

Which breeds stay in herds longer?

by Dennis Halladay, Western Editor

Sooner or later, every dairy cow leaves her herd for some reason. But how long she stays seems to depend a lot on what breed she is.

In the 2012 National Dairy Herd Information Association data compiled by USDA, the rate of cows leaving production for all reasons varied by nearly one-third between the highest and lowest breeds. Here's the breakdown:

Breed	Percent Culling
Holsteins	32.7%
Red & Whites	32.0%
Guernseys	30.8%
Brown Swiss	29.8%
Shorthorns	28.6%
Ayrshires	27.7%
crossbreds (over 50%)	26.9%
crossbreds (50% or less)	26.1%
Jerseys	24.9%

While it's likely that sexed semen use and continued high beef prices have an influence on some of these numbers, it's even more likely that there is something fundamental about Jerseys that helps them stay problem free and profitable longer than any other breed.

The Holstein breed, for instance, continues to have a glut of heifers that keeps the price spread small between cull cows and replacements and makes it easy to ship a cow for any little reason.

Jerseys don't do as well in the beef market, which could be an incentive for owners to hang on to them longer. But their remarkable reproductive abilities often make it difficult for their owners to find room for all of the heifers that are available.

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