

During the past 20 years it has been my good fortune and privilege as President and now Patron of the World Jersey Cattle Bureau to travel to 28 member countries. I have judged shows in New Zealand, Argentina, Guatemala, South Africa, Uruguay, France, Japan and the United Kingdom and in all these countries I have visited herds of pure bred Jerseys of the highest quality. These animals owe their origin to cattle shipped from Jersey Island shores over the past 200 years and all are registered in the herd books of their associations. Traceability of the purity of the breed is therefore fully accountable.

Overseas sales of cattle and semen from Jersey are now virtually nil (the recent export of cattle sold via the exit policy was heavily subsidized) indicating that the Island Jersey has no relevance to overseas breeders and their breeding plans. While Jersey`s closed breeding pool may be a curiosity to many, that is of little comfort to the Island`s present generation of dairy farmers, who have to pay their bills and try to make their farms profitable. This is in stark contrast to other countries such as the USA, New Zealand, Denmark and Canada with their large populations which enable the selection of plus-proven sires which have brought about huge improvement in all traits, especially the trait of production. Such results would not be possible for us ever to achieve.. This has meant that sales of animals, embryos and semen have rocketed- so successful, that the breed is expanding rapidly in all countries, especially in the developing countries of South America and South Africa and is in fierce competition with the formidable Holstein breed. Here in Jersey, with a very small population of 3,000 cows it is virtually impossible to run a successful bull proving scheme- it has been tried and failed miserably. We have some great cow families but need superior sires to enhance our dangerously narrowing genetic base. We just cannot operate an internationally competitive closed herd improvement scheme. The need to import is of the highest urgency. Only then, can we expect a thriving export industry to emerge. The shocking fact that, at present, 700 heifer calves are slaughtered at birth annually is proof that something is seriously wrong.

The average age of our breeders is well over 55years and very few sons and daughters are planning to come into the industry As things are there is no future for them. What young person is interested in entering an industry with his/her hands tied behind his/her back, seeing the great advances made overseas.

Importation would only be allowed under the strictest regulations with regards disease free status and the traceability of the purity of the incoming semen. So what is the problem? Breeders not wishing to use imported semen don`t have to, but please allow those of us who wish to avail ourselves of superior semen to have access to it.

. As I have seen with my own eyes in many countries, skilled and dedicated breeders (such as we have on our own island), are using the best sires to reinforce and improve conformation as well as raising milk production, thereby raising the overall standard of their herds. Our present breeders also need to breed super efficient cows with top functional type in these especially difficult economic times—opponents are telling our breeders that they must continue to work with tools not suited to their job or, indeed, telling our States that they must be prepared to fully support an inefficient industry to ensure viability when they have promised that there will be “brown cows in green fields”?

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