

Estimating Milk Production

The most common question asked by people interested in looking for a heritage dairy cow is “how much milk will she produce?” For some breeds, this information is handy because they have been a more conventional dairy breed. For most, the information is based on past knowledge of the ancestors used for milking purposes. Animals sold come with no clear history of milking or knowledge of its potential as a dairy cow.



When farms in America went away from cheese and butter production to fluid production, many of these breeds lost favor. As interest declined, the ability of the associations (if they did not cease to function or exist) to record milk yield and component data stopped. For those breeds, selection for dairy characteristics also reduced significantly, with some being selected for their novelty only.

Most current Base Line Milk Production Data

Breed	Average Yield	% Fat	% Protein	Avg. Days in Lactation	Source
Ayrshire	17,230#	3.86	3.15	305	(2002) US Ayrshire Breeders Association
Canadienne	9636-10,293#	4.21-4.6	3.36-3.62		Jeannette Beranger ALBC
Dexter	4,905.6-9,139.2	4.0	3.5		Dexinfo
Dutch Belted	12,000-15,000#	3.5-3.7	3-3.1	305	Jeannette Beranger, ALBC
Guernsey	15,887#	4.4	3.43	305	American Guernsey Association
Kerry	6,720-8288#	4.0			(2009) Irish Kerry Cattle Society website
	6343.48#	3.68	3.23	230-305	(2001) Strategy for the conservation of the indigenous Kerry Cattle of Ireland
Milking Devon	4,270-8,540#	6.0	3.5-4.5	180-300	(2009) Ray Clark re: Balch herd (1923) Batch Holder Farm, Mt. Vernon, NH John Wheelock DHIA 1986
	6,000-7000#	5.0	3.7		
	avg 4255#	4.17	3.57	avg 217	
Milking shorthorn	15,000#	3.33	3.2	305	Old Shorthorn website, need more current data
Pineywoods	±2 gal/day	n/a	n/a	After weaning	Jeannette Beranger, ALBC
Randall Lineback	±2 gal/day	3.7	3.2		Randall Registry website
Red Poll	8,960#	3.8	3.6		UK Red Poll Society web site