

30<sup>th</sup> May 2008

**Submission to the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel  
Re. Importation of Cattle Semen**

Dear Deputy Ryan

Although I am helping to lead the campaign to persuade the states to change the law in favour of allowing semen importation I hope you would allow me to make a personnel plea as a dairy farmer and long-term enthusiast of the Jersey Cow.

I joined my parents on our family's mixed farm in 1972, farming was in my blood and the dairy side of the business was always my first priority. From a very young age cattle breeding has always been more than just one facet of my job, but a passionate interest of mine. Throughout my career our herd has continued to expand and we have strived to develop the facilities Lodge Farm, I feel we have enjoyed much local success over the years, winning many shows, herd competitions, production awards as well as entertaining countless overseas visitors to the farm.

I was first elected onto the RJA&HS Council in 1978 and from that time I have served on many committees and held many posts including Vice President of the Society, it would be fair to say that over the years, the majority of my energy has been spent in the cause of 'Breed Improvement'. I first took the helm of the Breed Improvement Committee in 1985; two years after the States rejected a semen importation proposal. Together with a committee of progressive breeders we set about initiating several breed improvement schemes including the comprehensive Bull Proving Programme (working closely with Dr Jim Allen); a new Contract Mating Scheme to provide bulls for testing; the first Embryo Transfer sessions, we also revised the Type Classification System to introduce a new linear assessment method and furthermore we adopted a far more sophisticated Milk Recording Scheme.

I have been lucky enough to travel extensively in the last 25 years studying Jersey cattle. My first extensive cattle tour in 1985 to Canada shook me to the very core. I simply would not have believed the difference in the quality of their Jerseys compared to the Island population if I had not seen it with my own eyes. Since that visit I have never once doubted the need to re-import the genetics our forefathers exported in the early 1900s.

I have participated in many study tours since and visited herds and shows not only in Canada but Costa Rica, Denmark, France, South Africa, USA and the UK, in each of these countries we have much spent time not only looking at cattle but talking to fellow breeders and exchanging ideas and experiences. I am honoured to have been invited to judge herd competitions and dairy shows overseas on several occasions, most recently I judged the Jersey classes at the Devon County Show. (The champion Jersey went on to win the Interbreed Championship).

Many breeders now consider the North American Livestock Exposition in Kentucky to be the premier livestock event, this show includes the National Jersey Show, it is held each November and I have attended three of the last four years. To suggest to the breeders at that event that their cattle are less 'pure' than those born in Island would be dismissed as a joke. The overall quality of the Jerseys there is breathtaking.

Visiting many of the top herds worldwide, means I have seen many of the breeds greatest animals of the last 25 years, including 'Duncan Belle', 'Valleystream Silver B Jo', 'Valleystream SB Hilda', 'Rexlea Performing Hostess', 'Avonlea Valiant Kitty', 'Jasper Renaissance Evening', 'Family Hill FP Circus', 'Llodyn Judes Griffin' to name just a few.

I find it quite abhorrent that opponents of the proposition feel qualified to question the integrity of every National Jersey Breed Society and furthermore suggest that bloodlines have been tainted with other breeds. The existence of genetic recovery programmes in some countries is well documented, above board, and fully transparent, and the our society have made provision in the Herd Book rules to exclude derivatives of these schemes if a cow of non Jerseys breed is present in the ansestory. The validity of these national Herd Registers is professional and sound and I have seen no evidence to suggest otherwise.

Whenever the States are asked to make a serious decision their immediate reaction is to call for 'expert opinion from the UK' and in some instances much can be gleaned from such opinion indeed the society has engaged no less than five top geneticists since Proff Deeble in 1978 to advise on breeding matters, most recently, Dr Maurice Bichard OBE. Please do not ignore their advice. While I do not claim to be an expert in most things, I, along with a couple of other local cattle breeders do have considerable experience of breeding large number of animals over a long period of time and have an intimate knowledge of both local and overseas bloodlines. There are many locals with worthy professional opinion.

My career as a cattle breeder (in common with others) has been thwarted by the limitations of the current law. From time to time, like most breeders, I breed a really top cow, the tragedy comes when I find myself unable to mate her to the best or most appropriate bull simply because he was born in Canada or Denmark, invariably she is mated to the best local sire which by definition means 'Mr Just Above Average'.

Sadly both are now dead, but I now deeply regret not exporting my two best cows namely Golden Sybil's Foggy Ex91 and Prides Wayward Isis Ex 90 to be mated outside the Island, and further developing these bloodlines within an English or French herd. Currently we have two top young cows in the herd, both, we are sure are suitable to mother bulls, if the importation of the best sires continues to be banned I will sadly be forced to re-stable these cows outside the Island.

While some have expressed their opposition to the importation proposal I have to state my deep frustration at their apparent lack of knowledge of the breed and their desire to mislead the debate with spurious argument, hopefully this mischief will not stand up to proper scrutiny. As is often said, a little knowledge can be a dangerous thing. As a member of the Breed Society team I relish the opportunity to participate in the Scrutiny Debate and while putting our case based on hard facts we will not flinch from exposing any mistruths.

Sir, I hope the scrutiny panel will quiz the opponents of importation on the detail of their vision for the future of cattle breeding in Jersey. The crux of the argument put simply is; are the opponents interested in improving the standard of their cattle, and if so how, or do they wish to settle for what they have and concentrate on purely preventing inbreeding? To date there has been no alternative strategy put forward, nobody has indicated a different course to Dr Bichard's proposal, not at the public meetings where he presented his views or at any of the many subsequent meetings held at the Society.

I am a Jerseyman, born and bred, and for that reason alone I hate to see the stagnation of the Jersey Breed in its Island home, when the breed is moving forward with great gusto everywhere else in the world. I feel we have every reason to be optimistic if we can use the best international Jersey genetics.

Quite apart from the sound economic arguments for importation, the Island of Jersey must not remain annexed off from the wonderful breed our forefathers created. Anyone reading John Thornton's book *The History of the Jersey Breed* (circa 1891) or Harold Shepherd's book *The RJA&HS The first one hundred years* (1934) will be left in little doubt that the great pioneers of our breed would have

relished the opportunity and technology available to us today to safely utilise the bloodlines exported in years past.

Yours sincerely

Paul Houzé