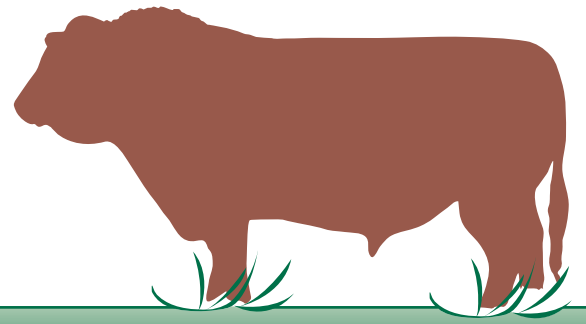


# Rotokawa

## CATTLE COMPANY



## Newsletter December 2009

Volume 1, Issue 2

### Welcome!

The Rotokawa® Cattle Company was formed to make the world's best genetics for 100% grass-fed cattle available to beef producers in North America.

This periodic newsletter will bring you information you need on grass-farming, running a sustainable rural business, human and bovine health, and much more.

### Inside this issue:

Eye Appraisal of Cattle  
Natural protection from E. coli

Grass-fed beef makes main-line press! Look for article on beef and the environment in *TIME* magazine, January 2010.

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## REPORT ON JUNE 2009 SEMINAR IN HARDWICK, MASSACHUSETTS

We had the good fortune to have Ken McDowall and his wife Prue with us for two and a half days here in Hardwick, Massachusetts to explore his methods of breeding the Rotokawa® Devon herd.

Ken's presentations were followed by visits to the Rotokawa® Devon herd that is now here in Hardwick. We traveled in mini buses to the different herds a couple of miles away. Ken shared visual appraisal cues (see article in this newsletter) and his methods of raising the Rotokawa herd. One of the richest sessions was the "fireside chat" on Saturday where we asked Ken questions about his breeding scheme.

The seminar was housed and fed by Eagle Hill School, a private boarding school. The attendees were unanimous in their happiness with the facility, the staff, the food (good and lots of it), the care for

individual needs, and the camaraderie that the school setting allowed. Sessions evolved into more informal sessions, and there was always a substantial pre-breakfast group hard at work trading experiences and stories about their farms and experiences.



Maggie Murphy brings laughter to the table with a humorous Scottish poem about AI.  
Below: Group from Seminar





*The head and jaw should show strength and the face not be dished—another indication of possible impurity.*

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## EYE APPRAISAL OF CATTLE —by Ken McDowall

This is a synopsis of a talk on evaluating live animals for conformation and structural correctness, by Ken McDowall, breeder of the Rotokawa® Devon herd, at the Rotokawa seminar in Hardwick, Massachusetts in 2009. Stay tuned for notice of our 2010 seminar with Ken.

If the intention is to select primarily by eye appraisal, what are the main points we should be paying attention to?

- 1) We should be selecting for efficiency as well as productivity, and this starts at the muzzle which should be broad with a clear pink colour. If there is any sign of darkness or smuts this indicates there is likely to be impurity in the pedigree. The occlusion should be correct where teeth meet pad to further ensure efficient feeding. If it takes an animal longer to achieve sufficient intake then that is energy wasted. She would be better lying in the shade under a tree chewing her cud. One of the best measures of the well-being of an animal is beads of moisture on the nose. The nostrils should be wide and open to ensure uninhibited breathing.
- 2) The head and jaw should show strength and the face not be dished—another indication of possible impurity.
- 3) Eyes should be bright, open and wide apart. The eyes indicate intelligence, health and temperament.
- 4) The ears should be well set and well fleshed with good hair cover, and are another indicator of intelligence,

temperament and health.

- 5) The poll should be flat and not carry excessive or long hair.
- 6) The neck should have adequate strength and length so as to blend evenly into both the body and head. If the head is held high this may indicate bad temperament.
- 7) The back line should be wide and level and not dip or rise at the junction with the neck or rise or fall away at the tail head.
- 8) The chest should show a good spread of ribs and depth through the brisket.
- 9) The brisket should have width but not excessive fat and not be prominent.
- 10) Shoulders must blend into the rib cage and not rise above the back line or be loose.
- 11) The paunch should show the same depth as the chest to give a straight bottom line to match the top. The width should exceed the chest width by a considerable margin. If an animal does not have sufficient capacity in both chest and paunch the quantity of product it can produce is similarly restricted.

- 12) The tail setting should blend in with the back line with the anus and vulva positioned to allow clear access to the ground.
- 13) Pin bones should be wide indicating good pelvic width for calving.
- 14) Span from hips to pin bones should be long to give width to the hind quarter muscling.
- 15) Hind legs should be wide apart without narrowing at the hocks to allow sufficient room for udder development. They should also have spring in the hock and not be placed too far under the animal to ensure good mobility and durability. Muscling should carry well down to the hock and not be pinched higher on the leg.
- 16) Udders should be well-caught, high in the escutcheon, with even quarters. The base of the udder should be level, with teats well spaced apart and not too large.
- 17) Feet should exhibit even parallel claws with a clear division between, and large enough to not be stressed by the weight of the animal. Feet should be dark in colour.
- 18) Pasterns must show elevation and strength but still allowing spring for durability.



19) Over all, what is essential is balance; this means durability and freedom from stress or problems caused by weaknesses or excesses.

20) The hide should be well coated with hair, soft to the touch and deep in colour.

21) Mobility is the best indicator of good conformation. The way an animal moves its legs and body when walking speaks volumes about the correctness of its structure. Do the front legs move in

line with the direction of travel or do they throw to the side and twist? Do the hind quarters twist to allow forward movement of the back legs? This is a common fault in the larger bulls and is an indicator of post-leggedness. A structurally correct animal should walk like a steam engine with the legs moving free and not swinging out to the side. The back leg should register where the front one lifted.

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## NATURAL PROTECTION FROM E. COLI —by Ridge Shinn

This past October the nation was shocked to hear about a young Minnesota woman who was nearly killed and perhaps permanently disabled by a home-cooked hamburger tainted with E. coli.

It's no surprise that the burger was *not* made with grass-fed beef. The chances of contracting this dangerous strain of bacteria from grass-fed beef are slim to none.

News stories about E. coli always make me think of a conversation I had with someone who used to run a feedlot. He told me about the tractor-trailers of baking soda that made regular deliveries to unload vast quantities of sodium bicarbonate that was fed to the cattle confined in the facility.

Why do feedlot cattle need so much baking soda? And what does baking

soda have to do with the E. coli tragedy? Baking soda did not cause the illness, but there is a connection.

Corn—or any grain—is not healthy for ruminants. Nevertheless, feedlot cattle, are given large quantities of this inexpensive feed, and often endure a condition known as acidosis, or “acid indigestion.” Baking soda is fed to them to counter this chronic problem feedlot condition. While E. coli is a normal bacterium found in humans as well as cattle, in the unnaturally acidic environment of the stomachs of feedlot cattle an acid-resistant strain of E. coli has developed. It can survive in the grain-fed bovine, and if passed on, it can also survive the acid of the human stomach and cause illness, paralysis and death.

Cornell University suggests there is a way to reduce this threat. As the

time for slaughter draws near, switch the cattle feed from grain to grass and hay.

Of course it makes much more sense to give cattle food that is natural for them for their entire lives. Cattle that live in pastures eating grass and hay are likely to have pH-balanced guts and little—if any—of the dangerous acid-resistant E. coli. When the bovine digestive system, which has evolved to process grass, is allowed to function naturally, it is very unlikely to cause an E. coli problem and compromise human health.

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*Go to the following link to read the entire Cornell University article:*  
[www.news.cornell.edu/releases/Sept98/acid.relief.hrs.html](http://www.news.cornell.edu/releases/Sept98/acid.relief.hrs.html)

# Rotokawa

CATTLE COMPANY

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## Our Mission

The goal of the Rotokawa Cattle Company is the revitalization of a sustainable rural economy through grass-fed and grass-finished beef production that benefits the animals, the consumers, and the land.

## Genetics for performance

### Early maturity

—finished on grass  
in 18 months

### Reproductive efficiency

—high rate of breed-back

### High volume of retail product

—more high-priced cuts

### Quality eating experience

—tender and tasty every time

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