

# ABERDEEN ANGUS

## Summary

Widespread and popular for commercial purposes, the Aberdeen Angus may have great potential for expanded use within conservation situations. A hardy, easy to handle breed with good indicative grazing and browsing characteristics, the placid nature of the Aberdeen Angus also makes it a good choice for sites with public access.



Sarah Murphy/Surrey Wildlife Trust

**Hardiness** – a useful hardy breed for a variety of situations, although not best suited to extremely harsh climates.

- *Hardiness* – adaptable to a range of environments, although not well suited to high, exposed upland moors or areas of high rainfall.
- *Agile* – able to cope with steep slopes and difficult terrain.
- *Supplementary feed* – able to live outdoors year round, provided supplementary feed and adequate shelter are available.

**Physical Attributes & Husbandry** – a good-natured, easy to handle breed.

- *Handling* – a good natured, adaptable and easy to handle breed. Polled.
- *Fencing* – respects electric fencing.
- *Flies and ticks* – not particularly susceptible.
- *Size* – medium/light framed. Short-legged with a deep body. Average weight of a cow 450-550kgs.
- *General health* – very good. Slight tendency to copper deficiency; a reddish tinge will come through on their black coats if they are deficient.
- *Breeding* – cows usually remain productive until 12-14 years of age. Gestation period slightly shorter than continental cattle, leading to especially easy calving, with calves that are strong and have a good survival instinct. Bulls very placid in a herd situation.
- *Appearance* – generally black in colour, although some animals may be red or dun.

**Grazing Characteristics** – a breed with good grazing and browsing potential, indicating an ability to prevent scrub encroachment and graze coarse grass and herb swards.

- *Browsing ability* – sufficient to stop encroachment of new scrub. Pushes pathways through, but does not browse older scrub. Eats thorn, hedging shrubs, Gorse and Beech.
- *Grazing ability* – see table overleaf for site-specific information. The breed appears to take a range of coarse species including Tor-grass, Thistles and Nettles.

**Interaction with the Public** – a good-natured breed, not renowned for aggressive behaviour towards the public.

- *Curiosity* – not especially interested in people.

**Marketability** – a highly popular commercial breed, renowned for its high quality meat.

- *Fattening* – early finishers on pasture of reasonable quality; animals which have been reared on a high roughage diet of low productivity need to be finished on pasture of high productivity or with a few weeks of supplementary feed.
- *Quality beef* – purebred Angus beef fetches a premium over Angus cross breeds, which in itself fetches a premium. Produces well-marbled, fine textured meat. Medium frame gives cuts of meat that are a popular size with butchers.

## Sites where Aberdeen Angus cattle are in use & contacts

SITE NAME	HABITAT	DETAILS AVAILABLE	CONTACT
<b>Thundry Meadows</b> Surrey  Surrey Wildlife Trust	Lowland wet & dry grassland. Part SSSI.  15 ha	Grazed year round since 1995 with average 12 heifers. River valley meadows grazed in summer; dry grassland SSSI in winter. Ragwort, Bracken and Ergot are problem species on parts of site. Extended grazing season on meadows in 2000 as some areas under grazed and becoming rank. Increased emphasis has been put on giving the grazier aims for structure of habitat across the site rather than rigid timings of operations. In general, botanical diversity of the site improving. Grazing does not appear to have adversely affected invertebrates.	Sarah Murphy 01483 488055  Angus Stovold 01483 811814
<b>Cherhill Down &amp; Calstone Coombs</b> Wiltshire  National Trust	Chalk downland.  130 ha	Grazed by 85+ since 1993 for 10 months of the year. Site includes areas of arable reversion and steep banks, which they happily move onto after grazing the flatter areas of the site. Having a good trampling effect on Tor-grass that had increased with sheep grazing.	Chris Gingell 01722 716341
<b>Old Hall Marshes</b> Essex  RSPB	Grazing marsh.  357 ha	Grazing May – September/October by 150 Angus cows and followers since at least 1984, on unimproved and improved (levelled in 1960's) grassland. Continues a tradition of over 400 years of grazing on the marshes. Actively seek out Common Reed and Reedmace species. Areas have to be fenced to prevent grazing where Common Reed is desirable.	Chris Tyas 01621 869015
<b>Bourne River ESA</b> Sussex	Lowland river meadow.  30 ha	Around 30 pedigree animals grazed April – Oct since 1990. Varying ages. All sold for breeding stock. Where they have access to the river, preferentially eat Water-cress and avoid Yellow Flag Iris. Readily browse Beech. The site has been particularly wet over the past three years but no associated foot problems. Some stock overwintered with supplementary feed on dry land.	Dr & Mrs Porter 01264 738541
<b>SSSI, SDA &amp; Countryside Stewardship land</b> Cheshire & Derbyshire	Derbyshire grit-stone and pasture.  Approximately 40 acres in 2 blocks.	Organic herd of 60 cows + followers grazed since 1995. Finish animals on low productivity grass at 30 months. Cattle eat nettles in late August and they appear to have been taking out the inflorescences on thistles. Maintained Gorse levels at status quo. Readily push through it to access various parts of the site but are not especially interested in browsing older plants.	Mrs M Hamnett 01663 765328
<b>Buccleuch Estates</b> Selkirk	Upland acid grassland.	Good-sized pedigree herd graze permanent pasture with Wild Thyme, Lady's Bedstraw, Birdsfoot Trefoil and a range of grasses, up to 1000 feet May – October. A dry site; the cattle cope well on the hill even during drought periods. Sold at 10-12 months for fattening off the farm. Out winter, generally not on the hill, although has kept cattle at 900 feet in winter with additional silage only. Come off hill in good, fit condition, but cows growing out on a hill will be smaller in stature than those off lowland areas. Grazing preferences generally not noted, although eat Nettles in Spring if grazing short, but not once stems thicken. Eat wilted Thistles.	Mr Andrew Guthrie 01750 20753
<b>Other contacts:</b>		Aberdeen Angus Cattle Society	R McHattie 01738 622477

## References