

2016 Livestock Breeders Show, Nairobi, Kenya.

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It was with huge excitement that I accepted the invitation to judge the Jersey show at the 2016 Livestock Breeders Show in Nairobi, Kenya. Having visited the country before without seeing any Jersey herds I had no idea what to expect. The show, held at the Nairobi Showgrounds was very well attended and thousands of people entered the gates each day and the event was also attended by the Vice President of Kenya Mr William Ruto. Large crowds of interested spectators lined the show arena where the Jerseys, Holsteins, Ayrshires and Guernseys were judged. According to the Kenya Dairy Board the country has a total annual milk production of 5.16 billion litres of which 3.9 billion is produced by cows, 985 million litres by camels, 35 million litres by sheep and 235 million by goats. Large commercial dairy farms like we know them are not the norm in Kenya and because there are so many small scale farmers in Kenya, almost all the spectators were dairy farmers themselves. This meant the crowds were keen followers of proceedings and class winners were met with large applause and appreciation from the spectators. A really exciting and enjoyable event.

The Jersey Breeders of Kenya are a friendly, enthusiastic group of people with a real passion for their cows and it showed in the quality of animals exhibited and preparation and showing of the animals in the ring. A small group of farmers spread around the country sharing and having a great time talking cows and enjoying the show. Everyone arriving at the Jersey arena was met with great hospitality and friendliness. The show is judged over three days, heifers on the first day, followed by the cows on the second day and an interbreed championship on the third as the highlight of the event.

From the first heifer class I was impressed by the quality of animals on show and although the classes weren't large in terms of number of entries they were certainly high in standard. My Champion Heifer, Ololua Caruso's Osmosis exhibited by Mrs Carol Rees, is a heifer that had everything I like to see, strength, dairyness, great feet and legs and she had some style to burn too! She was an easy winner and a popular one at that and had there been an interbreed championship for heifers everyone were in agreement that she would have won that too. The Junior cow show had cows of great quality with some exciting young cows and a very competitive Junior Championship was won by Ol Endeti On Time Sanaya exhibited by Dr Romi Grammaticas and her Reserve Ol Endeti On Time Honesty by the same exhibitor made up a very nice pair of Junior Jersey cows with good dairyness and very good udders.

The Senior Championship was won by Ol Endeti Kennedy's Hawthorn, a cow that simply overpowered her competition on the day, again exhibited by Dr Grammaticas and her Reserve Senior Champion was a phenomenal 12 year old cow Ololua Ernest's Charity exhibited by Mrs Carol Rees. "Charity" and her daughter "Ololua Lucy in the Sky" also came out on top in the very interesting "Mother and Daughter" class. Ol Endeti On Time Sanaya was the Supreme Champion and Ol Endeti Kennedy's Hawthorn the Reserve Supreme Champion. These two cows in my mind made an excellent pair of champions and the following day during the interbreed judging "Hawthorn" was called up into the final lineup along with the 4 Supreme Champions of each breed because of her outstanding quality.

The Interbreed show was judged by myself, Herman Duvenage and Edmund Els, an all South African panel! I must take the opportunity to thank Hermand and Edmund for the privilege to judge with them at this event and for the enjoyable time we all had. Again on the day the Jerseys came out on top. It was a very proud moment for me as the Jersey judge when Ol Endeti On Time Sanaya was crowned the Supreme Champion of the Show! Another interesting class is a breed group of seven animals where the judge gets to pick a string of seven animals to represent the breed. I compiled a lineup that started with the Champion Heifer and picked animals progressively older in age and development but with the same characteristics and again a very proud moment when this group came out on top! This group of animals is a great tribute to the Jersey Breeders of Kenya and the Jersey breed as a whole.

As always where Jersey breeders are involved I was met with great friendliness and hospitality and I also had the opportunity to visit the Mills' family farm "Rawhide" near the city of Nakuru and some great sights in their region including Lake Nakuru National Park, Lake Baringo and the Great Rift Valley. I also had the privilege of visiting the farms of Dr Romi Grammaticas and Dr Imbugi Luvai in the week after the show. Kenya is a great country to visit with spectacular scenery and wildlife and a group of Jersey breeders that are passionate about what they are doing and they definitely have a great future in a country where the opportunities for the Jersey cow are endless!