

Herefords in Germany

In the end of the seventies the first Hereford cattle were imported into Germany. Herefords appeared to be a good alternative to the domestic cattle. Traditionally cattle in Germany were bred for the dairy and beef production. However over the years the emphasis of breeding went more and more to the dairy production. The Herefords were ideal for the German grassland. With introduction of the milk quota in the EU more and more grassland became uninteresting for dairy farming due to being too difficult to reach or being too damp. As a result the amount of suckler cows increased. So that in 2007 there have been about 669.000 suckler-cows –pure and cross bred. At the moment there are 63.300 bulls and cows registered pedigree animals. The Hereford breed takes up 3,1% of this number and amounts 1.960 animals. The estimated portion of cattle from Hereford origin of the total German suckler cows is about 10 000.

To make Herefords more popular for the German market two steps need to be taken. On the one hand more animals must get into performance testing in order to press the breeding forward and to be able to provide the best breeding cattle to customer. On the other hand the benefits of Hereford thoroughbreds such as easy handling and calving as well as motherliness needed to be pointed out in order to get a higher market share in the cross breed and dairy farming.

The German Hereford Society was founded in 1991 and with its 80 members it is working to further the Hereford breed in Germany. The structure of the individual farms is varied. The farms in West Germany are mainly run on a part time basis with around 20 to 25 animals. In Eastern Germany the situation is the reverse with farmers running their farms full time. The capacity here lies on average with circa 100 cows (animals).

Most Hereford breeders in Germany work with herd sires. Only few use A.I. on selected cows (or even the whole herd) with sperm from top of the range bulls. The use of A.I. bulls such as Remital Director, Circle-D Standard Time, Remital Guideline, Klondike 61 Y 394 B, Huth Enhancer 2D, Pretty Boy, Mega Mark, Ferrari 4A put a stamp on those herds. These bulls improved the German herds with speed and success.

The last couple of years have been good years for German Hereford breeders. Over 150 animals were sold to Switzerland, Latvia and France. A development which we are very proud of.

One particular project to further establish the Hereford breed in Germany is the heifer project. The aim of this venture, starting in April, is to bring the best heifers from various herds and a corresponding bull together in order to reflect the individual development under similar conditions. The basic prerequisite for the project and the breeders is a high health status similar to a quarantine.

This project was started for various reasons:

1. To give potential buyers the opportunity to view first class animals from different herds in order to compare and hopefully purchase at the centralized autumn auction
2. For smaller farms to bring their top class heifers to the project to be served and taken back in autumn, thereby bringing new blood into their herds.

The heifer project was founded in 2007 and has been a resounding success so far. Last year 30 animals were brought together, 11 animals went back in calf to their original farms. 19 heifers in calf were put up for auction and sold. The project is continuing this year with 33 animals and the auction on the 4.10.2008. Also on 4.10.2008, to culminate the project, we have as final event a federal bull championship.



Another highlight in 2008 is the Novembers' Eurotier in Hannover where the German Hereford Society as an individual will take part for the first time. Not only that, but we are very happy about the prospect of sharing the stand with the British contingent this year.

Our aim for the future is that the Hereford breed continues to be successfully presented in order to attract more interest for this excellent breed.

Carsten Schmidt