

Proposed importation of bull semen into the Island of Jersey

A correspondent in Jersey has told me of concerns regarding the proposed importation of bull semen into the Island. I would like to draw attention to certain considerations that might be in danger of being overlooked.

My credentials are as follows: I am an academic zoologist, active since 1975 in research on the genetics, conservation and history of livestock breeds. I am author of two books on the subject and many scientific papers <http://www.lincoln.ac.uk/dbs/staff/642.asp>. I am a member of the Defra National Standing Committee on Farm Animal Genetic Resources, though I write here in my private capacity and my views must not be taken as necessarily representing those of the Committee.

The case for importation of bull semen has been made in the following documents accessible on line:

Proposition lodged by the Chief Minister on 14 March 2008:

<http://www.statcsassembly.gov.je/documents/propositions/40770-8634-1832008.htm>.

and

Pamphlet published by the Royal Jersey Agricultural and Horticultural Society in February 2008:

<http://www.royaljersey.co.uk/Pamphlet.pdf>.

If permitted, this importation would end the genetic isolation of the Island herd. The commercial justifications have been outlined in the above documents. There are other considerations, including some relating to the implementation of EU Directive 88/407.

However, the issue has further implications relating to UK government policy and international obligations entered into on behalf of Jersey. These have not been mentioned in the proposition and pamphlet cited above. May I respectfully draw attention to the following:

1. Defra has established a Standing Committee on Farm Animal Genetic Resources: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/livestock/strategy/genetic-res/uk-strategy/index.htm>. This Committee has within its remit the advancement of the UK National Action Plan on Farm Animal Genetic Resources <http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/livestock/strategy/genetic-res/pdf/faagr-actionplan.pdf>.
2. Under the Convention on Biological Diversity, the UK has accepted the international obligation to look after its farm animal genetic resources (page 13 of the National Action Plan). This obligation is discharged through the FAO Global Strategy for the Management of Farm Animal Genetic Resources to which the UK is party. The Strategy is implemented in Europe with reference to the European Regional Focal Point for Animal Genetic Resources <http://www.rfp-europe.org>.

The Island Jersey herd is a genetic resource and the use of semen from overseas may prejudice the integrity of this resource. It may be that conditions can be placed on the importation and use of the semen which would satisfy this concern, but I would **strongly recommend that the Defra National Standing Committee on Farm Animal Genetic Resources and the European Regional Focal Point for Farm Animal Genetic Resources should be consulted**. I am copying this communication to the Chair of the former, and the UK National Coordinator for the latter.

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Copied to
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