

The South African Guernsey Society
Report to the 14th World Guernsey Conference

It is an honour to present the following report to the 14th World Guernsey Conference here in Guernsey.

At present we have twelve members. During the past few years the numbers of members and registered cows have been declining. Dairy farms in South Africa are becoming less and herds are growing larger. Milking 200 cows would be seen as a very small dairy farm. Labour and feed cost are the biggest contributing factors why farmers are moving to other types of farming like beef and sheep.

Our average milk production for 2012 was 5681kgmilk 4.20% fat 238kgfat 3.48%pr 198kgpr. We had one outstanding lifetime performance by Langrietvlei Lorals Jewel, 13years old, 10 completed lactation with 87645kg milk 4.05%BF 3.56%P ICP (*Inter Calving Period/Calving Interval*) 406days.

10 heifers and 2 bulls were exported to Uganda from the Shangrila herd of Gay van Hasselt.

Subject of special interest.

We in South Africa have thought long and hard how to convince our breeders and commercial herds to all have the same objectives. We as bull breeders need to breed bulls that will produce daughters that will work in a commercial herd.

Two things came up in discussions with commercial farmers. They wanted cows that breed like rabbits and cows that are tough as nails. We had to find a practical way to convince ourselves that what we are doing would improve the breed. So we decided that every farmer should divide their herd into 2 groups a taller stature group and shorter stature group. If you take these 2 groups and work out the average of their ICP (*Inter Calving Period/Calving Interval*), you will find that the shorter group will have a far shorter ICP.

Tough as nails meant cows with longevity, good feet and legs, Low somatic cell count, low vet costs and in general just free from problems. Breed like rabbits meant cows with good reproduction, less than 400 days ICP, and cows that will be from the shorter stature group. There are many more things to look at when deciding on bull dams like inbreeding, production etc. But if we don't breed a good commercial animal we as Guernsey farmers have failed the breed.

Thank you,

Reuben Kotze