

Judging Blue Cattle

Most of what we accept for conformation is the same with all beef breeds. Well set legs at the four corners, not too straight or cow hocked, not set too far behind the hips. Good, strong feet, not turned out or in. Strong top line, deep ribbed, clean fronted without excess leather and exhibiting a proper amount of either femininity or masculinity. Mobility is important, an animal with good flexibility and ease of movement. We want animals that can travel and stay sound out in pastures where they work.

Here are some traits that might be different with the conformation of Blues. First, a thinner hide is desirable. They are usually lighter boned than on some breeds. This is in part due to Blues goal for higher yielding cattle. A long sloped hip with higher tail set is also acceptable. This is partially due to our extra muscling and has been argued by some to increased calving ease by opening up the calving canal. Nature seems to have selected for a sloped hip if we look at deer and elk.

The main difference is on the Blue's emphasis on muscle and yield. One of the first differences is circles. With many breeds the terms straight, flat and square are common. Blue's muscle is always round and to add more muscle and yield we try to stack more muscle on the sides of the animal. If standing in front or behind the animal, it is desirable to see circles. When looking at the hips, they should be rounded to express the extra muscle that is stacked on the sides of the hips. The ribs will also be rounded. The shoulders also should be well muscled and rounded with extra muscle stacked on the sides. The loin eye is thought to be a strong determinant of muscle, so the top should be long and thick. It can round above the backbone so that if you cup your hand and put your fingers on the backbone, the loin will fill your hand. The loin eye should stay thick all the way until it disappears between the shoulder blades. Another indication of muscle is the budging muscle at the top of the hip. When viewed from the side, the round should show good muscle definition and the muscle should fill out even the bottom of the round, a circle.

Bulls must be functional breeders. It seems that high muscle has a tendency to cause smaller testicles. So slightly smaller testicles can be expected but must still have enough size to be productive.

With many breeds judging is only visual, with Blues it should be hands on.