

## So, you have bought your Dexters. Now what?

When you bring your Dexters home you must take one of the postcards out of each animal's passport, fill it in as required and put your sticker in the correct place before posting it to BCMS (British Cattle Movement Service). You must also complete your own movement record book.

The vendor will have signed the green pedigree certificates. You must now fill in your own name and address and send them to the Breed Secretary with the appropriate transfer fee.

Before your first calf is born you will need to obtain a supply of ear tags. Defra may have sent you a list of approved ear tag suppliers. You will need to put a Primary tag in the right ear and a Secondary tag in the left before the calf is 20 days old. The Primary tag must be larger than the Secondary; a button tag or a metal tag is suitable as the Secondary. If you only have a few cattle you may be able to borrow the correct pliers.

### **Before the calf is 27 days old you must:-**

Notify BCMS of the birth of a calf and tag the calf with its UK identity ear tag. Please refer to: [www.gov.uk/guidance/what-to-do-after-a-calf-is-born](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-to-do-after-a-calf-is-born) for upto date details and deadlines.

### **Before the calf is 30 days old you must:-**

Notify or register the birth of the calf with the Dexter Cattle Society. After thirty days there is a late registration fee. (Do not forget to enclose the bull service certificate if you don't own the bull).

Many people want to keep their first male calf as a bull. Think carefully. Do you want to keep a bull with all that this entails?

Let your head rule your heart! Your vet, or the qualified stockman, who tags your calves will be able to castrate the male calf and check the female for extra teats.

Do you want horned cattle? There are pros and cons. If you do not want a horned herd and your calves are not naturally polled (no horns) they should be disbudded, again by your vet or the qualified stockman.

One more thing: at some point you will be notified about your TB test. This may be every year in high risk areas, less frequently in others. A test for Brucellosis is occasionally made. Your vet will advise you on all this, as will a friendly farmer. If in doubt, contact the Dexter Society for Field Advisor details. The vet will not relish testing unmanageable cattle! Get help if needed.

### **DEXTERS it is, then, for .....**

**MILK** – A Dexter will happily suckle her own calf, or you could share with her for the house. Many Dexters will suckle an adopted calf or two, given a bit of patience on your part. Extra feed for a suckling dam may be needed throughout autumn and winter.

**BEEF** – Dexter steers give excellent, premium quality beef. The small size makes them ideal for the freezer. If one is too much for you? Could you share it with someone? You may wish to market your own. Find out your nearest abattoir. There is a Dexter Cattle Society guide to 'Finishing Dexter Cattle'.

**HEIFERS** – You may wish to keep heifers or sell them for breeding stock. Private advertising or specialist sales are the best way of selling Dexters. Registered and halter trained heifers usually command higher prices.

**SHOWING** – Do you want to show? Shows are our shop window and, taken in the right spirit can be good fun. They give an opportunity to meet up with other Dexter owners.

Finally .... You may like to join your area support group. Remember the Society is here to help on matters great and small. If you have a query - just ask.

*A little help  
from*

# The Dexter Cattle Society



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## To begin at the beginning.....

Before you buy your first Dexter, ensure that you have sufficient grazing for whatever stock you wish to keep. Remember your herd will grow. Do you intend to make your own hay or silage for winter feed? Or will you buy in from a reputable feed merchant?

Find out whether the land you intend to use is a registered agricultural holding. Get in touch with DEFRA [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk) and tell them you intend keeping cattle. They will give you a holding number and a herd number. Do remember these numbers, in fact write them on the front of your cattle folder, as you will need them time and time again.

Once you have your holding number, get in touch with the British Cattle Movement Service (BCMS) [www.bcms.gov.uk](http://www.bcms.gov.uk) who will send your stickers (labels) for the postcards and the movement summary in the cattle passports. Do this well before you bring any animals home.

You will also need to keep accurate records of: -

- Any movements on and off your holding
- All births (see also the Dexter Society's rules about registrations), visits from your vet, any medicines used and on which animals.

Books for these may be obtained from your local Trading Standards or a local stationer, but DEFRA themselves produce a very useful and comprehensive record book.

Sign up with your local veterinary practice and get to know your vet. Hopefully you will not often need one, but you may have to call one out in a hurry. By now, you will have studied some literature and become familiar with problems that may arise.

## Unless you are an experienced stockman, operations like disbudding and castrating calves are jobs for the vet

**Now we can talk about DEXTERS in particular** Dexters are thrifty and economical. Their needs are somewhat different from larger beef or dairy animals. They are excellent food converters and are hardy enough to winter out providing they are well fed and there is adequate shelter from bad weather. If you have any doubts, seek advice – it is there all for free.

**Never keep a cow on her own.** Cows are herd animals and are unhappy away from others. The ideal way to begin is to buy a cow, in calf and with a calf at foot. If she does not have a calf at foot you could keep a steer with her. A pony, sheep or goats will provide field companions if this is absolutely necessary.

**Before you buy** there are several things you must check:

1. Ear tags. Most should have a tag in each ear, but older animals may only have one.
2. The numbers on the tags must be the same as the tag numbers on both the passport and the green pedigree certificate.
3. The vendor must sign the reverse of the green pedigree certificate.
4. If the animals are in calf the vendor must also give you a yellow bull service certificate for either natural service or AI.
5. If buying a bull, ask for the DNA certificate for the bull and DNA verification of its parents.

If there is any hesitation about these four points, don't buy until the matter is sorted out to your complete satisfaction.

Since young heifers take longer to give you a return on your money, older cows may be relatively less expensive.

Cows which have reared one or two calves are less worry when calving time comes around. If these older animals have not calved regularly every twelve months, insist on an explanation.

Temperament is important.

Are your prospective purchases: -

Easy to handle?

Are they halter trained?

Do they lead easily?

Ask to try them out before you buy.

Have they had their hooves trimmed?

Are they easy to milk?

To double suckle?

To spot when in season (bulling)?

To get in calf?

Is there a history of mastitis or milk fever?

## The Dexter .....

This leaflet is designed to help you. There may be things that you already know. If so, skip these bits – or just let them serve as reminder.

You may be an absolute beginner. If not, just imagine that you are as you read this: it may be worth your while as a refresher.

## Useful Websites:

[www.dextercattle.co.uk](http://www.dextercattle.co.uk)

[www.dextercattleforsale.co.uk](http://www.dextercattleforsale.co.uk)

[www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)

[www.bcms.gov.uk](http://www.bcms.gov.uk)

[www.tradingstandards.gov.uk](http://www.tradingstandards.gov.uk)