

# Irish Dexter Times

Legacy Dexter Cattle Breeders

Issue 4 / Fall 2017



LDCB

- 1  
Welcome
- 2  
Legacy definition
- 3  
A Legend Lost
- 4  
Ahead of the curve -  
Ranch Listings
- 5  
What's in a name  
I am a Dexter
- 6  
LDCB news
- 7  
Why and how to  
read a bull
- 8  
Breed description

Welcome - As fall comes to the countryside...

## The Legacy Continues

The dictionary defines the word “Legacy” as a



# “Gift”

*Something transmitted by or received from an ancestor or predecessor or from the past.*

Such meaning for our group Legacy Dexter Cattle Breeders but especially for our breed....

Coming from all corners of the country, we are working together to safeguard this rare gift... Established breeders remain true to the Dexter breed, steadfast through all the recent “changes” keeping our Dexters as they were intended to be. New owners, just getting started in the breed, found us after searching for the “perfect small cow” described in the journals of just a few decades ago, but so rarely seen today. Large and small, from all walks of life; some breed preservation bloodlines exclusively while others keep preservation lines alongside more modern lines.

*One thing we ALL hold true – These cattle are an irreplaceable part of our heritage and the very foundation of this breed we LOVE and must preserve.*

Our members are keeping the promise, ensuring that there will always be true Irish Dexter cattle in this country – so special and so unique and forever available to all those searching for that perfect little homestead cow and the most special of breeds.

Preserving this gift  
for now and for the future is our goal –  
**Our Legacy!**

## A Legend Lost

Sooner or later anyone interested in learning about or purchasing an Irish Dexter in the Northeast ended up contacting Marcia Read at Old Orchard at Stockdale, outside the Village of Claysville, Pennsylvania. Marcia, recently deceased, was the go to person so often suggested in those years spanning the 1980's and 1990's by scattered Dexter breeders, just as the breed was gaining immense popularity. Marcia's breeding stock had a huge influence on many start up Dexter operations. She owned and maintained a good-sized Dexter herd enabling her to provide "newbies" with their first Dexter.

When I decided in 1994 that my small Hereford herd wasn't a good fit for what I thought beef cattle should be I researched breeds that better suited what I had in mind. A smaller, hardier, easy to handle bovine better suited to wintry conditions. More triple purpose. A bonus was that the Dexter was unique and beautiful originating in the hills of County Kerry, Ireland. I called a few New Yorkers, but all calves were asked for. Very typical at that time, difficult to locate breeding stock. Finally, a woman milking a decent sized Dexter herd in Central New York told me to call Marcia Read in Pennsylvania. Thus, began my interesting Dexter journey thanks to the guidance of the relatively intriguing character of Marcia Read.

Old Orchard at Stockdale is in the Pennsylvania hills within sight of the West Virginia Mountains. A long climb up a narrow, no shouldered road circling the Old Orchard homestead located in a bowl on the valley floor below. As you approached the hill top you could look down into the bowl and see black spots (Dexters) and even smaller dots (sheep) grazing on the hillside. At the end of a long driveway into the barnyard you were met by a pack of dogs and Dexter calves free ranging. Marcia homed abandoned and stray dogs so pulling in meant a loud barking, joyous welcome.

I loved her farm and visited when I could. At first buying Dexters and in later years simply to visit. The house was built in the 1700's by Irish immigrant sheep herders. Claysville was a major sheep producing area and Irish settlement. A two-story stone farm house as natural in Pennsylvania as it was identical to one in Ireland. After a hike up and down hills checking on her Dexter herd, critiquing the bulls, we'd sit by the huge hearth where Marcia, a spinner, had two spinning wheels that she worked on surrounded by piles of stacked books. She was after all a librarian and like every librarian loved books, lots of them. She was a prolific reader and liked to research animal species. Our phone conversations began with "what are you reading now." There were also boxes of Dexter photos and folders of Dexter literature collected over the years. On one visit I spied the ADCA box containing Marcia's 2008 Talisman award. I asked her why she didn't hang it up. She replied that it was too beautiful to take out of the box. Yup, a typical Marcia reply.

Marcia didn't suffer fools.....her wit was sharp and her opinions even sharper. I did not want to be on the wrong side of her temperament and learned early on to be quiet and listen.... sensibly humbled into being educated to the breed. Her knowledge of livestock was limitless and when she sensed you were meant to be an owner of Dexters she championed your breeding program and marketing from that initial meeting point on. She had an ongoing love/hate relationship with the American Dexter Cattle Association. She served in office and on committees, but you never knew when that was an on or off again affair. I recall one year when she was on "off" with the ADCA Board. I told her I needed the registration paper for an Old Orchard heifer about to have her first calf. Please, I need that registration. Marcia grudgingly agreed to contact the Association and get back in good standing.....her definition of only as much as she could tolerate for being in good standing. When poll genetics were introduced into the American Dexter breed I asked Marcia if I should go in that direction. An innocent question, well, she barely contained her dislike of poll in the breed and snarled at me to "stay away from that." I did. Now, thankfully so. She predicted the decimation of the original genetically horned Dexter and in later years as that prediction played out she was saddened and disillusioned by the direction the Dexter Associations had taken. She claimed Dexter leadership was "amateurs running a rare breed association." She herself dehorned all of her Dexters. I'd tease her about that.....adamantly anti poll but intimidated by horns. She made no excuses, was simply afraid of horned animals and had her reasons. I still teased, and we'd laugh.

After Marcia's severe horseback riding injury, she hoped to return to full time farming but that was not to be and in ensuing years even as she battled a long painful, frustrating recovery the decision was made to phase Old Orchard Dexters out. A number of us bought remaining Dexter stock and all of Marcia's beloved horses and sheep were sold. Marcia retired to a house easier to manage and thus ended the years of an active, productive, Dexter breeder, livestock Judge and full-time breed promoter.

Many American Dexter pedigrees contain Old Orchard names. Anyone who has an Old Orchard cow is reluctant to sell them. Mine are sweet and gentle as all owners say theirs are too. I'll miss Marcia, I won't be the only one. I thank her for years of mentoring and friendship, for making me laugh at her goofy remarks and life observations. In the confusing Dexter world today, her commitment to the breed stands along with just a handful of other long time Dexter breeders as above and beyond.



by Shaun Ann Lord

# Legacy Registry

Far ahead of the curve .... Once Again!



Get the word out!

Let people know about you, and your wonderful Dexters.

Working for the breeder instead of the other way around, Legacy offers each of us our own personal Ranch Listing hosted on the registry site.

Create your very own page including information about your ranch or farm, services offered, your Dexter herd, or even your personal breeding philosophy. Anything you want to list about your operation. And of course, pictures! There is room for up to three pictures on your page.

Once set up, you will be able to list the Dexters being offered for sale (up to 10) in the Legacy

Classifieds Section, each displaying on their own individual page. You can include your photos, information and all testing results in your Animal Listing. Legacy even displays the mini-pedigree at the bottom of each listing.

All this is offered as a courtesy by Legacy Registry completely free of charge to every Dexter breeder using Legacy Testing services.

Once again .....

Thanks Legacy!

# What's in a Name

Old Orchard, Rainbow Hills, Yellowbird ..... the list goes on. I can almost see the farms... The trees of Old Orchard, the colors of Rainbow Hills, how beautiful they must have been. And what could be more fitting for an "Irish" breed than Fairy Hill, Cloverdale or Wee Gaelic. Such fun!

Just imagine Castlegould dexters grazing alongside a real castle in NY. This same herd was later changed to Hempstead House after Daniel Guggenheim purchased the entire estate and built the new house. Dover House and Clove Brook were owned by descendants of JP Morgan. And of course Peerless, probably the most important of all American herd names, and probably the most descriptive too – as they truly were "peerless".

So many faces come to mind, the bulls and cows I've seen in newspaper clippings and internet pages. How similar in build and characteristics they are.

Each herd unique; reflecting the mind of the breeder – Their "perfect" Dexter. Some a little shorter, some a little rounder, some with those incredible udders. And some with that "hard to put a finger on it something" that tells me – She's gotta be a ....

I believe we might be losing something today. Something subtle, yet so very important. With this trend of using farm initials in place of names, our herds are losing their uniqueness and individuality. Could we be trading something memorable and very special for uniformity? Truth be told, I almost made this mistake myself. As a new breeder and just starting out, I first listed my herd with only initials. Thankfully, before we had registered any calves under that name a dear Dexter friend, Judy got me thinking.... So now we have "Knobley", named for this area of WV. Much better than PTF..... And I see (knobby) calf knees.

We need to encourage everyone coming into the breed. Keep with Dexter tradition and come up with a herd name that is uniquely your own. Ideas can come from anywhere such as location, scenery, family names, even from something we love. I read that "Woodmagic" came from a book Beryl had read and loved as a child.

Have fun, be creative, but most of all choose well. You never know, you may well be naming a very important Dexter herd for future generations.

by Karrie Winebrenner



Castle Gould designed after Kilkenny Castle of Ireland. Built by Howard Gould and his wife. 1902

## I am a Dexter



### Colorado Bree Legacy # L00999LH-11HH

When Colorado Bree came to our farm 3 years ago she was skittish. Every day, we would go out and check on the cows, and Bree would watch me carefully from a far. Today, she has transformed into one of the friendliest cows we have, following us around. She even bellows to let us know if we are not paying attention to her. Bree has become one of our favorites.

Bree is a part of a project to preserve the Colorado herd. This herd, started by Marge and Mark Davis, has always been closed and we will continue it this way. The first Colorado animals were born in 1965. Only one other animal was ever added to the herd and that was in the 70's. Today there are 3 breeders that are continuing the closed breeding of this important herd in Dexter history. More on the Colorado herd in future editions.

by Mike & Joanne Mendenhall

# LDCB News

## LDCB loses a member and friend

Lynda was such an amazing and compassionate Lady (true sense of the southern word Lady meaning). She had a heart for homesteading, teaching and mentoring others that wanted to get into homesteading. We drove down from MN to Missouri where Lynda was years ago based on her reputation of commitment to the horned, traditional lines. She lived up to her impeccable reputation and we bought horned Dexters from her on several occasions. Her herd was beautiful, amazing horns with perfect temperaments with amazing mothering abilities. One of the heifers we bought from her we milked as a first timer and she produced a gallon a day with calf on- didn't need to be restrained and never lifted a hoof to kick. Lynda believed in temperament and traditional Dexter standards instead of following fads or what commercial markets were doing.

Lynda was such a kind soul, always ready to help anyone in need. We recently lost another dear friend here in MN, she left her three minor children to my husband and I to raise. We were having a benefit event for the children and Lynda was one of the first to reach out for love and support and offer some handmade products for the silent auction. She was tough as nails and her heart was as soft as fleece. We would have long conversations about tricks and things of homesteading and what works and laugh when we would made mistakes or get tangled up in something silly. I am going to miss her greatly. We have one of her heifers that I believe we will be keeping forever as I don't have the heart to train her up as a milk cow and sell her.

by Naomi Koenig



**Lynda Lacroix**

Belle Manor Farms  
Aurora, MO

## LDCB Preservation Certificates

LDCB Certificates of Recordation are being issued to every preservation Dexter in our members' herds. All Dexters registered legacy horned & trad horned are eligible for this program. Contact Karrie for more information.

[LegacyBreeders@gmail.com](mailto:LegacyBreeders@gmail.com)

## LDCB Brochures

Attending a Dexter Show or Event? Legacy Dexter Cattle Breeders now has Trifold brochures and a new Leaflet available to our membership. Spread the Word about our wonderful breed and the "Only Breeders Group dedicated to preservation".

Coming Soon... a group banner!

### Legacy Dexter Cattle Breeders

President – Michael Mendenhall  
Vice President – Shaun Ann Lord  
Secretary – Karrie Winebrenner

Contact [LegacyBreeders@gmail.com](mailto:LegacyBreeders@gmail.com)  
[legacybreeders.org](http://legacybreeders.org)



# Why and how to read a cow or bull

Knowing behavior patterns, especially of bulls, may help reduce injuries and might possibly save your life. Reading behavior can also help you improve care.

by Jack Albright

**A**UTOMATION, considered by some to be detrimental to the husbandry and welfare of animals in intensive units, needs to be reconsidered. The time saved, together with reduced work and drudgery, should release workers for more human-animal interactions, thus allowing better care. Yet, there are many instances where farm staff come into one-on-one contact with animals. Are they prepared?

For as long as cows have been milked, there has been the art of cow care that results in more milk from healthier, contented cows. It has been recognized that the dairy cow's productivity can be ad-



versely affected by discomfort or maltreatment. Alert handlers have the perception and ability to read body language in animals.

For example, healthy calves, cows, and bulls will exhibit a good stretch after they get up, then relax to a normal posture. Yet, higher rates of standing, oftentimes with an arched back and with their head and ears lowered, is taken as a sign of discomfort or discontent in studies of cow and calf confinement.

Cattle under duress show signs by bellowing, butting, or kicking. Behavioral indicators like these are always useful signs that the environment needs to be improved. In some cases, the way animals behave is the only clue that stress is present.

You can get clues to a cow's mood and condition by observing the tail. When the tail is hanging straight down, the cow is relaxed, grazing, or walking, but when the tail is tucked between the cow's legs, it means the animal is cold, sick, or frightened. During mating, threat, or investigation, the tail hangs away from the body. When galloping, the tail is held straight out, and a kink can be observed when the animal is in a bucking, playful mood.

## Dealing with bulls . . .

By virtue of their size and disposition, bulls may be considered as one of the most dangerous of domestic animals. Farm procedures should be designed to protect human safety and to provide for bull welfare. Everyone who comes into contact with bulls should recognize the various body postures of threat and aggression. This is the only way a person can stay mentally and physically ahead of the bull.

If cornered by a bull, it is best not to move too fast, but to back away from the bull's flight zone which is about 20 feet in range. While moving away from the bull's flight zone, you should watch the

The author is professor emeritus of animal science and veterinary medicine, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Ind.

bull at all times until you get to a fence, crawl space, or other safe retreat. Turning and running invites being chased. Not as likely, but the same can be said for aggressive fresh cows with their newborn calves as they, too, can attack and maul.

## Understand postures, threats . . .

There are certain major behavioral activities related to bulls. These are threat displays, challenges, territorial activities, female seeking and directing (nudging), and female tending. These activities tend to flow from one to another. Threat displays are a broadside view (Photo 1). This posture is observed when a person or another bull invades its flight zone.

The threat display of the bull puts him in a physiological state of fight or flight. The threat display often begins with a broadside view with back arched to show the greatest profile, followed by the head down, sometimes shaking the head rapidly from side to side, protrusion of the eyeballs, and erection of the hair along the back.

The direct threat is head-on with head lowered and shoulders hunched and neck curved to the side toward the potential object of the aggression (Photo 2). Pawing with the forefeet, sending dirt flying behind or over the back, as well as rubbing or horning the ground are often components of the threat display (Photo 3). If, in response to the threat display, the recipient animal advances with head down in a fight mode, a short fight with butting of horns or heads ensues. If the recipient of the threat has been previously subdued by the animal, he will likely withdraw with no further interaction.

While a bull is showing a threat display, if an opponent such as another bull (or person) withdraws to about 20 feet, the encounter will subside, and the bull will turn away. If not, the bull will circle another bull or animal, drop into the cinch (flank) body position, or start with head-to-head or head-to-body pushing.

At the first sign of any of the above behaviors, humans should avoid the bull and exit rapidly, hopefully via a predetermined route.

With the advent of artificial insemination, the bull initially left many dairy farms. With poor estrus detection and difficult breeding cows, the yearling bull has made a come back as a "clean-up" bull. While observing cows in larger herds in the Southwest U.S., I found as many as seven yearling bulls in a group. Rightfully so, at the first sign of meanness, a bull was sent on a one-way trip to the butcher.

Many people lack the background, attitude, and precaution of dealing with dangerous bulls and fresh cows; therefore, additional training on bull/cow behavior is needed. It is wise to respect and be wary of all bulls, especially dairy bulls, as they are not to be trusted. Each bull is different, and any bull is potentially dangerous. He may seem to be tame,

but, on any given day, he may turn and severely injure or perhaps kill a person, young or old, inexperienced or experienced.

Bulls become defensive when a cow is in heat and needs to be removed from "his" group or moved with the group to the holding pen for milking. Never handle the bull alone, and never turn your back on a bull. To move cattle or to appear larger and to protect oneself, carry a cane, stick, handle, plastic pole with flap, or a baseball bat. For further information about bull behavior and handler safety, refer the book by to Albright and Arave, "The Behavior of Cattle," CAB International, 1997, or many of the older dairy textbooks.

In addition to bulls, you must be careful around certain steers, heifers, and recently calved cows protecting their calves. Some animals are different and do not follow the threat display behavior previously mentioned. Be careful of following behavior, walking the fence, bellowing, a cow in heat, and the bull that protects the cow, thereby attacking the handler. Remember, an animal's first attack should be its last, and it should be sent to the slaughterhouse; see Hoard's Dairyman, November, 1998, page 787.

Animal care has a profound effect on their temperament, and this is not always taken into consideration. For example, bull calves should never be teased, played with as a calf, treated roughly, or rubbed vigorously on the forehead and area of the horns. You should stroke under the chin (rather than on top of the head) as an appeasement, taming, grooming-like behavior. This is essentially the way cattle groom each other.

## Learn to be a good observer . . .

Observation of dairy cattle has been going on for centuries and helps to raise knowledge and improves husbandry techniques. A more logical approach to the study of cow behavior and training is now advocated, linking it with commercial operations. Time saved through today's automation should be invested in observing animals. A knowledge of normal behavior patterns provides an understanding about cattle and results in improved care and handling that will achieve and maintain higher milk yields, worker and animal comfort, and welfare.

The National Institute for Animal Agriculture, formerly known as the Livestock Conservation Institute, Bowling Green, Ky., has prepared an excellent training video entitled, "Understanding dairy cattle behavior to improve handling and production" (Hoard's Dairyman, April 10, 1993, page 336). Dairy cattle must fit in well with their herdmates, as well as their handlers. For those who like to work with dairy cattle, proper mental attitude must blend in with skillful management and humane care in today's highly competitive, technological, urban-based society. 🐄



PHOTO 1. BROADSIDE THREAT DISPLAY is a warning that a human has invaded his flight zone.



PHOTO 2. DIRECT THREAT IS HEAD-ON with head down and shoulders hunched and neck curved towards the threat.

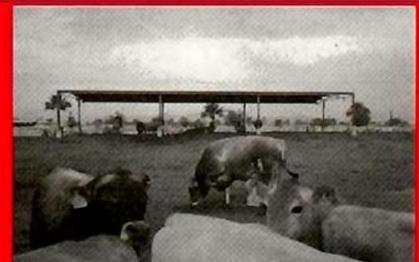


PHOTO 3. JERSEY BULL PAWING the ground. In the foreground, another bull is seeking out potential females in estrus.

Reprinted by permission from the November 2000 issue of Hoard's Dairyman. Copyright 2000 by W. D. Hoard and Sons Company, Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin.

# A Standard Description of the Dexter



Brenn of Paradise – Dwarf Bull



Lochinvar – Non-dwarf Bull



Legacy Jams Tuatha Jitsy – Dwarf Cow



Legacy Blue Tully – Non-dwarf Cow

1. The Dexter is essentially both a milk-producing and a beef making breed, and both these points should, in judging, be taken into consideration.
2. Colour.--Bulls.-Whole black or whole red (the two colours being of equal merit). A little white on organs of generation not to disqualify an animal which answers all other essentials of this standard description. Cows.-Whole black or whole red (the two colours being of equal merit). Black with white on the udder, or red with white on bag. The extension of the white of the udder slightly along the inside of flank or under side of the belly, or a little white on end of tail, shall not be held to disqualify an animal which answers all other essentials of this standard description.
3. Head AND Neck.--Head short and broad, with great width between the eyes, and tapering gracefully towards muzzle, which should be large, with wide distended nostrils. Eyes bright, prominent, and of a kind and placid expression. Neck short, deep and thick, and well set into the shoulders, which, when viewed in front, should be wide, showing thickness through the heart, the breast coming well forward.  
  
Horns.-These should be short and moderately thick, springing well from the head, with an inward and slightly upward curve.
4. Body.--Shoulders of medium thickness, full and well filled in behind, hips wide, quarters thick and deep and well sprung, flat and wide across loins, well ribbed up, straight underline, udder well forward, and broad behind with well-placed teats of moderate size, legs short (especially from knee to fetlock), strong, and well placed under body, which should be as close to the ground as possible. Tail well set on and level 'with back.
5. Skin.--The skin should be soft and mellow, and handle well, not too thin, hair fine, plentiful and silky.
6. Dexter Bulls should not exceed 900 Lbs., live weight, when in breeding condition. Dexter Cows should not exceed 800 Lbs., live weight, when in breeding condition.

It should be noted that this early standard describes Dexters with Chondrodysplasia (dwarfism). It should also be noted that at the time the standard was written genetic testing was not available, and dun had not been distinguished as being its own color, separate from red.