

2017-2021 Texas Show Steer Breed Classification Guidelines

Jason Cleere, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
Wade Shackelford, Prosper ISD
Jamie Osbourn, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

Classifying the breed of a show steer in Texas used to be easy. Only three British breeds were shown. Crossbreeding among them was rare and easily recognized, and only Brahman crosses were shown in Texas.

Today, there are as many as 17 breeds and breed-cross classes in Texas shows, among about 75 breeds of cattle in the United States that could contribute to the genetic makeup of a steer.

To an outsider or novice, placing a steer in a breed class might appear to be relatively simple. Just read the specifications for a class and then find an animal that meets the criteria-right? Please keep in mind, registration papers, breeder affidavits, or other paperwork is not considered in the classification process. Eligibility for the class is determined *only* by visual appraisal, as evaluated by classifiers appointed by show management.

Classification Terms:

Ideal Characteristics: Characteristics in combination that most accurately represent the breed

Acceptable Breed Characteristics: Characteristics that represent the breed

Discriminatory Breed Characteristics: Characteristics that are not reason for absolute disqualification but in combination with other discriminatory visual characteristics could lead to disqualification.

Absolute Disqualifications: Unfavorable visual characteristics resulting in removal from a breed division

Considerations: The following will be considered at the discretion of the classification committee: birthmarks or scarring (due to hot iron branding, freeze branding, or injury-caused discoloration)

The authors would like to recognize the Texas County Agricultural Agents Association, the Texas Association of Extension 4-H Agents, the Vocational Agricultural Teachers Association of Texas, and Texas and national purebred cattle associations for their input in preparing this document. The following guidelines were developed by representatives of these organizations during the Texas Steer Classification Workshop that was held September 13 & 14, 2015 in San Antonio, Texas.

BRITISH TYPE

This group includes cattle that appear to be purebred Angus, Hereford, Polled Hereford, Red Angus, and Shorthorn.

Angus

Acceptable Breed Characteristics

- Must physically exhibit breed characteristics of a purebred Angus
- Solid Black
- Polled
- Needs to have a tight sheath that is round and perpendicular to the ground
- *Angus*-type ear set, small to moderate ear size high on the head

Discriminatory Breed Characteristics

- Continental breed type structure (being coarse about his joints, not to be confused with big-boned cattle) and head
- Bumps where horns would be on a horned animal
- Birthmarks or white hair in the switch should be reviewed for the skin color (black skin color is acceptable; white or pink skin is a disqualification)

- *Non-Angus*-type ear set (Ear set and excessive ear size as in Continental breeds)
- Large navels and angular sheaths

Absolute Disqualifications:

- White skin resulting in white hair above the underline or in the front of the navel (White on the navel is acceptable)
- White skin resulting in white hair on the leg, foot or tail
- Horns or scurs
- Brindle
- Diluter color pattern
- Dehorning scars
- Double muscling

Hereford

Ideal Breed Characteristics

- Must physically exhibit breed characteristics of a purebred Hereford
- Some white on the back of both ears
- Red body with white face, white underline, and white-marked legs
- Traditional feather on crest
- Horned Herefords must show evidence of being dehorned

Acceptable Breed Characteristics - These characteristics are not necessarily desirable and in combination may be discriminating

- Dark red color
- Red neck
- Solid red ear(s)
- Excess white on legs
- Excess white above the underline
- Eye pigment
- Black hair in tail, or ear of animal
- Freckling on the nose
- White above switch in tail
- White across rump above the twist

Discriminatory Breed Characteristics

- Solid white ear(s)
- Questionable ear size and shape
- Straight-line white markings on legs or tail above the switch
- White above the hocks, on the outside and back side of rear legs
- Excess pigment or color around the eyes
- Red neck in combination with excess white on legs
- Line back
- Coarse joints, head, or ribs

Absolute Disqualifications

- Solid black nose
- Diluter color pattern
- Streaking of white from the feather off the shoulder
- Brindles
- Double muscling; extreme muscle definition
- Any color pattern other than red or white (birthmarks excluded)

Polled Hereford

Ideal Breed Characteristics

- Must physically exhibit breed characteristics of a purebred Polled Hereford
- Some white on the back of both ears
- Red body with white face, white underline, and white-marked legs
- Traditional feather on crest
- Must be polled or have loose scurs.

Acceptable Breed Characteristics - *These characteristics are not necessarily desirable and in combination may be discriminating*

- Dark red color
- Red neck
- Solid red ear(s)
- Excess white on legs
- Excess white above the underline
- Eye pigment
- Black hair in tail, or ear of animal
- Freckling on the nose
- White above switch in tail
- White across rump above the twist

Discriminatory Breed Characteristics

- Solid white ear(s)
- Questionable ear size and shape
- Straight-line white markings on legs or tail above the switch
- White above the hocks, on the outside and back side of rear legs
- Excess pigment or color around the eyes
- Red neck in combination with excess white on legs
- Line back
- Coarse joints, head, or ribs

Absolute Disqualifications

- Horn attachment to the skull
- Evidence of tampering with horns, or dehorning scars
- Solid black nose
- Diluter color pattern
- Streaking of white from the feather off the shoulder
- Brindles
- Double muscling; extreme muscle definition
- Any color pattern other than red or white (birthmarks excluded)

Red Angus

Acceptable Breed Characteristics

- Must physically exhibit breed characteristics of a Red Angus
- Solid red (shades may vary)
- Polled
- A blond, light red, or mixed switch
- Cattle may have black hair on the tail, muzzle, face, neck, and legs

Discriminatory Breed Characteristics

- Coarse joints (not to be confused with big boned cattle)
- Solid White Switch

Absolute Disqualifications

- Horns or scurs breaking through the skin
- White skin resulting in white hair above the underline or in front of the navel (white on navel is acceptable)
- White skin resulting in white hair on the leg
- Black pigmentation of the skin. Not to be confused with freckling on the nose or anus
- Roaning
- Dehorning scars or evidence of dehorning
- Black Noses

Shorthorn

Acceptable Breed Classifications

- Must physically exhibit breed characteristics of a purebred Shorthorn
- Solid red; solid white with red hair or red pigment on ear, muzzle, anus or tail; or any combination of red and white, with the red and white color pattern bleeding together

Discriminatory Breed Characteristics

- Motley face or brockle face
- Orange or light red color
- Black nose pigment
- Coarse head
- Coarse joints

Absolute Disqualifications

- Diluter color pattern, such as yellow or yellow roan
- Blacks, blue roans, or grays
- Brindle
- Solid white with no red pigment on the ears, tail, or anus
- Double muscling

BRAHMAN TYPE

This group is sometimes called American Breeds. Physical evidence of Brahman background is important (ear length and shape, amount of hide, hump/crest).

American Breeds Cross

Acceptable Breed Characteristics

- Any color or color pattern
- Progression of importance to include *Bos indicus*-influenced head, eye, and ear (of moderate length, slightly pointed, drooping and opening down and forward); showing *Bos indicus* influenced sheath
- Crest or evidence of hump
- With adequate *Bos indicus* head, eye, and ear characteristics; sheath score is of less importance

Discriminatory Breed Characteristics

- *Bos taurus* head
- *Bos taurus* short ear
- *Bos taurus* eye
- Sheath score of 1
- Slick neck (lack of crest or evidence of hump)

Absolute Disqualifications

- A combination of a *Bos taurus* head, eye, and ear

Brahman

Acceptable Breed Characteristics

- Must physically exhibit breed characteristics of a half-blood Brahman
- A prominent hump beginning at the shoulder and going forward but must angle back down to the neck to create a hump – not a crest
- Any color or color pattern
- With adequate *Bos indicus* head, eye, and ear characteristics; sheath score is of less importance

Discriminatory Breed Characteristics

- Sheath score of 1

Absolute Disqualifications

- A crest with an inadequate hump
- Lack of hump or presence of hump
- A combination of a *Bos taurus* head, eye, and ear

Brangus

Acceptable Breed Characteristics

- Must physically exhibit breed characteristics of a purebred black Brangus
- Solid black with no white above the underline or in front of the navel
- Polled
- Progression of importance to include *Bos indicus*-influence head, eye, and ear (of moderate length, slightly pointed, drooping and opening down and forward);
- With adequate *Bos indicus* head, eye, and ear characteristics; sheath score is of less importance
- Shows some evidence of a crest

Discriminatory Breed Characteristics

- Scurs or slick spots
- Excessive, pendulous sheath
- Inadequate *Bos indicus*-influence head, eye, and ear characteristics
- Brown dilution over ribs, fore flank, twist and muzzle
- Sheath score of 1

Absolute Disqualifications

- Horns
- Dehorning scars
- White above the underline or in front of the navel
- White on the legs, feet, or tail
- Any brindle

Santa Gertrudis

Acceptable Breed Characteristics

- Must physically exhibit breed characteristics of a half-blood Santa Gertrudis with adequate *Bos indicus* head, eye, and ear characteristics.
- Any color pattern of black, red, yellow or orange
- Moderate crest, no definite hump
- Moderate dewlap development
- Moderate length of ear, slightly drooping and opening forward
- Sheath score 2-5

Discriminatory Breed Characteristics

- Straight, pendulous sheath
- Slight brindle color
- Sheath score of 1

Absolute Disqualification

- Absence of any visible Santa Gertrudis characteristics
- Absence of *Bos indicus*-influence head, eye, ear, or sheath
- Smoke, silvers, grays or tiger-stripes

Simbrah

Acceptable Breed Characteristics

- Must physically exhibit breed characteristics of a purebred Simbrah (3/8 Brahman and 5/8 Simmental)
- A sheath score of 2 or greater
- With *Bos indicus* head, eye, and ear characteristics; sheath score is of less importance
- Stocking legs
- Bald, blaze, or streak face or mottled face
- Solid black, solid red or solid dun/tan combination with white or any of the previously listed colors
- Brindle color pattern preferably with white markings

Discriminatory Breed Characteristics

- A sheath score of 1
- A *Bos taurus* head
- A *Bos taurus* ear
- A *Bos taurus* eye

Absolute Disqualifications

- A combination of a *Bos taurus* head, ear, eye, and sheath
- Roans
- Grays
- Silver
- Smut
- Yellow
- Diluter color pattern

CONTINENTAL or EXOTIC TYPE

Included here are Charolais (half-blood and higher), Limousin (purebred), Maine-Anjou (half or higher), and Simmental (purebred).

Charolais

Acceptable Breed Characteristics

- Must physically exhibit breed characteristics of a half-blood purebred Charolais
- White, yellow gray, or silver (moderate dappling allowed)
- Expression of diluter gene
- Minimal painting or spotting less than 20%
- Skunk tail, line back, baldy

Discriminatory Breed Characteristics

- Excessive painting or spotting (over 20%)
- Double muscling
- Brindles
- Frail bone work and frail general appearance
- Light red color or orange
- Short, stubby head
- Overly refined, narrow head
- Excessive dark pigmentation (eyes, nose, ears, and anus)
- Excessive dappling

Absolute Disqualifications

- Black, red, dark smuts
- Showing no diluter gene, unless solid white
- Excessive painting or spotting

Limousin

Acceptable Breed Characteristics

- Must physically exhibit breed characteristics of a Limousin
- Solid black, red/orange, light red, charcoal black, chocolate black, orange or brockle-face
- Bald face
- Tend to be smooth shouldered
- Head
 - Eye – Deeper socket, prominent brow, light pigment around eye on reds
 - Poll –Needs to have a wide poll
 - Ear – Tends to be smaller and rounder
 - Muzzle – Tends to be short
- Sheath
 - Tend to have a forward angle
- Legs/foot
 - Tend to be smooth jointed
 - Tend to be flat boned

Discriminatory Breed Characteristics

- Coarse joints, skeleton, and head
- Course open shoulders
- Brindle
- Pencil sheath, hanging straight down
- Pointed poll
- Excessive crest
- White Switch

Absolute Disqualifications

- Stocking legs
- Spotting above the underline
- Roans
- Yellow, Blonde, Grey, Silver
- Diluter Gene
- Red Cattle with Black noses
- Monkey/Parrot mouth

Maine Anjou

Acceptable Breed Characteristics

- Solid red
- Solid black
- Red and white
- Black and white
- Heavy skeletal structure

Discriminatory Breed Characteristics

- None

Absolute Disqualifications

- Brindle
- Roan
- Diluter color pattern
- Appears to be more than 50% of any other breed

Simmental

Acceptable Breed Characteristics

- Appear to physically exhibit characteristics of a purebred Simmental
- Solid black, red, red and white, yellow and white, black and white
- Some painting or spotting above the underline
- Bald, blaze, or streak face
- Typically longer head, larger ears

Discriminatory Breed Characteristics

- Motley/Brockle face
- Excessive white above the underline

Absolute Disqualifications

- Brindle
- Roans
- Smut or gray, white, smoky, silver or any combination of these
- Skunk tail

CROSS DIVISIONS

Black Cross Division

- Must have a black body cavity. Defined as the area behind the top of the shoulder blade down to the point of the shoulder and above the belly line.
- White in the body cavity is only acceptable in the following instances:
 - White is a continuation of the feathering
 - White is at the fore and/or rear flanks similar to Hereford color pattern
 - White spotting not collectively larger than 9 inches (basketball size) in diameter per side (can not be all on the same side)
- Skunk tail cattle are permitted provided the white above the rectum does not exceed the amount of white spotting allowed (basketball size)
- Absent of diluter gene
- No roan or brindle cattle permitted

Red Cross Division

- Must have a red body cavity. Defined as the area behind the top of the shoulder blade down to the point of the shoulder and above the belly line.
- White in the body cavity is only acceptable in the following instances:
 - White is a continuation of the feathering
 - White is at the fore and/or rear flanks similar to Hereford color pattern
 - White spotting not collectively larger than 9 inches (basketball size) in diameter per side (can not be all on the same side)
- No skunk tail cattle permitted. White in the tail is acceptable provided it is not higher than the rectum
- Skunk tail cattle are permitted provided the white above the rectum does not exceed the amount of white spotting allowed (basketball size)
- Absent of diluter gene
- No roan or brindle cattle permitted

Other Cross Division

- Steers of any coloration pattern are acceptable

Classification Glossary

American breeds. Breeds created in the United States by interbreeding existing breeds, including at least one tropically adapted breed (most often American Brahman).

Bald face. Appearance when white covers most of the face.

Blaze or streak face. A wide strip of white down the face to the muzzle.

Bos indicus (zebu). Subspecies of cattle originating in south Asia; has a prominent hump on top or in front of shoulder.

***Bos taurus*.** Subspecies of cattle; originated in west Asia but is usually called European.

Brindle. A streaking of black, brown, or white on the body of the steer (tiger stripe).

British/English. Cattle originating in the British Isles; Angus, Hereford, and Shorthorn are most numerous in the United States.

Brockle or motley face. Red or black spotting on a white or bald face.

Continental. Breeds originating in Continental Europe; sometimes called European or Exotic.

Diluter gene. A gene that determines color. Cattle that carry both copies of the gene will appear white. Non-diluter cattle will appear black or dark red, whereas those carrying a single diluter gene will appear gray or yellow.

Discriminatory Breed Characteristics.

Characteristics that are not reason for absolute disqualification but in combination with other discriminatory visual characteristics could lead to disqualification.

Horned. Horns are solidly attached to the skull, or there is evidence of dehorning.

Painting. Large white markings covering a major portion of the steer.

Pigmentation. Dark skin coloring on the points of the steer (eyes, nose, ears, anus, tail).

Polled. Naturally hornless.

Purebred. Showing visual characteristics of a particular breed and none of any other breed.

Scurs. Horny tissue or rudimentary horn attached to skin but not the skull.

Sheath score. Scoring system from 1 to 5 based on the length of the sheath (1 = little sheath; 5 = excess sheath).

Smut. Dark gray color pattern.

Spotting. White spots on the steer.

Summary

In the commercial beef industry, most cattle are sorted by visual characteristics into numerous groups for marketing purposes. Similarly, during livestock shows, participating steers are sorted into breed classes based on visual characteristics. As you can see, in most classes there are generally few factors that will absolutely disqualify an animal, and those are usually easily identified. Instead, most disqualified animals have more than one subjectively evaluated discriminatory characteristic.

Steers should be selected and shown based only on their visual appearance because that is how they will be evaluated for classification. Remember that classifiers are asked to exercise their judgment. If your steer is classified out, it doesn't mean that the classifier or anyone else is accusing you of lying, cheating, or being unethical. Nor does it mean that the steer cannot be the breed you say it is. Look at breed classification as the first stage of judging. Don't be too upset if the classifier makes (or you think he or she has made) a mistake. It's all a matter of judgment.

Figure 1. Sheath Scores



Figure 2. Examples of non-Brahman influence and Brahman influence ears



Figure 3. Black Cross, Red Cross and Other Cross Examples



