

The Canadian Holstein

Holstein cows first arrived in Canada in 1881. The most recent importation was from Holland – ancestral home of the breed – in 1905. Foundation cattle were selected for their large size and excellent milking qualities, and Canadian breeders have since worked to improve these characteristics. The result is a large cow normally weighing about 680 kg (1 500 lb) in milking condition and capable of heavy production.

A mature bull should weigh approximately 1 045 kg (2 300 lb) and many reach 1 360 kg (3 000 lb).

Canadian breeders have placed particular emphasis on the development of udders and Canadian Holsteins are now noted for the shape, quality and attachment of the udder. The aim has been to develop a capacious udder that is not too deep and thus less subject to injury.

So successful have Canadian breeders been that 88 percent of all production records certified in Canada are now Holsteins. Other countries have been quick to take advantage of Canadian foundation animals and breeding stock has been sold to over 70 countries. Progeny from elite sires are in worldwide demand.

All current Canadian records for milk production are held by Holsteins. This milk-producing ability has made them the most popular choice of breeders who supply the Canadian milk market. The 1984 national average for all cows on the official testing program is 6 842 kg (15 052 lb) milk and 257 kg (565 lb) butterfat, i.e. 3.76 percent in 305 days in twice-daily milking. The average protein is 3.21 percent.

The size and vigour of the breed have made it increasingly popular in dairy beef production. Rapid daily gain has made Holstein bull calves economical in veal production. Holstein steers have also been finding their way into beef feedlots in recent years.

