



# ABERDEEN-ANGUS SHOW COMMENTARY 2011

The growing demand for quality Aberdeen-Angus beef throughout the UK and Ireland – and indeed the whole of Europe – offers commercial beef producers a unique opportunity of tapping into the guaranteed market and premium prices for Aberdeen-Angus cattle.

The continued success of the Aberdeen-Angus breed is under-pinned by strong consumer trust and loyalty and this represents an unparalleled opportunity for commercial beef producers to develop a sustainable and profitable beef enterprise based on low-cost production and a premium market.

Little wonder that annual registrations of Aberdeen-Angus pedigree cattle have soared to an all-time high in recent years as more and more farmers have switched to the world's premier beef breed.

All over the country, farmers are swinging back to Aberdeen-Angus as discerning consumers rediscover the superior eating qualities of Aberdeen-Angus beef and quality butchers, multiple retailers and top hotels and restaurants seek to source increased supplies of Aberdeen-Angus prime cattle to meet this growing demand.

Sainsbury's, Marks and Spencer, Waitrose, Costco and Tesco are among the leading high street retailers actively promoting Aberdeen-Angus beef to meet the demands of their customers for beef of superior eating quality. Demand from the Continent is also growing rapidly.

The success of the various specialist marketing schemes supported by the Aberdeen-Angus Cattle Society has been a crucial factor in building up consumer confidence and loyalty and creating a premium market for Aberdeen-Angus beef, earning commercial beef producers substantial extra income.

Key driver in the continued expansion of the Aberdeen-Angus breed is the breed's well-known advantages for economic, low-cost production, coupled with the premium prices paid for Aberdeen-Angus prime and store cattle.

The economic advantages of the Aberdeen-Angus breed are universally recognised and it's not surprising there are more Aberdeen-Angus cattle in the world today than any other beef breed. Indeed, the breed accounts for more than 80% of the 50 million beef cattle in Argentina which is one of the major beef producing countries in the world.

World markets for the breed are also opening up again following the easing of export restrictions. Semen and embryos are being exported to North and South America and Aberdeen-Angus cattle are being exported to many countries in Continental Europe, including Germany, Estonia, Romania, France, Portugal and Poland.

From the farmer's point of view, Aberdeen-Angus cattle are easily managed which is an important economic consideration with less labour available on farms. Advantages include natural polling (hornlessness) which makes for easy calving, regular breeding, good foraging ability, longevity and the ability to produce the highest quality beef naturally on a minimum of concentrate feeding.

The hardiness and will-to-live of the Aberdeen-Angus cross calf makes the breed ideal for crossing in both beef and dairy herds. Surveys consistently confirm that the lowest incidence of assisted calvings is achieved with Aberdeen-Angus, while the advantages of easy calving in terms of improved milk yield and less "wear and tear" on cows are well documented.

Aberdeen-Angus cross calves grow quickly and efficiently into highly acceptable quality cattle which meet the modern demand for medium-sized carcasses of around 280kg – 320kg. Heifers also make ideal suckler cows which are easily maintained, produce a calf every year and give plenty of milk to rear fast growing calves. Aberdeen-Angus cross cows are eminently suitable for putting back to the Aberdeen-Angus bull or crossing with other breeds.

Aberdeen-Angus breeders have been highly successful in meeting present-day commercial demand for moderate size, easy fleshing and good conformation and this is well illustrated at the breed's main show and sale at Stirling where strong bidding by commercial beef producers has boosted prices for Aberdeen-Angus bulls to record levels in recent years.

All this has been achieved by the adoption of progressive breeding policies which marry the inherent skills of the practical breeder with the advantages offered by modern technology.

AI and embryo transfer are widely used to spread the influence of superior proven breeding stock and the Aberdeen-Angus Cattle Society has pioneered the adoption of Breedplan, the world's most advanced performance recording system, to help breeders identify the sires demonstrating the best genetic potential.

Estimated breeding values (EBVs), including terminal sire index as a measure of growth and beefing quality and self replacement index indicating the milk potential for female progeny, are vitally important tools to help buyers select breeding stock which best suit their own particular requirements.

A guaranteed market and premium prices, coupled with the well-proven economic advantages of the breed, makes the breeding and feeding of Aberdeen-Angus cattle a highly profitable enterprise for the beef farmer, whether a suckled calf producer in the hills and uplands or a finisher on a low ground farm.