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Irish Moiled Breed Standard

The Cow



An excellent example of an Irish Moiled cow

1st Edition

Preface

This document was put together by Nigel Edwards MVB MRCVS who conducted a discussion group with approximately 25 breeders present from all parts of the UK and the Republic of Ireland which was held immediately after an Irish Moiled judging workshop day on the 7th June 2011. The judging workshop day was held at the well renowned 'Glassdrummond' Herd at Ballynahinch, Co. Down with the aim of forming a judging panel for the breed and also to review the Breed Standard. A range of classes covering all ages of cattle were presented for the panel to judge and reach a unanimous decision. An overall champion was also chosen. (Cow on front cover)

This document is the final verdict from the discussion group and it includes the opinions of all the breeders that were present. The opinions of all the breeders were agreed on quite well, with only some controversy arising on the amount of emphasis placed on each characteristic. The 'fairest' consensus of the amount of emphasis placed on each characteristic is used as the official values. As further judging workshops and further discussions take place, the Irish Moiled Society may in the future change any part of this document and an updated edition will be published accordingly.

It is the intention of the Irish Moiled Society in the near future to introduce a 'classification scoring system' for individual animals. The classification scoring system when in place will allow breeders to have access to official data for individual animals. The classification system will be carried out by a visual assessment of individual animals and a score out of 100 assigned to each animal. This document will be used as a guideline for the visual assessment and can be easily modified into a points system.

Characteristics to be considered when judging an Irish Moiled Cow

Six main characteristics should be considered when judging an Irish Moiled cow;

- 1) Colour
- 2) Head and Neck
- 3) Udder
- 4) Feet and Legs
- 5) Fleshing Ability
- 6) Frame

The 'official' amount of emphasis placed on each characteristic was also decided on.

The 6 main characteristics can be categorised into 3 groups which are shown below along with the amount of emphasis for each group

1. Features Unique to the Breed (25%)

This includes the 'Colour' and the 'Head and Neck' of the animal which are important in making the breed **distinct from other breeds**

2. Working Parts (35%)

This includes the 'Udder' and the 'Feet and Legs' of the animal, which are important for **milk production**.

3. Body (40%)

This includes the 'Frame' and the 'Fleshing Ability' of the animal, which are important for **meat production**.

1. Colour (12.5%)

The preferred colour (1) of an Irish Moiled is predominately (70%-80%) a solid rich red colour, with a broad white stripe the full length of the back ('finching' of the spine), white under-parts, white tail, white udder and has also a white 'patch' on each thigh area. The ears should be solid red and the face should be mottled (flecked) (2) with a solid red ring around the muzzle and at least a little red around the eyes. The muzzle should be ideally grey or otherwise bronze. This typical colour is the most preferred colour, however the breed can range from nearly all white with red ears (3) to almost completely red (4). Variations also exist in the tone of red which can range from a dark red (5) to a light red (6) to a roan (7) to a brindle (8) colour. The muzzle as well as grey (9) or bronze (10) can also be pink (11) in colour.



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10



11

2. Head and Neck (12.5%)

Dome

The Irish Moiled is a naturally polled breed and a dome (point) on the top of the head is very desirable. Historically this is the reason why the breed got its name...Moiled in the Gaelic language...'Maol' means 'mound'. The dome shaped head is not as commonly seen in the breed today but it needs to be encouraged to not lose this feature. A dome shaped head as well as looking good also indicates that the animal is less likely to carry the horned gene. There should be no trace of horns or scurs.



Eyes

Prominent eyes with a docile expression are a feature of the 'old' breed. Prominent eyes should **not** be encouraged as they are susceptible to 'pink' eye. The genetic defect which can exist known as 'Poppy Eyes' (a 'rolling' of the eyes with some of the white of each eye showing) with a non-docile expression (Photo to left) is very undesirable and should not be encouraged. **Care needs to be taken when selecting bulls in order to eliminate this trait in the breed.**



Face

The shape of the face found in the 'old' breed is a unique feature of the breed. It is of a 'rectangular' shape (12) as opposed to a 'triangular' shape (13) found in many other breeds. The face is long with two thirds of the face extending below the eye-level. The nostril area is wide relative to the upper nasal area which in turn is considerably narrow when compared to other breeds. Sometimes a 'dish' is found in the nasal area just below the eye level (14).

Neck

The neck should not be too short in length. It should be deep with some thickness. The neck should blend well in to the shoulders.



12



13



14

3. Udder (17.5%)

Milking Ability and Udder Texture

The milking ability is determined by the angularity of the shoulder and the growth rate of the calf 'at foot' rather than the size of the udder. Good milking ability is most definitely desirable. A nice 'silky', thin skinned feel to the udder is a sign of good milking ability.

Teat length and Placement

Traditionally the teats were long in the breed as the cows were hand-milked however the teats need to be of medium length to allow ease of suckling by the calf. Due to the breed having a superior milking ability, quarters are easily lost due to the lack of calves suckling, so ease of suckling is paramount in the breed. Teat placement should only be an issue if calves have trouble suckling.

Supernumerary Teats

They are undesirable as they can result in mastitis, however, they can be easily corrected by 'snipping' off at a young age.

Udder Support and Depth

A good strong medial ligament is desirable holding the udder not lower than the level of the hocks. As the breed has a high longevity this is important as the udder 'drops' as the cow gets older. A good front and hind attachment is also important.

Udder Balance

A well balanced udder is desirable. Each quarter should be evenly sized. Sometimes the front two quarters are poorer at milk production than the back two quarters which causes an apparent 'tilt' of the udder...this is undesirable.

A good example of a 'Moile' udder



Rear-view



Side-view

4. Legs and feet (17.5%)

Length

A medium length of leg is desirable.

Bone

Medium/strong strength of bone is desirable for 'robustness', especially if cross breeding, however, if too strong of bone is encouraged then calving difficulties could arise in the breed.

Feet

Hooves may be white, dark grey or brown in colour.

Locomotion

It is important that the cow has correct locomotion. The cow should move freely with no signs of lameness. Also from a rear view the hocks should not be touching as the cow walks.

Stance

This includes the 'correctness' of both the hind and front legs in the 'standing' animal. The front legs should stand wide apart with the toes pointing straight ahead. The hind legs from a side on view should neither be sickled (17) or straight (15) at the hocks but in-between (16). There should be a steep foot angle. Also from a rear-view the hocks should be pointing straight back.



15



16



17

5. Fleshing Ability (10%)

The Irish Moiled is a dual-purpose breed and hence well fleshed cows (with a good milking ability) are preferred to cows that don't carry flesh...they are easier to keep and better for meat production. However, cows with good milking ability that carry less flesh are preferred to cows that carry a lot of flesh that have a poor milking ability. A 'clean' fleshed animal is preferred to an animal that has 'bubbles/puffs' of fat around the tail head region and fat around the brisket region.

6. Frame (30%)

Capacity/Size

Stature/Height

An Irish Moiled is a medium sized dual-purpose cow that is hardy and easy to keep. The height of a mature cow should ideally be in the range of 125 - 135cms (49.5 – 54.5 inches) at the shoulder.

All cows should be in proportion.

Depth

A deep bodied cow with a good spring of rib is preferred to have maximum capacity to store forage which will be converted to milk/meat. This is important in rough moorland pasture where the forage is of poor quality and a high volume is needed for conversion into production.

Width

A good pelvic width (width between the pin bones and/or hook bones) is desirable for good calving ability. Good thoracic width (width between the front legs) is important for food intake.

Length

An average length of cow is preferred. If too long, cows can develop arthritis of the spinal column especially as the Irish Moiled breed has a high longevity.

Shape (mainly concentrates on the rump)

Top-line

The top-line should be level. At the shoulders an average angularity is preferred... the shoulder should not be too angular (as in dairy type cows) however it should have some angularity as a sign the cow can produce milk.

Tail setting

A high proportion of Irish Moiled cattle have a high tail setting



which is an undesirable feature and it should **not** be encouraged in the breed.

Particular attention should be paid to this when selecting a bull to try and eliminate this trait in the breed.

Rump slope

Rump slope is the slope between the hook and pin bone looking from a side view. Some Irish Moiled cattle tend to have a rather low rump slope but it should be ideally level or a little sloped. A high rump slope should not be encouraged due to reproductive problems, for example; retained placenta.

Thigh Shape

From a side on view the thigh muscle (the area from the pin bone to the top of the hind leg) should be well developed and should ideally be square (90 degrees) to the top-line (15). A lot of Irish Moiled cattle have a 'sloping away' thigh muscle (16) forming an angle of approximately 70 degrees to the top-line, however, the closer the angle to 90 degrees the better. Continental breeds, for example the Limousin, talk about the development of the 2nd thigh muscle. However, the Irish Moiled breed traditionally is a non-muscular breed and such a trait of high muscularity should not be encouraged to maintain the breeds 'ease of calving' ability.



15



16

Gallery of cows





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Irish Moiled Breed Standard

The Bull



An excellent example of an Irish Moiled Bull

Characteristics to be considered when judging an Irish Moiled Bull

1. **Colour**
2. **Head and Neck**
3. **Male Reproductive Parts**
4. **Feet and Legs**
5. **Fleshing Ability**
6. **Frame**

The characteristics to be considered are the same as the cow except that the characteristic udder is replaced by the male reproductive parts.

The amount of emphasis on each characteristic

1. Colour	(15%)	
2. Head	(10%)	25%
3. Male Reproductive Parts	(17.5%)	
4. Feet and Legs	(17.5%)	35%
5. Fleshing Ability	(10%)	
6. Frame	(30%)	40%

There is slightly more emphasis placed on the characteristic colour in the bull than in the cow.

1. Colour (15%)

Irish Moiled Bulls are preferred to be of the typical colour, which is predominately a rich red colour with a broad white stripe the full length of the back (i.e. from the top of the head to the tail), has white under-parts, and has a white tail. The face should be mottled in colour with a solid red ring around the muzzle and have at least a little red around the eyes. The muzzle itself should be ideally grey or otherwise bronze in colour.

2. Head and Neck (10%)

An Irish Moiled bull should have a non-feminine head. It should be of medium length and have a wide skull region which should be connected to the main body by a prominent neck that is heavily muscled. It is of particular importance that the bull has correct eyes. **The eyes should have a docile expression and should not be prominent in any way in order to eliminate the Poppy Eye defect in the breed.**

3. Male Reproductive Parts (17.5%)

This includes the scrotum sac, testicles, penis and sheath. Two testicles should be present of an even size in the scrotum sac. The scrotum sac should be free of skin thickness/hardness. The larger the testicles the better, as the size of the testicles are directly related to fertility. This is of particular importance in the Irish Moiled due to the breed having on average a high 'in-breeding co-efficient' which leads to a decreased sperm count and therefore decreased fertility. Also recent studies have shown that bulls with larger testicles produce daughters that have better fertility. Sexually mature bulls (over 2 years old) should have a minimum testicle circumference of 28cms (11 inches) however the circumference should ideally measure 32cms (12.5 inches) or more. At rest the penis should retract fully into the sheath. The sheath should be free of swelling and there should be no penile defects present.

4. Legs and Feet (17.5%)

Length

A short/medium length leg is desirable in a bull.

Bone

Medium/strong strength of bone is desirable for 'robustness' especially if cross breeding, however, if too strong of bone is encouraged then calving difficulties could occur in the breed.

Feet

Hooves may be white, dark grey or brown in colour.

Locomotion

It is important that the bull has correct locomotion. The bull should move freely with no signs of lameness. Also, when looking from behind the hocks should not be touching as the bull walks.

Stance

This takes into account the 'correctness' of both the hind and front legs in the 'standing' animal. The front legs should stand wide apart with the toes pointing straight ahead. The hind legs from a side on view should not be either sickled or straight at the hock but in-between. There should be a steep foot angle. Also from a rear-view the hocks should be pointing straight back.

5. Fleshing Ability (10%)

Well fleshed bulls are preferred to bulls that don't carry flesh...they are easier to keep and better for meat production. A 'clean' fleshed animal is preferred. Male calves should possess good growth rates to potentially end up in a steer beef finishing unit.

6) Frame (30%)

□ **Capacity/Size**

The Irish Moiled is regarded as a medium sized dual-purpose breed. The average height of a mature (over 3 years old) bull is approximately 135cms (54.5 inches) at the shoulder. Sufficient height is of particular importance when used to cross with other cattle breeds to produce commercial suckler cows, which in turn could be crossed with a terminal sire. Irish Moiled bulls should be long, wide and deep bodied. Bulls should have a good chest width but of particular importance is a wide rump.

□ **Shape (mainly concentrates on the rump)** **Top-line and Tail setting**

The top-line should be level. A high proportion of Irish Moiled cattle have a high tail setting but this is an undesirable feature and it should **not** be encouraged in the breed. **Particular attention should be paid to this in the bull to eliminate this trait in the breed.**

Rump slope

Rump slope is the slope between the hook and pin bone looking from a side view. Some Irish Moiled cattle tend to have a rather low rump slope but it should be ideally level or a little sloped

Thigh Shape

From a side on view the thigh muscle (the area from the pin bone to the top of the hind leg) should be well developed and should ideally be square (90 degrees) to the top-line. A lot of Irish Moiled cattle have a 'sloping away' thigh muscle forming an angle of approximately 70 degrees to the top-line, however, the closer the angle to 90 degrees the better.

Gallery of Bulls





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The Irish Moiled Cattle Society reserves the right to amend the Breed Standard and publish further editions to help develop and improve the breed. The intention of the Society is to further detail the Breed Standard in the future by including for example; the average weight and range in weight of mature cows and bulls. This can be achieved with input from its members and breeders, therefore if anyone has any queries, suggestions or data to contribute that is relevant to the development of the breed please contact;

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Visit and leave a comment on the Society website;

www.irishmoiledcattlesociety.com

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The Irish Moiled
is a medium-sized,
dual purpose,
easy to keep breed.



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