

# BREED FEATURE

*Luings*

## with Craigdarroch Luings

**Our family moved to Craigdarroch in 2000. At the time Craigdarroch ran 1650 Blackface ewes and although it had previously ran Luing cows, they had been sold off before we moved down.**

It was a few years later that we realised the hill would benefit from having cattle grazing it and after considering a few other breeds and listening to the advice of my dad's cousin Willie Graham of Ravensneuk, Luings seemed the obvious choice.

Craigdarroch is a hill farm with a good, fairly dry hill but it has limited in-bye ground so we needed a breed that would thrive out on the hill all year round. We slowly built up our numbers to about 55-60 cows which we felt was the ideal number for grazing the hill but not too many for making too much of a mess over the winter months. At the time, I had no real interest in cattle and it was just a cow to graze the hill. I never imagined that we would get as involved in the breed by firstly selling heifers at Stirling to a few years later selling heifers and then bulls at Castle Douglas.

When buying our bulls, first and foremost we need to like the look of them, but the dam classification is also a useful tool especially for temperament and udder and teat scores.

Billy Graham

January used to be a "quieter month" on the farm but not now with the all the last minute halter training of bulls!



P3 - Dam of Vamp and Xhaka. Bull calf by Yoker.

The cows are on the hill almost all year round, only being brought inside as the first one calves mid March and being put straight back out to the hill as soon as the calf is up, sooked and tagged. They get fed magnesium rolls from November through the winter.



Kirkland Yorkie on the hill at the end of October

Most years lately we haven't started them on silage until they start calving, we have a scraped area at the bottom of the hill for the silage trailers. We find this way they give us very little difficulty at calving time as they are keeping active grazing the hill right up until they start.



H70 pictured on the hill at 15 yrs.  
Most influential cow.

This year we never even had a cow through the crush to handle at calving and most years every cow goes out of the shed with her own calf. We tried calving the heifers at 2 years once but found it wasn't for us as they required more attention, both before and for the year after they calve. We like to keep it as simple as possible having all of the cows running out on the hill in one batch almost all year round. We only have two main handlings with them a year. One at speaning time mid November when we treat for fluke and worms. At this stage, we also blood test and PD. Over the last 3 years we have only had one cow not scanned in calf.

The other handling is mid June when we bring them in to split up for the bulls and dehorn any horned calves. Although dehorning wasn't a big job this year, as we only had 8 out of 61 calves with horns! We have tried to go down the polled route with the bulls we have bought. We have been very fortunate over the years with the way the bulls we have bought have bred with us. Initially, we were lucky to buy Figo as a calf at foot with his mother and he then sired Hakka. Then there was Harehead Jake and Finlarg Nimrod who both bred exceptionally well with us, their daughters now make up a large proportion of our herd. More recently Culmaily Turbo has also bred very well and then Plenderleith Wizard whose heifers and bulls are looking very promising. We currently have two young stock bulls, Harehead Yogi and Kirkland Yorkie. We bought Yogi at the online premier sale last year which seemed to be a great success for all involved. Yorkie is a homozygous polled bull sired by Craigdarroch Wren. My sister Una used Wren as a yearling with her Kirkland herd. We like to use as many of our yearling bulls as possible as they tend to be off of our best breeding cow families, this helps to keep these good lines going. It also gives us the confidence of them being successful workers when selling them at Castle Douglas.



When buying our bulls, first and foremost we need to like the look of them, but the dam classification is also a useful tool especially for temperament and udder and teat scores.

As for the feet scores, it is probably a bit harder to gauge with different ground conditions and feet trimming playing a part in it. We try to be as particular as possible and haven't touched any feet for years as I think good feet and ability to move freely are extremely important for any hill cow to graze over large areas of rough ground.

Our calves don't get any feeding until we spean them in mid November and the heifers are put back outside to winter and our bulls/bullocks kept inside, with the bullocks being sold store in the spring. I don't think there would be many if any other true hill breeds that can produce bullocks with the size and conformation of a Luing and they are proving very popular in the store ring. All in all, I certainly think the Luing is the ideal breed for this farm and many others with their versatility, temperament, foraging and mothering abilities, fertility and size all being the perfect fit.



M99 Dam of Texas and Whistler with her bull calf