

The Hayward family Cross breeding and onfarm processing are both key to the success of this well-known family unit, where both Shorthorns and Holsteins are milked.

Holsteins are milked.	
Herd size:	127
Expanding to:	240
100-tonne cows:	six
Average vields:	8.500kg and 10.000kg

Three-dimensional herd is central to an integrated family-run business

Dairying in 3D and adding value

We visited a mixed Shorthorn and Holstein herd to find out which breed reins supreme and why good longevity – the result of sound health and fertility – are allowing the family-run business to make the most of strong heifer prices.

text Rachael Porter

John Hayward's Hooton herd of pedigree Shorthorns is renown throughout the UK, with cows and heifer regularly gracing – and winning – in the show ring. But did you know that his family-run unit also has a Holstein herd, is leading the way with cross breeding and has on-farm processing?

With sons Matt and Chris on board, the mixed herd, which is based near Tuxford in Nottinghamshire, is also producing top-quality heifers, has recently invested in a new milking parlour and is now looking to expand cow numbers from the existing 127-cow herd – a 60:40 split of both Holsteins and Shorthorns – and they're all pedigree. The Holstein herd has its own prefix – Hootonex.

John admits that he's a Shorthorn man: "I try to be loyal to both breeds, but my real passion is with the Shorthorns. When I first started dairying I had no intention of milking Shorthorns, but I inherited some from my parents and the whole thing grew from there."

He says that there are notable differences between the two breeds, which are easy to see when they're milking side by side in the same herd and particularly when they are recorded separately. "The big advantages with Shorthorns are their health and fertility traits – they've a will to live. They're much easier to manage than the Holsteins."

Matt says that the breeds are contrasting. "The Holstein has a will to milk, but can be fragile when it comes to health and fertility. The converse can be said for the Shorthorn and the trick is to use the best

genetics to breed a cow with good health and fertility, as well as plenty of milk. And we've managed to do that time and time again with our cross-bred cows."

Separate recording

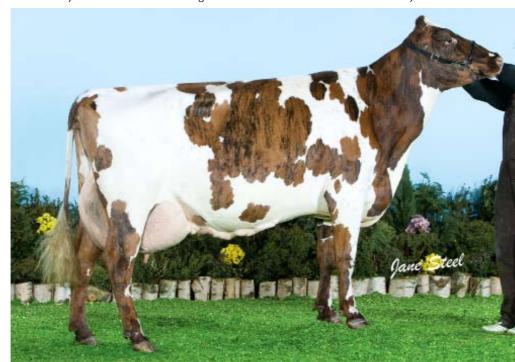
John says that there is about 1,500kg difference in average yield between the two breeds – the Holsteins currently average around 10,000kg and the Shorthorns around 8,500kg. In fact the Hooton Shorthorns topped the NMR annual production ranking for the breed in 2011 and, interestingly, the breed is the only one that saw somatic cell counts

and calving interval fall in 2011 and it also has the lowest scores for these parameters of all the recorded breeds. The breed average for somatic cell count is 178,000 cells/ml and the calving interval stands at 399 days.

It's a true reflection of the breed's tendency toward good health and fertility, according to John and the secretary of the Shorthorn Cattle Society, Frank Milnes.

"A similar SCC and calving interval trend was seen in 2011 in Shorthorns in the US and again it was the only breed to see a reduction, as opposed to an

Hooton Fairy Duchess 31 EX96 - the highest classified cross-bred cow in the country





increase. Milk from the Hooton herds is predominantly bottled on farm. John and his wife Ann set up the bottling enterprise 20 years ago and today it's grown to the point where it consumes 60 to 70% of the herd's output. A full range of milks and creams are sold locally, to power stations, old people's homes and other similar establishments. Milk is also sold to two local ice-cream makers – Blytons and Thaymars.

This side of the business is Chris' domain now. Matt focuses on the cows, with John very much at the front end as far as breeding is concerned.

Cross breeding

John is also into cross breeding, within the Shorthorn herd, using red Holstein and Swedish Red. And he's pretty good at it. He bred the highest classified crossbred cow in the country – Hooton Fairy Duchess 31.

She was classified EX96 – the highest for her breed – and she gave 13,000kg in her latest 305-day lactation, at 4.3% butterfat and 3.3% protein.

"I was one of the first breeders to use red Holsteins on my Shorthorns and one of the first to use Swedish Red. Today I'm using predominantly red Holstein and Shorthorn sires on my Shorthorns. And I'm looking for type. "If type is right then they should be able to milk well – and for many lactations." Longevity is certainly good across both breeds

In reply to the question of average age, John jokes that it's too high: "That's why we have so many heifers to sell – we don't need them all as replacements." He has six cows that have broken through the 100-tonne production

barrier, including two Shorthorns.

Parlour investment

Large volumes of milk and long milking times prompted investment in a new Westfalia 16:16 herringbone parlour, which was installed in November 2010 with computerised feeding, conductivity testing and yield monitoring.

"We're looking into the possibility of installing an automatic heat detection system, possibly later this year," says Matt.

This parlour replaced a 30-year-old 6:12 herringbone. "Milking was taking eight hours a day.

"We've slashed that to just four hours with the new parlour and there's spare capacity to cope with the proposed increase in cows."

The figure in mind is between 50 and 60 extra cows for the first phase of expansion, with a view to a second phase

that will push numbers up to between 230 and 240 head of milkers.

"We're looking at about five years before we're milking those kinds of numbers — we're in no great rush," says John. "We've a new shed to put up first — loose housing for all the young stock, dairy followers and beef cattle."

Heifer sales

At the moment the business is focused on selling freshly calved surplus heifers, with an in-calf heifer selling recently for £3,200.

Holsteins are sold at Beeston and Shorthorns are sold at the twice yearly Shorthorn Society sale at Chelford. "Prices are extremely good at the moment, so we're in no hurry to expand. Things are going well financially and long may it last. We're just focusing on keeping a tight rein on costs," adds Matt

The plan is to grow the business' bottling enterprise in line with herd expansion and to also sell a little more to the two local ice-cream makers.

"We'll be looking to push our 'brand' a little more when cow numbers increase," says Matt.

"In our experience, if the price and the milk quality are right then people will buy our milk."

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