

Random thoughts from a non-expert

1. A characteristic of Jersey is that the soil, except for the Blanches Banques, is lime free. This affects the development of animals – it was standard practice for farmers to go to Lessay to buy their horses for example on account of the lack of bone in the horses bred here (eg, in reverse, Connemara).
2. With a light boned animal, farmers – mostly time past – concentrated on a cow giving rich milk and one, which was a good “doer”. It was not (and is not) a dual purpose cow – normally one which, dare one suggest, is not as good for either purpose as one bred specially for one purpose.
3. Seemingly, despite the proximity of the Islands, the origins of the Jersey cow (unlike, if one has heard correctly, the Guernsey) are unknown. What is known, is that importation was forbidden some 200 years ago, and that save (one hears) for some experiments with shorthorns c. 1870, has remained closed ever since. The pedigrees go back well over 100 years. It might be interesting to conduct DNA tests (and v. infra).
4. It must though, surely be safe to assume that, in origin, it is a hybrid, so Mendel in theory would come into play: and the other hybrid that comes to mind, with closed breeding and a stud book that goes back to 1793 when Mr Weatherby produced Volume I of his stud book (V. Tesio, *Breeding the Racehorse*, J.A. Allen & Co, first published 1958, 1987 Edition) is the thoroughbred.
5. At that time (v. page 4 op. cit attached) the stud book contained the names of approximately 100 broodmares and the same number of sires who were proven producers of winners. Nearly all, if not all, he states were of oriental origin.

6. However, at p 24, he states that all thoroughbred horses, are bred in direct male line from three stallions (offspring of the original three lines left)

Matchem – bay horse, 1748

Herod – bay horse, 1758

Eclipse – chestnut horse, 1764

7. Tesio claims that “In hybrid animals, even if highly selected, each separate character is passed on independently” (page 49) – In passing (page 53), his view is that it is much easier to produce (inter alia) good milk producing cows than a breed of “athletes” (attached).
8. He goes on to say (at page 58) that all thoroughbreds are descended not only from three stallions but from about 42 mares, ten of which are on the way out (v. pages 58 and 59 attached).
9. In parenthesis, he has a few words to say on AI and embryo transplant and why, in his view, it was a failure for racehorses (v. page 88 and seq, esp pages 93 and 94 attached).
10. Last (dealing with Tesio!) (at p84) he makes the following statement “But it has never happened that sire, son, grandson and great grandson, in other words four consecutive generations in direct male line – have won the Derby. For 152 years the successions have reached the grandson at most”. I am not sure if this has changed since he wrote, but it is nonetheless a most interesting statement; and must, surely, suggest a reversion to the mean.
11. One of the more interesting disquisitions on reversion to the mean and the work of Sir Francis Galton, which I stumbled across recently was in Bernsteins work “Against the Gods”, John Wiley & Sons, Inc (at page 154 & seq.) (attached). Galton (Charles Darwin’s cousin) found the Bell Curve in the record of Cambridge Mathematics Exams, Sandhurst entry exams and Sweetpeas (pages 166 and 167 attached).

Interestingly, he found (page 164 attached) that only 36% of the sons of eminent men were themselves eminent; even worse, only 9% of their grandsons made the grade. Curiously he was childless; and I think I am right in saying that Charles Darwin had only one surviving grandchild (did he, Charles Darwin, not marry his cousin?). Tesio also suggests that inbreeding may lead to a loss of fertility. However, there seem to be quite a lot of Darwin's about in the 1960's. Vera Le Cras knew three of them! The Shawcross family also seem to be thriving!

12. Vera Le Cras has her pedigrees and a herd, which has been in being for over 60 years. A number of her cows are line bred, but with outcrosses from bulls. Hardly surprisingly her animals can easily be distinguished if they happen to be seen in, for example, the Quenault's Classic herd. Like Tesio and like many of the (older?) farmers here, she looks for the "nick".
13. About ½ mile down the road, the Zoo is engaged in breeding endangered species. I believe that they will have access to the world's leading Experts, The sort of thing they seem to do is to start with 30 or less and go on from there! One reads that all those humans' outside Africa descend from seven or at the most nine women – and a couple of geneticists with whom I was in conversation agreed that everyone in England (of English origin) was related, in two main lines (e.g. the Blanc Pignon Dairy herd!). It might be sensible to approach the Zoo for advice and assistance. Apart from the interest it may have for the Experts who, with the aid of the pedigrees and DNA testing can one would imagine, see how one got from, as it were "there" to "here"; and it might conceivably keep them in their main work. At any rate it would seem to be worth at least an enquiry. If they are interested, this in turn, must, I suggest, be of interest to the Island authorities (and in consequence) a good reason to advance funds.
14. The question of bringing in outside blood is bound to arise – indeed has already arisen.

It is facile to say that it must improve the breed but it is a step, which once taken, is irreversible. One would not want to fall into the same trap as the thoroughbred breeders some 200 years ago; a trap from which they extricated themselves, which must, one would think have been a source of some controversy, at any rate. Initially we may well not have the same option. I suggest that such a step should only be approached with great care – indeed only as a last resort.

15. Among the problems which immediately present themselves (there may well be others!), may I please make the following remarks:-

- (a) If one purchases an animal from within the Island one can be sure it is a Jersey (even if it is “foundation stock” or has this in its bloodline). Can the same be said, with certainty for an animal coming from outside?
- (b) It is likely, in my view, to be the end of sales from Jersey – Breeders, like everyone else, follow fashion. A few years ago, New Zealand bulls were all the rage – less so, more recently, perhaps. If we have a New Zealand dominance here why come here and not go direct to New Zealand. One does not go to Hereford, to buy a Hereford, - (incidentally an endangered species in England) does one? We were told (at the Royal show a year or two ago) that there were only 250 left in England. Incidentally am I right in thinking that under European regulations 7/8ths is pure bred? That, if true, could with an animal coming from outside, change the breed here!
- (c) Without a “base stock” what is a “true” Jersey. It was obvious at the World Cattle Conference here in 1979 that, for example, New Zealand and Danish Judges were looking for different characteristics and it is hardly surprising that if herds vary within the Island (v.supra) they should do so from country to country.

- (d) At the moment we are disease free (to a large extent). If we take in blood from outside will this continue to be the case?
16. If there is any dilution of the “Jersey breed” in the Island, is there any case at all for asking for any subsidy whatsoever for cattle farmers? At the moment it is given (and pretty freely) because the Jersey is unique (and a great advertisement) for the Island. If this changes, what is the *raison d’etre* (or indeed any reason) to support cattle farming here – why should the consumer have to pay? Milk from England may be cheaper!
17. I appreciate that Guernsey had to bring back blood from outside: but I am far from convinced that Jersey is, as yet, in the same state.
18. These are as I say only random thoughts from a non-expert, and I would not wish the reader to think that I was trying to teach my grandmother to suck eggs, this paper being put up to (hopefully) stimulate discussion.