

14th July 2005

D. Frigot, Esq.,
 The President,
 Royal Jersey Agricultural and Horticultural Society,
 Royal Jersey Showground,
 La Route de la Trinité,
 TRINITY, JE3 5JP.

Dear Sir,

Am I right in believing as it would seem from a perusal of the JEP that the importation of semen for cattle is now virtually "a done deal"? If so what is the position of the RJA and its representatives? If the Council of the RJA has either accepted, confirmed or endorsed this policy without further reference to its members, was there any point in asking the membership for their views? Having asked the membership for their views should the Council not be bound by them? Should not the RJA's views be put forward?

Apart from this, in these discussions may I ask if any consideration has been given to the points raised in my various letters to you prior to the vote by the RJA? You will recall that I was most concerned that all aspects should be considered before an irreversible step was taken. I do not mean so much those relating to the breeding, where everyone knows more than I do, nor the possible influence of climate and soil, nor can I properly comment on what will or may be the results of "improvement" of the local cow. May I ask though that if the local cow is to be transformed, it is to be transformed into what? Will it be "just another" Jersey no different from those elsewhere in the world? If so, why ever return here for breeding? In raising these points, please be aware that I am as cognisant as anyone regarding the problems faced by breeders and the financial (and emotional) stress faced by so many of them.

The points I recall raising were, inter alia:-

First, the derogation. If this exists and if the case were made that this is a closed herd, how will this affect it. If it has been obtained using, even in part that ground how can it (or rather will it) now be maintained? If it does not exist how will we ever hope to obtain such status without a closed herd?

Second, whatever the result of the first question, if semen is to be imported how could you now properly stop people from importing a Friesian or a Dexter or for that matter a shorthorn to "improve" the herd? When importation from outside is permitted it must surely apply to any semen which might "improve" the local herd. In any case, how would you be able to restrict the semen imported to that of registered Jersey, and if, you were to do so, how would you police it? How would you know the parentage of "foundation stock"?

How incidentally, would you prevent the importation, with the semen of disease not now present in the herd?

Third, if we are now importing semen, is there any justification, now that there will no longer be a closed herd, for forbidding importation of milk from outside? If there is I wish I could see it: and I should like to know that the big English and Irish Milk companies agree with your view. Can the interest of a few local farmers justify their position, against that of the consumer who wishes for cheaper milk? The subsidy farmers receive is very considerable at the moment. If the Island herd is "opened" and some (any?) improvement is achieved are the States not in a position to take the view that "you have got what you wanted, your cattle are now as efficient as they can be, the herd is no longer closed and unique and eighty-five thousand consumers demand the right to have cheaper milk, and pay the subsidies now given to farmers away elsewhere".

Fourth, I understand that sales of cattle from here have fallen to near zero because of the low fat content. Did not this arise because of the requirements of the Milk Marketing Board, to which breeders successfully adapted? Is this so, and how does it affect the position? Can it not be reversed from within the Island? If it is lack of quantity does this not argue that the cow is being changed elsewhere into something other than that which is unique to the Island? Are Jerseys in danger of following, the fate of Guernseys.

Last, has it been appreciated by the Island Authorities that Jersey will not continue to be the home of the Jersey but only its original or former home (a remnant of past glory as it were, like Empire). You will recall that the Hereford is now an endangered species in England, never mind Hereford.

There seem to me to be real risks, all of which, with respect, deserve in my opinion, an answer before an irreversible decision – one which may improve or harm many individuals is taken.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely,

P. R. Le Cras

Enc.