Origin and History of White Galloways in Canada

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The cattle that became the Galloway of today grew from a landrace of cattle that began to develop in the Galloway district of southwestern Scotland in the 1600's. A landrace is a distinct breed of domestic plant or animal that slowly develops over time in a particular agricultural region. A landrace begins as the original domestic population of an area and changes in response to the selection of the local farmers for the local environment. That local environment includes such factors as climate, soil, water, other species, other breeds, husbandry practices, and markets. A landrace slowly evolves over an extended period of time rather than being developed with a formalized breeding plan Thus a landrace has a diffuse history with no specific starting date and no specific originator. The slow evolution and wide genetic base of a landrace breed often results in a breed of varied colours and colour patterns.

By the 1700's cattle of the Galloway district of Scotland had developed into a distinct type. They tended to be polled, long haired, and hardy and were bred in several colours and several colour patterns. Animals could be found in black, red, dun, or brindle and in solid, belted, line-backed (riggit), white faced (badger or brockle faced), and various other spotted colour patterns. (To a geneticist belting, riggit, and white face are forms of white spotting.)

However, the white park colour patterned White Galloway of today is a relatively new addition to the 'Galloway family'. There is a remote possibility that there could have been some white park colour patterned animals in the original bovine landrace of the Galloway district of Scotland. However, the author has not been able to find any reliable documentation specifically of white park colour patterned animals in the original Galloway landrace. All reports investigated by the author to date have, on closer examination, been found to be descriptions of other forms of white spotting or, at least, not to have definitely been descriptions of the white park colour pattern. And, several reliable contemporary listings of the colours and colour patterns of the original Galloway landrace do not include the white park colour pattern. But, whether or not there were white park colour patterned animals in the Galloway landrace is strictly an academic question. The present population of White Galloways does **not** trace entirely to the original bovine landrace of the Galloway district. Rather, the White Galloway of today is a recently developed composite. Further, except for a few Canadian source White Galloways, the White Galloway of today is a composite of undocumented origin.

The animals that became the White Galloway of today have three totally independent, geographically distinct, sources -- one in Scotland, one in the U.S.A., and one in Canada. The Scottish source White Galloways originated with the Wilson family of Creetown, Wigtownshire, Scotland. The American source White Galloways originated with the Bishir family of Springdale, Montana, U.S.A. And, the Canadian source White Galloways originated with Hugh Robertson of Milk River, Alberta, Canada.

The Scottish and American source White Galloway populations are the oldest, the most wide spread, and have the most descendants. The oral traditions of the two founding families of the Scottish and American source White Galloways give these two populations similar histories. Both families had black Galloway herds. Both families acquired a white park colour patterned female in a purchase of animals of unknown heritage in the early 1900's. The Wilson family tradition has that original female purchased in 1919. The Bishir purchase is not as accurately recorded: one source suggests 1912, however, another source states that Mr. Bishir did not purchase even his first Galloways until 1914. In both cases that first white park colour patterned female was bred Galloway and her white park colour patterned, Galloway-cross, progeny were retained but few records were kept. Later white park colour patterned, polled, long haired, Galloway-cross, descendants were sold to other breeders without pedigrees or formal records.

The Canadian source White Galloways were developed by Hugh Robertson, a pedigree Galloway breeder in southern Alberta. Mr. Robertson purchased a source of white park colour pattern genetics in the late 1960's, crossed that source with his pedigree Galloways, and developed a small population of white park colour patterned, high percentage Galloway, Galloway-cross animals. The development of his white park colour patterned Galloway-cross population was documented with percentage Galloway pedigrees issued by the American Galloway Breeders' Association.

Eventually all three white park colour patterned Galloway-cross populations were recorded as White Galloways by registries already issuing pedigrees for other members of the 'Galloway family'. Galloway Performance International in the U.S.A. set up a pedigree registry for American source White Galloways in 1970. The Belted Galloway Cattle Society in the United Kingdom set up a pedigree registry for Scottish source White Galloways in 1981. And, the Canadian Galloway Association set up a pedigree registry for foundation White Galloways from any source in 1990.

The white park colour pattern of most of the White Galloways in Canada, all of the White Galloways in the U.S.A., all of the White Galloways in Australia, and all of the White Galloways in New Zealand traces to the American source -- i.e. the Bishir family of Springdale, Montana. Further, the white park colour pattern of most of the White Galloways in Canada, all of the White Galloways in Australia, and all of the White Galloways in New Zealand traces to one female from that source. That female was a long haired, polled, white park colour patterned heifer purchased by Jim Airth of Walking A Ranches Ltd., DeWinton, Alberta in 1966 from David Gibson, Springdale, Montana. David Gibson was the son-in-law of the Mr. Bishir who is credited with producing the first long haired, polled, white park colour patterned Galloway type cattle in the U.S.A. Walking A Ranches Ltd. developed a small population of white park colour patterned, Galloway-cross animals from their original purchase.

In October, 1970 a new Galloway registry was organized in the U.S.A. -- Galloway Performance International. Within a few months that new registry started to issue pedigrees for white park colour patterned Galloway type animals as White Galloways. Galloway Performance International used only two criteria for registration as 'purebred' White Galloways -- complete the application form and pay the fee. Thus, the original White Galloways registered by Galloway Performance International were issued pedigrees without inspection, without documentation, regardless of colour pattern, and regardless of ancestry.

In 1972, Walking A Ranches Ltd. registered their original purchase from Mr. Gibson, and three homebred white park colour patterned Galloway-cross animals, as White Galloways with Galloway Performance International:

(a.) White Heather 1 201089
Sex: Female
Born: 1966
Sire: No record
Dam: No record

(b.) White Heather 2 201090
Sex: Female
Born: 1968
Sire: Galair Kismet's Flashlight -7145-
Dam: No record

(c) White Devil 1 201091
Sex: Male
Born: March 13, 1970
Sire: Galair Kismet's Flashlight -7145-
Dam: No record

(d) White Devil 2 201092
Sex: Male
Born: March 31, 1971
Sire: Galair Kismet's Gerald-7365-
Dam: No record

Galloway Performance International operated for only three years from October 1970 to October 1973. In 1973 Galloway Performance International, and the much older American Galloway Breeders' Association, merged as the American Galloway Breeders' Association. With

the merger the American Galloway Breeders' Association accepted the entire Galloway Performance International Herd Book without prejudice including the White Galloways. After the merger Walking A Ranches Ltd. continued to register White Galloways with the American Galloway Breeders' Association.

In 1990 the Canadian Galloway Association opened 'Section III. White Galloways' in the Canadian Galloway Herd Book with the original entries designated as Foundation White Galloways. A procedure was initiated to issue pedigrees for Foundation White Galloways based on inspection for Galloway character, inspection for the white park colour pattern, and documentation of a specified percentage of Galloway ancestry. The first Canadian Foundation White Galloway pedigrees were issued in 1991 for American source White Galloways produced and owned by Walking A Ranches Ltd. and registered with the American Galloway Breeders' Association. All Foundation White Galloways entered in the Canadian Galloway Herd Book by Walking A Ranches Ltd. trace to either, or both, 'White Heather 1 201089' or 'White Heather 2 201090'. Only three Canadian source white park colour patterned Galloway-type animals from Mr. Robertson's project qualified as Foundation White Galloways. All three were females and two of the three were exported to Germany before leaving any progeny in the Canadian Galloway Herd Book.

In Canada, the U.S.A., and the United Kingdom, Galloways and White Galloways are registered as two distinct populations. In Canada, White Galloways are registered in a separate section of the Herd Book of the Canadian Galloway Association. In the U.S.A., White Galloways are registered in a separate section of the Herd Book of the American Galloway Breeders' Association. And, in the United Kingdom, White Galloways are registered in a separate section of the Herd Book of the Belted Galloway Cattle Society. In Canada and the U.S.A., white park colour patterned first cross 'White Galloway X Galloway' progeny are eligible for registration as White Galloways. However, in the United Kingdom, the registry requires an upbreeding program to at least seven eighths White Galloway from a Galloway base for full White Galloway status. In Canada, the Canadian Galloway Association does not issue pedigrees for any mis-marked (i.e. solid colour patterned) animals with White Galloway ancestry. In the U.S.A., the American Galloway Breeders' Association does issue special appendix pedigrees for mismarked (i.e. solid colour patterned) females with White Galloway ancestry. Mismarked, appendix registered, females are referred to as 'Non-Confroming' White Galloways and can be used only as base females for the production of White Galloways. And, in the United Kingdom, the Galloway registry (i.e. the Galloway Cattle Society of Great Britain and Ireland) does not recognize any animals with any White Galloway ancestry. (This author does not have any information regarding the treatment of mismarked White Galloways by the Belted Galloway Cattle Society in the United Kingdom.)

White Galloways and Galloways are registered as separate populations in Canada, the U.S.A., and the United Kingdom because of the relative youth, and the undocumented origin, of the White Galloway. To do otherwise would be to deny both the validity of the principles of breed registry and the heritage of the Galloway. The White Galloway is a recently developed 'Galloway' composite of undocumented origin. The White Galloway population still contains significant 'non-Galloway' genetics. Genetics that is potentially deleterious in a 'Galloway' population. Genetics that is more than just a theoretical possibility. To date there have been at least four genetic 'glitches' identified in the White Galloway population. One is serious under any circumstances: the other three are undesirable in a 'Galloway' population:

a.) individuals in the Scottish source White Galloway population carry:
  i.) arthrogryposis
  ii.) the riggit colour pattern.
b.) individuals in the American source White Galloway population carry:
  i.) an extra colour dilution factor
  ii.) a horn or scur factor.
c.) individuals in the Canadian source White Galloway population carry:
  i.) the riggit colour pattern.

Note that these are the identified complications. The Galloway has a very long history of selection for 'Galloway' characteristics. The White Galloway, on the other hand, has a very short history, period.

The two problems identified to date in the American source White Galloway population have been identified in some of the first White Galloways entered in the Canadian Galloway Herd Book. One animal with both problems, for example, is 'Galair White Lad 2W' produced by Walking A Ranches Ltd. 'Galair White Lad 2W' was the ninth White Galloway entered in 'Section III. White Galloways' of the Canadian Galloway Herd Book. He had good beef conformation and growth, was available on A.I., and was widely used and exported. Thus both American source White Galloway problems have the potential of being fairly wide spread throughout the White Galloway population in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

The two problems identified to date in the American source White Galloway population are a direct result of the origins and youth of the White Galloway. Only time and careful breeding will remove these and other genetic 'glitches'. Four very important points should be noted:

a.) 'Galair White Lad 2W' is not the only source of the two problems.
b.) the two problems are of minor economic significance.
c.) the two problems should not be construed as reflecting negatively on the integrity or breeding programs of Walking A Ranches Ltd..
d.) the two problems should not be construed as reflecting negatively on the bull 'Galair White Lad 2W' or his value as a sire.

e.) the two problems should not be construed as reflecting negatively on the White Galloway as a breed.

The extra colour dilution factor, and the horn or scur factor, identified in the American source White Galloway population are of minor economic significance but they are, nevertheless, troublesome 'gliches' in a 'Galloway' population. Colour dilution results when some part of the process from pigment production to pigment display fails to function properly. There are several points at which that process can, and does, fail. Different types of failure in the process have different genetic causes. There have been a half dozen different genetic causes of colour dilution identified in the bovine. The situation in the Galloway to date has been fortunate in that colour dilution, i.e. dun, in the Galloway has had a single, dominant, one gene cause. Thus colour dilution in the Galloway has a degree of predictability in that dun progeny are produced only when at least one parent is dun. There appears, however, to be a second cause of colour dilution in the White Galloway. The bull 'Galair White Lad 2W' had one solid colour patterned black parent and one white park colour patterned black pointed parent. He was registered as born with black points. However, the points on 'Galair White Lad 2W' were grey as an aged bull. And, 'Galair White Lad 2W' has sired both solid colour patterned dun and white park colour patterned dun pointed calves when mated to non-dun dams. Unless there has been a spontaneous mutation in 'Galair White Lad 2W', there is a good chance that the cause of colour dilution in 'Galair White Lad 2W' is different from the cause of colour dilution in the general Galloway population. To spread a different cause of colour dilution through the Galloway population could destroy the colour predictability advantage that the Galloway how has.

A new source of either horns or scurs in the 'Galloway family' is also a potential problem. Horns and scurs are different physical phenomena with different genetic causes. However, some poorly developed horns and some large scurs cannot be positively distinguished from each other without an x-ray. 'Galair White Lad 2W' has sired at least one progeny with either very large scurs or very poorly developed horns from a commercial cow with a horn factor. Unfortunately, the calf was not x-rayed. Both horns and scurs are disqualifications for registration in most 'Galloway' registries. The scur factor has, however, persisted in the population at a fairly low frequency. The horn factor, on the other hand, has been essentially eradicated. A reintroduction to the general population would be very undesirable.

To summarize, the White Galloway is a recently developed composite involving Galloway and a source of the white park colour pattern. Further, for all but the few Canadian origin White Galloways, that source of the white park colour pattern is undocumented. The White Galloway is **not** a colour phase of the Galloway. Rather, the White Galloway is a relatively young composite breed involving Galloway genetics that strives to encompass Galloway-type characteristics. Given the origin and relative youth of the White Galloway, White Galloway breeders can justify

the continued use of Galloway genetics. There is, however, no need to, or justification for, infusing White Galloway genetics into the Galloway population. And there is good and sufficient reason to make every effort to keep all White Galloway genetics isolated from the Galloway population.

The White Galloway of today is **not** a colour phase of the original bovine landrace of the Galloway district of Scotland. Most of the White Galloways in Canada, all of the White Galloways in the U.S.A., all of the White Galloways in Australia, and all of the White Galloways in New Zealand trace to Montana, U.S.A. not Galloway, Scotland. There are claims that the Montana population could have started as early as 1912 but there are no breeding records or ancestry documentation prior to 1970. Montana, U.S.A. in 1970 is a long way, both physically and temporally, from Galloway, Scotland in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries!!