

BRITISH FRIESIAN CATTLE

Although records show black and white cattle were present in the UK from the 17th century, the first herd book was established in 1909. The British Friesian as we know it was developed from the 1914 importation, by the Society, of bulls from Holland registered in the FRS herd book for cattle specific to the Friesland area. These bloodlines are still to be found in many of today's pedigree black and white herds.

The British Friesian population grew until, within 80 years, it became the major dairy breed in the UK, before giving way to the more extreme dairy breed, the Holstein.

Currently, there are around 200,000 British Friesians and British Friesian crosses, the breed being numerically the second largest dairy breed in the UK, and with no inbreeding problems.

The British Friesian is less angular than the Holstein, with generally larger areas of black markings. It is smaller in size and so can achieve good feed efficiency. It displays strong rear quarters, sturdy legs and feet and a robust constitution, making it highly suitable as a grazing animal.

British Friesians are bred from a background of proven longevity and excellent fertility. Official evaluation gives an advantage of nine Fertility Index points. Yields vary considerably, averaging about 7,000 kgs, depending on high or low input systems. Heifers generally commence with a more modest yield, and then develop higher mature yields over numerous lactations, with good fat and protein content from home produced feeds.

Health and production traits are transmitted to the progeny and, although the vast majority of bovine pregnancies in the UK are achieved by artificial insemination, the British Friesian bull is in great demand as a 'sweeper' bull or from those farmers with extensive grazing systems where the bull runs with the herd, and there is no reliance on AI. There are also many British Friesian bulls available through AI Companies who now export the semen to sixteen countries across the globe.

The pure British Friesian bull calf is valued for its beefing qualities as a steer or entire, and is suited to all systems of beef production which, together with quality cull cows, make an important contribution to overall profitability.

All pedigree black and white cattle in the UK are registered by Holstein UK in their joint open herd book. A minimum of 87.5% Friesian, qualifies for a separate breed code 20. This allows the extraction of data for type and production, based on the breed average. This also provides valuable data for those who wish to cross breed, recognising the profitable attributes of the British Friesian whilst retaining the value of the black and white cow.

Further information can be found on www.britishfriesian.co.uk