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FEED EFFICIENCY OF DIFFERENT BREED COMPOSITIONS STEERS FINISHED IN FEEDLOT IN SOUTHERN BRAZIL¹

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The aim of this study was to evaluate the influence of breed composition on feed efficiency of feedlot finished steers during winter in southern Brazil. A total of 35 steers of six different breed compositions: Angus (ANAN), Hereford (HHHH), Nellore (NENE), Angus × Nellore (ANNE), Angus × Hereford (ANHH) and Angus × Caracu (ANCR) were evaluated. These animals were fed at libitum a diet consisting of 40% concentrate and 60% roughage on dry matter (DM) basis and their DM intake (DMI) was measured by the difference in weight between the feed provided and the leftovers. The weighing of animals were performed every 28 days to obtain average daily gain (ADG) and the slaughter criterion was a minimum fat thickness of 3 mm, measured by ultrasound. There were significant differences ($P < 0.05$) in feed efficiency between the racial compositions studied. In general, the feed conversion ($FC = DMI/ADG$) was lower for pure or crossbred British breeds and HHHH animals performed better than the c and ANNE animals ANCR and purebred NENE (6.0 vs. 9.4, 8.5 and 10.9 kg, respectively). The residual feed intake (RFI), obtained by the difference between the observed and estimated DMI, showed that HHHH animals consume less feed for an equivalent ADG and metabolic weight compared to ANAN and NENE, with values of -0.92 kg against +0.73 kg and +0.70 kg, respectively. These results indicate that better performance in terms of weight gain and feed conversion can be achieved in feedlot finishing systems during the winter in southern Brazil by the use of animals of pure or crossbred British breeds.