



30 August 2013

Ayrshire Cattle Society of Kenya
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Hi Dr. Muchemi,

I would like to extend my thanks to the Ayrshire Cattle Society and you personally for your invitation to judge in Kenya and the hospitality shown to me during my visit. I would like to make a few observations that may be of help to you all in Kenya. At least they will be areas of discussion. Any comments I make are in a positive direction in order to improve some areas I noted.

1. Grass species. I consider that most of the species used in Kenya are below average in pasture growth and palatability. I realise that climate, rain times and heat will have an effect on outcomes, but I think a lot would be gained particularly in the higher altitude areas where the temperature is not so hot. Some trials using other species could be carried out e.g. a rye grass, clover mix. If growth rates are improved and palatability is increased then milk weights will jump upwards, which is all better for the economy. Modern grass varieties benefit from rotational grazing – they produce more dry matter as compared to set stocking regimes. Maybe Brookside Dairy Co would be interested in putting some money in this direction as it would help them as well.
2. Improved growth rates in young stock. This is a bit of a two edged sword as it is pointless improving growth rates in young stock if the cost of extra feed required is not viable. Equally, if the animals are not continued to be fed at a higher level than what presently happens then a lot of the gain is lost. Therefore the emphasis needs to be on gaining better growth rates from pasture. This can be easily done if those younger animals are offered fresh grass of a leafy nature on a regular basis. Set stocking is not an option for improved growth rates. The extra production that results from calving animals earlier and at a higher liveweight is huge.
3. Genetic Gain. Genetic gain is largely a numbers game – the more bulls of high genetic merit put through any scheme then the greater the gain on average. In Kenya's situation with only 4% of the cows milk recorded then more emphasis needs to be on the bulls offered on AI. The bulls offered on AI should only have semen offered for 3-4 years maximum and then be replaced by new genetics. By using sons of proven offshore bulls that are progeny tested you are using these sons as soon as possible, thus keeping up with genetic trends from throughout the world. Also by turning over these bulls it helps to keep diversity within a breed and reduces inbreeding. Genetic gain throughout the world is improving and by using a bull for too many years without reliable progeny information in fact will lower genetic gain



and opportunity. I realise there is a cost with a larger turnover of bulls and is there enough tested cows for bull dams in Kenya? I don't know those answers, but it should be considered anyway.

Please also find attached my report on my visit to Kenya. I understand that I have left plenty out of the report, but I just can't fit it all in. An abridged version has been published in our latest Ayrshire Bulletin, and a full copy made available to our members of the website www.ayrshire.org.nz.

Once again, thank you for your hospitality during my visit.

Yours faithfully,

Gordon Glentworth
Ayrshire New Zealand