

GALLOWAY

Summary

The Galloway is one of the oldest breeds of cattle in the UK and retains many of its native characteristics. The breed originates from wet, reedy country, and is an excellent choice for fen and marsh sites where it is happy to wade into reed areas to trample and graze.

Hardiness – a very hardy breed, particularly useful for grazing in wet climates and year-round grazing systems.

- *Extremely hardy* - has a thick undercoat with long, sometimes wavy hair overlying it which sheds the rain. Will happily continue grazing through the wettest weather.
- *Dislikes too much heat* - does not shed coat until high summer and as a result can suffer from heat stress, particularly on warm inland sites in the south of the country. The provision of shade is crucial.
- *Prefers to be outdoors year round* - not ideally suited to being housed in winter as the Galloway finds it too hot.

Physical Attributes & Husbandry – a placid, easy to handle breed with good general health.

- *Handling* - generally quiet, placid and easy to handle, although if turned out on a large area for a long period of time, the Galloway may become unapproachable.
- *Fencing* - will break out of single strand electric fencing if there is something tempting on the other side. Its thick hair means that the Galloway does not feel the shock particularly.
- *Medium weight* - average weight of a cow 450-500 kgs.
- *Versatile* - happy to graze on a great range of terrain, including wet and boggy, steep, and rough and uneven. However, requires dry, flat areas for ruminating and resting.
- *Flies & ticks* - Galloways are very thick skinned, so biting insects do not pose a problem.
- *Breeding* - bulls very placid in a herd situation. Cows retain strong mothering instincts for up to three months after the birth of her calf and can be fiercely protective within this time.
- *General health* - Very good. Older cows (over 12+) may be susceptible to arthritis in the pelvis.
- *Distribution in extensive systems* - a herd will move out and spread across a site well.
- *Appearance* - a polled breed. Black and occasionally dun in colour,
- *Distribution* - most herds occur across southern Scotland and the Borders. Also found in the SW of England.



Chris McCarty/English Nature

Grazing Characteristics - an excellent choice for a range of habitats, including fen and marsh sites.

- *Fen vegetation* - happily wades into, tramples and grazes a range of typical species.
- *Rush control* - is variable. See site information table for more details.
- *Grasses* - Grazes Purple-moor grass in spring and early summer when most palatable. Norfolk Reed, the Hair-Grasses and Small-Reeds are all eaten at various times throughout the year.
- *Browsing* - varies from site to site. Trample Bracken readily, especially in winter. See table overleaf for details.

Interaction with the Public – a placid breed which will generally ignore the public and dogs.

- *Temperament* - generally a placid, quiet breed.
- *Reaction to people* - will move away from people it does not know. May mistake young children for dogs which can be a problem if cows have young calves at foot.
- *Reaction to dogs* - not disturbed by the presence of dogs unless young calves are at foot, in which case, a cow may be fiercely aggressive.

Marketability - a breed well-adapted to vegetation on a range of conservation sites, although is likely to need finishing with concentrates.

- *Slow maturing* - historically, Galloways would have been marketed for beef at around 4 years old, so although superbly adapted to rough grazing, very difficult to fatten even on average pasture within the 30 months. Easily fatten in 24 months with good feeding; 36 months if left alone to marter.

Sites where Galloway cattle are in use & contacts

SITE NAME	HABITAT	DETAILS AVAILABLE	CONTACT
Upper Teesdale NNR English Nature	Upland pasture 27 ha	A complex mix of basic and acidic grassland with calcareous flushes which were becoming progressively invaded by rushes. Long history of grazing but Galloways not used since 1970's. Breed re-introduced 1998/9. Grazing May - October. Early indications looking favourable.	Chris McCarty 01833 622374
Woodwalton Fen NNR Cambridgeshire English Nature	Peat fen and Purple Moor-grass grassland. 208 ha	Grazing re-instated in 1966 with English Nature's own stock. Summer grazing; cattle in yards in winter. Sward diversity has improved over past 30 years. Jointed and Hard Rush eaten early in the year and late if forced. Soft Rush eaten only in winter.	Alan Bowley 01487 812363
Hengistbury Head Local Nature Reserve Dorset Bournemouth Borough Council	Varied site with fresh water and brackish marshes, and old tip site.	Marshes grazed in summer months and cattle moved onto higher tip site in winter months. This area was re-seeded some 40 years ago and floristic diversity has improved greatly in this time. Up to 24 animals of varying ages on site. High public usage. People and cattle generally separated. During winter months, the cattle graze down coarse grasses such as Cocksfoot and Soft Brome which have been left uncut and ungrazed all summer. On the wetland areas, have to be pushed quite hard to graze out the rushes and sedges.	Mark Holloway/ Paul Rychnovski 01202 420909
Kingcombe Meadows SSSI Dorset Dorset Wildlife Trust	Varied site with dry grassland over chalk and green-sand and wet rush/fen over fullers earth and gait clay. 174 ha	Galloways used on wetter and scrubby areas. Short-horns and other cross breeds also kept on site but breeds grazed separately. Wildlife Trust has owned site since 1987 but site has a long history of grazing. Purple Moor-grass grazed throughout the year. Soft Rush eaten in autumn and winter, Acute-flowered Rush and Compact Rush taken throughout the year. Hard Rush not eaten. Browse Gorse and Holly especially in the winter. Will push into scrubby areas.	Paul Comer 01300 320573
Dartmoor - South Brent area Common Grazing	Varied site with heath, blanket bog and peat bog.	200 Galloways running over 3000 acres amongst other cattle, sheep and ponies. Outwintered on Moor until 2000 after which it is expected that they will have to be taken off because of ESA restrictions. Browse young Gorse and Whortleberry. Stands of Bracken have been reduced through trampling.	Robert Savery 01364 73245
Brook & Compton Downs NNR Isle of Wight	Chalk grassland. 109 ha	Cattle outwinter on site with additional hay. 25 cows + followers. Galloways have been used on the site for at least 50 years - their hardiness being the main attribute. No young stock finished on the farm. High public use of site with no problems as there is plenty of space for the cattle to retreat to. Have developed resistance to Red-water. Browse on Blackthorn, Hawthorn and some Privet. Ivy is a particular favourite.	Dennis Phillips 01983 740215 Tony Tutton National Trust Longstone Farmhouse, Strawberry Lane Newport, Isle of Wight PO30 4EA
Other contacts:		Galloway Cattle Society	Mr Alex McDonald 01556 502753

References