World Galloway Congress Presentation

What are Riggit Galloways?

‘A classically marked Riggit, which can also be red, or dun, with the white’

The line-backed skin pattern falls between certain White/black pointed beasts, and solid, single coloured.
While, for instance, many British White cows will bear line-backed calves to a solid colour bull, it’s not as common in White Galloways.
Some though occasionally throw Riggit marked progeny, while others never seem to.
Those of you from Australia and the States will hardly have seen them, while our German, Canadian and Kiwi friends have reported several Riggits.
Seen as oddities, they have seldom been retained for breeding where they’ve occurred….until recently.

History

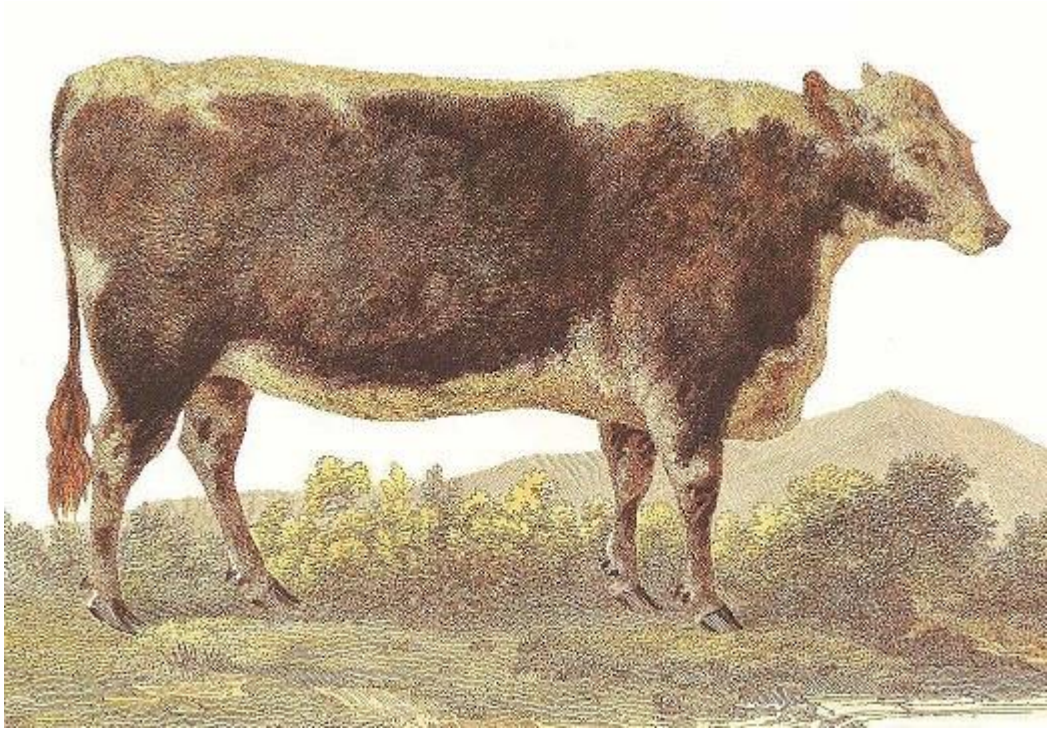
The word Riggit is simply a vernacular Scottish term, comparable to ‘ridged’, as in simply a visual description, much as ‘Belted’ or ‘White’.

Before Bakewell, and our modern hang ups on breed standards, written records make frequent reference to Scottish cattle with a stripe along their back, calling them riggit marked.

Robert Wallace, Professor of Agriculture at the University of Edinburgh wrote the seminal 1885 tome ‘Farm Live Stock of Great Britain’, in which he describes the

polled cattle in Scotland being (as well as black) ‘yellow, red, or brown; others brindled, black and white, ‘belted’ and ‘rigged’’.

In 1830, William Cobbett described in ‘Rural Rides’, a herd of ‘Galways’ in Hampshire as being ‘white with black or red spots, these spots being from the size of a plate to that of a crown piece’. (Or, as we might call them now, overmarked Whites).



‘‘The Fat Galloway Heifer’ a George Garrard engraving produced between 1799 and 1814 suggesting they were common in 1804’

1980s Resurgence

Following the birth of a Riggit bull calf on one farm, and a heifer on another, a handful of White breeders started a breeding programme in Scotland in the 1980’s. The 3 herds initially involved were Kyle, Mochrum and Park.
Sadly, after the untimely demise of Miss Flora Stuart, and John Corrie’s decision to focus on his Belted Galloways, the project almost stalled.

Happily though, by then, animals from those herds and occasional fresh throwbacks were finding new homes, and attracting interest.

The Riggit Galloway Cattle Society

With no-one else picking up the ball, the RGCS in 2007 and our group have taken the Riggits forward.
After locating all the breeding stock and interested parties, we began our foundation register, and have just published our 3rd herdbook.

We've tried to strike a balance between aiming at classically marked stock with solid built Galloway build, while encouraging breeders to try their hand at a very obscure breed.
Mindful that we're short of bloodlines, we've allowed animals to be graded up, primarily from other Galloway breeds. And at present, we're quite well off for choice.

We're unable to reliably predict skin pattern inheritance so far, still getting solid coloured calves as well as the ubiquitous Whites. But we're comfortable the project is moving forward, and at least we can always eat what we don't fancy.

Overseas

We've also begun a register for those Riggit breeders in New Zealand, with 3 herds on the books, and have regular communications with breeders in several other countries.

Cherrybank Dunstan – New Zealand bull currently owned by Barbara Fitchett

We look forward to seeing the Riggits being given a chance.