

29/05/08

Dear Members of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel

Proposed Importation of Bull Semen

The Jersey cow is a product of our Island, its soil, its climate and its people and is part of our Island history. There is evidence of Jersey cattle being exported to England during the seventeenth century.

Hugh de la Haye discovered the Royal Fluke potato in 1880 and today it is known as the Jersey Royal. One may well ask what the Jersey cow and the Jersey Royal potato have in common. The answer is quite simple. They are all part of our Island heritage.

In the early 1970s, English varieties of early potatoes, other than the Jersey Royal, were grown for their earliness and they beat the Jersey Royal by as much as ten days. Because these varieties were poor in flavour and very watery, they seriously undermined the market for our Jerseys. After three years the Jersey growers abandoned this project, but it took many years to regain the trust in the market place. The Agricultural industry at the time took the tough decision to prohibit the export of these potatoes, so the status quo was regained and its credibility restored. We are now the envy of all our competitors and with the EU acknowledging the unique status of the Jersey Royal, which resulted in achieving the Protected Designation of Origin in 1997. This PDO means Jersey Royals can only be grown in Jersey.

A decision could be made shortly to allow the importation of not just Jersey cattle semen, but the semen from any breed of cattle. Many milk producers, cattle breeders and a large number of the general public are rightly concerned that this would have a detrimental effect not only on the dairy industry, but for Jersey as a whole and would destroy a vital part of our Island heritage.

Our potato industry was saved from a huge catastrophe and the problem rectified. Had it been with our cattle the damage would have been irreversible.

Should this proposition go ahead, Jersey's beautiful cattle will immediately lose their unique identity and we, the people of Jersey, will lose the Jewel in our crown.

Yours sincerely
Graeme Le Marquand