

ABERDEEN-ANGUS CATTLE SOCIETY



Breed Assessment

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HOW DO YOU ASSESS YOUR PEDIGREE CATTLE AT HOME?



Assessing your own cattle is a difficult but necessary task.

If you are selling at an auction or indeed selling to a private customer it is important that you assess your animals critically so that only the best are presented for sale.

Having bred and reared these animals you understandably get attached to them. To some breeders it is a bit like a beauty parade of your own family and you don't need to imagine the difficulties that could bring.

However your cattle are all individuals and should be judged on their merits.

Impartial and careful selection has to be the governing principles in any assessment process. If you sell bad cattle then there are two disappointed people namely the buyer who will quickly realise what he has got and secondly the seller who has just lost the prospect of a long term customer.

Repeat business is the definition of quality. If your customers keep coming back then you must be doing something right.

The following pages outline some of the steps to be followed when assessing or judging your cattle at home. Experience will make the task easier and perhaps you should invite a fellow breeder to lend a hand. For the less experienced, two heads are better than one.

ABERDEEN-ANGUS BULLS



View the bull in a natural stance and appraise from a good distance at various angles. This gives you an overall impression of how the bull conforms to breed type.

The Aberdeen Angus bull should be robust and powerful in stature with a bright and alert “look at me attitude” and well put together showing a strong firm stance with a leg in each corner carrying a volume carcass filling to the eye.



Set on a medium well defined powerful crest and neck the head should be masculine and strong with a clearly defined poll free of scurs. Ears should complement the head size carried high and being readily mobile and well covered with hair. Eyes should be bright clear and alert set well apart and showing reasonable length to nostril within a broad moist muzzle and wide correct jaw.



Shoulders smooth and neatly fitted into the body with the top of the shoulders being moderately wide, flat and firm fleshed carrying through a long level top line to a well set tail head between wide plates. The top line should support a good spring of rib showing width, capacity and volume from the backbone highlighting a full long firm loin. From the plates a wide firm fleshed first thigh following down through a deep well rounded second thigh to a well filled deep flank and level underline parallel to the top line. A light clean brisket and clean dewlap should complete the visual carcass appraisal. Skin should show a degree of elasticity allowing for growth with the coat being soft, abundant and a silky shine to the eye.

Remember to check mouth for being over or undershot (teeth not meeting the pad).



correct and on the pad

over shot

under shot

Pull testicles down firmly into the lower part of the scrotum with one hand, squeezing and pulling down. The thumb and forefingers should be located on the side of the scrotum, not between the testicles. The minimum circumference at the widest part of the scrotum should be:

30 cms at 12 months of age.

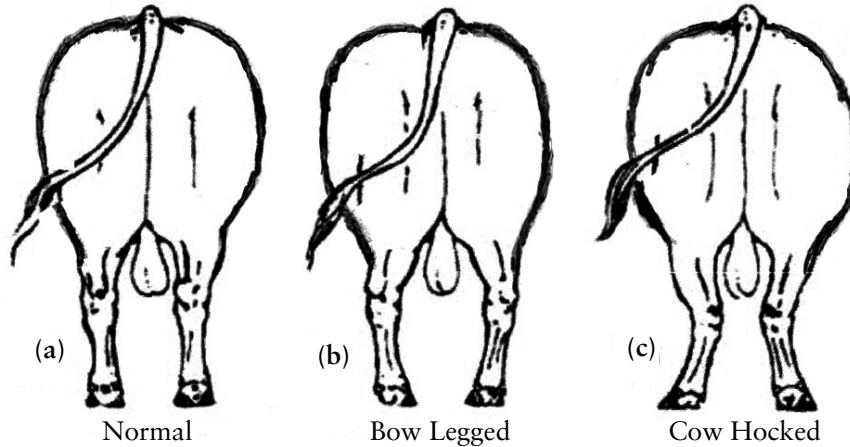
32 cms at 18 months of age.

34 cms at 24 months of age.

Remember in cold weather bulls retract their testicles, making it difficult to take accurate measurements.



Fig. 1 – Bull Rear Leg Placement



The working frame carried by back legs showing a natural width of stance (*see Fig. 1*) slightly curved forward from the hock (*see Fig. 2*).

Fig. 2 – Bull Hock Structure

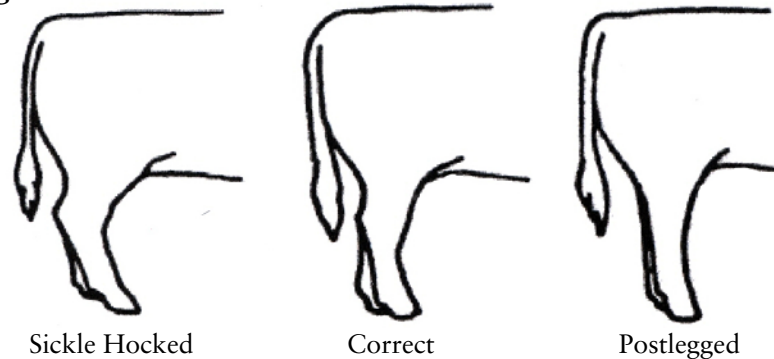
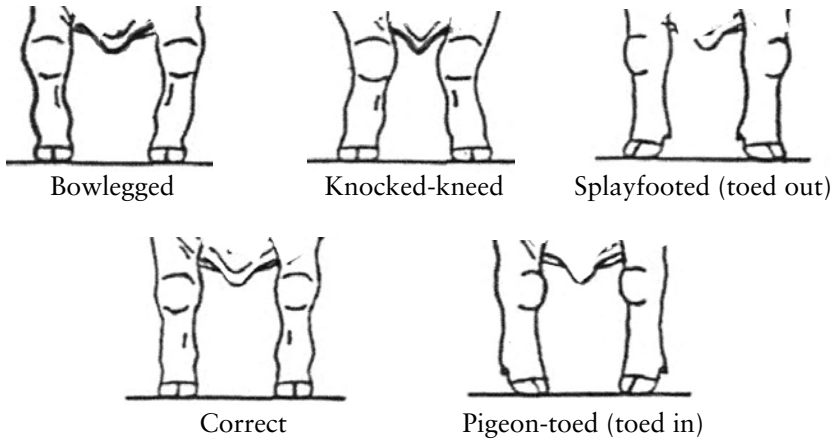


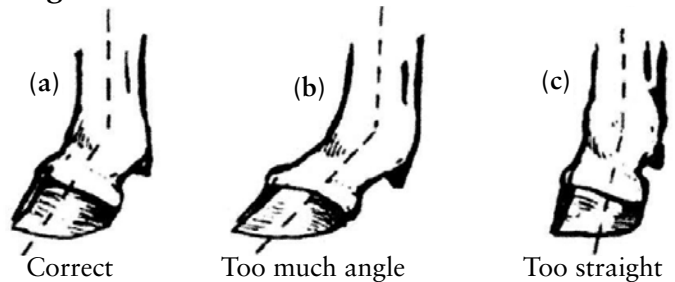
Fig. 3 – Bull Foreleg Placement



Forelegs correctly placed showing a natural stance and adequate length of the cannon bone (see Fig. 3).

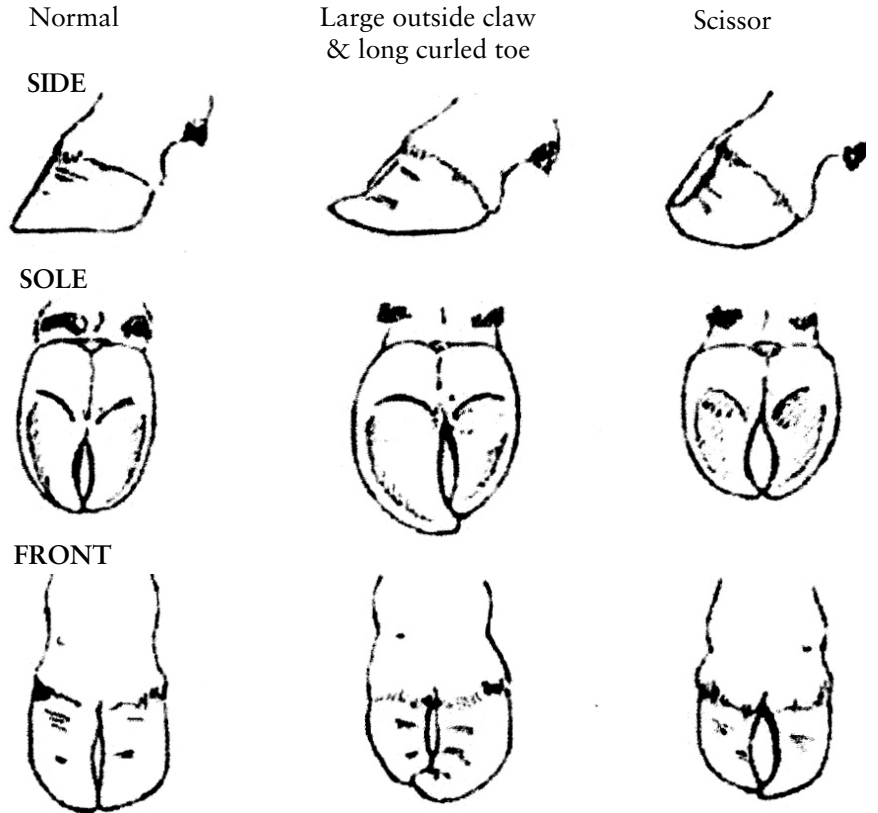
Leg bones generally should be broad, clean and flat with feet of a sound proportionate size, open, level and giving the appearance of being up on his toes (see Fig. 4).

Fig. 4 – Foot and Pastern Structure



Walk the bull on the halter in a straight line, locomotion should be definite and confident with full straight strides when viewed from front, side and the rear showing natural foot placement.

Fig. 5 – Examples of Foot Types

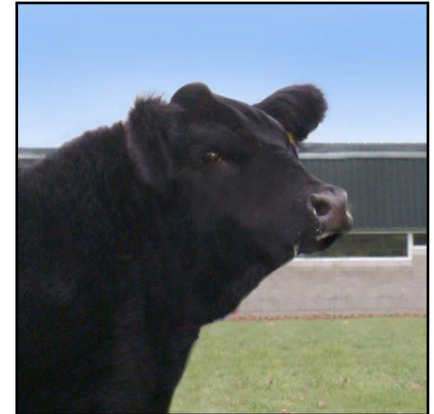


ABERDEEN-ANGUS FEMALES



The Aberdeen Angus female should be proud, elegant and pleasing to the eye. Alert and showing vigour, she should be well balanced and put together with a strong firm stance, a leg in each corner carrying a strong skeletal structure and working capacity. Skin should show a degree of elasticity allowing for growth and fleshing with the coat being soft and abundant.

Set on a medium length well defined elegant crest and neck the head should be feminine and refined with a clearly defined complete poll free of scurs. Ears should compliment the head size carried high and being readily mobile and well covered with hair. Eyes should be bright, clear and alert set well apart showing slightly more length to nostril than a male within a broad moist muzzle and wide correct jaw.





Shoulders smooth and neatly fitted into the body with the top of the shoulders being moderately wide, flat and firm fleshed carrying through a long level top line. The tail slightly raised between wide hook bones with good length through the plates creating a wide pelvic area for ease of calving. The top line should support a good spring of rib showing width, volume and angular working capacity. From the plates a natural width of firm fleshed first thigh following down through a deep second thigh to a level flank with good udder attachment and medium sized square teat

placement. The underline should continue through parallel to the top line. A light clean brisket and dewlap should complete the working frame appraisal.

Remember to check mouth for being over or under shot (teeth not meeting the pad).



correct and on the pad



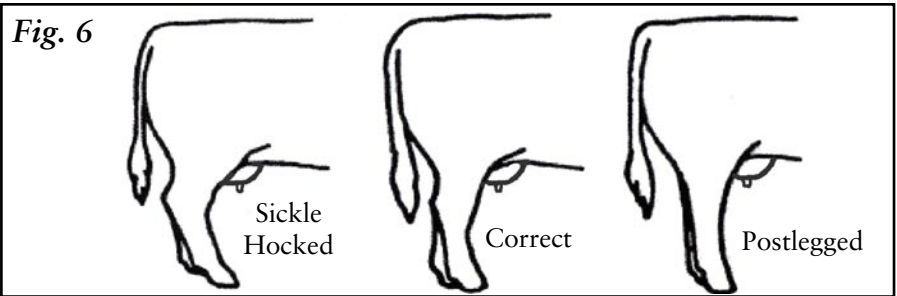
over shot



under shot

Inspect for any abnormalities in the udder.



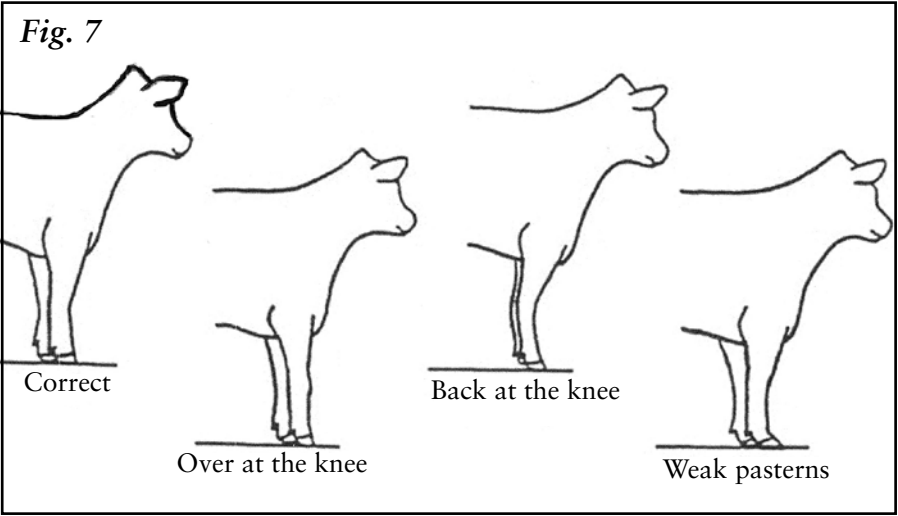


The working frame carried by back legs showing a natural width of stance slightly curved forward from the hock.

Forelegs correctly placed showing a natural stance and adequate length of the canon bone (see Fig. 7).

Leg bones generally broad clean and flat with feet of a sound proportionate size, open, level and up on her toes.

Locomotion definite and confident with full straight strides showing natural foot placement.





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