

American Kerry Cattle Association, Inc.

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A North American
Registry for
Purebred
Kerry Cattle



Kerry Cattle Breed Description

The Kerry cow is beautiful to behold. Her black coat grows long and luxurious in winter, and short and sleek in summer. She has a slender build, and fine features; she is dainty, but not delicate. Her small hooves and long legs allow her to move with grace and agility, easily navigating any obstacles in her path. Her kind face boasts large, warm eyes that are full of expression, and tapers downwards into a fine black muzzle.

A relatively small cow, the Kerry's shoulder height should not exceed 4 feet, and adult weight ranges from approximately 800-1000lb. She should be even and straight from her withers to her hip, and her narrow rump should have a well-set, long tail. The Kerry cow is very "dairy" in type, and has well-sprung ribs with a deep chest and barrel. Her udder should be round and well attached, with evenly spaced teats. On average, a Kerry cow's production ranges from 3000-3700kg of milk, with 4% butterfat. Kerry milk is notorious for its small fat globules and natural homogenization, making it rich, but easily digestible, and idyllic for making cheese and ice cream. Kerries are reputedly easy-calvers, and can continue to calve well into their teen years.

Kerry bulls exhibit many of the same qualities and features as the cows, albeit with an added masculinity. They are docile, gentle and easily managed by knowledgeable handlers.

While the majority of cows are black, some Kerries are born red, but this variation is not permissible for registration. Small amounts of white are allowed on black cows, so long as the white hairs are retained to the cow's udder, or directly in front of it. White hairs within the tassel are allowed for both cows and bulls. While most herds are dehorned, horns should be well-sprung and white in color, before narrowing into black tips.

In addition to their hardiness, impressive milk yield, and intriguing history, perhaps the most endearing quality of Kerry cattle is their loving personality. They are known to develop strong bonds with their handlers when treated with kindness and respect, and can be extremely affectionate. They are also incredibly intelligent, and can be trained with ease.



Canadian Kerry News



Kerry Cattle Heading West!

Kerries on Ferries

In September 2016, two range Kerry heifers left their home in Saskatchewan to go where no Kerries have gone before – Vancouver Island, British Columbia.

The pair travelled west, across the prairies and into BC's lower mainland, before boarding the ferry and crossing the Strait of Georgia. At midnight on September 9th, they arrived at Alderbrook Grange, a small farm on southern Vancouver Island, dedicated to rare breed conservation. They will be bred via artificial insemination this year, and the first Kerry calves to be born on the island are eagerly anticipated.

Kerries from the Prairies

Just months after the arrival of these first Kerries into BC, the pacific province saw another influx of the breed, this time, to a ranch in the interior. In December 2016, a small herd of five Kerry cows and heifers left Black Diamond, Alberta, to begin life in the west. Within the span of four months, BC's Kerry population has rocketed from zero to seven – a significant number considering that current registrations of all of Canada's Kerries indicate that breed numbers are dwindling in the twenties.

US Kerry News



New Kerry Owners in Pennsylvania

Corey and Brenda Picard of BCBC Farm, Knobsville Road, Frenchville, PA are the new owners of Buckhill LTRK Mona.

New Kerry Bull Collected for AI

Mountain Shade P Fort (CAN 282) was collected in October 2016. Semen is available from Buck Hill Farms. Contact by email at jessracin@comcast.net. P Fort is A2/A2. Tested Negative for Johnes, BVD, BLV, Brucellosis, TB and Trich. P Fort is 46 ½ inches at the hip, 850 lbs and is 4 years old (DOB April 18, 2013). Tested pure for Black, does not carry Red. Very docile and gentle.

Two Additional Bulls for AI Collection

Hickory Haze KF Kieran (CAN 287) and Buckhill PP JT's Midnight Ryder (CAN 276) will be collected in late 2017.

Strolling of the Heifers, Brattleboro, Vermont

Two Kerry Heifers made their debut in 2016 at Vermont's world famous Strolling of the Heifers parade in Brattleboro, VT. The Kerry's will return this year Saturday, June 3rd, 2017 in promotion of the breed. The Kerry's were well received last year, a refreshing reflection on Heritage cattle amongst the dominate black and white Holsteins. For more info please visit: strollingoftheheifers.com.



Kerry News From Ireland



Irish Kerry Cattle Society Herd Book

The ***Kerry Cattle Society, LTD*** in Ireland has approved the listing of American Kerry Cattle Association Registrations in The Kerry Cattle Herd Book. This reconnection with the Irish Herd Books is welcome news to North American breeders of pure bred Kerry Cattle. With the Sire and Dam DNA parentage confirmation requirements of the AKCA, the pure bred status of the North American Herd will be maintained without question.

100th Anniversary

The Kerry Cattle Society, LTD turns 100 years old in 2017. At the December 7th meeting of the Society suggestions were made to have a Society Centenary dinner held at the Lake Hotel in Killarney, IE. One suggestion was the possibility of serving Kerry Pink Veal at the event. Discussions have begun here about what the AKCA can do to help the Society celebrate this milestone. More information will follow in the next Journal.

AI Bull Collected for AKCA

5207 - Muckcross Admiral (IE-19-16364-7-1098) has been collected for export to the United States. 250 straws will be sent to the US. This will be the first import of Irish semen in many years and will greatly help with preventing inbreeding depression in the North American herd. More information will be forthcoming on the availability of this semen. Robert Reilly of Latham, NY was instrumental in accomplishing this effort. It took 1.5 years to meet the import testing and regulatory requirements for this accomplishment.



Kerry Cattle

Dr. Sponenberg Analysis, 2016

As a general backdrop, the genetic variation in the breed is pretty modest. The bad news is it needs to be managed carefully. The good news is that inclusion of “found” or “recovered” animals should be pretty easy, as it should be easily possible to spot crossbred cattle.

This analysis is pretty basic. One analysis can be done on pedigrees. This is basically just cataloging the production of sires and dams. based on genotypes, rare types. Bulls with relatively high contributions include the Kelmscott bulls, LTR Kody, Mountain Shade Ebon, Winterset Serendipity Sam.

I don't know how to balance these any better, frankly, because in all breeds there will be some breeding programs that are larger and more active, and others less active and smaller. The pitfall to avoid is having several sons of a single bull, though. This is especially true of semen sires, as this can rapidly overtake the breed.

Older semen that is available, such as Russell Basil, should help. It might be possible to have him genotyped from a used straw of semen, if such is around somewhere. I am not sure I'd bother wasting a new straw on this. Having him mated to a daughter is a wise step, hoping for a bull! The daughter and the calf should definitely be typed. The color is likely to be controversial, although it will be many generations before a red one is born. The important detail is that these colors ARE lurking there, and need to be acceptable.

It is tough to know what to recommend on this. Some of this depends of philosophy. My bias would be to focus a bit on the rare genotypes to make sure they do not disappear. We may know more as yet more animals are genotyped, because rare alleles are all the more likely in isolated pockets of the breed. Those isolated pockets can then be important reservoirs of genetic diversity.

An alternative view is that the diversity is not typical, and should be avoided. While that does have some validity, I fear that it may lead to inbreeding depression if breeders are not careful. What this means is that above all, some attention to type, productivity, and hardiness needs to be included in any final decisions.

It is possible to go through the list of cattle, and to pull out certain points on a few of them. It looks as though Bergen Farms animals may be a source of diversity. Bridges most certainly is a source of diversity, with each of the two animals from that farm having rare variants.

Cathryn Bevin has the A1 milk type. I realize the current direction is A2A2 milk, but I do think it is important to keep some A1 reserve within the breed. This could be through frozen semen, if anyone is brave enough. Too many times breeds have gone forward with eliminating a variant that was not the contemporary favorite, only to find out later that there were compelling reasons to keep that variant alive and well at least somewhere in the breed.



Heamour animals include several with rare variants.
LTR Moya has three rare variants.

Mountain Shade has several rare variant, especially Sable.
Newbridge Gerard has several rare variants. This is good, especially in an imported bull. The key here is to not use him too much, but the good news is that he does bring much-needed diversity to the breed. Any further imports should also try to be from animals with unusual pedigrees, and typed to see if the genotype is typical or somehow unique.

North Plain Bonita is the only one with one variant of INRA 23

As to how to use Muckcross Admiral. His maternal grandsire is Newbridge Gerard, and this implies that widespread use of these two could swamp the breed that is here in the USA. I'm not sure how to limit use, but informing the breeders of the importance of home-bred bulls is important. And, saving semen from them whenever possible. Mountain Shade Teddy is an example of a bull with semen frozen, and that has some rare variants.



The American Agriculturalist

July 1868

The Kerry breed of cattle offer another example, like those of the Channel Islands, of a variety which has been formed by the urgent necessities of a people. County Kerry is a rude, rough, poor district in the southwestern extremity of Ireland. As an agricultural region it is primitive, isolated, and, in part, mountainous and sterile. Pushing out into the ocean, it not only forms a headland or breakwater against the warm Gulf Stream, but presents a bold front to all the storms of the Atlantic. This gives me to that abundant moisture which adapts the country to the growth of peat; and peat bogs alternate with rocky pastures, upon neither of which could ordinary cattle pick up a tolerable living—while at the same time, the climate is milder than that of any other portion of the British Islands. The poor people needed cows which would sustain themselves upon scanty fare, and give an abundance, of good milk, and in the course of time this has been brought about. The Kerrys are very small, hardy, rugged cattle, not notable for symmetry, or any beauty but that of a picturesque roughness; they yield an abundance of excellent milk, and make, properly fattened, very good beef.

Our engraving is a truthful representation of three animals of this breed, the property of Andrew H. Green, Esq., of this city, and now on exhibition at the Central Park. The stock was imported in 1864, the bull having just taken the prize of the Royal Agricultural society of England. The herds of that mountainous district having been searched by an experienced breeder, with the object of securing the very best types of the breed. The importation consisted of the bull "Paddy," the cow "Margaret," (both shown in the engraving), another cow "Honora," and a bull calf dropped on the passage. The animals were photographed by Fonlayne, and the pictures copied upon wood. We believe that they present the characteristics of the breed as well as any can. The only other importations of Kerrys that we are aware of are those made by Mr. Sanford Howard in the years 1850 and 1860 for Mr. A. W. Austin, of West Roxbury. The descendants of these, now in possession of Mr. D. F. Appleton, Ipswich, Mass., some 12 or 15 head, have increased notably in size, mid improved in form, but retain all their good milking qualities, ability to sustain themselves on coarse and scanty fare, and to hold out very long in giving milk. There are a few other cows in this country, owned by different parties, but all, so far as we can learn, traceable to one of the three importations named; and wherever tested, we believe the Kerry cow fully sustains her character as an extraordinary milker, considering her size and the quantity of food she requires, and demonstrates her right to the title, "the poor man's cow." A standard treatise on cattle says of the Kerrys: "They are found on the mountains and rude parts of the country, in almost every district. They are small, light, active, and wild. The head is small, although there are exceptions to this in various parts, and so numerous, indeed, are those exceptions, that, some describe the native Irish cattle as having thick heads and necks; the horns are short compared with the other breed, all of them fine, some of them rather upright, and frequently, after projecting forward, then turning backward. Although somewhat deficient in the hind quarters, they are high-boned, and wide over the hips, yet the bone generally is not heavy. The hair is coarse and long; in some places they are black, in others brindled; and in others black or brindled, with white faces. Some are fine in the bone, and finer in the neck, with a good eye, and sharp muzzle, and great activity. They are exceedingly hardy; they live through the 1x111101', and sometimes fatten on their native mountains and moors; and when removed to a belter climate and soil, they fatten with all the rapidity of the aboriginal cattle of the Highlands and Wales. They are generally very good milkers, and many of them are excellent in this respect," Youatt says: "The Kerry is truly a poor man's Cow, living everywhere, hardy, yielding, for her size, abundance of milk of a good quality, and fattening rapidly when required." Milburn observes "She is a treasure to the cottage farmer; so hardy that she will live where other cattle starve. She is a perfect machine for converting the coarsest cattle food into rich and nutritious milk and butter." Prof. Low remarks; "The peculiar value of the Kerry breed is the adaptation of the females to the purposes of the dairy. In milking properties, the Kerry cow, taking size into account, is equal or superior to any in the British Islands. It is the large quantity of milk yielded by an animal so small which renders the Kerry cow so generally valued by the cottagers and smaller tenants of Ireland. She is frequently termed 'the poor man's cow,' and she merits this appellation by her capacity of subsisting on such fare as he can supply." We can hardly give these statements from distinguished British writers upon cattle without expressing our own belief that the quantity and quality of the food have just as much to do with the milk a Kerry will yield as with a cow of any good milch breed—however true it may be that she will make more and better milk than another cow on a very inferior quality of fodder, and on hard, rough, short pasturage.



Registry Update

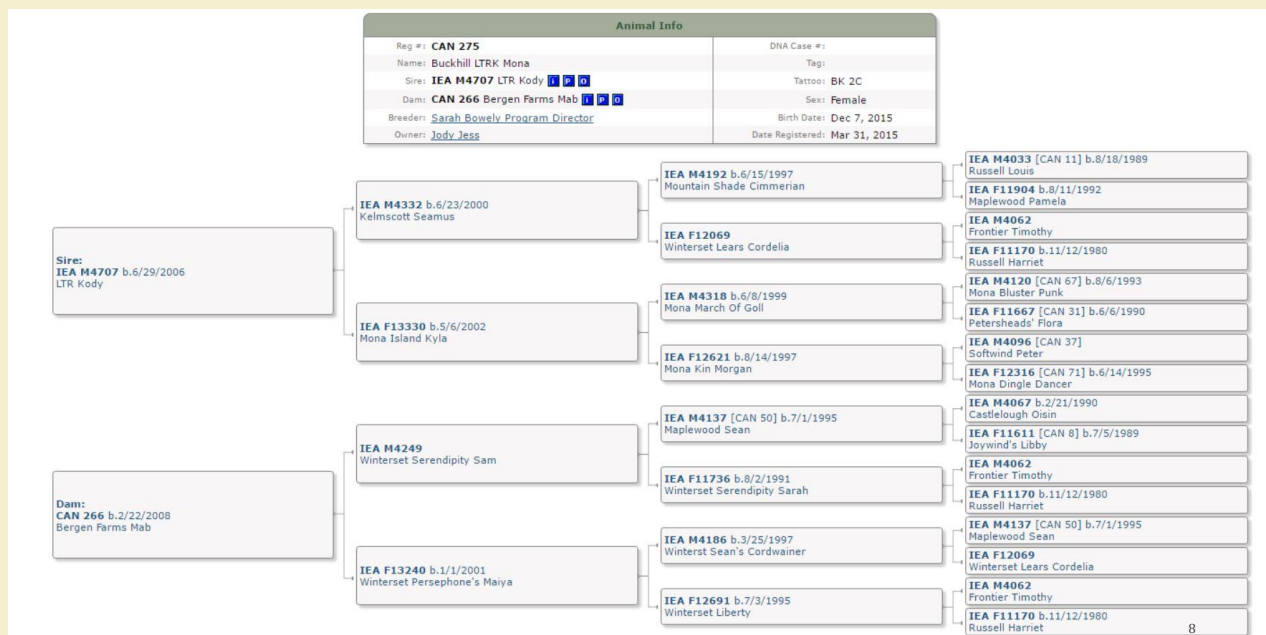
The American Kerry Cattle Association Registry development is complete. 560 North American entries have been made and the searchable data base will be operational online shortly. The AKCA Website, which will link to the online Registry, is in the final stages of development. The launch of the Website and Online Registry is slightly delayed from the original date of January 1, 2017. We hope to have the site up and fully operational by mid March, 2017. Below is a sample of an animals registry card and pedigree.

Quick Select:	Reg #	Name	Tattoo	Breeder Name	Owner Name

CAN 275 Buckhill LTRK Mona

Animal Information	Edit	Certificate
Reg #: CAN 275		
Name: Buckhill LTRK Mona		
DNA Case #:		
Tag:		
Tattoo: BK 2C		
Sex: Female		
Birth Date: Dec 7, 2015		
Birth Type:		
AI: Yes		
ET: No		
Parentage DNA: Sire and Dam Qualify		
A2 Milk: A2/A2		
Sire: IEA M4707 LTR Kody		
Dam: CAN 266 Bergen Farms Mab		
Breeder: ID #: 140 Sarah Bowely Program Director SVF - Swiss Village Foundation Newport, RI		
Current Owner: ID #: 101 Jody Jess Buckhill - Buck Hill Kerry Westminster, MA		
Date Registered: Mar 31, 2015		
Notes:		
Record Created: Jan 1, 2017		
Record Last Modified: Jan 1, 2017		
Transfer Records	Add New Transfer	
No Transfer Records Found		

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OPINION

The Red Factor.

There are a significant number of Kerry that carry red in the North American herd. The incidence of red seems more prevalent in the Canadian herd than those in the US. This red gene traces back to the bulls Castlough Oisin and Newbridge Gerard. The occurrence of red Kerry births also occasionally occurs in the Irish herd. The Irish Herd Book classifies the birth of a red Kerry in a separate sub category but does not grant purebred status to that animal. Only black Kerry Cattle are eligible for full Irish Herd Book status. Currently the American Kerry Cattle Association mirrors the Irish Kerry Cattle Societies position in that only black animals can be registered as purebred. The ACKA does not currently have a sub category for red animals.

Red Kerry cattle will eventually be born in the North American herd as the genetic factor is there for this to occur. A red bull was born in Canada in 2014. With this in mind the inevitable question will be asked why red animals are not accepted for registration when there is a demonstrative history of the occurrence of red in the breed. Without a doubt the red Kerry has curb appeal and there may well be a good market for these animals. Are we losing some future genetic variable that hindsight may prove the elimination of red was shortsighted?

I will make the case for the elimination of red in the North American Herd, or, at the very most mirror the Irish Societies protocol. The following is my opinion and assessment and is not an official statement of policy of the American Kerry Cattle Association.

All pure breeds have identifying phenotype characteristics. The Hereford sports a combination of red and white coat color and is easily identifiable, even to folks whom are not well versed in cattle breeds. The same is true for the Holstein. These cattle consistently breed true to color pattern. Scottish Highland cattle do not breed to a single true color and have variations of black, brown, dun, brindle, white and red. However, in the case of the Highland cattle the phenotype is so distinct that these cattle cannot be confused with any other breed.

In the case of Kerry Cattle the red variant does not have a unique phenotype. In fact, a red Kerry looks very much like another North American cattle breed, the American Milking Devon. The American Milking Devon could pass easily for a red Kerry and has very similar physical features. Particular similarities include the white horns with black tips. The length and curvature of the horn is strikingly Kerry like. By introducing a red variant of the Kerry Cow a very real possibility exists that both breeds would suffer. The demand for red, heritage homestead cows is a limited market. By extending into a market that already exists we may be inadvertently putting pressure on another rare heritage breed.

By maintaining the black color on the Kerry cow as the only acceptable variant the breed maintains a unique and singular identity. Solid black, white horns, an upward sweep with black tips, true dairy phenotype and bred for dairy production. This keeps in line with the breed's historical purpose. Very little confusion exists between the Kerry breed and other similar dairy or dual purpose heritage breeds. By accepting a red variant the Kerries identity becomes somewhat fluid, less defined.

Larry Bruffee
President, AKCA

Update – The Board of Directors voted on March 5, 2017 to follow the protocols of the Irish Societies position on Red animals. This will keep the AKCA in alignment with the IKCS.

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OPINION

Upgrade Program

The question has recently arisen several times if the American Kerry Cattle Association will have an upgrading program. At this time there is no upgrade or appendix program for breeding pure bred Kerry Cattle. The Irish Kerry Cattle Society has no program for upgrading. An upgrading program for a rare Heritage breed like the Kerry is normally engaged as a last resort to save a population at a critical risk stage of extinction. Another reason would be for the purpose of introducing some desirable trait into an established breed, generally for commercial improvements.

I believe that the Kerry is nowhere near the critical population numbers to warrant going outside the breed to ensure its survival. What is amazing to me is that this breed has gone through such a tight bottle neck genetically and still maintains remarkable vigor and health. There is no immediate indication that there are dangerous levels of expressed inbreeding depression. When line breeding animals, selection is critical to remove undesirable genetic defects and characteristics while advancing the line and locking in desirable traits.

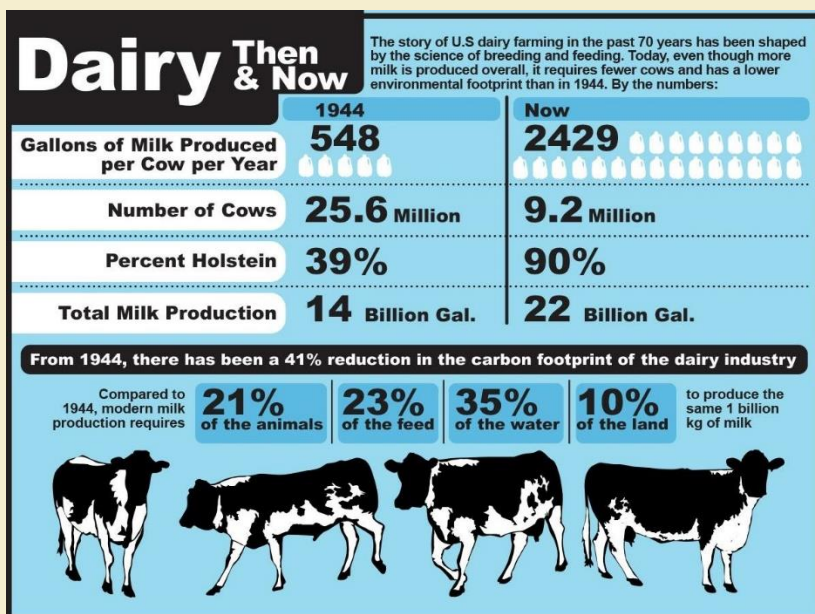
With the small numbers of Kerries in North America and the tight breeding that has occurred I find it remarkable that the Kerry has shown little evidence of negative inbreeding effects. With the continued collection of native bulls for AI, smart breeding decisions and the occasional import of semen from Ireland the North American Kerry Herd should be able to advance and maintain itself without the use of an upgrading program.

Larry Bruffee

President, AKCA



From the Web:



Interesting to note that in 1944 a Kerry Cow would have been considered a very acceptable dairy cow by the Gallons of Milk Produced per Cow per Year statistic.

The Kerry is believed to be the world's first true dairy cow, with an average annual milk production, from a good cow, of 7,700 to 9,900 pounds per year. These cattle are slow-growing but long-lived, with cows often having calves with ease at 15 years of age or older. Considered to be one of the best "family cows," they are well known for producing good amounts of milk on little forage.

The globules of butterfat in Kerry milk are much smaller than those found in other breeds, thus making it easier to digest. As a result it is ideal for feeding to babies, invalids and others who find it hard to take fat. This emphasizes the breed as eminently suitable for fresh milk, cheese and yogurt production.

The breed is probably descended from the Celtic Shorthorn, brought to Ireland as early as 2000 BC.



Bergen Farms Mab, a purebred Kerry at Buckhill Farms, Westminster, Massachusetts.

Kerry were imported to the United States beginning in 1818 and the breed prospered through the early 20th century. By the 1930's, the Kerry breed had disappeared from North America soil. Believed that in the United States they were mixed in among the more popular breed of cattle such as Dexter cattle herds and bred with Dexter bulls. Then in the mid 1970's Dr. Russell Scott imported eleven Kerry cattle into Canada, those imported Kerry are the foundation Kerry stock of the Kerry population today in Canada and United States.

Since the importation of the eleven Kerry into Canada, there has been importation of semen from Castlelough Oisín into Canada and Newbridge Gerard into the United States. There was a recent discovery that embryo's were imported into USA but none of the progeny were registered. The most recent import into the United States was eight Kerry heifers from Rare Breeds Canada in 2016. In late 2016 a pure bred bull, Muckcross Admiral, was collected in Ireland for export to the USA. This new semen should be available sometime in the spring of 2017.