

Grazing on the Common



Midsummer Common has provided grazing for animals since at least the 12th century. Under an 1861 Common Seal of the Borough, the Rights of Common on Midsummer Green or Jesus Green were for geldings, mares and cows from Old May Day to Old Candlemas Day. Similar Rights existed for Butt Green but starting earlier - from Old Lady Day, but in the day time only. In 1923 the Council decided to exclude animals from Jesus Green.



Registration under the *Commons Registration Act 1965* says that persons residing, owning or occupying land in the City of Cambridge have the right to graze geldings, mares and cows from 1st April to 30th November in each year to a total of 20 beasts over the whole of the land known as Midsummer Common. The *Cambridge City Council Act 1985* allows the Council to prescribe the procedure for the registration of commoners entitled to graze animals, to set the number of grazing animals, and to make a reasonable charge. Cattle have been absent from the Common in some years but a local vet introduced a small herd of rare Red Poll steers in 2007.



The [Red Poll](#) is derived from the original cattle of Norfolk and Suffolk - the Norfolk cow was crossed with the Suffolk polled bull. In the first half of the 18th century it was one of the dominant breeds in English dairy farming. It still maintains the dual purpose characteristics which now give the Red Poll such a valuable niche role in today's quality beef production.



The wider picture

Commoners have long had rights to grazing on Cambridge Commons. These rights were registered under the *Commons Registration Act 1965* and are shown in the following table:

Common	Grazing from 1st April to 30th November in each year
Coe Fen, Coe Fen Straits and New BiT	Cows, geldings and mares to a total of 20 beasts
Coldham's Common	Geldings, mares and cows to a total of 124 beasts
Empty Common	Mares, geldings and cows to a total of 5 beasts
Jesus Green	Geldings, mares and cows to a total of 17 beasts
Laundress Green	Horses, mares, geldings or cows of St Botolph's or St Mary-the-Less all the year on Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays from sunset to sunrise to a total of 2 beasts
Midsummer Green	Geldings, mares and cows to a total of 20 beasts
Nutters or Fosters Close	Cows, geldings and mares to a total of 2 beasts
Queens' Green	Geldings, mares and cows to a total of 20 beasts
Sheep's Green	Dairy stock to a total of 20 beasts
Stourbridge Green	Geldings, entire horses and cows to a total of 53 beasts

Under section 6(2) of the *Cambridge City Council Act 1985*, the Council was given powers to change these grazing rights:

"The Council shall continue to have the power to regulate grazing on the land to which this section applies, and in particular but without prejudice to the generality of that power may –

- a. prescribe the procedure for the registration of commoners entitled to graze animals on that land in the following grazing season and make a reasonable charge for such registration;
- b. determine which commoners may graze animals on that land in the following grazing season and the number of animals each may graze;
- c. charge a reasonable sum for the exercise of grazing rights;
- d. prohibit the grazing on those lands of animals otherwise than in accordance with this section and any byelaws made thereunder;
- e. make byelaws for or in connection with their regulation of grazing on the land to which this section applies."

Under section 6(3) of the same Act, the Council may detain and sell any animal that is found grazing on the common land without its consent (in accordance with section 7 of the *Animals Act 1971*). These powers give the Council great scope for managing animals on Midsummer Common.

Please contact us if you have anything to say about the issues raised on this page