

UK Report to the World Conference

I am sorry not to be here to give this report but I know that the UK is well represented by Sue Staples and Digby who will be our delegates at the WGCF. I would like to thank the States of Guernsey for making the conference such an excellent event and thank all the delegates for attending. I would also like to thank our presidents Rosemary and Dennis Warren. We hope you have had an enjoyable and interesting time in the UK and on the Island.

Over the years we have worked very closely with the Island on our Joint Breeding Plan and although the current restriction on export of semen to the UK from the Island has limited our progression we believe it is important to continue to pool our resources for the benefit of our wonderful breed. Our Breeding Policy still remains focused on the use of young bulls and the results from the latest proof run in April 2013 show the strides we are making. Since 2008 the average bull on the scheme has produced daughters with +250kgs milk and over 22kg F&P with reliability figures of 80-90%. Moreover the balance of the GMI has also improved mammary scores to over 1.2 with good reliability scores. PTA's for 2011 and 2012 are even better with milk figures +300 kgs and F&P +26kgs. Mammary scores and feet and leg scores are also positive. We have also seen peripheral benefits on farm where breeders have used GMI's to select home-bred bulls. Fertility is a key issue and we have been actively selecting bulls with less negative fertility values which has also reflected well in our more recent PTA's.

On farm we have probably experienced the worst 12 months in Dairying for many years. The very poor weather resulting in high cereal prices and many having to buy in costly forage at a time when milk prices have stagnated. There have been a lot of dispersal sales this spring but fortunately our registrations are holding up a 900-1000 per year and we have had some new herds formed to balance those leaving.

Some producers are at last seeing some positive financial benefits from the A2 milk they produce as championed by Col. Chris Watson and Digby for so long. A2 corporation have a joint venture with Muller Wisemans and have A2 milk available in a number of retail outlets paying the farmer a 2-3ppl premium. On testing the herds supplying them we have found them to be 85% A2. They have then had to replace cows to make sure they are 100%. An easier task than with Holstein herds that are only 30-40% A2. At present milk prices in the UK are rising due mainly to a massive shortage of milk and because of recovering world markets. The Code of Dairy Practice has also made it easier for farmers to give notice and leave if other companies are paying more for the milk. Arla Co-op have also purchased Milk Link so the processors are becoming stronger in the market place to negotiate better contracts with supermarkets and are also able to compete better in the world markets and return a more stable price for UK farmers.

I am sure many of you will have noticed the high proportion of UK Guernsey farmers processing on farm and adding value to the milk. Many of these businesses are thriving due to the high quality milk we produce which makes it possible to manufacture rich, quality products that cannot be matched by standard milk.

I would like to finish by wishing you all health and prosperity until the next conference.

Duncan Vincent