

Sent: 29 May 2008 21:13

To: Scrutiny

Subject: proposed importation of bovine semen

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To: Members of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel

Re: Proposed importation of bovine semen

First I am an Island-born person with a strong farming background who has lived in the UK for many years, so am possibly able to take a more rounded view of the question. I have just returned from Jersey to my home in Bournemouth.

I have considered the matter carefully and am now writing to express my concern and disappointment at this proposed law change. My concern is that cattle breeders who have signed up to this change may have been misled by the promise of increased profits. One can easily understand the desire, on the part of hardworking farmers and their families, to find a way of making money. However it seems to me that careful breeding and intelligent herd management, with efficient processing of the milk produced, are the key factors. It is not only that commercial interests should not be put before heritage. It is by no means guaranteed that there will be more profitability in terms of increased milk production and cattle exports, even 10 years hence.

There is also the issue of size. Obviously larger animals are likely to produce more milk and, I have heard it argued, will therefore be more profitable. The relatively small Island Jersey cow is uniquely beautiful and suited to her home. Big is not necessarily better, and Jersey does not have the pasture available in other countries such as the US, for animals to grow bigger. Bigger animals are likely to need more food in the form of concentrates, which will cost the farmer more overall.

It may well be that fewer international breeders have been buying Island-bred Jerseys in recent years, but when they have bought, it is with a guarantee of the purity of the breed, something they may use to reinforce Island genetic material. Any reticence in recent years may well have to do with other factors such as transport costs (their own as well as the animals', as after all Jersey has been seeing fewer visitors in general), or their not seeing animals of the calibre of the past, when perhaps more attention was paid to breeding. If the law were to be changed, it is difficult to see why overseas breeders would be keener to buy animals from the Island when they might purchase the same breeding closer to home.

Lastly I cannot see any evidence that Island-bred Jerseys are becoming genetically weaker. One has only to consider the quality of the animals at the RJA&HS Spring Show to appreciate that. In addition I have approached scientists in the UK to discuss with them the status and relevance of various scientific articles published and have been reassured by their comments.

I very much hope you will give your most careful consideration to all the issues, and listen to those who have the interests of the Jersey cow, and the Island, at heart.

Jennifer Hawkes (née Le Ruez)