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 From Dairy and Animal Science at Penn State

UNIQUE BREEDS OF DAIRY CATTLE
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Everyone knows the most popular breed of dairy cattle in Pennsylvania is Holstein — those black and white creatures that produce milk on most of our 12,000 dairy farms.

Other well-known breeds are Jersey, Guernsey, Ayrshire, and Brown Swiss.

However, there are a number of dairy breeds that have a unique history and place in our agriculture.

Milking Shorthorn

The Milking Shorthorn is a segment of the Shorthorn breed that had its origin in northeastern England in the valley of the River Tees, a rich agricultural area bordered by the North Sea. Through selection for dairy qualities, the Milking Shorthorn became separate and distinct from the Shorthorn.

When the breed arrived in America in the late 1880s, many saw it as dual-purpose for producing both meat and milk.

Recently, more emphasis has been put on breeding for increased milk yield, even to the point of crossing the Milking Shorthorn with New Zealand's Illawara breed.

The breed's color is either red, white, or roan (a mixture of red and white hair). Mature cows weigh up to 1,600 pounds, averaging closer to 1,300 or 1,400. Several Milking Shorthorn herds kept in Pennsyl-

vania frequently are exhibited at county and state shows.

Dutch Belted

The Dutch Belted breed of dairy cattle originated in northern Holland prior to the 1800s. Its most prominent feature (and part of its name) comes from the broad band of white encircling the otherwise black body just back of the forelegs.

This breed (also called Lakenfelders) was developed by the Dutch nobility, whose primary selection goal was to preserve the striking color pattern. In fact, Dutch Belted are one of the early strains of dairy cattle from northern Europe that evolved into our present-day Holstein breed.

Dutch Belted were imported starting in the middle 1800s. Numbers have never been large. These cows weigh from 1,000 to 1,300 pounds and produce from 8,000 to 12,000 pounds of milk per lactation. Calves weigh from 65 to 90 pounds at birth.

Red Poll

Originating in England's Suffolk and Norfolk counties, the Red Poll breed was brought to America in 1873. The breed is naturally hornless (polled) and is a medium-to deep-red color with a red and white tail switch.

The original cattle were dual-purpose in nature with good carcass value and fair milking ability. The earliest imports did not leave a permanent record but are thought to account for the so-called native "muley" (naturally hornless) cattle.

They became established here in the latter 1800s from only about 300 head that were imported. Red Polls most often are found in the Midwest, with Indiana, Illinois, and Kentucky leading in breed registrations.

The Red Poll is a medium-sized breed, with cows weighing 1,200 to 1,500 pounds and mature bulls a ton or more.

Red Danish

Red Danish cattle are one of the youngest dairy breeds in this country. They were imported from Denmark in 1925 as part of a program to introduce superior genetic material into American dairy herds.

In 1935, 20 cows and two bulls were imported by the USDA Agricultural Research Center, Beltsville, Md. Bulls were later kept in regular service at the Michigan Artificial Breeders Cooperative unit at East Lansing.

A group of Michigan dairymen cooperated with the USDA and the Cooperative Extension Service to progeny-test bulls of the breed and develop Red Danish herds. Interest in the Red Danish has declined since the 1950s, and few animals of the breed can be found outside of Michigan.

Females weigh from 1,300 to 1,500 pounds and bulls as much as a ton. Beef qualities are equal to those of Milking Shorthorns and Red Polls. These reddish-brown animals are rugged in appearance. The breed averages 12,000 to 14,000 pounds of 3.8% to 4.0% milkfat milk per lactation.

Linebacks

The term "lineback" describes a particular color pattern that can be found in certain Holsteins. A band of white hair, usually four to eight inches wide running the length of the animal from the poll to the tail, is the definitive color pattern. These animals are also known as "color-sided" individuals, since black, brown, or red hair is found

on both sides of the white band. There is little else to distinguish them from other members of the Holstein breed.

Although people who own Linebacks consider them a separate breed, the USDA-Animal Improvement Programs Laboratory does not provide a breed code for them. They are, in fact, Holsteins with a striking color pattern. Size and milking ability are no different than for other Holsteins.

Linebacks are seldom found among the registered cattle of the breed. However, there is a "registry" association for them (American Lineback Cattle Registry, 730 Woodside Drive, Seymour, WI 54165).

Red And White

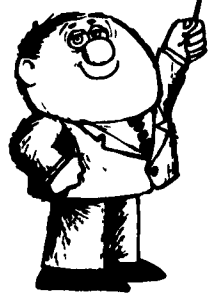
The Red and White Dairy Cattle Association was formed in 1964 to create a registry program for dairy cattle that are red and white in color. Red and white, red, white, or roan animals could be registered in the Red and White herdbook if the owner was a member of the association. A grading-up program is in place that will accommodate cattle of other breeds and red-carrier

(RC) black-and-white Holsteins. Many of the most productive Red and Whites have been produced from the mating of two RC Holsteins.

In recent years, from 5,000 to 6,000 animals have been recorded annually as Red and Whites. Some red and white Holsteins are dual-registered in both Holstein and Red and White herdbooks.

Production and type characteristics are much like those in the black-and-white breed. After generations of being shunned by registered Holstein breeders, Red and Whites now have a unique value that enables them to sell for more than their black-and-white counterparts, even though their production and type traits often are not equal to those of black-and-white Holsteins.

Body size, milk production, and milk component percentages are similar to those of the black and whites. Red-and-white animals are common in the Holstein breed in Europe, where selection procedures for red-and-whites have been the same as for black-and-whites down through the years.




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