

## 2016 Livestock Breeders Show – Judges report

Herewith my report on judging the Jerseys and Interbreed show at the 2016 Livestock Breeders Show in Nairobi, Kenya. First of all I have to comment on the great hospitality I enjoyed during my time in Kenya. Growing up with Jersey people I have come to know them as friendly and very hospitable and it was also true for the Jersey Breeders in Kenya! Thank you all for your friendly welcome and great hospitality during my stay!

From the start of the heifer classes I tried to look for animals that showed good dairyness, strength, open rib and a strong topline as well as good feet and legs. This is the type that I like as a heifer and these animals usually develop into good dairy cows. I have to say that finding the type I like was easy in every class as there were animals of great quality in every heifer class. My Champion Heifer Ololua Caruso's Osmosis is an excellent example of what I like to see in a heifer. Strong, good dairyness, strong topline and great feet and legs. She also had lots of style which made her an easy choice and she would definitely also have won an interbreed heifer championship if there had been one at the show. My Reserve Champion Heifer Ololua Sam's Daisy was of similar type but the Champion just showed a stronger topline and a bit more style as she moved around on the day. These are two excellent heifers and they would also do well if they were exhibited in South Africa. Congratulations to all the breeders on a great heifer show. I think that as a whole you have the right type of animal considering all the heifers in the classes. Always remember that these animals are your best genetics and feeding them is an investment in your dairy and not a cost (as so often it is referred to because they are not producing milk yet) there is a direct correlation between heifer raising and future production. I urge you to make the most of your best genetics by making it an important part of your strategy on your dairy. With heifers like the ones exhibited at the show the Jersey breed in Kenya is well away!

I really enjoyed the young cow classes and although the cows were a bit smaller than what we are used to in South Africa they had the same dairyness and good udders. Here I tried to look for animals that showed youthfulness in their udders along with the other traits I usually look for. I found the young cow classes very enjoyable and my Junior Champion and eventual Supreme Champion cow Ol Endeti On Time Sanaya was an easy winner in her class and just kept on looking better and better as the day went on! I think she is a very complete dairy cow, very well balanced, strong and with enough body capacity with a good spring of rib and quality of bone and dairyness all round. She walked very well and comfort of movement is very important to me and she has a great udder that is very well attached. Her Reserve Ol Endeti On Time Honesty is a young cow with a great future and I expect her to return to the showing in years to come.

The senior cow classes were equally impressive and I was especially impressed by the way the cows are able to last long and stay productive for so many years. When judging senior cows I look for development in relation to age, in other words has the cow become what is expected of her for her age. For example a cow that is eight years old but still has the udder development of a two year old has clearly not produced to potential yet and will be penalized, also an udder floor below the hock is undesirable at any age but can be excused somewhat for older cows as they have produced a lot of milk by then. My Senior Champion Ol Endeti Kennedy's Hawthorn was a tremendous cow and showed

everything I like to see in a senior Jersey cow. She has loads of strength and capacity while not giving anything away in dairyness and femininity. She has beautiful udder attachments and also good quality of udder texture. It was very close for me to decide between her and OI Endeti on Time Sanaya for the Supreme Championship and the fact that "Hawthorn" was also called up into the final lineup during the interbreed judging is proof of her quality. My Reserve Senior Champion was also a very impressive cow especially for her age, Ololua Ernest's Charity impressed me greatly from the moment she walked in and I always love to see cows that age as well as she has while she has clearly been a hard worker throughout her life.

In final comments I would again like to congratulate all the Jersey breeders on an excellent show especially in the interbreed classes where the Jerseys stood head and shoulders above the rest, not only in quality of animals but also in the way they were prepared and handled. A very proud moment for me as a judge indeed! I often get the question "What should we do to improve further?" The answer is that there is no one correct answer. Each herd has its own breeding goal, while the basics will of course always be very important there are different challenges on each farm that need to be addressed. My advice would be to always have a clear plan with your breeding goal. Select a group of bulls that will help you achieve those goals and be very particular about which bulls you choose. Make sure they contribute positively to the herd and stay focused. Good udders are always my most important criteria and from there on every farm has different goals in terms of production, milk solids etc. The way I see it there are huge opportunities for the Jersey breed in Kenya and surrounding countries and you as a group of breeders should make an effort to supply more Jersey heifers to the market. From driving around in Kenya I was amazed not to see more Jerseys there, you have an opportunity to change the colour of the dairy industry in Kenya!

Again my greatest thanks to you all

Kind regards

Wikus van der Merwe