Structure of Cattle Hindquarters

After my talk to SRPG a few weeks ago, I have been asked for more information about cattle hindquarter/pelvic structure and desirable angles, and in particular identify/describe the position of the thurl.

The thurl is part of the hip joint and where the femur connects to the pelvis/ hip structure.

The photo you have attached is obviously American…. I laugh and remember my time with the Breeding Animal Evaluation team at Illinois and remembering that I had to call the hips, hooks when discussing my placings at judging competitions!!

I believe it is important to have "depth" in the top of the "Y" in the hip region and that the pins are lower than the hips. Having the top of that "Y" at least right angles, shows length in the hip to pin which as I mentioned is the birthing canal.

If the animal's pins are level or worse, higher than their hips, this is where I feel the pelvis is rotated and you could end up with the anus sitting forward of the vulva and creating an undesirable angle that could cause uterine infections due to waste falling into the vagina/ reproductive tract.

If the "Y" is shallow, this will constrict the room that a calf has whist been born through the birthing canal which could result in a hard delivery, perhaps requiring assistance. A shallow "Y' will also effect the amount of meat over the rump.

The angle from the hip to thurl v's the angle of the femur bone should be around 90 degree's. Too open in this angle, the animal will be straight in the hind/ "post legged" causing compaction and inflammation in the joints. Too closed in the angle could result in the animal being under itself/ "sickle hocked". This adds extra strain on the hock joint trying to support the extra weight that is carried behind the hock because it is further forward.

In the pelvis area, from behind you need to have a balanced width. In the hips and pins for calving ease and in the thurls to allow the leg to drop underneath the pelvis area. If the thurls are too narrow (tight) the animal will be base narrow, which puts extra strain on hocks, fetlocks and can cause the foot structure to be undesirable. If the angle that the femur bone comes from the thurl at an outward angle, this could cause an animal to be "bow legged" thus putting strain on the hocks and the thurl joint itself.

I hope this all make sense, but please feel free to shoot anymore questions through!

Fiona Glover

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Side View