



Droimeann Cattle

An Droimfhionn Donn Dáilis

A dhroimeann donn dáilis, a shíoda na mbó, cá ngabhann tú san oíche is cá mbíonn tú sa ló ? Bíonn mise ar na coillte is mo bhuachaill i m' chomhair agus d'fhág sé siúd mise ag sileadh na ndeor. Níl fearann, níl tíos agam, níl fionta ná ceol, níl flatha i m' choimhdeacht, níl saoithe ná sló Ach ag síoról an uisce go minic sa ló agus beathuisce agus fíon ag mo naimhde ar bord. Dá bhfaighinnse cead aighnis, nó radharc ar an gcoróin Sasanaigh a leidhbfinn mar a leidhbfinn seanabhróg Trí chnocaibh is trí ailtibh, is trí draighneach lá ceo agus siú mar a shaorfainn mo dhroimeann donn óg.

The Droimeann Donn Dáilis

O droimeann donn dáilis, O flower of the lea, Where are you by nighttime, where are you by day? 'I'm confined to the woodlands, my minder in tow, and it's there that he's left me, in tears, lying low. I'm bereft of a homestead, land, music and wine, attendants and princes are no longer mine, I've nothing but water to fill my



poor cup, While on whiskey and wine my foes gaily sup. Could I get access to, or sight of that crew, I'd dispose of the Sasanach like a battered old shoe.' Then thro' hills and thro' bogs, and thro' places of thorn, Is how I will guide you, my young Droimeann Donn.

The above poem used the old Irish cattle breed as a device for lamenting the state of Ireland in penal times. Apart from this poem and a certain amount of publicity generated by a long lived droimeann cow named "Big

Bertha” who became something of a bovine celebrity in the 1980’s, most people will scarcely have heard of the breed which by the turn of the century was critically



endangered, being scarce even in the last stronghold of the breed in South Kerry. With a view to saving the breed from extinction a number of breeders and enthusiasts began to meet up and with the assistance of the dept. of agriculture, Weathebys, the ICBF and Teagasc, good strides have been taken in the preservation of the breed in recent years.

The Droimeann Cattle Society

The society was founded on 5th November 2015 and the first AGM was held on 11th September 2016 in The Firgrove Hotel, Mitchelstown, attended by a number of breeders and non-breeders interested in the preservation of the breed. Full membership is open to breeders in possession of at least one pedigree female



recognised by the society as pure. Associate membership is open to those who do not have any cattle but are interested in the breed and feel that they may have a role in breed preservation or are just interested in the breed. The following method statement was adopted at the meeting;

To promote the preservation of the Droimeann breed of cattle with the aim of maintaining a viable population of purebred animals to preserve their genes as a genetic resource, while at the same time doing all that is necessary to promote the commercial attributes of the breed.

The society was formally established after several years of meetings and following on from breeders collecting cattle with droimeann characteristics with a view to establishing a breeding programme. Previous attempts by breeders to establish the breed on a solid foundation failed due to a combination of official indifference and genetic science not being as advanced as it has since become. However, in



recent years, due to a greater appreciation of the benefits of genetic biodiversity as well as advances in genetic testing, the preservation of the breed has become possible.

Large scale genetic testing was first undertaken in 2013 and has proceeded apace since 2015. Livestock are tested, for purity and ancestry. Inbreeding coefficient can be determined by utilising the services of the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (I.C.B.F.). This allows breeders to make the optimal mating decisions for purity of progeny while avoiding the dangers of inbreeding.

Agri Environmental Schemes

The society hopes that the latest agri-environmental scheme run by DAFM, the ACRES scheme which provides financial supports to breeders of registered Droimeann stock to build up the numbers to a point where we can have sufficient throughput of produce for a viable producer's organisation to provide continuity of supply of high quality beef to potential customers.

Intangible Cultural Heritage

Droimeann Cattle are recognised as part of the intangible cultural heritage of the island of Ireland and the Droimeann Cattle Society is responsible for the safeguarding and promotion of the breed. More Information can be found at the following link.

<https://nationalinventoryich.tcagsm.gov.ie/native-irish-cattle-breeding/>

Breed Recognition and Herd Book establishment



In November 2016 the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine wrote to inform the society that the dept. was willing to recognise the breed and allow the society to open and maintain a herd book subject to certain conditions being met. These included genetic

testing of all cattle entered into the herd book and the prior approval by the dept. of the herd book rules adopted by the society.

Following an inspection and review of the society's records and procedures in April 2018 the society was formally allowed to establish a herd book. The registrars of the society work closely with the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation in validating recorded ancestry through examining the results of genetic testing.

Pedigree certificates are only issued once the results of genetic tests have been received by the society.

There is currently a breeding up programme in place with five categories of livestock, pure animals as well as categories A,B,C and D. The breed code DN was assigned to the breed and all cattle with proven droimeann ancestry as well as all calves born into the herd have this code on their official records.

In January 2020, following a submission from the society to the Department of Agriculture, and based on historical references to droimeann cattle being recorded in Ireland from ancient times, the breed was granted indigenous status.



Droimeann is an Anglicisation of the word Droim Fhionn which can be translated as white backed. While the classic colour associated with droimeann cattle is a speckled or mottled black and white cow with a white stripe running the length of the back, a variety of colours are present in the breed, plain black, white or red as well as black and white or red and white and also some blue animals.



Traits associated with droimeann cattle are good maternal qualities, and very good fertility with heifers being fertile from about five months of age and cows frequently back in calf within seven or eight weeks of giving birth. They are a hardy breed, often out-Wintered by farmers and can subsist on land that would be unsuited to continental cattle. They are long living and while they were traditionally a dairy breed they also perform well as suckler cows as

they have plenty of milk to rear a calf and are known for ease of calving. Cross bred to continental cattle, they produce very impressive calves.

Droimeann cattle in modern farming systems

Of the cattle currently recognised by the society about half of them are on organic farms, both beef and dairy farms and they perform well in an organic system. Most of the cattle are suckled but suckler farmers participating in the Beef data Genomics Programme (BDGP) have various traits measured such as milkiness and this has the advantage of farmers milking droimeanns to choose stock bulls with

this trait. Their hardiness and ability to thrive on even poor quality pasture negates the need to supplement their diet with concentrates.



The society had an official launch of the herd book at Ballyvollane House in Co. Cork on 22nd August 2018. Ballyvollane is where the “Bertha’s Revenge” small batch gin is distilled, named in honour of the most famous droimeann cow of all so it was a fitting place to celebrate the achievement of the society reaching this milestone. A wide variety of individuals and organisations were invited and amongst the attendees were representatives of various conservation schemes and we are hoping to build on these links to involve the breed conservation grazing schemes and we are in communication with The

National Parks and Wildlife Service in this regard

AI Bulls



The Droimeann Cattle Society is currently working on making Pedigree Droimeann Bulls available to its members and other customers. The first Droimeann Bull to enter Commercial AI will be hopefully available towards end of July through

Progressive Genetics in Ireland. The Society is also in the process of adding a

further 2 bulls to AI by the end of the year. Bulls have been selected and are currently undergoing the necessary testing protocols. All bulls should be fully exportable. Please keep an eye on the society's website for updates.

Society Contacts

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www.droimeanncattlesociety.com

The Droimeann Cattle Society maintain active social media accounts on Facebook, X and Instagram. Please like and leave a comment!

Many thanks to Tom who is the Vice Chairman of the Droimeann Cattle Society for this very interesting article on one of our fellow Irish Cattle breeds.

