

On August the 7th Diane & myself set off to go to Kenya, having accepted the invitation to Judge the Livestock Breeders show in Nairobi. In preparation we had to have countless injections and anyone that knows me well will know I'm not too good with them!

We left from Manchester airport at 10.30 am to fly to Istanbul to then catch a 7 hour flight to Nairobi, we arrived at 2.30am minus my suitcase! Fortunately for all concerned Diane had hers. Arriving at the hotel was welcome after our long journey.

Dr Muchemi Kariuki, our host came to meet us later that evening and helped track down my case which was delivered to our hotel 45 minutes before we needed to leave the following morning. Dr Muchemi did assure me that if my suitcase didn't arrive in time he would take me shopping at 5am for a suit. I had to be smart because the president of Kenya was attending the show and as it was, I wasn't suitably dressed in my T shirt, jeans and trainers!

The following morning Dr Muchemi and his driver Joseph picked us up from the hotel at 5am. We had to leave so early because if we were 30 minutes later it would have taken two and a half hours to get through Nairobi, instead of the 45 minutes it did take because of the amount of traffic. We were both astounded at the amount of traffic and people on the roads at that time of the morning. We were taken on a tour around the financial part of the city, then on to a viewing point that overlooked the city. It was a fantastic sight!

We arrived at the show and much to our amazement it was cold! When we left the UK it was 30 degrees, so we hadn't been used to such low temperatures.

Judging commenced at 9am with a large entry of 120 Ayrshires forward, by far the largest breed represented. Blood lines from the cattle shown were a mixture of native, Canadian, Finnish and Swedish and one pedigree going back to Bankend Lord Ontario.

The junior champion came from ADC Olingatongo farm, from the young cow class over 3 years and under 5 years in milk by a bull called Humour. The reserve came from the young dry class sired by Maakiou Orkko Coffee, a Purolan Orkko son from Gicheha Farm Ltd.

My overall champion again came from Gicheha Farm. She was in the mature cow class over 5 years under 7 years old in milk and sired by Palmrya Jerrys cannon, a Kildare Jerry son. Reserve was my junior champion. Following all of the production classes, best handler and groups etc. there were 34 classes in total judged.

On the final day of the show we were taken to the Kenya animal genetic resources centre, where we met the managing Director, Dr David Kios who was keen to know my view on the bulls we were going to see. We were taken to a grassed area where we took a seat while the bulls were paraded one by one in front of us. This was quite nerve wrecking as the bulls were on 15-foot metal chains and at times the bulls were leading the men rather than the men leading the bulls!

The bulls were of good confirmation and many of the them were up to 8 years old. The centre was collecting on average 700 straws per week from each of them. Demand from the domestic market meant they were using them all. We were shown about 12 Ayrshires, 15 Holsteins, a couple of Jerseys and a Boran.

We then returned to the show where we chatted with people keen to learn about the Ayrshire Society in the UK and it was good to hear the familiar name Jack Lawson brought up by so many breeders. This also gave us the chance to thank all of the lovely people we had met for their kind hospitality.

The following day Dr Muchemi and his son Jean-Paul picked us up to take us to the Rift Valley. We were taken 8000 ft above sea level, words nor pictures can explain how amazing and breath taking the views of the valley are! We then travelled down through the bottom of the valley to Nakuru National Park where we were taken on a safari, to see White Rhinos, Water buffalo, Zebras and many more beautiful animals.

After the safari we visited ADC Lanet Feedlot, a mixed breed herd of 100 animals, 20 of them being Ayrshire. They were milked by hand by 12 people! Although the Ayrshires were small in numbers they were very desirable types. The owner made us feel very welcome and was keen to know my opinions.

After a very long drive back, which made the M25 seem like a country road, Dr Muchemi dropped us off at a new hotel in the middle of Nairobi.

On our final day Dr Muchemi collected us to take us to Maakiou Estate Ltd which was located on the outskirts of Nairobi. Here they were growing coffee and milking 100 Ayrshires. The farm was a little more modernised as they did milk with dump buckets and a vacuum line, and there were a number of bulls standing from this farm at the AI centre we had previously visited. They were feeding fresh maize which had been chopped by hand with a stationary chopper, then bagged up and fed to the cows by a human feeder wagon! As we left the farm we saw a family sat with cows in a field and were told it was their job to stand with the cows all day to make sure they stayed in the grazing area.

Dr Muchemi then drove us back through Nairobi and showed us where he had grown up, before taking us to try some street food, which was an experience! We then said our goodbyes.

The whole experience was phenomenal, breath taking and although at times we felt a little out of our comfort zone, we cannot thank Dr Muchemi and his colleagues enough for their very warm welcome, hospitality and the overall experience myself and Diane received.