

Report by Steve Le Feuvre (Jersey cattle judge, LBS 2013)

It was a tremendous honour to be chosen as judge for the 2013 Brookside Livestock Breeders Show, and I thank the organisers of the show and the Council of the Jersey Cattle Society of Kenya for appointing me. I would like to thank everyone for making me feel so welcome, and for the superb hospitality shown to me throughout my stay in Kenya.

The Jersey cattle classes were well filled with quality animals throughout, a credit to their breeders and owners, and to the herdsman (and women) who care for them on a daily basis.

For my Champion Heifer, my clear winner was the world-class "OI Endeti On Time Sherpa" (bred and owned by Dr Romi Grammaticas), and this heifer would have performed very well anywhere in the world. She was full of style and dairyness, with extremely correct conformation and potential udder development for a heifer in calf. My Reserve Champion Heifer, "Rawhide O Fisi" (Rawhide Ltd) was a very refined heifer which was very close to calving, showing all the signs that she will make an excellent dairy animal in the future.

My Junior Champion was "OI Endeti Duke's Shilpa" (Dr Romi Grammaticas), a very correct and perfectly balanced six year old cow, with an udder to match. She, incidentally, was the dam of my Champion Heifer. For my Reserve Junior Champion, I chose an extremely modern Jersey, the Heifer in Milk "OI Endeti Sultan's Halcyon" (Dr Romi Grammaticas). This heifer was tall, well refined and had the most exquisite udder which earned her the prize for Best Udder in the Jersey section.

The Senior Championship was dominated by two eight year old cows who had both had six calves, with the Champion being awarded to "Ololua Fair Garnet" (Mrs Carol Rees), an animal with extreme refinement and an udder that one would normally expect to find on a much younger animal. In Reserve place was the deep-bodied and very correct "Ololua Ernest's Charity" (Mrs Carol Rees) who just lacked in udder fill being nine months calved.

Supreme Jersey Champion was my Junior Champion, "OI Endeti Duke's Shilpa" (Dr Romi Grammaticas), with "OI Endeti Sultan's Halcyon" (Dr Romi Grammaticas) in the Reserve Championship spot. For my Honorable Mention (3rd), I chose the Champion Heifer, "OI Endeti On Time Sherpa" (Dr Romi Grammaticas). Three exceptional and very well bred Jerseys, that are a credit to their breed and to their owner.

In the Interbreed competitions, the Jersey breed won every class despite good competition from the other dairy breeds. This just reinforced the superior quality of the Jerseys at the show compared to other breeds.

Interbreed Supreme Dairy Champion Female of the Show (Brookside Cup)

Champion: "OI Endeti Sultan's Halcyon" (Dr Romi Grammaticas)

Reserve Champion: "Ololua Fair Garnet" (Mrs Carol Rees)

Unfortunately, my Supreme Jersey Champion did not bag up too well for the Interbreed judging, so ended up placing third. However, the quality of the Jersey representatives was so high that this did not matter, and in the eyes of the four dairy breed judges, the superb Heifer in Milk "OI Endeti Sultan's Halcyon" just pipped "Ololua Fair Garnet" for the ultimate crown.

Progeny Class – 3 females by one sire (Brookside Shield)

1st: Jersey group “SHF Centurion Sultan”

2nd Holstien-Friesian group

With three lovely in-milk “Sultan” daughters in the Jersey group, they completely outclassed the other groups that were forward.

Team of Seven Animals of any one Dairy Breedu

1st Jerseys

2nd Holstein-Friesians

3rd Ayrshires

4th Guernseys

In a close-run contest, the Jersey group just prevailed over the Holstein-Friesian group, mainly due to superior dairyness and udder quality.

The cancellation of the Interbreed production and type competition (for the Supreme Champion Dairy Female – “Working Miss”) was most disappointing. The reason I was given was quite astonishing, in that apparently the Jersey breed was the only one that was able to submit valid entries because the other breeds did not have animals that had qualifying lactations. In my view, you should not penalise anyone (or any breed) simply because the other breeds do not bother to produce animals that qualify for the competition. This competition produces the very best dairy animal as the winner, and it is a shame that human failings in other dairy breeds basically robbed the Jersey breed of winning this “Supreme” award along with all the other Interbreed classes.

Many thanks

Steve Le Feuvre

Other general points

The Jersey breed is the ideal cow for Kenya, not only for the medium and large size farms, but most importantly also for the small farmers with just one or a few cows. The attributes of the Jersey should make it the breed of choice for Kenya – small, docile, low maintenance requirements, and when managed properly with the ability to produce good quantities of milk that contains superior levels of butterfat and protein.

Supplying any substantial demand for pure Jerseys may be difficult to achieve at present, so perhaps the best short-term course of action should be to encourage cross-breeding with Jersey semen, encouraging the gradual grading-up to pedigree Jersey status.

The issue of component pricing for milk in Kenya must be tackled with some urgency. The rest of the world acknowledges that not all “milk” is the same, and now pretty much worldwide a higher price per litre is paid for milk containing higher components. The dairy industry in Kenya cannot progress in the direction that it should be going unless and until milk buyers and processors are prepared to pay for milk on the basis of what that milk contains. Milk containing 5% buttefat & 3.7% protein is a much more valuable product to the processors than milk of 3.5% butterfat & 3% protein. The farmers should be rewarded with a higher price for producing milk that contains higher components.

When component pricing is introduced, which hopefully will be quite soon, farmers will very quickly have to establish which of their cows produce milk with the highest components, so that they can concentrate on breeding youngstock from those superior animals.

To do this, a cost-effective and efficient milk recording service will have to be established in Kenya. With the assistance of good computer programs, it should be very easy to run this service, with butterfat and protein samples for individual cows being taken on a regular monthly or two-monthly basis.

If I can be of any help, please let me know.