

22/5/76

Should have its own file

- is an ongoing question as
answers to all points

2nd September 2005

have not yet been found -

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Dear members,

Following our recent, brief discussion on the necessity to import semen, I suppose a convenient starting point would be the vote by the members of the R.J.A.

As you know the members of the RJA, were by a large majority, against the importation of semen, and one would assume that the Council will keep this in mind while discussing the position.

I can quite understand that the JMMB comes from a different standpoint, I assume that what the board requires is, from one source or another, a constant and guaranteed supply of milk which is (more or less) fresh.

What concerned me before the R.J.A. vote, and what concerns me now, is that there appear to be factors which have been neither put to the members nor to the general public, which may affect the position and I am extremely anxious that an irreversible decision may be taken, which could have very serious consequences for local producers, before all factors have been considered.

In discussing this, please understand that I quite understand that it may be necessary to import semen. What I do wish to happen is for the possible consequences to be considered and a decision taken after considering them.

When the decision came up for the membership of the RJA, I prepared a few random thoughts; and although you will already know all the points in it, for the sake of completeness, I enclose a copy herewith.

To summarise, the problems - and there may be more - which I suggest ought to be considered do not relate really 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, separate from those issues, could perhaps be listed as follows:-

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"? In any case is not 7/8th pure considered by EEC Regulations as pure bred?

How incidentally, would you prevent the importation, with the semen, of disease not now present in the herd? This, as I recall, was of concern to Dr. Bichard.

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. Whatever will they do to the cow's head on local notes?

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.

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Yours sincerely,

P. R. Le Cras