red Poll, did not thrive under the warm to hot conditions of the ranching areas of South Africa.

Because poor nutrition was considered to be the cause of tropical degeneration, a large-scale nutritional experiment was launched at the Messina Livestock Research Station in 1937, using a large group of heifers of different British beef breeds. This brought Bonsma to the realization that malnutrition was not the culprit. Among the heifers were individuals that thrived appreciably better than others. Careful observation proved that those, which showed the least climatic stress, thrived best. Those animals that showed signs of stress on hot days had a very high respiratory rate, they panted, and their tongues hung out and dribbled profusely.

Because Bonsma wanted to MEASURE every aspect of the livestock that he worked with, he made numerous observations on his experimental animals. These included regular weighing, 14 different body measurements, body temperature, pulse- and respiratory rates, hair count per square centimeter and tick counts. Hair diameters were measured and complete hair coats of different types of cattle were shorn off, weighed and put through a felting machine.

These elaborate tests proved beyond doubt that the hide and coat of cattle played a tremendous role in the process of heat dissipation, which is of the utmost importance for the animal to maintain its thermal equilibrium in the environment. Animals that suffer from hyperthermia have increased respiratory and pulse rates with concomitant metabolic, physiological and endocrinological disturbances.

Animals with a respiratory type of body conformation, a wide forehead and convex facial Profile are much better adapted to the tropics and sub-tropics than those with a digestive type of body conformation and a dished forehead and Profile. At this early stage of the breed creation project it was not possible to decide which of the British beef breeds would give the best results when cross-bred to Afrikaner cows. After many criss-cross matings, the 5/8 Afrikaner, 3/16 Hereford, and 3/16 Shorthorn animals seemed the most satisfactory and became the new breed now known as the Bonsmara.

Only after the climatologically data on the various types of cattle were submitted to the late Professor A. M. Bosman, could Bonsma convince him that the proportion of blood in the new breed to be established, should be the opposite of the Santa Gertrudis, namely, 5/8 Afrikaner and 3/8 British beef breed (the Santa Gertrudis consisted of 5/8 British beef breed and 3/8 *Bos indicus*). The South African research showed conclusively that as soon as the British beef breed content of the Afrikaner/*Bos taurus* cross went beyond 50%, signs of distress were encountered on hot days.

Shortly thereafter, Bonsmara were widely spread across South Africa and the rest of the world. This led to the formation of the society in 1964. Other African countries which promptly accepted Bonsmara are Namibia, Uganda and Zambia and the beef cattle industries of Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Paraguay, Colombia, USA, and Uruguay.

Strict selection for economical factors such as fertility, milk production, growth and adaptability are still applied and are a contributing factor to the reality that Bonsmara proudly succeeded in becoming the strongest and most Professoressional administrated beef breed in South Africa in less than 25 years. Bonsmara, the most prominent of beef cattle in South Africa, currently have more than 120 000 registered Bonsmara cattle.

Thanks to Bonsmaras unique method of scale photography, the Bonsmara is the only breed in the world that can boast a pictorial genealogy from the very beginning of the breeding work until the new breed was established.

It is also unique in that every mating was based on scientific data, where the concept MAN MUST MEASURE was always taken into consideration.

Now, ***Bonsmara cattle are available in the United States*** without restrictions. So, welcome to the new world of Bonsmara where we are devoted to improving the functional efficiency of all beef cattle in the United States!