

Charolaise

Origins & history

The Charolaise is one of the oldest French breeds and currently the most important beef cattle breed in France with 4.2 million heads, representing 40% of the French beef cattle population and 22% of the entire French bovine stock (2013 BDNI data). It originated in the region of Saône-et-Loire but is now present worldwide and its genetics are used to improve the beef Breed characteristics of local breeds. From 1830 to 1845 the breed was crossed with Durhams but the results were disappointing and the selection continued as a pure breed. The herd-book was created in 1864.
The Charolaise breed was traditionally used for agricultural work (draft) and beef production. The animals were used as draft power from their 3rd to their 5th year of life, and they were fattened after two working seasons. Starting from 1900, selection programs improved conformation and muscle mass and the breed was raised exclusively for beef.

Importance

Current n. of heads (France, 2013): **4,244 million**

Breed characteristics

The head is short and wide, the horns are rounded, white and long. The profile of the back can be straight or slightly lordotic. The limbs are thick and strong.

Coat

The *coat* is white or creamy white without spots. **Mucosae** are dark pink to light brown. The coat can be wavy and become curly on the head, especially in males.

Reproduction

Compared to other specialised beef breeds, calvings are easy: 86,8% occur without problems, 7,7% present some difficulties, 6% require assistance (source : ADETF, L'élevage français, la race Charolaise). Twin births are frequent, occurring in 4% of cases.

Size

Males		**Females**	
Height at withers (cm)	Adult weight (kg)	Height at withers (cm)	Adult weight (kg)

140-165	1,000-1,650	135-150	700-1,200

Carcass characteristics/meat quality

In France, Charolais cattle are used for a wide range of productions, from veal (calves slaughtered at 2.5 months) to beef obtained from young cattle aged 30-36 months to older cattle weighing more than 700 kg. Charolaise meat has a thin layer of covering fat but with an adequate distribution of intramuscular fat. The breed is rustic and can live on pasture.

Blonde d'Aquitaine



Blonde d'Aquitaine

Origin & History

Blonde d'Aquitaine is a breed of beef cattle originating from the Aquitaine district in south west of France embracing the area of the Garonne valley and the Pyrenees. The breed is a combination of three local strains, the Garonnais, the Quercy, and the Blonde des Pyrenees.
The Blonde d'Aquitaine breed exhibits a history of selective breeding pressures that have resulted in the economically valuable breed that we know today. Its muscle development, hardiness and docility are products of its early development as a draft animal. In the latter half of the 20th Century the breed proliferated in other parts of Europe and overseas, establishing major breeding populations in Canada, Australia and The United States.

Blondes are the third most popular beef breed in France behind Charolais and Limousin. They are also present in Belgium, where they are officially admitted.

Importance

Current n. of heads (France, 2013): **1,331 million**

Breed characteristics

Blondes have a long head with a wide forehead. The horns are of medium length and are oriented downwards. The body is long, with a fine bone structure.

Coat

The coat is uniform, ranging in colour from almost white to tan, with lighter areas around the muzzle and eyes. The hooves are light-coloured.

Reproduction

Up to 98% of calvings from full blood Blondes do not require assistance.

Size

Males		**Females**	

Height at withers (cm)	Adult weight (kg)	Height at withers (cm)	Adult weight (kg)
155-175	1,100-1,700	145-160	850-1350

Production parameters

The Blonde d'Aquitaine has been selected mainly for the production of beef bulls or heifers as well as "broutards", i.e., calves aged 5-6 months that are sent to fattening farms. The carcass yield is good thanks to the fine bone structure and the low percentage of fat. The current selection programmes are trying to reconcile different types of production (pure breed and crossings) while maintaining the original qualities of the breed.

Limousin



Limousin cattle (Limousine)

Origins & history

The breed originated from the South-West of France, in the region of the Massif Central. Since the 17th century it was known for its muscular power and was used as a draft animal in agriculture. At the end of their career in the fields, the bulls were fattened and sent to slaughter aged 8-10 years. The animals, which at the time weighed only 300-350 kg, were led to the cattle markets of Bordeaux or Paris and had to walk for 12 to 14 days to get there. In the 19th century, pure breed selection began, accompanied by better feeding and hygiene. The Limousin herd-book was created in 1886, with very strict criteria, and annual competitions were organised to select the best individuals. All of these activities were interrupted by WWI, and the herd-book was reconstituted in 1920. At that time, the objective was to obtain bigger and heavier animals. With the development of agricultural machines, the breed knew a constant decline from the 1930s until the 1960s, when it started to be appreciated and bred for its beef Breed characteristics. Since then, the breed has known a constant expansion worldwide. The breed was officially “admitted” in Belgium in 1973.

Importance

Current n. of heads (France, 2013): **2,621 million**

Breed characteristics

The Limousin is a large-framed breed of beef cattle with a short head, broad forehead and muzzle, lighter area around the eyes and muzzle, fine horns curved forward and slightly raised at the tip (if present). The neck is short, the chest broad and rounded. Pelvis wide, especially at the pin bones, not too inclined. Bones of lower back and hips slightly protruding. Forequarter well muscled, wide above and very muscular. Hindquarters thick, deep and rounded. Horns and hooves lighter coloured. Fine supple hide.

Coat

Bright wheat-coloured coat, not too dark, a little lighter on the belly, the rear of the thighs, between the legs, on the anus, around the testicles or udder, and the tail tip. Absence of any spots or pigmentation, with pink mucous membranes.

Reproduction

Limousin calves weigh only 36 to 39 kg at birth, which greatly facilitates calving. However, uterine prolapse is not infrequent.

Size

Males		**Females**	
Height at withers (cm)	Adult weight (kg)	Height at withers (cm)	Adult weight (kg)
140-155	1,000-1,300	135-145	650-850

Production parameters

At slaughter, carcass yield is high, with a high proportion of muscles and a low percentage of bone (GEAY et al., 1975). Limousins generally have lower levels of intra-muscular fat (marbling) when compared with other breeds of cattle grown in similar conditions (e.g., the Charolais). Marbling, together with tenderness and flavour, has been associated with eating quality in some countries, and attracts a higher quality grading with associated premiums. In some countries, Limousin's lean, tender meat is considered to be of outstanding quality and marketed through specialist outlets. However, the carcass conformation is considered inferior to that of Charolais and Belgian Blue cattle.

Chianina

Chianina



Origins & history

The Chianina (pronounced kee-a-nee-na) is probably one of the oldest breeds of cattle in existence. The name comes from the Chiana Valley in the province of Tuscany in Central Italy (where Chianti wine is also made!).

Chianina cattle were originally used as draught animals, but now selection emphasis has been placed on beef Breed characteristics. The earlier selection for work animals had produced a very large breed with heavy muscling, a fast and agile pace and a docile temperament. The later selections for beef production has maintained the Size of the breed and improved the rate of growth. The breed played a part in upgrading other Podolian breeds, such as the Romagnola, Marchigiana, and Italian Podolian, and it was used in the breeding of the Maremmana.

Importance

44,400 heads (end 2013)

Breed characteristics

Originally draught breed (for agricultural work), the modern type has been selected for beef Breed characteristics.

Appearance: Chianina is a giant cattle breed with a uniformly porcelain white coat. The short horns curve forward and are usually black in the younger animals but become lighter as the animals mature. Both sexes have black pigmented skin and mucosae. The most noticeable characteristic of the breed is the extensive and well-defined muscling. The legs are longer than most breeds, the faces are rather long and straight.

Curiosity: Chianina calves are born a fawn colour, and turn white between 30 and 260 days.

Size

The average Chianina cow stands 150-160 cm at the withers and weighs 800-1,000 kg, while the bull measures 160-175 cm, weighing 1,150-1,280 kg. Cows over 160 cm and bulls over 180 cm are not uncommon.

Production parameters

Very few calving problems, hard hooves, resistant to heat and parasitic diseases. Well defined muscles that provide excellent lean but marbled beef (=tenderness). The dorsal-lumbar region cut is used to make the renowned “bistecca alla Fiorentina” (Florence-style steak).

Hereford



Origins & history

The Hereford takes its name from the county of Herefordshire the UK. Back in the times when Herefords began to be bred, farmers expected cattle to work the fields for 5 to 6 years before being sold for fattening. The first herd book was published in 1846 and the Breed Society was established in 1878. In the period after the Second World War the native Hereford cattle had unprecedented demand that saw some of its most successful breeders rewarded with prices for bulls not seen before or since. The Hereford was widely exported during the twentieth century and there are large populations of the breed abroad particularly in the U.S.A, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South America. As with the Angus, however, the animals developed abroad were very different to the native stock and many of these Herefords were reimported in the UK to make the breed more capable to compete against the continental beef breeds. The imported Herefords became so popular that the native bloodlines became endangered.

The herd-book comprises 3 sections: Hereford (horned), Poll Hereford (imported) and British Polled Hereford (the result of an improvement program with Galloways). The polled character is due to a gene (P) which is dominant on its allele (p). Additionally, the Traditional Hereford is enlisted as a rare British breed i.e., descended entirely from animals registered in the 1878 Herd Book.

Herefords are an exceptional breed, very rustic and capable to convert even poor pastures into good quality beef. It has an extraordinary longevity (cows can suckle until 15 years of age) and a docile temperament.

Importance

There are currently 340,500 Herefords (including crosses) in the UK.

Breed characteristics

The coat has a typical pattern. The breed's defining feature is the famous white face. The animals should have a white head and a white crest, white dewlap and throat and white underside, white socks and white brush to the tail. The rest should be a deep rich red colour. The Traditional Hereford is more compact and has shorter and thicker limbs compared to the modern Hereford.

Size: medium (cows 450-550 kg; bulls 750-850 kg)

Production parameters

The breed is known as being excellent for converting grass into top quality meat and will even do well on poor quality pasture. In particular, the meat has a high level of intramuscular fat (marbling), which helps to provide flavour and tenderness.

Red Pied of the Plains

Red Pied of the Plains (Pie Rouge des Plaines)



Origins & history

This breed has a recent history in France. It originates from crossing individuals of the Armoricaine breed with German Rotbunts, Dutch MRYs and Red Holsteins. The Red Pied of the Plains is found mainly in Brittany and Normandy, as well as in the plains of Northern Europe (Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg).

Breed selection in France went towards cattle of great Size and highly specialised towards milk production. Red Pied cattle are fertile and docile, and express a maximised production with a diet based on forage and corn silage.

Importance

Current n. of cows (France, 2013): 20,032

Breed characteristics
The coat is red pied.

Size (adult cow)

Height at withers: 147 cm

Weight: 700-800 kg

Production parameters

Standardised lactation 305 d: 7,888 kg

Fat: 4,17 %

Proteins: 3,27 %

Jersey

Jersey



Origins & history

The Jersey breed originated in the island of Jersey, which is the largest of the Channel Islands. The first imports of Jersey cattle to France date back to the XVI century. At the time they were called "Alderney", which was a generic name also used for other UK cattle breeds. In 1860 a restriction on imports of cattle was introduced on the island of Jersey, and this facilitated the breeding of pure-bred Jerseys. The French herd-book of Jersey cattle was created in 1903. In 1985 the French Jersey was included in the national programs for the selection and promotion cattle breeds (Unité Nationale de Sélection et de Promotion de Race - UPRA). In 2008, after the reorganisation of the UPRAs, a common organism for the selection of Browns and Jerseys was created in France (Brune Génetique Service). Jerseys are mostly concentrated in the West of France.

Considering their small Size, the milk production of Jersey cattle is exceptional. Their milk is renowned for its high protein and fat content. In particular, it has the highest protein content of all other dairy breeds (which catches on average 100 euros/1000lt more than other milks). Jersey milk is also very suitable for cheese-making. Jersey cattle are very effective in transforming relatively rough forages into proteins and fat, and their standard milk production per hectare of foraging surface is similar to that of the Prim'Holsteins. Jerseys have a very good longevity, due to the conformation of their udders. They have strong hooves and limbs and are rarely affected by lameness and other locomotory problems. Additionally, they are a fertile and docile breed, easy to keep and to manage. All of these qualities together make the Jersey a much appreciated breed across all continents, particularly in North America, Denmark, Australia and New Zealand.

Importance

N. of cows (France, 2014): 11,884

Breed characteristics

Jerseys are small and have a delicate body structure. The head is fine with a typical concave profile. They have a neck long and thin neck, a long trunk, a wide and voluminous abdomen, low hips and flat thighs, leaving space to a big and well-developed udder.

Coat: the coat is tawny in all its variations, from pale yellow to light brown, red or dark brown, and can have white spots. The muzzle is dark (slate colour) with a lighter contour. The hooves are black

and very hard, ideal for irregular terrains. Jerseys have pigmented skin, eyelids and mucosae: this Breed characteristics protects them from potential sunburn.

Size (adult cow)

Height at withers: 130 cm

Weight: 430 kg

Production parameters

Milk yield 328 d: 5,073 kg

Fat: 5,6%

Proteins: 3,83 %

Simmental

Simmental (Fleckvieh)



Origins & history

The Simmental is a world-renowned dual purpose cattle breed that adapts well to the most diverse conditions and that can be kept in all production systems. For this reason, it is estimated that there are 41 million Simmental animals worldwide, and this is the second most numerous cattle breed in the world. The origins of this breed date back to the early 19th century, when the first Simmental cattle were imported around 1830 from Switzerland to Southern Germany to improve the local breeds. At that time Simmental cattle was known for its milk production and work performance. Since then, the breed spread to other regions of Germany and the world.

Simmental cows have an excellent longevity, udder conformation, milk yield and fertility. Lines used for beef have easy calvings, and male calves used for fattening have very good daily weight gains and carcass conformation and quality. The docile character of this breed makes it easy to keep. Simmentals are often used in crossbreeding programs to ameliorate the Breed characteristics of other breeds (e.g., longevity of Holsteins; temperament, maternal traits of Brahmans).

Importance

Current n. of heads (Germany): 3,66 million, of which dairy cows: **1,26 million** (965,000 concentrated in Bavaria)

Breed characteristics

Simmental cattle are spotted, occasionally with just a few white markings. The color varies from pale gold to dark reddish brown. The head is usually white in front of the eyes with the lower parts of the legs also largely white.

Size

	Cows	Bulls
Height at withers (cm)	140-150	150-160
Adult weight (kg)	650-850	1,100-1,300

Production parameters

Simmental cattle			
	Dairy type		Beef type
Milk yield (kg/year)	7,000-10,000 (depending on feeding regime)	Average age at slaughter	16-18 months
Fat (%)	4.14	Average weight at slaughter	ca. 700 kg
Protein (%)	3.49	Daily weight gain (range)	690 -1400 g (in specialised feedlots)

Note

In this breed the polled character (i.e., the natural absence of horns) is still an important breeding goal. See the section on disbudding and dehorning (to be developed!) to learn more about the importance of the polled gene.

Montbeliard

Montbeliard



Origin & history

The breed has modest origins; after the second World War, it was present in two-thirds of the territory of the French Comté, with only sparse nuclei present outside of that geographical area. Nowadays it is the main dairy breed in the East of France and is present in a wide territory covering South Alsace and Lorraine and reaching the Auvergne region. Its herd-book was founded in 1984. For some time it used to be the first most important dairy breed in France but it was surpassed in 1987 by the French Friesian. Genetic selection focused mainly on two aspects: the coat, which is white and bright red, and the dairy Breed characteristics. The Montbéliard remains, however, a balanced breed, whose meat has good value. Montbéliard cattle is exported in various countries to be crossed with local breeds to improve their dairy and beef Breed characteristics. Crossed with specialised dairy breeds, Montbéliard blood brings functional qualities such as longevity and fertility. The current priority of the genetic selection program is dairy production: one of the objectives is to increase the proportion of cows that complete at least their 5th lactation; another objective is to produce larger quantities of milk while maintaining a good resistance to mastitis and a low fat/protein ratio.

Importance

The Montbéliard cow is currently the second most important dairy breed in France, with 662,000 registered cows (data: BDNI, 2014). It is one of the local traditional breeds whose milk is used for the production of many protected cheese varieties AOP (*Appellation d'Origine Controlée*), including *Comté*, *Reblochon* and *Morbier.*

Breed characteristics

The Montbéliard has the following features, which can vary slightly depending on the rearing environment and the specific genetic line:

- Considerable Size (females can reach 800 kg and 150 cm at withers)
- Ample, large chest
- Straight back with spine not visible
- Slightly sloped rump
- Tail attachment not prominent

Further reading

Please refer to the websites below (in French) to learn more about the most salient Breed characteristics of the Montbéliard breed as well as its geographical distribution in France:

- http://www.racesdefrance.fr/bovins/races-laitieres?id=108
- http://www.montbeliarde.org/standard.php

Size

Adult cows

Height at withers (cm)	Weight (kg)
145-150	650-800

Coat

The coat of the breed is red pied, with a typically lively shade of red and well demarcated areas. The head is white, but red areas around the eyes and on the cheeks are admitted. White areas are mostly concentrated in the abdomen and limbs. The mucosae and hooves are light coloured.

Production parameters

The Montbéliard produces on average 7,924 kg of milk per standardised lactation (305 d) with 3,91% fat and 3,27% protein (source: Institut de l'Elevage FCEL, 2010).

Italian Buffalo

Italian Mediterranean Buffalo



Origins & history

The group Bubalus bubali (Asian water buffalo) is the most important of domestic buffaloes in economic terms: the main breeds that are used for draught, beef and dairy all belong to this group. Water buffaloes are further subdivided in river buffaloes and swamp buffaloes, depending on their preferences for wading in running water (=rivers) or in still, murky waters (=swamp) and on their physical Breed characteristics. Water buffaloes count many different breeds and are present in many parts of the world.

The Italian Mediterranean Buffalo belongs to the family of river buffaloes and is the result of a long selection process which has excluded cross-breedings with other breeds of buffalo. The breed was officially recognised in the year 2000. Italian buffaloes are probably not indigenous to Italy and different theories exist concerning their introduction in the Italian territory. They may have been introduced during the Lombard (or Langobard) invasions in the year 568, or later during the invasion of Sicily by Saracens around year 1000. From the South of Italy buffaloes gradually spread to the Centre, which is their current main area of diffusion, especially in the Campania and Latium regions. Buffaloes thrived there because they adapted well to the marshy environment. They were raised extensively, then progressively semi-extensively and in stabled systems, and were used as draught animals as well as for their milk, beef and hides (to make leather). The
Italian buffalo population declined dramatically in the period between the two World Wars, but after 1947 it has steadily increased.

Importance

In 2013 there were 402,659 buffaloes in Italy, of which 241,164 adult females. Housing systems tend to be intensive (paddocks) all year long, with the same modern systems used for dairy cows. One third of Italian buffaloes are also put out on pasture in the favourable seasons, or green forage "cut-and-carry" such as alfalfa can also be used.

Breed characteristics

Black, black and brown, dark grey coat. Horns are flat at the bottom, and point backwards and slightly outwards; the top is pointed inwards. Conformation is compact, with a deep and wide chest as well as a well developed pectoral. The back and rump are short. Size, weight and productivity vary a lot according to the environment and management.

Size

The body weight of the adult female is 450-650 kg.

Production parameters

Italian Mediterranean Buffaloes are typically dairy animals, but the meat of male buffaloes is of very good quality and can be commercialised fresh or as salami or bresaola (dried, salted and/or spiced products).

Average daily milk yield varies considerably depending on the feeding system.

Avg. milk yield (270 d lactation, Italy, 2013): 2,222 kg

Fat: 8.0%

Protein: 4.2-4.6%

Italian buffaloes are raised and selectively bred principally for the production of milk used to make buffalo mozzarella, notably the mozzarella di bufala campana of Campania, which has DOP status. Other dairy products include burrata, caciotta di bufala, ricotta di bufala, scamorza di bufala, stracchino di bufala, stracciatella di bufala and yoghurt.

Buffaloes are butchered both for fresh meat and for preserved meat products such as “bresaola di bufalo” (a kind of dried salted meat), or salami. Buffalo meat is obtained from the males, which are slaughtered between 12 and 20 months of age after a fattening period based on a vegetable diet (forages). In 2012 a total of 118,653 buffalo were slaughtered in Italy, approximately 2.7% of the total weight of bovines slaughtered that year. The average yield was 50.6%. Note that the demand for buffalo meat is not very big at the moment (although on the increase), so a significant proportion of males have to be destroyed shortly after birth.

Duroc

Duroc



The Duroc breed is one of the oldest American breeds and it remains the most important. It is also present in many countries of Latin America. It was imported to Europe around the 1970s and is used mainly in hybridisation schemes (3-way schemes or 4-way schemes in which the terminal boar is a Duroc hybrid). The obtained piglets excel in durability, growth, and muscle qualities attributes, and are competitive for carcass leanness and feed efficiency. Duroc boars are the predominate Terminal sire used in the world and provide 100% heterosis when mated to Yorkshire x Landrace females. It is a very prolific breed, and sows have good maternal abilities and an excellent milk production. It is predominantly raised in intensive systems but it is a very robust breed that can be raised extensively. Thanks to its strong limbs, it can be crossbred with Italian Large White and Italian Landrace for the production of heavy pigs which are slaughtered at a live weight of 160-170 kg to make high quality cured hams (e.g., Parma and San Daniele).

Breed characteristics

- Durocs have considerable variation in color, from a very light golden, almost yellow color, to a very dark red that approaches mahogany(always solid)
- Face slightly dished (concave), the ears should be drooping and should not be held erect
- Medium size and body length
- Very solid bone structure and limbs
- Fast growth (lean meat)
- Good carcass conformation

Hampshire

Hampshire



The Hampshire is used extensively as the sire of cross bred pigs for the pork and manufacturing markets in the USA and many other countries. It has the reputation of being the leanest of the North American Breeds and the majority of carcass competitions in North America are won by Hampshires and Hampshire crosses.

Its main Breed characteristics are the maternal attitude and milk production: weaned piglets are strong and well-grown. Hampshires produce large quantities of lean meat, but the presence of a recessive gene (RN-) causes the meat to become too acidic (< 5,5), which causes a loss of 5-6% in weight of cooked hams and alterations in colour.

Hampshires are well suited to extensive (open air) farming systems as they are hardy, resistant to disease and excellent foragers. Recent selection has improved the breed's growing ability, and its carcass is among the highest in quality and quantity of meat.

Breed characteristics

- Fine black coat with a white "saddle" or belt, which includes the shoulders and the forelegs
- Ears erect and forward pointing
- Heavily muscled, lean meat breed

Meishan

Meishan



The breeds imported from China are slow growing and fat, but have a very good taste. They are considered to be resistant to some diseases and are able to consume large amounts of roughage. Purebred Chinese pigs have the following Breed characteristics:

- an exceptionally early sexual maturity (first heat between 2 and 4 months);
- a high prolificacy (14-17 piglets/farrowing);
- a high number of teats (17-24);
- a marked maternal instinct;
- a fat carcass

Meishan pigs come from the region of lakes and valleys in China, an area with a mild climate, where pigs are fed farm by-products and water plants, as well as concentrates.

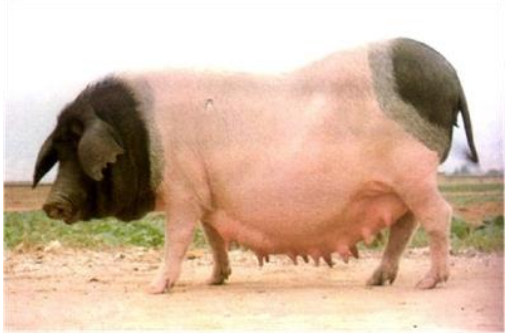
The Meishan breed is known for its wrinkled face and skin.

Meishan pigs are perhaps one of the most prolific breeds of pig in the world. They reach puberty at 2.5-3 months of age, achieve high embryo survival rates, and a large litter size of 15-16 pigs. It is quite common to have two litters per year.

Hybrid sows (Large White x Meishan or Landrace X Meishan) have a 30% higher prolificacy compared to European breeds, equivalent to +5-7 weaned piglets/sow/year.

Jinhua

Jinhua



The breeds imported from China are slow growing and fat, but have a very good taste. They are considered to be resistant to some diseases and are able to consume large amounts of roughage. Purebred Chinese pigs have the following Breed characteristics:

- an exceptionally early sexual maturity (first heat between 2 and 4 months);
- a high prolificacy (14-17 piglets/farrowing);
- a high number of teats (17-24);
- a marked maternal instinct;
- a fat carcass

The **Jinhua** pig is characterized by its hair color and meat quality. The animals have a white body, with black at the head and rump. This leads to the common name of “two-end-black pig". The back and loins are slightly curved. The breed is especially noted for its thin skin, fine bones and tender meat. After special processing, "Jinhua ham" is favored for its attractive flavor and rosy color and it has a high reputation in the international market.

Jinhua pigs are early maturing and may be mated as early as 3 to 4 months old. They are also prolific with an average litter size of 13 and seven pairs of teats.

This breed is currently threatened in China.

Basque

Basque



The Basque pig is one of the 6 official indigenous French breeds together with the Gascon (LINK), the Limousin, the Corse (LINK), the Western White, and the Bayeux. Nearly extinct and declared as an endangered species in 1981, the Basque pig has survived thanks to an important conservation program driven by committed breeders (currently there are 137,885 heads). It is bred extensively: pigs roam free in the forests of mountainous areas and take shelter in wooden cabins made with fern roofs. Basque pigs are very rustic and mainly feed on herbs and seasonal fruits like chestnuts, acorns, beechnuts and on a food supplement of (GM free) cereals given daily by the breeders. Their life cycle is unique, and you can read more here (link to page http://en.pierreoteiza.com/l-entreprise/le-porc-basque/-1).

Breed characteristics

- The Basque pig has a pied black and white coat, with black head (no white hair), rump and hind legs.
- Head: long, straight profile
- "Lop" (floppy) ears covering 2/3 of the face and are forward and downward facing
- Limbs: hams well developed; legs strong and short; good walker; strong feet
- Agile and inquisitive: the mobile snout allows it to dig and root for food
- Slow-growing
- Used for the production of fine, red, savoury meat and for the famous "Jambon de Bayonne"

Iberian Pig

Iberian Pig (Cerdo ibérico)



Iberian pigs are a group of 6 indigenous Spanish breed varieties with the same origins and that are traditionally bred in the “dehesa”, the area for the production of the famous "Jamon Iberico". **“Dehesa”** is a 3-million hectare wooded area located in the south-west of Spain; about one-third of this area is used for the breeding of Iberian pig. The area is covered by typical Mediterranean woodlands where various species of oak predominate. The pigs roam free and forage in the forest. However, during periods of lower food availability, the diet of these free-range pigs may be supplemented with commercial feedstuffs.

Due to their slow growth and relatively low prolificacy, Iberian pigs are now often crossbred to non-Iberian breeds such as the **Duroc** to reduce production costs, so purebred Iberian pigs are now rare (6.2% of the entire production for traditional hams in 2012). However, *Jamón ibérico* (high quality cured ham) must be produced using the meat of pigs that are have least 75% Iberian pig blood.

According to the different finishing methods, Iberian pig meat is classified in 3 categories:

1) Montanera or Bellota: this is the top quality product because it comes from pigs that are fattened in the woods. The slaughter takes place only after an appropriate period of guaranteed foraging exclusively on acorns and other forest resources. This ensures a strong qualitative characterization of the product. This is basically related to the fatty acid composition of the meat, since acorns are very rich in monounsaturated fatty acids, particularly oleic. The quality of Montanera pig meat is assessed by independent control bodies for its content of fatty acids (palmitic, stearic, oleic and linoleic), whose values are determined annually by the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture.

2) Recebo: this is a product that comes from animals that have not been able to complete their production cycle in the woods that are finished (i.e., they complete the fattening period) with commercial feed. The commercial value is therefore lower than that of Montanera.

3) Cebo or Campo: the meat comes from animals fed exclusively with commercial feed and therefore it has a lower commercial value.

General Breed characteristics of Iberian pigs

Iberian pigs, in analogy with other pig breeds of the Mediterranean basin, have pigmented skin and coat. Coat colour can vary from black to reddish, depending on the specific variety. Additionally, some varieties have bristles while others are almost naked.

- Average size, good musculature
- Lop ears, forward-oriented
- Fine but strong limbs
- Slow-growing
- Very suited for grazing year round
- Remarkable fat deposition, both covering and intramuscular (marbling)
- Not very prolific
- Used for the production of traditional high-quality cured hams like “Jamón Ibérico” and “Pata Negra” (slaughter weight up to 160 kg to obtain a ham weighing 7 kg)
- Recently also used for the production of fresh cuts of meat

Merino sheep

Characteristics

A series of common characteristics and defects (more or less marked) are found in the breeds derived from the Spanish Merino. Merino wool is generally finer and wavier (the natural waviness of wool is called the **crimp**) than that of other sheep breeds. The fleece is thicker but the staples (=strands) are quite short. Merino sheep are well adapted to the climate and terrain of dry regions; they also tolerate mountain climate well, where **transhumance*** is traditionally practiced in Mediterranean countries. Merino sheep can be kept in big flocks thanks to the gregarious nature, placid temperament and predisposition to walk over long distances. Lambing occurs in the autumn.

Merino sheep are not much appreciated for meat production, as their growth rate is slow (with a substantial tendency to fat deposition) and carcass conformation is not ideal. Additionally, prolificacy is lower than in specialised meat breeds (1.1-1.3).

***Transhumance=** The action or practice of moving livestock from one grazing ground to another in a seasonal cycle, typically to lowlands in winter and highlands in summer. Source: Oxford English Dictionary online.

Further reading on transhumance: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transhumance

There are four Merino breeds in France, of which two have an important economic role ('Arles' Merino sheep and Merino sheep of Eastern France). The other two breeds (Merino Rambouillet and Merino Precoce) are quite rare.

	
Arles Merino	Eastern France Merino
	
Rambouillet Merino	Precoce Merino

Hampshire

Hampshire (aka Hampshire Downs)



The Hampshire sheep acquired its name from the county of Hampshire in England where it was developed. It belongs to the group of sheep of the "Downs" (= hills) and was improved by crossbreeding with Southdown rams. It is a rustic and adaptable breed that has found success worldwide. Growth rates are good but the lambs must be slaughtered early (at 20-25 kg) to avoid an excessive fat deposition. Hampshires are noted for their rapid growth and efficient feed conversion.

Breed characteristics

- Hampshire sheep have a woollen "cap" extending from the neck over the forehead. Any wool interfering with vision is a defect.
- Smaller size than Texel and Suffolk
- The face is long, dark in color and free of wool from the eyes down
- Ears are of moderate length, thickly covered in dark brown or black hair (no wool)
- Hornless
- Stocky and robust
- Legs and hooves are not wooled and have dark hair
- Fast-growing, precocious and adaptable
- Good mothering abilities and milk production
- Lambings occur in December-January (assisted lambing frequently required due to large shoulder width)

- Excellent carcass yield and meat quality
- Fleece of mature ewes weighs 3-3,5 kg

Bleu du Maine

Bleu du Maine



This breed takes its name from its region of origin in Western France and the dark grey or blue colour of its face and areas of the body not covered by wool. This colour probably derives from crossings with the British Wensleydale. Selection towards the "blue" type was especially active after WWI in the Loire area of France. The bluish pigmentation of the skin was the first distinctive element of this breed, but its genetic determinism is still not well understood, so that fixating it in a definitive manner remains difficult.

Breed characteristics

- Large breed with white wool
- The wool does not cover the head nor the limbs
- The skin colour is blue to slate, mucosae are black
- The head is large, with a wide forehead and a fine muzzle
- The orbital bones are prominent
- Hornless
- Fine limbs
- Adapted to grazing all year round (except for lambing), rustic
- Precocious
- Good mothering abilities and milk production, easy lambings
- Lambing season: February-March
- Good carcass yield and carcass quality of lambs
- Fleece yearly weight 4-4.5 kg

Ile de France

Ile de France



This breed was developed in the last century in the Paris area by crossing 2 breeds with very different attitudes: the Merino Rambouillet and the Dishley Leicester. By the end of the 19th century, the initial flock of Dishley-Merino sheep had become very numerous, so crossings were stopped and an intermediate type was maintained. The flock-book of the breed was created in 1922. The selection objectives were to obtain a precocious, prolific breed with a good carcass conformation and also producing abundant and fine fleece. Between the two world wars, this became the most important French breed in terms of numbers, but it declined from then on.

Breed characteristics

- Large size
- The head is wooled only on the forehead, the other regions of the head as well as the limbs are covered in white opaque hair
- Hornless
- The fleece is fine and of medium length, the weight for an adult ewe is on average 4 kg
- Lambings can occur at the end of the summer and in the autumn
- This breed can be kept in barns all year round

Lacaune

Lacaune



This is the most important French dairy breed in terms of numbers (**1,1 million ewes**). Lacaune flocks are mostly concentrated in the Roquefort area. In the milk production cycle, lambings occur between November and March. The lambs are weaned at 4-5 weeks of age and milking begins immediately afterwards. Milking and Roquefort production are thus seasonal (from December to July). Roquefort cheese can only be made with Lacaune milk. More or less 300,000 Lacaune ewes are kept to produce meat lambs, either pure bred or crossed with Charollais or Rouge de l'Ouest rams. In the past, lambs were traditionally slaughtered for meat at a live weight of 13 kg and sold as "milk lambs" (*agneaux de lait*). Nowadays they are mostly sold and fattened by specialised livestock producers until they reach 3 months of age (35 kg live weight).

Breed characteristics

- Slender body (long limbs), medium size (ewes: 65 kg)
- The head is fine and long, with a slightly convex profile and big eyes; long, horizontal ears
- Polled
- Very light fleece (1,5 kg)
- Well adapted to semi-extensive grazing system (pastures); however, it is often raised intensively
- Lambings are seasonal but can also be obtained out of season
- High maternal abilities
- Lambs have a good growth rate but average carcass conformation
- Lacaune milk is very rich, with 6-8% fat and 5,5-6,5% protein
- Current milk production (163 d lactation) is **277 l**, and on the increase (+ 2.4% yearly through rigorous selection)
- **4 l of milk are required to make 1 kg of Roquefort** cheese

Romanov

Romanov



At the beginning of the 1960, foreign sheep breeds with a high prolificacy began to be introduced in France to create industrial ("synthetic") crosses. The Romanov, a Russian breed, was first introduced in 1963, and the results of the crosses were excellent. Romanov ewes have an early sexual maturity (5-6 months) and a long mating season (9-10 months/year). The prolificacy is among the highest in the world: 2.5-3.0 born/lambing depending on the genetic line. It is often crossed with local breeds to obtain F1 females to use in industrial crosses.

Breed characteristics

- Small size (ewe: 45-55 kg; rams: 60-80 kg)
- Delicate head and limbs, with white spots
- Rams are usually horned, ewes are usually polled
- The fleece is straight and short, and looks almost bluish-grey due to a mixture of black hair and white woollen fibres; rams have a "mane" of black hairs around the neck and shoulders
- Rustic and resistant, tolerates weather extremes
- Excellent fertility (up to 5 lambs/ewe/year)
- Excellent maternal abilities, ewes lamb out of season
- Excellent milk production (can milk > 2 lambs at the same time)
- Carcass conformation is mediocre

Suffolk

Suffolk



This British breed is the result of crossings between Southdown rams (links to breed pictures) and Norfolk ewes. Apparently the product of this cross was a great improvement over either one of the parents. Although the Suffolk was a recognized breed as early as 1810, the flock book was not closed until much later. The current breed type was established in 1810. In 1886, the English Suffolk Society was organized to provide registry service and to further develop the use of the breed. Through selection and careful breeding by many great English sheepmen, the Suffolks brought to this country retained the qualities for which they were originally mated. Suffolk sheep are popular for their prolificacy and precocity. Suffolk sheep are active, strong-limbed and gregarious and perform well in flocks kept extensively. Worldwide, the Suffolk is used in crossbreeding programs as an improving breed for the production of fast-growing prime lambs.

Breed characteristics

- The wool is white and short. The head and distal limbs are not wooled and the hair is black.
- Large size, similar to Texel but less stocky
- Face is black, long and fine; ears black and of medium length
- Muzzle moderately fine
- Hornless
- Straight and solid limbs, wooled to the knees and hocks, clean and black below
- Precocious and fertile
- Lambings are easy and occur between December and February
- Carcass conformation and yield is not as good as in other breeds but the meat is appreciated for its marbling and special taste
- Short wool
- Fleece weights 3,5-4,5 kg

Alpine

Alpine



The Alpine breed is reared in all the areas of France where goats are usually found and is today the most widely used breed in France with 55% of the females (i.e., 148,335 heads) in milk recording .The French Alpine has many different coat colours: chamoisée, mantelée (= hooded), multi-coloured and black. The chamoisée (link to record) is the most numerous. The “hooded” type has light-coloured neck and shoulders and darker back and flanks. The multi-coloured type has white spots on a back or brown background. The black type is either solid black or it can have white limbs. The
French Alpine can be polled or horned, with or without a beard and with or without wattles on the neck.

Breed characteristics

- medium sized (doe: 50-70 kg)
- many different coat colours
- hardy and adapts perfectly to indoor systems, and even pasture and in mountain conditions
- limbs are strong
- voluminous udder, well attached at the front and at the rear
- teats are directed forwards and parallel

Average Milk production (data from 2007, 268 d lactation): 790 kg

Fat content : 3.73 %

Protein content : 3.24 %

Alpine Chamoisée



The *chamoisée* is a variety of the Alpine breed with shorter, reddish brown hair. It is the most popular and productive dairy goat breed after the Saanen, also due to its rusticity and adaptability to both intensive systems and difficult alpine environments.

Breed characteristics

- black face, breast, abdomen, and limbs and a black longitudinal stripe along the length of the back
- short head, of medium length and slightly dished
- there can be a small beard on the lower jaw
- straight, horizontal back and sloped rump

Milk yield (290 d): 842 kg

Fat: 3,53%

Protein: 3,15%

Vendeen Sheep

Vendeen Sheep



The Vendéen sheep were developed near Vendée in western France. It is a very old breed of sheep, its first known mention dates back to the 10th century in the region of Bas-Poitou. The local sheep were initially crossed with rams that came from Flanders in the 17th century and then at the end of the 19th century with English beef breeds, particularly Southdown rams, on local ewes. The phenotype of the breed was fixed during the 20th century, and around 250,000 females are registered in France today.

The breed is medium sized and ram weigh from 85 to 110 kg and ewe weigh from 60 to 70 kg. Their fleece is white and their face and legs are covered with dark brown to gray hair or may be spotted. Both sexes are polled. The average fleece weight for the breed is 2 to 5 kilograms with a staple length of 4 to 6 cm. The wool is used for hand-knitting wool and high-quality fabrics such as hosiery, dress fabrics and flannel.

Vendéen ewes are prolific, with an average of 1.75 lambs per ewe and year and have a good milk production. Vendéen ewes are characterized by their precocity and the ewes' reproduction period is quite long, and allows a lambing period extending from October to June.

The breed is renowned for the production of high-quality lamb carcasses and in comparison with the Texel sheep, Vendeen sheep are relatively equal in muscularity. Though Vendéen have a lower wool yield, lower daily gain, carcass leanness and milk yield than the Texel, it is rustic and can adapt to different types of holding, such as extensive grazing systems as well as in intensive indoor systems.

Sussex

Sussex



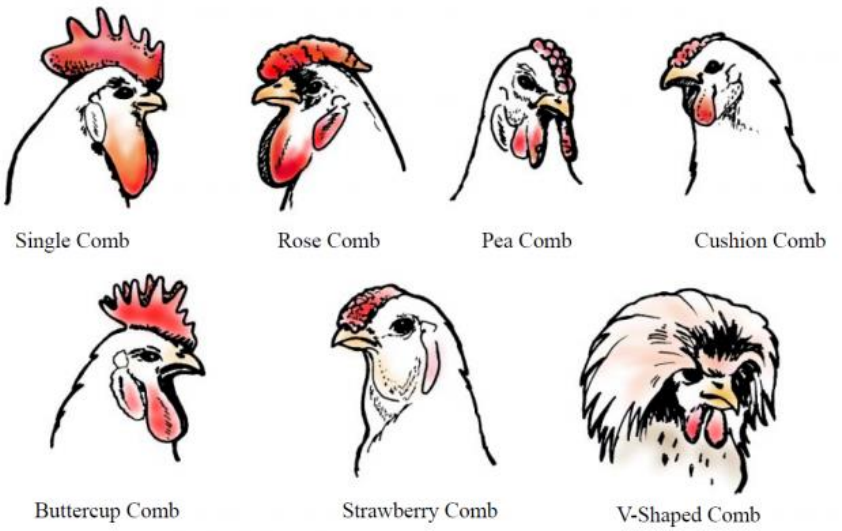
The Sussex is an old but exceptional heavy, dual purpose breed developed in the UK, where it was very popular as a table bird during the 19th century due to its white flesh. Sussex hens are good layers (but slightly less productive than Rhode Island Reds and Leghorns). Sussex chickens can come in many different colour varieties: Speckled, Light, Brown, White, Buff, Silver, Coronation. The face, comb, earlobes and wattles are red.

Leghorn

Leghorn



The Leghorn is an Italian breed of poultry that acquired worldwide renown in the 1900s thanks to its exceptional egg-laying capacity. It was exported from the port of Livorno (Leghorn in English) to the rest of Europe and to the U.S.A. They are one of the best known breeds of chicken and produce the majority of the world's white eggs. The commercial genetic line was markedly improved in the U.S., where the Leghorn became the prototype of the laying hen. Leghorns come in a variety of plumage colours, but the modern layers are white. These hens can produce up to 300 eggs but during selection they have almost completely lost their broodiness instinct (the desire to hatch eggs). Leghorn is a lightweight breed (hens weigh less than 2 kg) and its muscular masses are not well developed. The comb can be single (floppy in hens) or rose. See the image below for all the shapes that combs can take!



Meat rabbits

Meat rabbits

For a long time, rabbit farming remained traditional and basically limited to domestic consumption and smallholdings, but in the 1960s the first specialised farms appeared and started to raise improved genetic lines of rabbits with industrialised methods. In 2013, the EU produced 482,547 tonnes of rabbit meat. The main producer is Italy, with 262,500 tonnes in 2013, followed at a distance by Spain (63,289 ton) and France (52,131 ton), the Czech Republic (38,500) and Germany (35,200 ton). Other EU countries, including Belgium, are minor producers but rabbit meat is imported from abroad (source: FAOSTAT, 2013). Internationally, the major producers are Asian (China in the first place).

Rabbits are highly prolific and productive. In a year, a doe (female rabbit) can have 7 litters, each with an average of 10 young, for a total of 55 weaned young stock. However, the mortality rate before weaning is high (around 20%). Does are inseminated 10-12 days after the last delivery, with a theoretical interval of 42 days between successive litters. The young are weaned at 4-5 weeks and at a live weight of 600 g. Fattening continues until the average live weight of 2,350 kg (around 10 weeks). Females are used for reproduction starting from their 16th-18th week of life and their average productive life is 2 years. The choice of a specific breed depends on the maternal characteristics (prolificacy, fertility, milk production), resistance to disease and growth rate of the young. Meat rabbits are expected to have a high growth rate, a low feed consumption (3 kg), and a carcass yield of 60-65% (final weight 1.2 kg). Carcass quality is also very important. Consumers appreciate a stocky carcass with rosy meat, white fat and light-coloured liver.

Heavy and medium heavy breeds are used in rabbit meat production. The Géant des Flandres (Flemish Giant rabbit) and the French Lop belong to the heavy category, with adults weighing 6-9 kg. These are rapidly growing breeds but with a high feed conversion ratio and a low carcass yield. Therefore, they are mainly used in crossings to create hybrid lines.

The most interesting breeds for meat production are the medium heavy ones, with a final live weight of 4-5 kg. Internationally used breed are the **New Zealand** and the **Californian**, furthermore the **Fauve de Bourgogne** and the **Vienna White.** The **White of Termonde**, the **Belgian Silver** and the **Blue of Beveren** (see image below) are local Belgian breeds belonging to this category (click on any of the images to enlarge).



The New Zealand is the typical meat rabbit. It was selected in the U.S.A. with carcass conformation in mind and was introduced in Europe around 1955, where it soon became very popular. White is the most valuable variety for commercial purposes, and therefore is the most highly developed and most commonly seen. The body is large and rectangular, with strong paws that are entirely covered in thick fur, including the palmar and plantar aspects. The appearance is meaty.



The Californian is one of the best American breeds of meat rabbit due to its smooth, firm and plump body. The coat is pure white except for the ears, nose, feet, and tail, which are black.

Angora rabbits

Angora rabbits



Rabbits can be exploited for their pelts and hair. Long-coated Angora rabbits are raised for the quality of their wool, which is fine, very soft and fluffy. The Angora is one of the oldest types of domestic rabbit, originating in Ankara (historically known as Angora), present day Turkey, along with the Angora cat and Angora goat. The wool is traditionally harvested by combing (see here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJokunZfwpo), but the most common techniques are now plucking (epilation) or shearing with scissors or manual or electric clippers (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=03blytQ8tf0).

Angora rabbits can live 7-12 years and can produce fine quality wool for their entire lifespan. The wool is harvested at 90-day intervals.

Animal welfare



Plymouth Rock

Plymouth Rock



The Plymouth Rock is a large poultry breed (hens weigh 3.5-4.5 kg). It was developed in North America, where it was the most popular poultry breed until WWII. Its success derived from its qualities as an outstanding farm chicken: hardiness, docility, broodiness, and excellent production of both eggs and meat. Early in its development, the name Plymouth Rock implied a barred bird, but in time more varieties were developed, such as the white, the buff and the partridge Plymouth Rocks. The Barred Plymouth Rock was one of the foundation breeds for the broiler industry in the 1920s, and the White Rock continues to be used as the female side in commercial broiler hybridisation programs.

Purebred Spanish Horse

Purebred Spanish Horse (Andalusian)



The Purebred Spanish Horse, also known as the Andalusian or the *Pura Raza Española* (P.R.E.), is an elegant breed with ancestors dating back thousands of years to the Andalusian region of the Iberian Peninsula. The horse evolved to have catlike agility, power, and beauty because it faced rugged terrain and needed to co-exist with local wildlife, including wild bulls. The Spanish horse was the choice mount of all European royalty and was thus regarded as the royal horse of Europe throughout history.

The exact origins of these horses are not fully known. Some experts consider the P.R.E. to be a native and pure breed, whereas others speculate that the breed is a result of crosses between native Iberian horses and horses brought by the Berbers from Northern Africa in the 8th century during the Moorish conquest. However, recent genetic evidence does not support the notion of extensive gene flow between Iberian and Northern African lineages during the Moorish invasion. During the Middle Ages, Carthusian monks began to breed Andalusians and zealously guarded the purity of their bloodlines. Most of today's Spanish Purebred Horses are descendants of these Carthusian horses.

Thanks to its versatility, today the Andalusian horse is used in many equestrian disciplines, especially dressage. The Andalusian was among the first horses used for classical dressage, and they are still successfully competing at the international level.

Curiosity: the Andalusian has been extensively used in films and has been featured in Gladiator, Interview with the Vampire, Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life, Braveheart, The Lord of the Rings film trilogy, King Arthur, First Knight, The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, and many others.

Breed characteristics

- The typical Andalusian stallion stands 156 cm at withers
- The Andalusian is strongly built, yet extremely elegant

- Head is rectangular, lean, of medium length, with convex or straight profile
- Ears are small and straight
- Eyes are large, kind, alive
- Strong, arched neck. The mane is thick, long, and silky
- Powerful body
- Hind legs positioned well underneath the body with strong hock action and impulsion
- The quarters are broad and strong with a rounded croup
- The tail is set low and lies tightly against the body
- The most common color is gray, but many other colours are now accepted

Quarter Horse

Quarter Horse (USA)



The Quarter horse is the most popular horse breed in the USA and one of the oldest. It is also one of the most popular worldwide. It was developed by crossing Spanish and English horses, and later also Thoroughbreds. Quarter horses have traditionally served as mounts for the cowboys (i.e., as stock horses) leading their herds of cattle: the term "Quarter" was chosen because since colonisation times horses were made to race on distances of a quarter of a mile. Cowboys needed a horse that would be very fast on the short distances, a sprinter that could start and stop quickly and abruptly, very agile, resistant to efforts and with an in-bred sense for gathering herds ("cow-sense"). At the present time, these qualities are much appreciated during rodeos and other Western disciplines that are very popular in the USA. Quarter horses are also present in Europe where they are used for Western style riding.

Breed characteristics

- Height at withers: 145-156 cm
- Compact conformation with powerful muscles
- Noble head, short back
- Hindquarters are muscular and higher than the forequarters
- Solid chestnut and bay predominate, but other coat colours are possible, with the exception of piebald and appaloosa. White markings on the head and limbs may be present

Belgian Trotter

Belgian Trotter (Demi-sang Trotteur Belge)



The Belgian trotter is the result of crosses between American and French trotters between the two wars. Belgian breeders wanted to associate the temperament and the speed of American trotters with the conformation and the more pronounced rusticity of French trotters. The idea was to obtain "an American engine (*moteur*) inside a French bodywork (*carrosserie*)", that is, a horse with both speed and endurance. World war II put an end to the golden period of Belgian breeders, because American trotter stallions reached unaffordable prices. In spite of these difficulties, Belgian Trotters have continued to improve over the years and compete internationally. Selection is based mainly on race performances (times and prizes gained).

Appaloosa

Appaloosa (USA)



The Appaloosa horse originated in Oregon, where it was bred by the Native American tribe of the Nez Perce in the region of the Palouse River. Today, the Appaloosa is one of the most popular horse breeds in the United States; it is used in a number of western riding disciplines, as well as many other equestrian activities. There is a wide range of body types within the breed, stemming from the influence of multiple breeds of horses throughout its history.

Breed characteristics

Appaloosas are best known for their colourful spotted coat pattern, which is often white on the lumbar region and on the croupe with well demarcated oval or round coloured spots of a diameter of of 8-10 cm. Appaloosa markings have several pattern variations. This unique group of spotting patterns is collectively called the "leopard complex”. Spots overlay darker skin, and are often surrounded by a "halo", where the skin next to the spot is also dark but the overlying hair coat is white. There are three other distinctive characteristics of Appaloosas: mottled skin, striped hooves, and eyes with a white sclera. Skin mottling is usually seen around the muzzle, eyes, anus, and genitalia. Striped hooves are a common trait, quite noticeable on Appaloosas, but not unique to the breed. The sclera is the part of the eye surrounding the iris; although all horses show white around the eye if the eye is rolled back, Appaloosas have a visible white sclera with the eye in a normal position. The physical conformation is similar to that of Quarter horses.

Belgian Saddle Horse



1. SBS: Belgian Sport Horse (Cheval de Sport Belge)

Half-bred saddle breeds were developed particularly in the early 1900s as war horses for the military cavalry. However, with the advent of motorised vehicles, these breeds were converted into saddle horses.

The objective was to obtain a multi-purpose, harmonious horse with a good temperament and that could compete in all equestrian disciplines. The current denomination of the Belgian Half Bred is "Belgian Sport Horse" (Cheval de Sport Belge) or sBs, with its own stud-book. There are about 800 sBs foals born each year.

Origin	Belgium Wallonian Region
History	Already in 1920, the Society of Encouragment to breed Military Horses was founded. This society was re-named in 1930 in the Society for the Belgian Half-Bred (Demi-Sang Belge - Belgisch halfbloedpaard), which became royal in 1967. Since 1991, the society calls itself Studbook SBS.
Size	Minimum 1.55 m, maximum 1.80 m
Weight	in mean 400 to 550 kg
Colour	All uniform colours
Temperament	Docile and brave
Utilisation	Jumping, dressage and cross field

The Belgian Sport Horse is characterised by uniformity of purpose rather than by strict physical features.

2. BWP: cheval de sang belge, Belgisch Warmbloedpaard, warmblood belge ou belge sang chaud

Origin	Belgium Flamish Region
History	Studbook was created in 1955 and is held by the National Association of the Warmblood Horse (Association nationale de l'élevage du cheval de sang - het Belgisch warmbloedpaard, BWP).
Size	Variable between 1.55 m and 1.80 m, the mean is between 1.65 m and 1.71 m
Weight	400 kg to 550 kg
Colour	All colours
Temperament	Calm but energetic
Utilisation	Jumping, dressage and cross field

The most reliable way to positively identify a Belgian Warmblood is by the brand on the left thigh (see image below). Belgian Warmblood foals receive this brand during their foal inspection, when they are given a passport and deemed free of obvious defects. There are about 4500 BWP foals born each year.



Image: the studbook brand, which features a "windmill" of horse heads, is given to all Belgian Warmbloods

Between the ages of three and four years old, Belgian Warmblood stallions need to pass a licensing test, consisting of a veterinary inspection, subjective evaluation of the stallion's conformation and jumping ability without a rider, and evaluation of the stallion's qualities under the saddle.

The published breeding aim for the Belgian Warmblood reads as follows:

> **"A noble modern and correctly-built warmblood horse with a rectangular frame, big outlines and good basic paces. The horse should be pleasant to ride and have an unobjectionable character, so that it can be used by any rider, both as pleasure horse and as a performance horse on national and international level. There has to be a balance between conformation, performance and health."**

Friesian

Friesian (NL)



The Friesian horse is a half-blood heavy horse used for the saddle and for carriage driving. It descends from the horses that once inhabited the primitive forests of Northern Europe and has been bred for millennia in Friesland, in the Northern part of the Netherlands, where it is extremely popular. Friesian horses played an important role in human history and in the development of many other horse breeds. The Romans appreciated the strength of Friesian horses and used them for their cavalry. In the Middle Ages it was also much appreciated as a military horse and participated in the Crusades, during which time it was crossed with Arabian and Berber horses, and subsequently also Andalusian horses during the long Spanish occupation of the Netherlands. Friesians are excellent trotters, ideal as saddle horses and also as light and heavy draft horses, but they are mostly used for driving carriages, as they have a lively but docile temperament and a high, rapid and energetic trot.

Breed characteristics

- The average height at withers is 160 cm and may be between 152 to 173 cm.
- The head is long and narrow with a straight profile. The ears are short and pricked, very mobile, with an abundant forelock and very expressive, mild eyes.
- The neck is short and wide with a thick, lustrous and wavy mane.
- The distal parts of the limbs are covered in thick long hair.
- The tail is long, thick and wavy.
- The coat must be pitch black without white markings. Only a small star on the forehead is tolerated.

Comtois

Comtois (FR)



This breed originated in the Franche-Comté region and is currently the most numerous draft horse breed in France, having gained popularity for all horse sports disciplines due to its reasonable size, its docility and its pleasant appearance. It is used for riding and carriage driving as well as for light forestry and agricultural works in delicate environments (i.e., in vineyards).

Breed characteristics

- It is a light draft horse (150-160 cm) of a less imposing appearance compared to the other draft breeds, and well adapted to working in the mountains.
- The head is square, with a dished profile; the neck is straight, the limbs quite short.
- The back often presents a degree of lordosis.
- The coat is bay or chestnut, often with flaxen or silver mane and tail.

Merens

Merens (FR)



The Mérens pony is a very ancient local breed that still lives semi-wildly in the high mountains of the French Ariège region, near the French-Spanish border. It was used traditionally as packhorse to transport wood and minerals, as well as for agricultural work. Real selection began n 1908 and the stud-book was created in 1947. Nowadays, Mérens ponies are used primarily for mountain trekking, where they are much appreciated for their sure-footedness and their robustness. Mérens are docile, multi-purpose animals, easy to maintain as they can survive on meagre rations even when used as working horses.

Breed characteristics

- Height at withers: 131-145 cm.
- Head: expressive, flat forehead, short hairy ears, lively eyes. A “beard” grows on the jaws during winter months.
- Neck: short, large at the base, not elegant but straight and solid.
- Mane and forelock are very thick.
- Body structure: robust, large and deep chest, long and solid back; the limbs are short but sometimes less robust than desirable due to “cow hocks”, a common undesirable feature of mountain breeds of horses.
- Tail: long and thick.

- Coat colour is exclusively **black**, with short and shiny hair. White markings on the head and limbs are exceptional.

Connemara

Connemara (IE)



Connemara ponies are native to Ireland's west coast, a region of lakes and turf fields. They probably descend from the same line as the Highland and the Shetland, but different crosses throughout the centuries made the Connemara lighter and more athletic than the former two breeds, to the point that the modern breed does not resemble its ancestors at all. Connemaras are remarkable jumpers and they are equally good at dressage, being considered the best competition pony. They can also be used for polo and for harness driving, as well as for horse-trekking, where they are appreciated for their sure-footedness.

Breed characteristics

- Height at withers should ideally not exceed 132 cm but it can reach 147 cm.
- They are described as elegant, resistant, nervous and active.
- All colours are admitted with the exception of piebald, but the predominant colour is grey. The primitive colours, isabella and roan, sometimes with a dorsal stripe, are now rare.

New Forest

New Forest



The breed originated in the New Forest area in Hampshire, where these ponies have traditionally lived in the wild, receiving the influence of many other breeds, such as the Arabian, the Hackney, the Exmoor and Dartmoor, the Welsh Pony. Different crosses were carried out until 1948, when the current breeders' society was founded. The stud-book was created in 1960.

Breed characteristics

- The standard of the breed admits a height at withers of maximum 148 cm.
- The head is very elegant and recalls that of an Arabian. It has a straight profile, a large forehead and long ears. The eyes are intelligent and friendly.
- The body is compact, with a short back, and fine but solid limbs.

New Forest ponies are used for riding, harness driving, hunting and polo. They are robust animals that can live outside all year round. All colours are admitted excluding skewbald, spotted and blue-eyed cream

All the ponies that wander freely within the New Forest are owned by people who have the 'Rights of Common of Pasture', which permits putting animals out at pasture on the 37,500 hectares of open Forest. "Commonable" animals are ponies, horned cattle and donkeys.

Manx

Manx



History. The Manx has existed for many centuries on the Isle of Man, in the Irish Sea between England and Ireland, probably first introduced there by settlers and explorers. Not much is known about its origins, except that in the beginning Manx cats arrived with their tails intact. The tailless tract is probably the result of a spontaneous mutation within the Isle's domestic cat population. The gene governing the lack of tail in the Manx is dominant, while most other short-tailed breeds such as the Japanese Bobtail, have tails governed by recessive genes. Given the Isle of Man's closed environment and small gene pool, the dominant gene passed from one generation to the next. Nowadays the Manx is a very popular show breed, always in high demand due to breeding challenges.

Personality. Intelligent, fun loving, devoted, gentle, loyal.

Appearance. Solidly muscled, compact, medium in size with sturdy bone structure. Overall impression of roundness; round head with firm, round muzzle and prominent cheeks. Ears are wide at the base, tapering to a rounded tip. The eyes are round and full. Legs heavily boned, with hind legs much longer than fore legs, with heavy muscular thighs. The tail should be absent in perfect specimens. However, a rise of bone at the end of the spine is allowed. The rump is extremely broad and round.

Note on the Manx gene. The Manx is one of the most challenging cats to breed because of the Manx gene. Homozygous Manx kittens (= kittens that inherit the Manx gene from both parents) die in utero. Even heterozygous kittens (= kittens that inherit only one copy of the Manx gene) have a higher than average mortality rate, because this gene can cause deformities such as spina bifida, fusions of the spine, and defects of the colon. Because of these possible physical problems, the Manx standard calls for disqualification of any cat with congenital deformities. Careful breeding helps minimize the defects.

Coat. Double coat, short, dense, with a well-padded quality do to the presence of cottony undercoat. Texture of outer guard hairs is hard and glossy. A softer coat may occur in whites and dilutes due to colour/texture gene link.

Colours. Any colour or pattern with the exception of those showing hybridization (chocolate, lavender, sable, lilac, cinnamon, fawn, colour-pointed (Himalayan pattern) or these combinations with white.

Abyssinian

Abyssinian



History. The Abyssinian is one of the oldest known cat breeds, but its exact origins are unknown. Some believe that it comes from Abyssinia (now Ethiopia), and was named after that country. More recent genetic evidence suggests that it may have descended from a type of cat found in parts of Southeast Asia. Whatever its exact origins are, the Abyssinian was first exhibited in 1871, during the first modern cat show, in London's Crystal Palace, and gained the third place out of approximately 160 specimens. The breed arrived in the U.S.A. in the 1900s, and is now one of the most popular cat breeds there.

Personality. Corageous, curious, high-spirited, affectionate (but independent), athletic, playful.

Appearance. Medium size, regal appearance, light, hard and muscular. The body is medium long and graceful, showing strength without coarseness. The head is a rounded wedge. The ears are large, alert, moderately pointed, broad at the base. Eyes are almond-shaped, large and expressive. Legs and feet are proportionately slim, fine boned. Tail is thick at the base, fairly long and tapering.

Coat. Of medium length, soft, silky, fine, dense , with a lustrous sheen.

Colour. The Abyssinian is a ticked (or agouti) breed. The distinctive coat appearance comes from the combination of colours on each hair shaft (see picture below): the lighter or ground colour lies closest to the skin, and each hair shaft has dark-coloured bands that are contrasted with lighter-coloured bands. The hair shaft ends with a dark tip.



Healh. Plaque, tartar buildup, gingivitis, renal amyloidosis, PK deficiency.

Birman

Birman



History. These magnificent cats were imported from Burma (now Myanmar) – where they were kept as sacred animals in the Buddhist Temples - to France in the early 1900s, where they were bred and refined. Today, it is one of the most popular long-haired cat breeds.

Personality. Affectionate, gentle, faithful, intelligent, people-oriented, easy to handle.

Appearance. The Birmans are massive cats, more elongated and lower on the legs than the Persians. The head is round with full jaws. The nose is short, the ears small and far apart. The eyes are almost round, sapphire blue, with a sweet expression. The tail is of moderate length.

Coat. Medium long-long, silky in texture, with heavy ruff around the neck.

Colour. Colourpointed (meaning that the tail, ears, extremities and face are coloured on a light background): seal point, blue, point, chocolate point, and lilac point. The paws must have white "**gloves**" (the more symmetrical, the better) and "**laces**" (see picture below). Birmans are born pure white, and the shadings appear gradually.



Norwegian Forest cat

Norwegian Forest cat



History. The Norwegian Forest Cat, called the *skogkatt* (forest cat) in Norway, is a natural breed, and despite its feral appearance it is not a descendant or a hybrid or any wild cat species. Forest Cats probably descend from domestic cats first introduced to northern Europe by the Romans. These cats, however, would have been short-haired, and in time they adapted to the severe climate of Norway. Over centuries, they developed long, dense, water-resistant coats, as well as hardy constitutions, a sharp intelligence and strong survival instincts. The first Norwegian cat club was founded in 1934, and in 1938 the first Forest Cat was exhibited in Oslo, Norway.

Personality. Active, playful, inquisitive, family-oriented, gregarious.

Appearance. Sturdy cat, solidly muscled and well-balanced, moderate in length, with substantial bone structure and powerful appearance. Head is like a triangle, with all sides of equal length. Ears are medium to large, rounded at the tip and broad at base, with cup pointing sideways. Eyes are large, almond shaped, well-opened and expressive. Tail is long and bushy, broader at the base. Desirable length is equal to the body from base of nexk to base of tail.

Coat. Characteristic double coat, with dense undercoat covered by long, clossy and smooth water-resistant outer coat (guard hairs) hanging down the sides. The bib consists of three separate sections: short collar at the neck, side “mutton chops”, and frontal ruff. Breeches are full on the hind legs.

Colours. Any colour or pattern with the exception of those showing hybridization (chocolate, lavender, sable, lilac, cinnamon, fawn, colour-pointed (Himalayan pattern) or these combinations with white.

European Shorthaired

European Shorthaired



History. The ancestors of the European Shorthaired were probably North-African cats who arrived to Europe on board the ships of Phoenician merchants. The European Shorthaired is currently the most common cat breed worldwide. Until 1982, there was a lot of confusion around the breed, which had two varieties, the British Shorthair (obtained by crossing shorthairs with Persians, now called British Shorthair), and the Scandinavian type, which was obtained exclusively by crossing “common” cats. Nowadays it is the latter that is called European Shorthair.

Personality. Intelligent, active, adaptable (individual characteristics vary widely).

Appearance. The European Shorthair possesses exceptional beauty, endurance and agility. The body is compact, stocky but well-proportioned body, low on the legs. The chest is large and full, the front and hind limbs are of equal length, the paws are rounded and rest firmly on the ground. The head is rounded, almost apple-shaped, and the cheeks are full. The nose is large and short. The ears are small, set apart, tapering to a rounded point. The eyes are big and round. The tail, relatively short, tapers towards the tip.

Coat. Short, thick, short, shiny, close-lying.

Colours. All colours are admitted except for those indicating hybridization (chocolate, lilac, lavender, colour-pointed, etc.).

Belgian Shepherd*

Belgian Shepherd (BE)



(A Malinois Belgian Shepherd)

In Belgium, at the end of the 1800s, there were a great many herding dogs, whose type was varied and whose coats were extremely dissimilar. In order to rationalise

this state of affairs, some enthusiastic dog fanciers formed a group and sought guidance from Prof. A. Reul of the Cureghem Veterinary Medical School, whom one must consider to have been the real pioneer and founder of the breed, together with breeder Nicolas Rose. The detailed breed standard was published in 1891.

Behaviour and temperament

The Belgian Shepherd is a watchful and active dog, bursting with energy, and always ready to leap into action. As well as its innate skill at guarding flocks, it also possesses the highly prized qualities of the best guard dog of property. Without any hesitation it is the stubborn and keen protector of its owner. It brings together all those qualities necessary for a shepherd, guard, defence and service dog. Its lively, alert temperament and its confident nature, showing no fear or aggressiveness, should be obvious in its body stance and the proud attentive expression in its sparkling eyes. When judging this breed, one should take into consideration its calm and fearless temperament.

Physical characteristics

The Belgian Shepherd is a dog whose shape can be fitted into a square. Height at withers is approximately 62 cm in males and 58 cm in females; weight between 28 and 35 kg. Its general appearance is less robust but more elegant than that of a German Shepherd. The head is long without exaggeration, rectilinear, well chiseled. The muzzle is slightly longer than the skull, contributing to the impression of lightness. The triangular ears are carried erect. The tail, slightly curved, must not fall lower than the hock. As opposed to the German Shepherd, the stifle is approximately on the plumb line from the hip.

Depending on the coat type and colour, one distinguishes **4 varieties** of Belgian Shepherd: the **Groenendael**, the **Tervueren**, the **Malinois** and the **Laekenois**. In all the varieties the hair must always be dense, close-fitting and of good texture, with the woolly undercoat forming an excellent protective covering.

Beauceron

Beauceron (FR)



The name Beauceron was long used in France to describe all types of short-coat shepherd dogs as opposed to long-coat ones, who were called Brie dogs. These ancient French Sheepdogs of the plains had all smooth hair on the head, a harsh, short coat and ears normally cropped. The body had tan markings, notably at the extremities of the four legs, which led the breeders at that time to call these dogs “Red-Stockings” (Bas-Rouge). The coat was commonly black and tan but there were also grey, entirely black and even wholly tan dogs. These dogs were bred and selected for their aptitude to conduct and guard flocks of sheep.

Behaviour/temperament

Self-confident. Never mean, timid or worried. The character of the Beauceron should be gentle and fearless.

Physical characteristics

The Beauceron is a big, solid, hardy, powerful, well built and muscular dog. Males measure 65-70 cm at withers, females 63-68 cm; average weight is 27-37 kg. The head is long, with a marked stop; the skull and muzzle are approximately of equal length. The ears were once cropped and carried erect, but they are naturally carried flat although not plastered. The tail descends to the hock and forms a hook in the form of a “J”.

The metatarsals (rear pasterns) are vertical, slightly further back than the point of the buttock. The dewclaws are typically double.

The coat is smooth on the head, short, thick, firm and lying close to the body, 3 to 4 cm in length. The buttocks and the underside of the tail are lightly but obligatorily fringed (with long hair). The undercoat is short, fine, dense and downy, preferably mouse grey, very close, and can't be seen through the top coat. The colour can be black, black and tan, fawn with dark overlay, grey, grey with dark spots.

The "Red-Stockings" variety is black and tan (Black with tan markings). The black is pure black and the tan is reddish. The tan markings are distributed as follows:

• Spots over the eyes

• On the sides of the muzzle, diminishing gradually on the cheeks, never attaining under the ear

• On the chest, preferably two spots.

• Under the neck

• Under the tail

• On the lower limbs

Border Collie*

Border Collie (UK)



The Border Collie as a breed was originated in Northumberland, a place on the very border of England and Scotland. The breed is developed for the purpose of herding livestock, especially sheep. The name “Border Collie” came from the simple fact the breed had been developed in a place on the Anglo-Scottish border.

Behaviour & temperament

The Border Collie is widely considered to be the most intelligent dog breed. Due to their working heritage, Border Collies are very demanding, playful, and energetic. They are better off in households that can provide them with plenty of play and exercise, either with humans or other dogs. Many Border Collies develop neurotic boredom-driven behaviors (destructive biting and digging) in households that are not able to provide for their needs. They are frequently surrendered to shelters due to their strong desire to herd, which makes them unsuitable for families with small children, cats, and other dogs. As with many working breeds, Border Collies can be motion-sensitive and they may chase moving vehicles.

Physical characteristics

Smaller than the long-coated Collie (ca. 53 cm at withers). Two coat varieties: moderately long or smooth. In both, topcoat is dense and medium textured, undercoat soft and dense giving good weather resistance. In the moderately long-coated variety, the abundant coat forms

mane, **breeches** (a term used to describe the longer fringe-like hair on the upper and lower thighs of some long-coated breeds) and **brush** (tail that has a dense or heavy amount of hair; also known as a bushy tail). The hair should be short and smooth on the face, ears, forelegs (except for **feather**, i.e., a fringe or feathery tuft of longer hair that is usually found on the ears, tail, body, or legs of a dog. Feathering can occur on one area or on several depending on breed standard), hind legs from hock to ground.

Variety of **colours**: solid, bicolour or tricolour on blue merle, red merle, chocolate merle, liver, lilac merle harlequin, chocolate, lilac, blue, sable merle, sable, shaded sable, chocolate sable, black, white, red, or **brindle** (a coat patterned with specks and streaks of light and dark markings).



Black and white (left) and blue merle (right) Border Collies. Click on the images to enlarge.

Breed-specific health concerns

Generally healthy but more prone to certain conditions.

Hip dysplasia, progressive retinal atrophy (PRA), epilepsy, Collie Eye Anomaly, Allergies, Osteochondrosis dissecans (OCD).

Dobermann Pinscher*

Dobermann Pinscher (DE)



The breed was created in the late 1860s by a Mr. Karl Dobermann, a German tax collector and dog catcher who worked in a dangerous area and needed a tough, smart, reliable protection dog.
Mr Dobermann used German Shepherds (for hardiness, intelligence, soundness), German Pinschers for quick reaction and terrier fire, and Weimaraners, for hunting abilities and a fine nose. He also used Rottweiler blood for courage, Greyhounds for speed and Manchester Terriers for the short, sleek coat. The result was a lean, mean fighting machine, a dangerous dog requiring courage to own. However, since then the breed has excelled in all aspects of service to humankind, including search and rescue, therapy, police dog work, guide work for the blind etc., as breeders now breed for intelligence, balance and responsiveness instead of ferocity.

Behaviour & temperament

Today's Dobermann Pinschers are intelligent and loyal, playful, athletic and powerful, but also of aristocratic appearance. They are natural protectors who won't hesitate to act when they feel that their family is under threat, but they are not aggressive without reason.Versatility is still a noble characteristic of the breed. They need a lot of exercise to expend their energy and stay in shape.

Physical appearance

Height: M 66-72 cm; F 61-69 cm
Weight: M 40-45 kg; F 32-35 kg

Head: tapered towards the tip of the nose, wedge-shaped if observed from above
Body: square shaped, especially in males
Coat: smooth, short, hard, thick, close lying. Undercoat not allowed (FCI)
Colours: black or brown with rust read clearly defined and clean markings (FCI)

Health

Lifespan: 10-12 years
Von Willebrand's disease, hip dysplasia, progressive retinal atrophy, hypothyroidism, Wobbler's syndrome, gastric dilatation-volvolus, dilative cardiomyopathy.

Bulldog*

Bulldog (UK)



This breed is the result of selection for bull-baiting (see the picture below), which was once a popular (and very cruel) form of entertainment in England. The Bulldog's undershot jaw stems from those terrible days, as it enabled it to grab a bull at any point, clamp down and then hang on. These bull-baitings, which had been common since the 13th century, were finally banned in 1835 ("Cruelty to Animals' Act"), after which time the Bulldog evolved into the shorter, squatter dog that we know today. He was also bred to be a kind companion, and many consider him as a symbol of courage and tenacity.

Image of bull-baiting: note that the bull was tied.

Behaviour & temperament

In spite of its tough beginnings, the Bulldog is probably one of the gentlest breeds. It retains a strong protective instinct, though, and makes a wonderful watchdog. Extremely affectionate with its family. Craves affection and attention. Gentle with children, agreeable with other pets. Breathing somewhat difficult, so it should not be overstressed with exercise. Simple stroll will fulfill its needs.

Physical appearance

Powerful, stocky body supported by very short, thick and arched legs. Big head with very large forehead and a very short bridge of the nose. The lower jaw is markedly overshot, the lips are thick

and pendulous, the ears are in the form of a rose.
Lifespan: 10-12 years
Height: 30.5-40.5 cm
Weight: M 22.5-25 kg; F 18-23.5 kg
Coat: short, straight, flat, close, fine, smooth, glossy
Colours: brindle (all variations), piebald, red, fawn, fallow, white. A black mask can be present.

Breed-specific health concerns

“Cherry eye” (prolapse of the gland of the third eyelid), elongated soft palate, entropion, hip dysplasia, hypoplastic trachea, patellar luxation, spina bifida, stenotic nares.

Great Dane*

Great Dane (Deutsche Dogge, German Dogue, DE)



(A blue Great Dane)

Note that this breed is only called the “Great Dane” in English-speaking countries. In Germany he’s called the “*Deutsche Dogge*”, or the German Dogue. Its history is not exactly known. It may have descended from an ancient mastiff-type dog already depicted in Egyptian drawings dating from 2,200 B.C. For hundreds of years the Dane-like “Boar Hounds” served as boar hunters, bull-baiters, and war dogs for both the German and the Celts. Hunting savage boars required a powerful, agile, tough dog, and these dogs became so famous that German nobility began to take the best specimens for their estates. The Germans continued to refine the breed, which was so loved that it was chosen as the national dog in 1876.

Behaviour & temperament

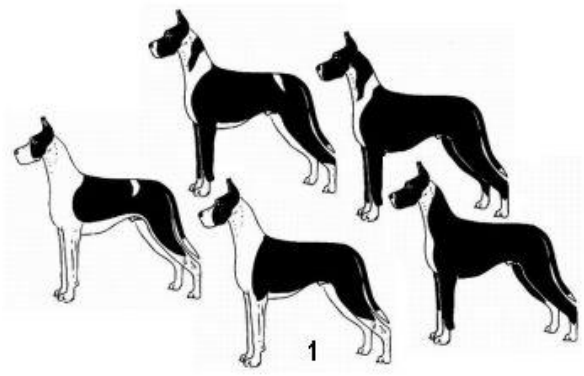
Today’s Great Dane is a lover, not a fighter – although it retains a strong protective instinct towards members of its family. Mostly, though, it is affectionate, playful and patient, especially with children. A people-oriented dog that does not require much physical exercise and is quite content indoors, sharing the life of the family.

Physical appearance

Great Danes are called the “Apolloes of Dogs” because of their majestic and harmonious appearance. They have a well-proportioned body carried on long legs. The head is very expressive, light and elongated, with a marked stop. The ears are carried dropped.

Lifespan 7-10 years
Height: M at least 80 cm/ F at least 72 cm
Weight M at lest 54 kg/ F at least 46 kg
Coat: short, thick and glossy

Coat colours: brindle, fawn, blue, black, harlequin **(pure white base colour with separated and irregularly distributed black patches over the entire body; pure white neck preferred)**, mantle **(black base with various white patterns).** Harlequin and mantle are colours found only in Great Danes.





Mantle (left) and harlequin (right) colour patterns of the Great Dane

Breed-specific health concerns

Breed health concerns include developmental issues often in association with an inadequate diet. Other frequent problems are hip dysplasia, gastric torsion, bone cancer (osteosarcoma), lymphoma, cardiomyopathy, cervical vertebral instability, surgical complications.

Bloodhound*

Bloodhound (Belgium)



The modern Bloodhound dates back from more than 1,000 years ago, when the breed was refined in the monastery of St. Hubert in Belgium from an ancient dog type called Segusius. These St.Hubert hounds were mostly black in colour and were slow, deliberate, heavy-skinned tracking dogs with persistence, extremely sensitive noses, and melodious voices. They originally tracked game such as wolves, big cats, and deer or followed the trail of wounded game. When the Normans conquered England in 1066, the St. Hubert hounds made their way across the Channel. In England they eventually became known as Bloodhounds, because they were used exclusively by the nobility. Bloodhounds have an unrivalled reputation for cold-trailing and they are used by police forces to detect very difficult trails and to track missing people. They are still called St.Hubert Hounds in Belgium and some other countries.

Behaviour & temperament

These kind-souled dogs get along with everyone and they are a gentle and loving presence. They are, nonetheless, single-minded and persistent, so they are often more interested in what's on the ground than in what their owner is trying to show or tell them. They need a safely enclosed area to exercise or they can follow their noses into trouble. Bred to be pack animals, Bloodhounds do not thrive if left alone. They need regular exercise but not necessarily vigorous.

Physical appearance

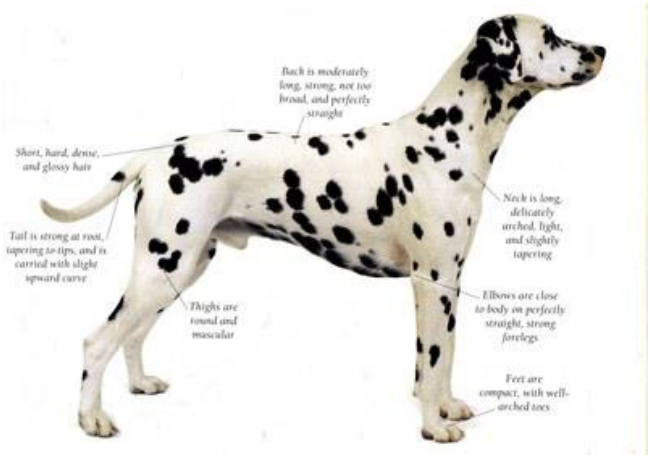
Bloodhounds give an impression of strength and solemnity. The head is very long, uniformly large, with a square profile. The skin is supple, thin and loose and forms deep folds and wrinkles on the forehead and cheeks. The eyes are deep set and the lower eyelid is slack, showing a portion of the conjunctiva, which confers to this breed the typical gentle and melancholic expression. The ears are very long and fall along the sides of the head. The lips are markedly pendulous. The tail is carried straight.

Lifespan: 10-12 years
Height: M 63.5-68.5 cm/ F58.5-63.5 cm
Weight: M 41-54 kg/ F 36-48 kg
Coat: short, smooth, close-lying, weatherproof or harsh
Colour: black and tan, liver and tan; red; may have white markings

Health
Bloat; ear infections; entropion; hip dysplasia

Dalmatian*

Dalmatian (Croatia)



(Image: physical standard of the Dalmatian. Click to enlarge)

This spotted dog has been known in Europe since the Middle Ages and was first described in Dalmatia (nowadays Croatia). With his introduction into England in the 1770s, the aristocracy found the perfect addition for their elegant carriages and high-stepping horses. At first, the Dalmatian trotted alongside carriages on long treks to protect travellers from highwaymen, but eventually the breed became an ornament for the wealthy. They became known especially for their presence in fire stations with horse-drawn water wagons, and in cities, where they would often run ahead barking to clear the streets for the firemen. To this day, the Dalmatians are kept as mascots of fire brigades in the United States.

Behaviour & temperament

The Dalmatian is intelligent, independent-minded dog with a big devotion for his master. He is very athletic and has a lot of energy and enthusiasm, and an almost endless *joie de vivre*, which requires an active owner. The Dalmatian needs socialization and positive training to feel most comfortable around children and other animals. If he gets it, he becomes completely trustworthy. Dalmatians are high-energy dogs who need regular exercise several times a day. Without it, they can become destructive. They are great jogging and hiking companions.

Physical appearance

The most notable feature of Dalmatians are the black or liver-coloured spots on a white background. The head has a prism shape with hanging ears. The body is rectangular, strong, muscled and distinctively spotted. The movement must be elegant. The sexual difference must be visible. The thin ears taper towards the tip and are set fairly high and close to the head. Eye color varies between brown, amber, or blue, with some dogs having one blue eye and one brown eye, or other combinations.

Lifespan: 11-13 years
Height: M 56-61 cm/F 54-59 cm
Weight: M 27-32 kg/ F 24-29 kg
Coat: short, sleek, glossy, hard, dense
Colour: pure white background colour with black or liver-coloured spots

>> Did you know? Newborn Dalmatian puppies are born without dark spots!



Health

Congenital deafness; epilepsy; hip dysplasia; hypothyroidism; skin allergies and problems; urolithiasis

English Pointer

English Pointer (UK)



The English Pointer (or Pointer) is sometimes described as the thoroughbred of the canine species, a breed that combines great distinction to his hunting qualities, among which an unrivalled sense of smell. It was developed in England to search for game and then stand on point to alert the hunter to the prey's location. At one time, Pointers were used to locate hares, so that Greyhounds could move in and course them down. Their look is so distinctive and aristocratic that they came to symbolize what a gentleman's gundog should look like.

Behaviour & temperament
Pointers are devoted and loyal family dogs. Highly energetic, they require obedience training and socialisation from puppyhood, or they will become boring and destructive. Some Pointers tend to be shy.

Physical appearance
Medium-size breed. The head is carried on a long and slightly arched neck. The forehead and nose bridge are of the same length, and the nose bridge is dished. The occipital ridge is very pronounced. The ears, attached high, are of medium length and carried flat. The tail is tapered towards the tip.

Lifespan: 12-14 years
Height: M 63.5-71 cm/ F 58.5-66 cm
Weight: M 25-34 kg/20-29.5 kg
Coat: short, smooth, dense, with a sheen
Colours: liver, lemon, black, orange, either self-coloured, tricolored or with white

Health
Hip dysplasia, skin problems, progressive retinal atrophy, thyroid problems.

Irish Wolfhound

Irish Wolfhound (Ireland)



Imposing sighthounds have been recorded in Ireland since 200 B.C. Mythic tales on these giant hounds report of great deeds, and the most famous story based on true fact is that of "Gelert, the faithful Hound" (read here). Throughout the Middle Ages, the Irish Wolfhound was used as a war dog, a guardian of property, and a hunter of large game (boars, stags, and elk). During the 15th and 16th century they became specialized in hunting wolves, and they also became more fixed in type. However, when wolves became extinct in Ireland in the 1700s, Wolfhounds lost their job and their popularity decreased enormously. Today, however this is again a thriving breed.

Behaviour & temperament

Irish Wolfhounds are gentle giants. They are intelligent, even-tempered, patient, loyal and affectionate. Although of imposing size, they are completely trustworthy around children and friendly to everyone.

Physical appearance

The Irish Wolfhound is a giant-sized dog, one of the tallest breeds in the world, reaching the size of a small pony. The head is long and the skull is not too broad. The muzzle is long and somewhat pointed. The small ears are carried back against the head when the dog is relaxed and partway pricked when the dog is excited. The long tail hangs down and is slightly curved.

Note that Irish Wolfhounds mature very slowly, reaching physical maturity around two years. They should not be over-exercised during the growing phase.

Lifespan: 6-8 years
Height: M 79-81 cm (min)/F 71-76 cm (min)
Weight: M min. 54.5 kg/ F 40.5-47.5 kg

Coat: rough and hard on body; beard and hair over the eyes are especially long and wiry
Colour: gray, brindle, red, black, pure white, fawn or any other colour in common with the Deerhound (link to FCI)

Health

Gastric dilatation-volvolus; bone cancer; heart problems; hypothyroidism; portosystemic shunts; von Willebrand disease.

Pekingese

Pekingese (China)



These miniature dogs have been known in China since the 8th century. Their terrifying "lion-like" appearance was believed to frighten away evil spirits. Around the 1800s there were thousands of them around the various imperial palaces of China, and 4,000 servants were housed and employed in Peking solely for the purpose of breeding and caring for the Pekingese dogs. No one outside the nobility was allowed to own one, and stealing one was punished by death, and the dogs were treated like kings. When Peking was taken by the British in 1860, the Imperial family gave orders to kill all Pekingese dogs, for fear they would fall into enemy hands. However, four were found alive and brought back to England, where they became popular.

Behaviour & temperament
Pekingese dogs are confident, charming, and a bit stubborn. They are fearless but never aggressive. Their purpose in life is to give comfort and companionship, and they tend to bond strongly to one person only. They need early socialisation to gain confidence. They can be jealous of other pets and children and should not be over-exercised.

Physical appearance
The Pekingese has some rather unique physical characteristics. The extremely shortened muzzle puts the nose directly between the eyes, creating a wide "smiling" mouth and a flat face. This characteristic causes them to suffer on hot, humid days. Their eyes are prominent and prone to injury. The head is wide and flat, the neck is short with relatively massive shoulders and chest, and the front legs are short and crooked. Combined with the long body, short stature, and narrow hips, the breed characteristically moves in a "rolling" way.

Lifespan: 10-12 years
Height: 15-23 cm

Weight: M max 5.5 kg/ F max 5 kg
Coat: double coat with long, straight, coarse, stand-off outer coat and thick, soft undercoat; abundant mane; feathering.
Colours: all colours and markings; may have black mask. No albino or liver.

Health

Pekingese can be affected by several health problems, among which breathing problems (brachycephalic airway obstruction syndrome), cleft palate, degenerative heart valve disease, patellar luxation, distichiasis, ulcerative keratoconjunctivitis. For a complete list, see here http://dogtime.com/dog-breeds/pekingese#health

Bichon Frisé

Bichon Frisé (France)



The origins of the breed are uncertain, but some say that it was imported from Tenerife to France by visiting sailors. He became a favourite of the 16th century French royals, including King Henry III of France, who is said to have carried Tenerife dogs in a tray-like basket hung from his neck with ribbons! With the French Revolution, Bichons were released on the streets and soon became pets for common people. They were also use as companions by organ grinders and circus performers. After the World Wars, the breed became known in France as “Bichon à poil frisée”.

Behaviour & temperament

Outgoing, merry, with a lot of personality. Affectionate and gentle, he likes to be with his owner as often as possible. He has a very cheerful attitude, well mannered and loves to be around people, children and other pets.

Physical appearance

The Bichon Frisé is a small, sturdy dog. The skull is slightly rounded. The muzzle is shorter than the skull, is not pointed, and has a slightly pronounced stop. The round eyes are black or dark brown. The ears are dropped covered in long hair. The tail is carried over the back.

Lifespan: 13-16 years
Height: max 30 cm
Weight: 3-5.5 kg
Coat: fine, silky coat with corkscrew curls Colour: solid white

Health

Allergies, cataracts, dental problems, ear infections, patellar luxation, skin problems.