

Good day to all Guernsey Enthusiasts,

On behalf of the Canadian Guernsey Association I would like to bring you up to date with respect to changes since the last Conference. In Canada, Guernseys are considered to be on the endangered species list since we have less than 250 registrations per year. However, this does not extend to the quality of animals. With several breeding options still available from our friends to the south and Semex in Canada, the Canadian Guernsey breeder is able to make educated choices.

There is one piece of bad news – Semex has decided to discontinue the Guernsey young sire program in Canada. Due to numbers, young sires have been jointly proven with U.S. breeders for several years. This decision to discontinue the program came from Semex – USA as their market focus will be directed at herds 500 head and larger. Distribution is also a concern. The Association is currently considering options and has not ruled out working with Semex down the road.

Over the past 3 years, we have seen modest increases of 250 kgs in milk production to over 7050 kgs with a slight increase to butterfat (4.51% to 4.57%) and a slight decrease to protein (3.45% to 3.42%). These statistics are based on approximately 400 records per year.

Our classification system is still administered by Holstein Canada with great success. The system is based on the Holstein model and has been adjusted for individual breed traits. It also allows the Association to analyze evaluation reports and tweak certain traits as needed. This program has been in use since 2006 and has seen only minor changes since its inception.

Today, the Association has annual membership of 39 members (a slight decrease since the last report) and 43 life members (including some that are still active). From 2009 to 2011, we saw a decrease of purebred registrations from 251 to 203.

We have had the opportunity to introduce Guernsey cheese into the market place as a niche product. The Upper Canada Cheese Company from Jordon, ON is in its 8th year of operation. They continue to amaze consumers with their great artisan cheeses made entirely from Guernsey milk. Countryside Poultry is in its 5th year of marketing Guernsey Cheddar and has had great reviews of their cheese including awards from this past year at the Royal Winter Fair in Toronto. Eby Manor Ltd. has recently completed its first year of bottled milk production with ever increasing results.

Our Promotions Committee was formed to come up with refreshing ideas to create greater awareness of the Guernsey breed. This past year, a joint promotion took place between the Association and Upper Canada Cheese at a shop in Toronto including a live cow display with several pictures showing up on facebook. The Association also had a joint promotion with Eby Manor Ltd at a farm show over 2 days with 7500 people in attendance. Attendees were educated about our quality of milk highlighting the ability of our milk to be consumed by those with allergies due to its A2 component. Members from the Association continue to offer top genetics for sale both live animals and embryos. The Canadian National Guernsey show is held annually with 70-75 head being shown

The future - As with many things, the future is our youth. They must be encouraged to become and stay involved in the dairy industry and specifically the Guernsey breed with youthful enthusiasm. Education to farmers and non-farmers alike must be ongoing in order to maintain a market presence especially with respect to A2 milk. Breeders of other colours have been inquiring about the A2 component of our milk and additions of both bulls and cows have been made. However, existing Guernsey breeders must continue to make animals available for integration into these existing herds. We will continue to encourage registration, milk recording and classification to enhance genetic improvement and accuracy. All of these things must be addressed consideration to make advancements of the Guernsey breed in Canada.

