

WHITE PARK

Summary

The White Park is the oldest native cattle breed in Britain, and is extremely well adapted to the natural environment in a wide variety of conditions. Distinctively attractive in appearance, with a white coat and black points. It is a tough and thrifty breed, ideal for conservation grazing which also yields beef of high quality.

Hardiness – a hardy, rustic breed, well adapted to a wide range of conditions and management systems.

- *Adapts well to many environments* – originally widespread through Britain and well adapted to diverse conditions ranging from upland rough grazing (Pennines and Scotland) to rich lowland pastures (Devon and East Anglia).
- *Tolerant to a range of weather* – grows a longer protective coat in winter and happily winters outdoors; smooth short coat in summer.
- *Suited to poor grazing* – produces efficiently on rougher grazing and able to over winter on poor coarse forage. Also suited to good grazing but shows a preference for coarser herbage to balance rich grasses.

Physical Attributes & Husbandry – a breed with a long history of domestication and handling.

- *Regional adaptability* – stock on lowland pastures tend to be robust, deep-bodied and short-legged; hill stock are lighter framed and more active.
- *Efficient production* – able to perform efficiently under low-input systems.
- *Handling* – responds well to normal handling and management, due to long history of domestication.
- *Fencing* – contained by ordinary stock fencing or by electric fencing.
- *Health* – vigorous healthy cattle, with great longevity; cows often breed up to 15/16 years of age.
- *Maternal qualities* – easy to calve and good mothers. High fertility and milkiness even on moderate grazing.
- *Size* – upland cows are medium small (450 kg); lowland cows are medium large (600+ kg).



Lawrence Alderson

Grazing Characteristics – thrives on a wide variety of grazing types including poor coarse forage.

- *Grazing ability* – grazes coarse herbage readily, even when richer grasses available. Readily wades into deep water to graze Common Reed.
- *Browsing ability* – determined by grazing regime; increases with reduced availability of grazing.

Interaction with the Public – attractive appearance appeals to public.

- 1 *Reaction to public and dogs* – becomes accustomed to public and dogs in areas of open access, although necessary caution should be exercised when cows have very young calves.
- 2 *Aesthetic appeal* – its distinctive colour pattern appeals to the public.

Marketability – the high quality beef of this breed provides good marketing opportunities in premium markets.

- *Profitability* – the output of premium products from low-input systems can yield good returns.
- *High quality meat* – White Park beef is well marbled but has a low overall fat content; it is of gourmet quality and ideal for specialist niche markets.
- *Established market* – prime meat in great demand through the Rare Breeds Survival Trust's Traditional Breeds Meat Marketing Scheme.

Sites where White Park Cattle are in use & contacts

SITE NAME	HABITAT	DETAILS AVAILABLE	CONTACT
Salisbury Plain Wiltshire	Upland chalk grassland.	Large breeding herd (40 cows) and young stock run on permanent rough grassland throughout the year within twenty acre paddocks. No supplementary feed or forage given to the breeding herd, but the weaned calves are housed in their first winter. Absence of winter-feeding prevents poaching and the sward remains intact. Cows thrive under this regime and calve in spring with strong calves and an abundance of milk. Grazing throughout the year is in ten-acre paddocks in which the cattle are contained by electric fencing.	Patricia Holloway 01380 813212
Wimpole Home Farm Cambridgeshire National Trust	Upper greensand, mainly lowland permanent pasture parkland.	Large breeding herd (25 cows) and young stock mainly run outdoors, although young stock may be winter housed and occasionally breeding stock. Supplementary winter-feed given. This is a National Trust farm with open public access. The cattle are quiet and untroubled although some care needs to be taken when a cow has a very young calf.	Bernard and Shirley Hartshorn 01223 208987
Trough of Bowland Lancashire	Carboniferous limestone uplands.	Small herd run on environmentally sensitive area.	John Weld Blundell 01995 61581
Sussex Weald Sussex	Mixed high Weald and coastal marshland.	Small herd used for habitat management of flooded marshland and re-created reedbeds. Grazing occurs July to November. Good grazers of Common Reed, will wade in deep water and do not (yet!) fall in ditches with very deep water. Excellent at helping maintain diverse wetland habitats.	John Willsher 01797 226374
Field Place West Sussex Private	Heavy Wealden clay. Permanent pasture. Some woodland.	Large breeding herd (59 females) – the Dreadnought Herd. Largest herd in MAFF Beef Assured Scheme, allowing slaughter up to 42 months. Cattle only fed grass, hay and silage. No fertilisers other than own farm manure used on land. Housed in winter to prevent poaching of land although well able to cope with winter outside. Prepared to consider lending breeding females on a sharecropping basis. Several bulls available.	Ken Prichard Jones 01403 269166
Haddans Pits Isle of Wight National Trust	Mesotrophic grassland. 4.1 ha	Three White Park within a small mixed group of rare breeds owned by a grazier. Starting in spring 2001.	Robin Lang 01983 741020
Other contacts:		Rare Breeds Survival Trust	024 7669 6551
		www.whitepark.org.uk	Web pages

References