



Breed Standard
New Zealand Highland Cattle Society
June 2011

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1 Introduction

Highland Cattle are a traditional Scottish beef breed. They are a mid-sized animal and well adapted to living in difficult climatic conditions, as experienced in their native environment. Highland Cattle are recognised for their browsing ability and will actively forage to seek food. They can survive on limited or poor quality grazing, but they are also well adapted to be highly productive when feed of reasonable quality is readily available.

The Highland cow has an extremely strong mothering instinct and calves are vigorous at birth. Highland Cattle are considered to be a slow maturing breed. In their home environment females are not bred until 3yrs old to enable full mature size to be obtained. This late start compared to other breeds is compensated for by a very long breeding life and it is not uncommon to have 15-18yr old cows in the breeding herd.

Highland Cattle have been exported to many countries. New Zealanders have established the breed via importation of animals, semen and embryos and by cross breeding programmes using foundation stock of other breeds.

Highland Cattle are a heritage breed with quite distinctive characteristics that set them apart from other cattle. As well as these distinctive characteristics they should also be structurally sound to enable optimum mobility, fertility, longevity and overall productivity as a beef animal.

The NZHCS breed standard is adapted from the Highland breed standard published in Scotland by The Highland Cattle Society on 10th June 1885.

2 The Head

The head must be in proportion to the body, broad between the eyes while short from the eyes to the point of the muzzle. The muzzle must be short, broad and with large distending nostrils.

The jaw should be proportionate when compared with the head. Teeth must meet evenly with the pad.

Eyes should be bright and clear. They can be any colour.

The dossan (forelock or long hair growing from between the horns) must be present. It should be wide, long and thick. It may cover the eyes and be either straight or curly.

3 Ears

The ears should be symmetrical, well-formed and smooth.

Crop ear is considered to be an undesirable trait in Highland Cattle. Males with crop ear are not accepted in to the NZHCS herd book. Females with crop ear are accepted but their pedigree will record the presence of crop ear. Male progeny from "crop eared" cows will not be accepted in to the NZHCS herd book.

4 Horns

Highland Cattle are a horned breed.

Horns in both males and females should be symmetrical and be characteristic of the breed.

In males the horns should be strong but not too heavy. They should come level out of the head, curving slightly forward and may rise slightly towards the points. Any downward angle (or droop) between the head and the start of the curve is undesirable. Horns rising directly upward from the head are also considered undesirable.

In females there are two distinct styles of horns. In both cases the horns are finer than those of a male. They should not curve downwards before rising.

The first style comes out squarer from the head than in the male, they rise sooner and are longer.

The second style come out level with the head have a set-back curve and a very wide sweep.

5 Neck

The neck should be clear, without a dewlap and be of sufficient length to allow for the natural lift of the head. It should form a straight line from the head to the shoulder.

Mature bulls should have a thicker neck and have developed the distinct crest common to males of bovine species, thus exhibiting masculinity.

6 Body and Hindquarters

From the shoulder to the back the top of the animal should be straight with no hollows or lumps. The back should be wide and well rounded. The animal should not narrow over the heart i.e. behind the shoulders nor should the shoulders protrude or be too prominent. The ribs should be well sprung and be both well rounded and deep. The body should be long with the under belly running parallel to the back line.

The thighs should be deep, well developed and be as full as possible. When viewed from the rear, the hindquarters should appear square and the body not be split up to any great height by the legs. When viewed from the side the body should appear rectangular.

The legs should be of moderate length and strong. The bones should be broad, straight and strong. Hooves should be well set, have sufficient width, depth to heel and toes lacking faults. Legs should have a good covering of hair.

Highland Cattle are considered to be a mid-sized breed with mature weights typically in the range of 400-600kg for females and 600-900kg for males

7 Hair and Coat

Highland Cattle have two coats of hair. The outer coat is long and strong and may be straight or slightly wavy. The undercoat is soft and downy. Each coat is renewed separately. In warmer areas much of the coat may be shed to aid temperature regulation. It re-grows once temperatures cool.

Coat colour in must be full and one of the six NZHCS designated colours. All are equally acceptable

Animals with broken colour or "parti colour" are not accepted in to the NZHCS Herdbook as fullblood or purebred registrations.

White colour on the belly from behind the front legs to the udder and/or a pale tail switch are both acceptable in Highland Cattle.

Red	very light reds to very dark rich reds
Yellow	ranges from dark cream to very light reddish colouring
Black	clearly black at 12 months, calves may exhibit other shades at birth
White	obviously white
Dun	silver to all shades of greys and browns
Brindle	black striping evident on face neck and body, more easily seen in summer when outer coat is shed. Second colour may range from reds to yellows.

8 Udder

The udder on females should not be fleshy, coming well forward in line with the body and well up behind. It should have four perpendicular teats well apart and of even and moderate size.

9 Sheath and Scrotum

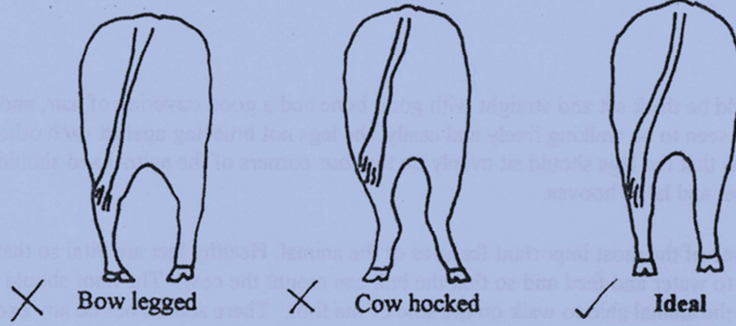
The sheath should not be loose or pendulous. The scrotum should contain two testicles, well let down and of good and even size.

10 General Structural Characteristics

These parameters are common to all cattle.

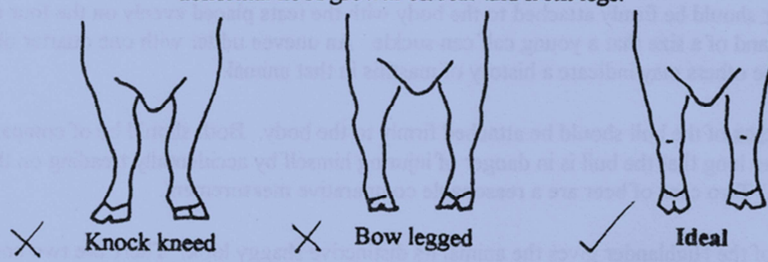
The following visual representation is adapted from several sources as a guide.

LEGS
REAR

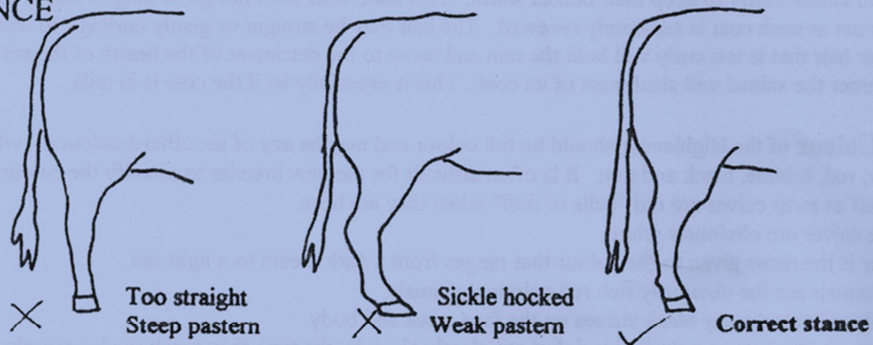


Poor leg structure and position is often indicated by abnormal hoof growth on rear and front legs.

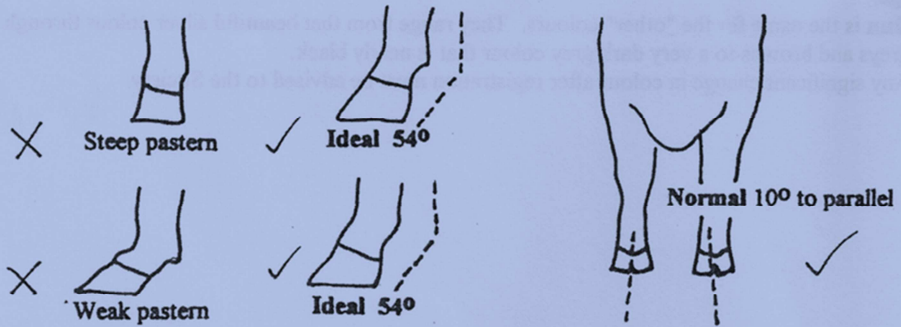
FRONT



STANCE



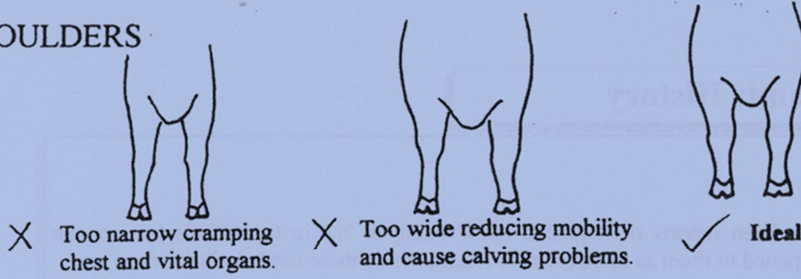
FEET



TOES



SHOULDERS

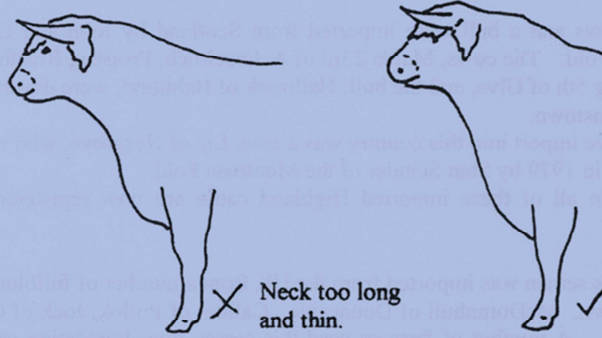


✗ Too narrow cramping chest and vital organs.

✗ Too wide reducing mobility and cause calving problems.

✓ **Ideal**

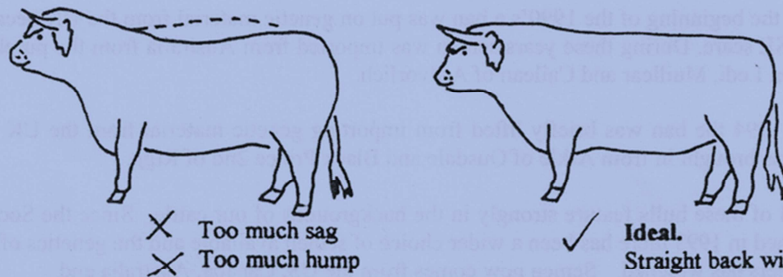
NECK



✗ Neck too long and thin.

✓ **Neck ideal**
ie shortish and thick.

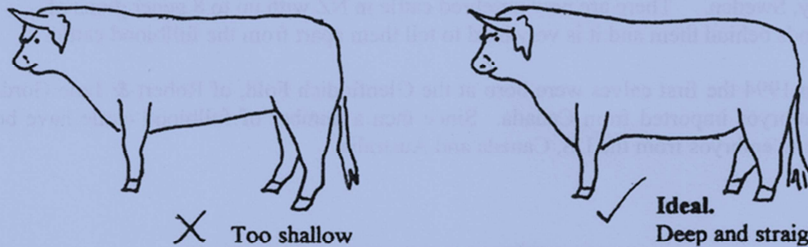
BACK



✗ Too much sag
✗ Too much hump

✓ **Ideal.**
Straight back with good length.

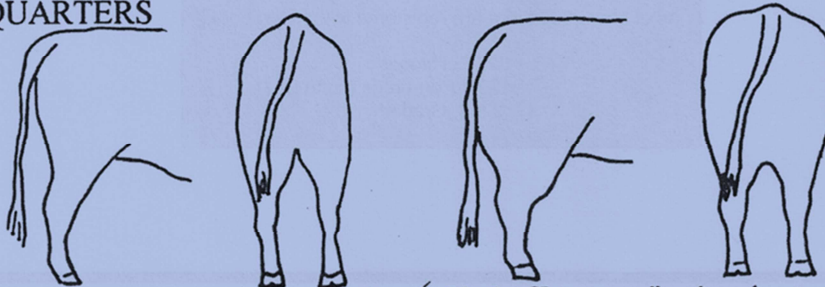
BELLY



✗ Too shallow

✓ **Ideal.**
Deep and straight

HIND QUARTERS



✗ Thin & under-developed muscling

✓ **Ideal.** Heavy muscling down low toward hock.
Good round at rear.