

A
Brief History
of
British White Cattle
in
America



T.R. Komander with his herd in Iowa, USA.



MR NOY 6F
On winter pasture near Bells, Texas, USA.

24 August 2003

BRITISH WHITE CATTLE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The British White Cattle Association of America has as its primary objectives the development and promotion of the British White breed of cattle. It is believed that the British White breed can make an important contribution to the improvement of the cattle industry in America.

The association is open to anyone with an interest in British White cattle. It is the intention of the association to maintain high breeding standards with emphasis placed on performance.

MEMBERSHIP

1. Application for membership must be made in writing to the Secretary of the Association.
2. The Board of Directors shall have the power to accept or reject any applications for membership. The Board of Directors shall have the power to suspend or expel any member who conducts himself in a manner detrimental to the association or fails to comply with the rules and regulations, without refund of membership fees or dues.
3. A member whose membership has been revoked may make a written application for reinstatement and can be reinstated only after having received an affirmative vote from the Board of Directors with no more than two dissenting.
4. Legal Partnerships or Incorporated Companies shall specify in writing the person authorized to vote or act in their behalf at any meetings of the association.
5. Members may vote by proxy at the Annual Meeting if the delegate has in his possession a letter of introduction stating that he carries the proxy of the undersigned membership.
6. Associate Members are non-voting members who may be interested in the advancement of the association, Associate Members may not vote or hold elective offices.
7. Junior Members shall be those under 19 years of age who have paid the prescribed fee. Junior Members are not entitled to vote nor hold elective offices.
8. Honorary Members are individuals who have made an outstanding contribution in the development of the British White breed. They are elected by the general membership of the association provided they have been recommended for such an appointment by a prior resolution of the Board of Directors. Honorary Members are not entitled to vote and may not hold elective offices.
9. Charter Members shall be the first 50 members of the association.
10. The Board of Directors shall set all dues and fees pertaining to membership and publish them in a separate publication titled "Rules and Regulations."

HISTORY OF BRITISH WHITE BREED IN AMERICA

GREAT BRITAIN

Most bovine historians have come to the conclusion that the British White breed of cattle traces its roots to early 8th or 9th century Scandinavia. There is some historical evidence that polled white cows with black points were in evidence at that time in the mountains in Scandinavia. Apparently a few of these distinctly colored cows were brought to the British Isles by the Vikings, either as conquerors or via trading.

The first written records would indicate that a herd of white polled cattle with black or brown ears and black muzzles were located in Northern England around the latter part of the 17th century. The records show that the cattle were kept in the park (at that time) of Whalley Abbey, then within the Forest of Bowland near Clitheroe.

The main herd was moved to Norfolk, north and east of London in the early 1800's. Records indicate that the herd was sold piecemeal in small lots to the Nobility of the surrounding countryside and remained under Nobility ownership for several decades. The foundation of British Whites in England, United States and Australia, in all likelihood, may be traced back to 1840 when Albermarle Cater of Norwich, England, purchased a herd of pedigree British Whites from Lord Suffield of Gunton. That herd has remained intact under the stewardship of John Cator and his son, Henry. The Cator prefix, "Woodbastwick", is wide spread throughout all three countries.

Another substantial British White herd is located at Hevingham, England, near Aylsham. This herd has also played a key role in the breed's history and survival. Miss Diana Birkbeck has presided over this herd with skill and dedication, winning many show championships.

The first British White herd book was established in England in 1918 with five herds represented. They are as follows: Bawdeswell, Hevingham, Woodbastwick, Faygate and Kellmarsh. Today (1996) the breed is prospering as never before in England. There are now (1996) 111 herds that are registering cattle in England. In 1993 these herds had new registrations of 406 females and 57 bulls. The breed is now well accepted as a viable economic asset to the bovine industry of Great Britain.

United States

In 1941, on the brink of a German invasion of England, five cows and one bull of the British White breed were shipped to a Pennsylvania Prison Farm in the United States. These cattle were held at this location until 1949 and then disbursed. These original British White five cows and one bull, plus several other full blood British White bulls that have been imported from England form the foundation of today's British White herds in America.

Since no accurate records were kept of the actual number of British White Cattle sold in 1949 from the Pennsylvania Prison Farm, or to whom, the following is a piecemeal bit of their history. It is accurate to the best of our knowledge.

Most, if not all, of the British Whites were purchased by a cattleman from Indiana, a Mr.

Nerhood. Apparently he held the cattle together until most, if not all, were sold to another cowman from Cuba, Illinois, a Mr. Joe Williamson, either in the late 1950s or early 1960s.

During the Nerhood and Williamson ownership, no records were maintained of the parentage of the progeny as the herd increased in numbers. There is evidence that the British White herd, brought into Illinois, had outside blood introduced at a minor level during this period of time.

There is also some evidence that British Whites had been introduced into the United States in the 18th century by English Immigrants. The Jackson Family of Sturgis, Mississippi, have maintained a herd of British Whites that had been brought over by their ancestors in the 17th or 18th century. None of the Jackson animals were sold to outsiders. What were not butchered were kept and maintained by the Jackson Family. In the event that herd culling took place, those culled animals were sold for kill. Consequently, the Jackson herd became quite inbred. However, the Jackson genetics were excellent and were introduced into many herds with excellent results.

What was now the Williamson British White herd was held intact in Illinois until the early 1970s. In 1973, Williamson sold the greater part of his herd to a land promoter, Roger Westman, out of Ames, Iowa. The newly purchased British Whites were then moved to a farm near Williamsberg, Iowa, for a short period of time. In 1974, Westman then moved the cattle from Williamsberg, Iowa, to Williamsberg, Missouri.

To repeat, during this transition period, evidence indicates outside blood was introduced into the herd. However, there remains a bull line, headed by an original Penitentiary bull nicknamed "Old Ugly" (no other name is known). Old Ugly was a full blood and sired a great full blood bull, Atlas. Atlas progeny can still be found in many British White herds throughout the US. Two of these Atlas sired bulls were G & G Progress and G & G Punjab. In addition to Old Ugly and Atlas, several full blood British White bulls have been imported from England. They are as follows: Woodbastwick Premium Bond, Woodbastwick Statesman and Woodbastwick Mastermind, which were imported by E. Vannorsdel of G & G Land Ltd., Nevada, Iowa. Another bull "Woodbastwick Regis" was imported by Tom Zimmerman of Des Moines, Iowa. Two English full blood bulls, Harswell Sampson and Castleton Daniel were brought to America in the mid 1980s along with one female and semen from a bull named "Brendan" by R. Woodcock of Illinois. As well as semen imported on Premium Bond, Mastermind and Statesman. The influence of these imported English bulls is widespread throughout the breed in America. Additionally other semen has been imported.

The Williamsberg, Missouri, herd was purchased by Everett Vannorsdel of Nevada, Iowa, in late 1974. In 1976, a dentist, Dr. Merle Bean of Des Moines, Iowa, joined Vannorsdel and became a partner in G & G Land Ltd. Also, previous to Dr. Bean becoming his partner, Vannorsdel had called a meeting with the purpose to form a National Association. In attendance at that first meeting, held on June 7, 1975, were Joseph Williamson of Illinois, Auvergn Jackson of Sturgis, Mississippi, Jim Shey of Missouri and others. It was decided to name the new association the "White Park Cattle Association of America." This later created much confusion as the cattle, in reality, were British White rather than White Park. There was, and is, a White Park Society in England. These animals are genetically unrelated to British Whites, but with the same coloring. English White Parks have huge horns and are smaller in stature than British Whites with a much fiercer temperament. However, when history speaks of the wild white cattle of England running in the wild for thousands of years, in all likelihood, it is speaking of

horned White Parks not British Whites.

From the initial meeting, June 7, 1975, the White Park Association of America showed steady growth over the next several years. Through Everett Vannorsdel's leadership, yearly National Sales and private production sales were initiated and proved successful. In addition, a National registry and office were put into place and maintained. Most, if not all, of the White Park (British White) herds were owned by small farmers and/or part time cattlemen. Growth was steady but certainly not spectacular.

At the time that the White Parks (British Whites) were being introduced to America there was a "big is better" movement that hit the American cattle scene. Continental breeds huge in size were being introduced in America and popularized. In the United States, British Whites were smaller in stature than the Continental breeds. At that time, this smaller size worked against the American owners, but today the pendulum has swung back to moderate size. About this time other factors were developing that proved to be a problem. Problem number one was that individuals elected to White Park leadership were not promotional minded. Consequently, the cattle were never promoted with consistency. The cattle were, and are, excellent, but the promotion was not equal to the quality of the breed.

In 1987 a group of White Park (British White) breeders and members felt that for long term growth and betterment of the breed of cattle, they should be identified by their correct name of British Whites. This group formed the "British White Cattle Association of America, Ltd." and filed their Articles of Incorporation as an Iowa Non Profit Corporation with the Iowa Secretary of State on December 16, 1987.

Tom Zimmerman, a Des Moines, Iowa businessman and cattleman was the leader of the movement to break away from the White Park Association and became the new Association's first President. Several other breeders soon followed suit. Any British Whites registered under the White Park banner were allowed to be transferred into the new British White Association at the discretion of their owner. Many changes were instigated and adopted by the new British White Association. Among the most important, no horned animals were to be admitted. This rule was in compliance with both the British White Societies of England and Australia.

As we enter the 21st Century the British White Cattle Association of America is showing substantial growth. Membership is spread throughout most of the states. There is a unity and common objective of the membership that gives much promise that the British White breed in America is on its way to establishing an important niche on the American cattle scene.

CHARACTERISTICS OF BRITISH WHITES

The American British White cow is of moderate size, 1000 to 1500 pounds. Bulls are from 1800 to 2300 pounds. They are smooth polled although an occasional "scur" will be observed. Scurred animals may be registered if the scur has not been removed. Both bulls and cows are very docile in nature. The cow udders are well set and tight with small black teats. Back lines are straight and strong with a slight slope to the tail head. The bull's scrotums are well shaped and large in size, a 38 to 42cm circumference in yearling bulls is normal.

British Whites are a breed noted for fertility, calving ease, efficiency and trouble free. They have a lean and tender carcass with superior milking ability and hardiness.

Another very important characteristic of British Whites is their ability to prosper and excel on average to poor pasture. A British White herd will give the rancher "more pounds of beef per acre" than any other breed of cattle. Also, they will honor the fence that's not in the best of shape.

The people who own British Whites swear by 'em. They say she can't be beat to give you a live, healthy calf year after year. Owner after owner will tell you that the British White cow will give you more pounds of calf per acre than any other breed in existence. She will give those extra pounds at less cost and less trouble than other more recognized breeds. In talking with one owner who has run approximately seventy head of mama cows yearly for twenty years, he says he has assisted a total of only four or five calves in those 20 years. This includes heifers with their first calf.

They are known to be gentle with lots of milk. It is not unusual for an owner to take guests out to the pasture and walk among the cows and their babies without disturbing them. Veterinarians agree that this breed causes them less trouble "in the chute" to the point the vet even enjoys working 'em. That docility spills over into the feed lot where calm calves will fatten on less feed than a nervous calf.

The milk is there! In interviewing several breeders, they report that it is not unusual for their bull calves to average close to 600 pounds and heifers in the 550 pound category at weaning. These weights are on grass without creep. Birth weights in the 70 to 80 pound category is common among purebred British White calves.

Breed Difference

There are several different white breeds with colored points described in the book, "**Cattle, A Handbook to the Breeds of the World.**" Much work has been done to try to classify the British Cattle breeds as to their pedigree based on their ancestry. This has led in many instances to physical characteristics such as color coat and/or horns. As we all know, this can be very misleading. Breeds seem to develop along the lines and wishes of the breeder, so that it is not necessarily true that a large black animal in one part of the country is blood related to a large black animal in another part of the country. One such proof of this scenario is the results of the blood protein studies that show the horned, black eared, white coated White Park and the polled, black eared white color coated British White are not blood related. In fact this same study shows that the British White is no more closely blood related to the White Park than to the Angus, Hereford, Shorthorn and other British Breeds. It is believed that the British White breed is much more influenced by infusion of Shorthorn blood in the past than White Park.

Color pointed cattle are pretty rare on a World Wide basis. However, in Britain two breeds seem to stand out, the horned White Park, including the Chillingham and Dynevor types, and the polled British White. It should be noted that even though the White Park and British White breeds shared the same herd book for many years they are very separate and distinct breeds as far as genetics.

The true White Park is genetically far distant from all British Breeds. The breeds that appear to be most closely related to the White Park are the Kerry of Ireland and the Highland and Galloway of Scotland.

Because of their color pattern, these cattle were a favorite in Celtic lore. It is written that the

color is mentioned in records dating back to the fifth century BC. This would mean that they were known well before the Roman invasion. Some of the cattle were referred to as White Polled in the late nineteenth century. Two of the oldest polled herds were the Guisborough Priory in Cleveland and the Whalley Abbey in Lancashire. These cattle were believed to have derived from the wild white horned cattle that roamed the nearby Bowland Forest in the sixteenth century. They were bred specifically to perpetuate their polled genetics.

The British White is no longer classified as a rare breed as their numbers are growing around the World. They are popular in Australia, and it is one of the basic breeds in the developing of the Mandalong Special breed.

Summary

Through its long and storied history, the British White cow has proven itself as a superior animal. Different fads in cattle come and go but high quality and efficiency will always be in style. No other breed of cattle in the World can compete with the British White economically. She is in a class by herself.



Grading Up.

The British White Cattle Association of America, in an endeavor to provide individual breeders with a means of better serving their customers within certain geographical areas, and as an economical method for new breeders to build a registered herd offers a grading up program.

Preferred Animal will be Standard Marked (White body with black or red points, including black ears, eyes, nose, feet, legs and teats) and have no scurs (defined as a horn like growth fastened only to the skin and not attached to the skull, an animal that has had scurs removed is considered to have been horned and is not eligible for registration).

Half-Blood. A Registered Purebred crossed with a commercial or other non-registered animal will produce a half-blood. Also percentages are always rounded down so that a 3/4 bred to a 1/2 will produce 1/2 blood progeny. Exception, a half blood bull must have a registered pedigree on both his sire's and dam's side with one being a British White

Three-Quarter. A Registered Purebred crossed with a Registered Half-blood will produce 3/4 progeny.

Purebred. To be designated as a purebred the animal must be seven-eighths blood (7/8) or higher. A registered purebred crossed with a registered 3/4 will produce purebred progeny.

“AA”. A registered purebred crossed with an American Fullblood or an English Fullblood will produce “AA” (Double A) progeny.

“AAA”. Double A animals crossed with an American Fullblood or an English Fullblood will produce “AAA” (Triple A) progeny.

***A.** American Fullblood will be designated with an asterisk and a capital A on the end of their name (*A). Triple A animals crossed with American Fullblood or English Fullblood will produce *A (American Fullblood) progeny."

If an animal does not conform to the preferred standards and is registered in American Fullblood it must have the letters NC (non-conforming) inserted in front of it's name on the pedigree registration certificate. The reason for NC will be stated on the registration certificate of the non-conforming animal.

All animals classified double A and above must be DNA tested and DNA test record on file in BWCAA office.

Official University Test Records of British White Bulls			
Bull	Birth Weight	365 day Weight	Daily Gain
8	84	1318	4.35
7	75	1203	4.00
2	83	1116	3.75
6	76	1266	3.70
1	78	961	3.66
5	77	1208	3.63
9	73	1169	3.60
15	75	1107	3.60
4	72	1066	3.57
3	78	990	3.43
14	90	1234	3.32

Texas A&M 1994-95 Ranch to Rail North Test included 1555 steers from 142 ranches. The Net Profit from five British White Steers was 26.5% more than the average. Their average age at slaughter was 424 days (14 months) and they were fed 200 days.

Steer #	1478	1485	1486	1487	1490
In Wt.	522	478	594	498	574
Sale Wt.	1118	984	1186	1142	1128
A.D.G.	2.98	2.53	2.96	3.22	2.77
Dress Wt.	718	628	740	758	710
Dress %	64.2	63.8	62.4	66.4	62.9
Grade	Ch	Ch	Sel	Ch	Sel
Shear Tst	7.70	6.72	5.27	7.93	5.65

Performance and Beauty

Whenever British Whites have been placed into competition they have excelled! Several times young British White bulls have been placed on feed test to determine average daily gain. Just recently a young British White bull was in competition with 53 other bulls of different breeds, i.e., Angus, Charolais, Brangus, Parthenais, Shorthorn, Beefmaster, Polled Hereford, Santa Gertrudis and Simbrah made up the lot. At the completion of the 84 day test the British White bull had an average daily gain of 5.65 pounds per day which was the top gaining bull. This was 135% more than the average of all bulls on the test. This is just the latest example of British White bulls excelling on these types of tests.

When purebred or percentage British White steers or heifers are shipped to kill and graded, their performance is quite extraordinary - - (All cattle graded throughout the U.S. will average about 53 to 55% Choice and Prime) which are the preferred grades. British Whites, on the other hand, will consistently grade 90% or higher Choice & Prime. At the same time when graded for tenderness (Warner-Bratzler Shear Force Test), British Whites grade out quite tender. A rare and much desired combination.

An American British White Bull's Semen was purchased by a small group of Australians with

startling results. In one of Australia's most prestigious cattle shows a British White bull was named "Best of All Breeds." This was a bull sired by the imported American semen bred to a purebred British White Australian female. In competition with a large number of bulls and females of all breeds the British White bull was judged the best of them all.

In growth, quality of meat, and showmanship the British White breed will gladly compete and excel.



Double A RS05 and Jeannie Belle
Picture taken April 1995 near Bells, Texas, USA

International Co-operation by Breed Societies.

On the 17th of July 1984 representatives of the three major British White Cattle Societies in the World met informally at the historic village of Fotheringhay in Northhamptonshire, England.

The three organizations were: Host Society, England represented by John Cator; USA, represented by Tom Zimmerman and Australia represented by Kent Keith.

Representatives speakers indicated the breed was gathering increased interest from commercial cattle breeders and expressed confidence in the future expansion of the breed in their respective countries.

Each Society and Association welcomed co-operative ventures between organizations and these are summarized as follows:

1. Encourage the visits of British White Cattle breeders between the three countries. Emphasis being placed on attendances during Show or Sale venues.
 2. Each Society and Association to communicate by way of Newsletters or contact between secretaries on general matters relating to the breed.
 3. To hold international meetings in each country by rotation from time to time.
 4. To exchange information relating to the management of Society or Association cattle recording systems.
 5. Encourage the interchange of creditable bloodlines between countries, the preservation of rare family lines and the continued expansion of The British White Breed.
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Recommended Standards by British White Cattle Society of England.

Character: The BRITISH WHITE is a naturally polled, large and hardy native breed exhibiting the dual characteristics of beef and milking ability.

Colour: Must be white with black or red points, viz., nose, muzzle, pigment round the eyes, ears, teats of cows or rudimentary teats of bulls. Hooves and splash or spots of colour on the front of each fetlock. The skin showing dark pigmentation.

Head: Free from slugs or rudimentary horns. It should be of a fair length from eyes to muzzle, which should be broad. The heads of bulls should be masculine in character and of cows, fine and feminine.

Body Conformation: Animals should be functional and free moving on sound feet, with a long level top line, not rising at the root of the tail, broad and expanding over the loins to hips, pin bones well apart especially in the bulls. The shoulders gently sloping and well set in, the ribs well sprung. The underline should be level. The hindquarters long from hook to pin, buttocks being well fleshed down to the hocks, which when viewed from the back, should be straight, turning neither inwards or outwards.

Udder: Level, well developed but not pendulous, the teats of moderate size, set evenly and pointed to the ground. It is important that the rudimentary teats of bulls should be wide set and well developed.

Skin: Should be fine and handle well.

We give special thanks to Tom Zimmerman of Des Moines, Iowa, for his help in gathering and providing most of this information. 515-225-1136

A considerable amount of material, both published and un-published, has been consulted and reviewed during the writing of this publication. We are sure there is more information left out than included here, but, never the less, we feel it will make interesting reading for you if you have an interest in White Cattle with Black or Red Points.

You may also refer to some of the following for additional information.

Cattle, A Handbook to the Breeds of the World, by Valerie Porter.

Especially recommended reading, but now out of print:

Our Vanishing Farm Animals, by Catherine Paladino.

The Wild White Cattle of Great Britain by The Late REV. JOHN STORER, M.A., Edited by his son JOHN STORER. Published about 1876. If not available at your local library it may be available by special request from your local library to the Southern Methodist University Archives Library, Dallas, TX.

The Wild White Cattle of Great Britain, by John Storer.

The Ancient White Cattle of Britain and their descendants, by G. Kenneth Whitehead.

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The Ancient White Cattle of Britain and their descendants, by G. Kenneth Whitehead.

Farm Animals in the Making of America, by Paul C. Johnson.

May be available by special request from the Dallas Texas Public Library.

The Smithsonian Magazine.

The Chance to Survive, by Lawrence Alderson, In association with **The Rare Breeds Survival Trust**. May be available from American Livestock Breeds, PO Box 477, Pittsboro, NC 27312.

A Publication by “**SEED SAVERS EXCHANGE**,” Decorah, Iowa.

Correspondence from; **American Livestock Breeds, Pittsboro, NC**

Cattle, a Handbook to the Breeds of the World, by Valerie Porter.

Rare Breeds Survival Trust, Lawrence Alderson, Executive Director, England.

Previous Publications of - “White Park Cattle Association of America”

Previous Publications of - “British White Cattle Association of America”

Interviews with various members of each Association.

