

Guild of Agricultural Journalists Training Award 2009

By: Janine Heath

A FARMER in Staffordshire is hoping to change the preconceptions surrounding one of the UK's favourite carcass breeds.

Eddie Sims has been breeding Limousin cows for five years and believes that with a little extra attention they can have placid temperaments.

At his farm in Stockton Brook, he has produced some highly prized pedigree animals that have helped him to earn his status as a top quality breeder.

He hopes that his work will encourage other farmers to consider the breed. He said: "Temperament is a big issue and they are perhaps renowned for being a wilder breed."

"With having a small herd, we spend a lot of time with them and it's the contact which has helped them to become tame."

"You could say that I only do this as a hobby, but I still take it all seriously. I highly recommend that farmers consider the breed."

Demand for Limousins has rapidly increased since the 1970s due to their ability to produce a carcass with a superior bone structure and little fat.

Eddie added: "It's a breed where you have got a lot of red, tasty meat so it's what the supermarkets want. That is another reason why I chose Limousins."

Not only proving a success for Eddie, Limousins have also been highly praised at agricultural shows this year.

At this year's Staffordshire County show, the overall beef championship went to a Limousin heifer from Leicestershire. Two-year-old Newstart Cinderella will next be shown at the Royal Highland.

Additionally, Limousin Sundale Bon Bon scored the Inter-breed beef champion title at the Suffolk County show. Judges described her as a "very complete cow."

Figures released last year show that the breed has also retained its position as Britain's number one beef breed for the past 13 years. The British Cattle Movement Service, Workington, released figures that showed that out of a total of over 1,800,000 beef sired calves for the year, more than 620,000 were from Limousin bulls.

Studies in America have also shown that the breed has made great progress since its arrival from Europe.

The North American Limousin Foundation (NALF) has developed temperament-scoring systems which have enabled breeders to improve docility.

NALF use the scores to indicate the likelihood that offspring will inherit genes from their parents for docile behaviour. The higher the score, the better the temperament.

With breeders such as Eddie continuing this work in the UK, farmers may be convinced to place faith in this once untrusted breed.