

A step back in time...

Extracts from the I.M.C.S Minute Book

Formation of the Irish Moiled Cattle Society

At present the Irish Moiled Cattle Society is in the fortunate position in having breeders in all areas of the British Isles. However in 1926 when the society was established most breeders were confined to Northern Ireland with a few members in the Republic of Ireland. With this in mind I believe it is helpful to publish selected extracts of Minutes from Society records relating to the characteristics of the cattle suitable for registration in the newly established herd book.

At a meeting of the Irish Moiled Cattle Fanciers held on 12th January 1926 in the Old Town Hall, Belfast under the Chairmanship of Mr FH MacLean, JP, it was decided to form a society to preserve and grade up this ancient breed of cattle.

The attendance was representatives of the Six Counties. Captain the Rt Hon. H Dixon D.L., M.P was appointed President and Mr John B Morrison, JP Ballydrain and Major W W Dobbin, MBE, Dunmurry were elected Vice-presidents.

Mr John Hill was appointed Treasurer and Captain J Gregg Registrar and Secretary. The following were appointed inspection judges - Mr Thomas Lindsay, Mr W R Cresswell, JP and Captain Gregg, OBE.

Captain Dixon was appointed to act as one of the judges of the breed at the Balmoral Show, where the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society has kindly arranged for the two classes.

What Characteristics were required of cattle for admittance to the Herd Book?

In 1926 the following instructions were given to the inspection judges :

That the Irish Moiled Cattle should be graded into two classes, Viz No 1 and No 2 foundation stock. Both should be naturally hornless and roan, red , grey or spotted in colour. Both grades should be long and deep of the body, with good capacity for rough food, the legs should be short and necks long and lean.

No 1 may be coarser in outline, as it is less crossed with the beef breeds, and should show capacity to give at least 1000 gallons of normal milk per year.

No 2 should be level in outline and more compact than No 1, in fact have the appearance of the Red Poll, but longer and deeper of body. These should show capacity to give at least 800 gallons of standard milk per annum. Bulls should be of the No2 type.

In 1932 the Registrar issued more detailed guidance in recommended points for judging during inspection. "These cattle should be halfway between milk and beef breeding, both in conformation and practical test. They should come halfway in size between the Kerry and the Shorthorn. In conformation, the legs should be short, the sides long and deep and abdomen well sprung, the ribs, rump and croup should be close fitting, and the back and hips not so wide as in the Shorthorn. In other words, the Irish Moil should make a close good carcass of meat with the fat evenly distributed, no surplus fat (laid on as such) as one finds on the Shorthorn.

The neck should be thin and the head and mouth large, the eye prominent and the skin of the body and udder silky to touch.

An Irish Moil may give one the appearance of ruggedness even to the extent of ugliness as compared with most other breeds.

"This can be understood when it is remembered they are designed to live on coarse herbage and in an exposed environment. The approved colours are :- Red or dark roan with a white stripe down the back; white spots may occur on the inside of hocks, on the centre of the hips and between the forelegs but large splashes of white elsewhere on the body are considered as faults. Milk yields should be up to 1000 gallons of 4% milk in 45 weeks."

Note; In judging, the following maximum points have been suggested:-

Colour	33 1/3
Conformation	33 1/3
Potential Milk	33 1/3
	100

Characteristics of Moiled Cattle

A letter written on 17th October 1928 by Mr R Martin who had visited Roslea, Co Fermanagh "to inspect the Irish Moiled cows of the district" is very informative regarding the essential characteristics of the moiled cattle. He commented "They are nice-sized, medium cows, some of them thin, but many in good order"...."Roslea is the worst and poorest belt of country I ever was in, and I believe that the Irish Moiled cattle are the cows for these hills; nothing else except a hare will live and thrive here."

Judging Irish Moiled Bulls

Suggested rules for judging Irish Moiled bulls and for the awarding of Prizes and Premiums at Irish Moiled Cattle Society show and sale held at Allam's Oxford Street, Belfast on March 11th 1927.

"An Irish Moiled bull should have a long deep body and chest, the legs should be short and strong, the head should be coarse, the neck fairly long, and the back and quarters should not be overwide or smooth."

The following plan of marking may be used by the judges:

Body and Chest	(maximum marks)	10
Legs	(maximum marks)	10
Head and Neck	(maximum marks)	10
Back and Quarters	(maximum marks)	10
If Dam has a certified milk yield of 1000 gallons		10
		50

Selection Of Colour and Type Reinforced

Registrar's Report May 1932

After an initial attempt at "rule of thumb methods", they found that, before they could make

any great headway, they must study Mendel's Law and Atavism, as these applied to cattle, so that they would be in a position to collect throwbacks from the existing Irish Moiled stock and so eliminate the results of previous crossings. They therefore selected cattle red in colour with a white stripe down the back and by mating these hitherto uncrossed strains of Irish Moils - that is, West of Ireland cattle with those existing in Down, Antrim and Derry - they got calves which were undoubtedly "throwbacks" to the original Irish cattle. In this way hardiness, as well as correct colouring, is being re-established.

Standardisation of Colour

Standardisation of colour, ie Whiteback...IMCS Committee meeting recommends standardisation of colour of Moiled cattle favouring the Whiteback. Belfast 28th August 1929.

"They had some difficulty during the last few years in explaining to the public that Irish Moils were originally different in colour in various parts of the country. The difficulty had convinced the Committee that they should gradually work towards fixing a colour that was peculiar to Irish cattle only - viz., the white stripe down the back.

By Sam Smiley