

HEREFORD

Summary

The Hereford is one of the most numerous breeds in the UK and is widely used for commercial meat production. It preferentially grazes coarse vegetation and browses a range of trees and shrubs. Docile and easy to handle, yet adventurous, adaptable and surefooted, the Hereford is already widely used in conservation grazing.

Hardiness – A hardy, versatile breed.

- *Hardy* - thick skinned and has a coat which becomes very dense in the winter.
- *Suitable for outwintering* - although may need to be provided with some supplementary hay or short feed. Housing this breed *may* cause problems with heat stress if a thick coat develops.
- *Water* - there are indications that the Hereford will travel further to and from a source of water than any other breed. This may be a useful attribute on large sites.
- *Maintains good health on poor forage* - the Hereford thrives on low quality forage, being an excellent converter of roughage to meat.

Physical attributes & Husbandry – a versatile, docile breed, requiring routine husbandry.

- *Adaptable & sure-footed* – able to negotiate and graze steep banks and is also content on sites where there are wet areas.
- *Handling* – a docile breed which is easy to handle.
- *Fencing* – respects electric fencing.
- *Horns* – both polled and horned strains occur.
- *Size* – a medium sized breed, weighing 500-600 kg.
- *Flies and ticks* – no evidence of problems, especially if ear fly tags are used.
- *Breeding* – the Hereford is a good easy calver. Cows are likely to produce calves until 14/15 years of age. Bulls are docile in a herd situation.
- *General health* – very good.
- *Appearance* – has a red body, characteristic white face, white stripe from the neck to the withers and patchy white under parts.



Gary Williams

Grazing characteristics - a useful breed on a wide range of habitats, the Hereford prefers to graze varied unimproved pasture, in preference to an improved ley.

- *Non-fussy* – willing to graze whatever is available, although will tend to select a varied herb rich sward in preference to an improved ley.
- *Grasses* – Purple Moor-grass willingly taken on sites where available.
- *Rushes* – individual site information indicates that rushes are quite well grazed. See table overleaf for more details.
- *Herbs* – some indication of a preference for herb-rich areas, which on some sites has led to noticeable numbers of orchids being consumed. Also appears to graze coarser herbs. See table overleaf for more details.
- *Browsing* – significant browser of a range of species. See details in table overleaf.

Interaction with the Public – a docile breed.

- *Curiosity* – appears to take no particular notice of people crossing a site

Marketability – a traditional and popular meat breed with good marketing potential.

- *Fattening* – one of the easiest breeds of cattle to fatten. Even off unimproved pastures in the summer months, it is easily possible for them to become over fat by 24 months when second head-age payments are due. Purebred Herefords run to fat quicker than cross breeds. The modern Hereford will need more inputs over the winter months to maintain condition and to fatten.
- *Meat quality* - produces a quality carcass.
- *Hereford Beef Scheme* – a branding scheme was started in 1999, putting labelled, pre-packed meat on the shelves in 17 Waitrose stores; with plans to extend. In the space of a year, there has been a trebling of throughput of animals per week.

Sites where Hereford cattle are in use & contacts

SITE NAME	HABITAT	DETAILS AVAILABLE	CONTACT
Buxton Heath SSSI Norfolk Norfolk Wildlife Trust	Dry and wet heath and valley mire.	Grazed June - October since 1998. Herefords and crosses. Preferentially graze mire as it has the sweetest bite. Wade into waters edge and eat emergent vegetation, including Common Reed, thus creating a good ragged edge to the community. Seek out Purple Moor-grass. Rushes taken as other forage decreases. Actively browse Birch.	Melissa Slote 01603 625540
Holt Lowes SSSI Norfolk Norfolk Wildlife Trust	Dry and wet heath, and valley mire.	Grazed June - October since 1999. Hereford and Hereford Cross Cattle seek out Common Reed, creating a good ragged edge to the community; preferentially graze mire area and Purple Moor-grass. Rushes taken as other forage decreases. Actively browse Birch.	Melissa Slote 01603 625540
Ryedale North Yorkshire Ryeland District Council	Valley fen, dominated by Sharp-flowered Rush, Blunt-flowered Rush and Purple Moor-grass.	One particular neglected site grazed summer 1999 after no grazing in recent years. Grazed rushes and Purple Moor-grass well and broke up the thatch effectively but 1 cow lost in seepage typical of the area. Grazing unlikely to continue at present.	Martin Hammond 01653 600666 x327
Salisbury Plain part SSSI Wiltshire	Chalk grassland. Bleak, undulating site with little cover.	25 Traditional Hereford cows (+ followers) moved around the Plain to graze 20 acre blocks within electric fencing. Long history of grazing site but Herefords have only been kept since 1998. Bought as an easier breed to manage than the White Park which are also kept here separately. Herd outwinters, except first year calves that are housed on weaning.	Patricia Holloway 01380 813212
Marcle Hill Herefordshire		Around 8 hectares of the hill grazed year round. Cows outwinter with Rumevite blocks. Steep site used well. David Powells family have kept Herefords for 160 years.	David Powell 01531 660220
Badley Moor SSSI Norfolk Managed by English Nature and grazier	Calcareous valley fen. 40 hectares.	Hereford Crosses. Grazing from 1999 mid June-November after a lapse of 3/4 years, during which time Black Bog-rush and Purple Moor-grass became dominant. These species are eaten by the cattle and they have broken up the litter layer well. Tackled the coarser vegetation, including Meadowsweet, Angelica and Greater Willowherb. Sward diversity is already improving. Animals wade into waters edge and eat emergent vegetation. Use site well. Desirable light poaching across the site.	Andy Millar 01603 620558 Roger Worman 01953 602351
Dersingham Heath NNR , Norfolk English Nature	Acid valley mire, dry heath and mixed conifer/ broadleaved woodland.	Grazing started in 1999, preceded by mechanical clearance. Site is perimeter fenced and cattle have year round access to it all. Old landfill area used for supplementary winter feeding. Around 30 cattle on site of mixed ages. Some Hereford, some Hereford crosses. Young stock will not be fattened on site.	Phil Holms 01485 543044
Ouse Washes Cambridgeshire RSPB	Lowland wet neutral grassland. Much of the site is flooded.	Summer grazing (April-end October) for over 300 years. Site split by drains into washes of various sizes from 6-100 acres. Around 2000 cattle on site including 35 Hereford cows (+ calves), Sussex and Continental Crosses.	Jon Reeves 01354 680212
Other contacts:		Traditional Hereford Breeders Club	Ms Debra Lang 01452 780373
		Rare Breeds Survival Trust	024 7669 6551
		Hereford Cattle Society	Mr D Prothero 01432 272057

References

The Ark, summer 1996 Native Breeds - New Rare Breeds Classification

The Ark, summer 1999 The Traditional Hereford by Edward Hart