

AHCA Adopts a Breed Standard

by Jennifer Lewis, Education Committee

Adopting a breed standard has been a goal for the Education Committee for some time. I want to thank Tom McConnell for the dubious pleasure of putting me in charge of creating one. I felt woefully inadequate to the task. However, Highland people are a helpful community and I didn't have to do it myself. Mark Johnson, Jacob Larson and Skyler Anderson all made essential and important contributions; I was just the facilitator. As the proposed standard went through the process of approval, committee members and directors all had input. AHCA is a committee driven organization and, while sometimes that seems cumbersome, everyone has input and various perspectives are carefully considered.

From the beginning, committee members agreed that we should stay true to the Highland Cattle Society standard. It is, after all, where preservation of the breed started. Who would better know what a Highland animal should look like than the association in the country where they have lived for centuries? However, we also wanted to craft something that fit the needs of breeders in the USA. We hope breeders use this standard as a starting point when assessing cattle.

The Education Committee recognizes that breeders might be looking for more guidance in using a standard. In the coming months there will be educational material on the AHCA website to address that need. It's something committee members are very excited about so watch for that announcement!

The Scottish Highland breed of cattle is a type of beef cattle originating in the Highlands and Islands of Western Scotland. It's a breed known for its majestic appearance, flowing hair and long horns. It is hardy, long lived and can thrive in harsh environments. The cows should be attentive to their young and have excellent maternal traits.

Head:

The head should be grand and picturesque. The animal's head should be proportionate to the body of the animal, broad between the eyes, while short from eyes to the end of a broad muzzle. The dossan should be wide, long and full. The eyes should be lively and bright.

Horns:

In bulls, the horns should be strong and come level out of the head, while curving slightly forward. In the cow, the horns are generally longer and taller with an acceptable configuration displaying a backset curve and wide sweep.

Neck and Shoulders:

The neck should be clear and without excess dewlap. In cows, it should form a straight line from the head to the shoulder. In bulls, the neck should have a distinct crest which transitions gracefully to the root of the horns. Shoulders should lay smoothly into the neck and be well muscled in proportion to the given sex.

Body, Back and Hind:

From behind the shoulder, the animal's back should be straight and broad, with the ribs springing out, well rounded and deep. Breadth across the hips should be very wide and level in the female and the rear quarters should be well developed and square from the hips backwards for both sexes. In profile, the distance from the hook to pin should be long and close to level.

Legs:

The legs, both the fore and hind, should be short and powerful, with strong, broad, straight bones, good musculing and well feathered with hair. The hoof should be proportionate to body mass with a deep heel. All four legs should be set wide apart with adequate joint flexion. When the animal is in motion they should display coordination, efficiency and grace.

Hair:

In the ideal, the hair should be long, gracefully wavy, prolific and able to withstand exposure to harsh conditions. In hot summer months, the ability to shed a winter coat is an advantage.

Color:

The accepted colors in Highlands are red, yellow, white, brindle, black, dun and silver.

