

## Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel

### Review of the Proposed Importation of Bovine Semen

*Answers to Questions relative to Submission from Ms Suzanne E Le Feuvre  
June, 2008*

19<sup>th</sup>

1. *Your submission states that those who do not wish to use imported semen would not have to, but would there not be a pressure on those farmers to do so, to stay in business and to be able to remain competitive with other farmers?*

All farmers already face such pressures, and those who do not wish to use imported semen have, it implies, satisfied themselves as to the best way to deal with these. They have this choice. However, other farmers who wish to make use of Jersey genetics previously sent away from the Island to deal with these pressures, do not have this option.

2. *What would be the implications, as you see them, of not lifting the ban on the importation of bovine semen?*

From my understanding of the various complex factors involved, not lifting the ban on bovine semen importation is likely to result in several, at least, of our major Island producers (i.e. those producing a majority of Jersey's local milk litres) deciding to leave the industry, enough to compromise our local milk supply. And this would not be easy to reverse.

In addition, even if all the present producers remained in the industry, continuing the ban is likely to have a serious negative impact on the future of the Island Jersey's genetic pool. We just do not have the numbers of cattle on Jersey to deal with the needs of modern production economics and keep the genetic diversity needed for milk production.

The conservation of the 'Island Jersey' itself would, I understand, not need as many individuals, but I certainly would not want to see the 'Island Jersey' treated in the future as an endangered species. Keeping a viable dairy industry will automatically keep the Island Jersey thriving, losing a viable dairy industry endangers this in more ways than one, and would also have a range of deleterious effects on the Island's natural environment.

3. *Under the Convention on Biological Diversity, the UK Government (acting on behalf of Jersey) has undertaken to protect its farm animal genetic resources.*

*In view of your evident concern for the natural environment and for conservation, do you feel the import of semen goes against this obligation?*

It must be remembered that an individual approach would be needed to satisfy this obligation, as Jersey's needs for its cattle are not the same as the UK's with respect to farm animal genetics. Bearing this in mind, I still go back to the fact that the importation of bovine semen would allow the best use of what are Island Jersey genetics that have just been moved geographically to places where they have been able to be developed because of the much larger numbers available around the world.

This has allowed for the development of a wide range of Jersey genetics, much wider than would ever have been possible on the Island. This has given Jersey breeders around the world the option to select the best genetics for their needs – be it for a cow capable of walking the distances required on some New Zealand and South African farms, for example, or for cows capable of thriving in the varied farm systems found in North America – from feedlots to lush green pastures. Most importantly for us, here in Jersey, it would be possible for local breeders to select the genetics that would best suit the local consumer and the local environment – both now and in the future. And all while remaining within what is basically still the pool of Island Jersey genetics – bringing back the genetics past Island farmers have sent out into the world.

Whatever the future needs of the local consumer and the local environment, the importation of bovine semen would give us the best flexibility for what Jersey needs – and, I repeat, while still remaining within the Island Jersey genetic pool.

From an environmental point of view, for example, the Jersey cow that suits the Island best will be one with

the best efficient production of milk – more milk per unit of land area used, for example, or more milk per unit of methane produced by the cows. Remember too, that the Island landscape that we want to conserve is one developed by the presence of Jersey cattle and to continue this we need a thriving dairy industry for which, I have already said, the importation of semen is vital.

4. *You mention concern for animal welfare. Given that the prime reason for importing semen is to increase production, do you feel there is a risk that this may jeopardise welfare of cattle through a possible increase in production diseases?*

A prime reason for importing semen is to increase production, but in relation to efficient production. Again, being able to breed cows which naturally produce more milk, butterfat, protein and other various components of great value to the human consumer, is better for the individual animal's welfare than having to push a more limited animal because the farmer has such limited options to improve her ability. Modern genetic selection allows the breeder to choose, for example, cows able to give high production without stress, cows with higher resistance to diseases (those related to production and those with other causes, such as infection), cows with the temperament to be better suited to modern (and future) production systems. All this offers positive benefits for the individual cow's welfare.

*Suzanne E Le Feuvre, BSc, CIBiol*