



The **ABERDEEN-ANGUS** Cattle Society

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Newsletter

The **ABERDEEN-ANGUS** Cattle Society Newsletter Spring 2010



NEWSLETTER SPRING 2010

Well, spring is allegedly here and not a minute too soon. Patience like silage and straw has been wearing a bit thin as we all await the onset of warmer days. For the majority of livestock farmers 2009 has been the longest and coldest winter of recent times with snowfall measured in feet rather than in inches. One breeder that keeps us posted of his daily predicaments claims that his arms are a good bit longer than they were at the start of the winter due to the number of buckets of water he has carted to his stock. The good news for his friends is that he will now be able to reach the money in his pockets which allegedly he has not always been able to do with any great ease.

All reports would indicate that cattle have wintered well and the meat trade are predicting tight supplies of finished cattle in the early summer which should be reflected in a stable price. Calving is well underway as evidence by the high volume of registrations coming in both by post and increasingly by the on-line system. There is a real sense of optimism at this time of year when breeders see the first calves by their new bull or perhaps an ET calf with totally new genetics.

The indicators for the Aberdeen-Angus breed remain good with the latest BCMS passport applications to the end of 2009 holding relatively steady at 236533 passports issued with all of the other major beef breeds showing reductions in the order of 9%. With the overall number of beef breeding cows having declined significantly, to hold your own is really positive news.

Before we know it we will be cutting silage and showing cattle that is if we can survive the volcanic ash and the General Election. Anyway, onwards and upwards.

The following are some of the topics discussed by Council when they last met at the end of March. As always the subject matter is in no particular order but we welcome your comments and feedback either direct to the office or to your Council member whose details are on the web or at the back of this Newsletter.

WEBSITE: The Society's website continues to grow and grow in terms of visits and downloads. The new features have been well received and we will continue to roll out new ideas and services to meet the needs of our members.

One interesting new feature is the "Mating Predictor" from the "On-Line Database" or "On-Line Registration" buttons on the home page. Since it was first launched a few months ago we are seeing increased usage from both the inquisitive, hoping it is some sort of on-line dating service for lonely members and from breeders who are using it to help predict what effect a certain bull would have on their herd. It is a 'try before you buy' facility and is easiest to use for those members who register their calves on-line because all your

active females are listed. You can then 'mate' your selected bull to all or some of your females. The outcome predicts the effect that bull will have on the EBVs of the resulting calves as well as showing you the percentage of 'inbreeding' or 'line breeding' in the mating. By selecting a bull with the traits that you believe you need to improve in your herd such as milk or growth, this facility allows you to look at the results before you buy the bull or use his semen. Remember it is only a guide and should be used as such but it is better than making an expensive mistake when buying a bull and being disappointed with the results. It can help you narrow the field when selecting a new bull but it won't help you find a partner. That takes more time and can cost a lot more money. Give it a go and let us know what you think.

FREE MUSTO JACKET AND HELP OUR GREEN CREDENTIALS:

Here's your chance to win a free "Musto Jacket" as featured on our website to improve member communication and reduce postage. These are really high quality jackets and retail at over £100. All you have to do is send us your current, up to date e-mail address and you will be entered into the free prize draw. Go to the Society's website at www.aberdeen-angus.com and click the button that says "update your address here" and you might just be the smartest dressed breeder in town! For those wishing to enter but have a latent fear of the technology then just give us a call and we will do the necessary.

OFFICIAL SALES:

The move towards declared health status at official Society sales has been widely welcomed principally by buyers who can now buy with confidence, safe in the knowledge that all cattle entered for Perth (Stirling) and Carlisle have been tested and vaccinated for BVD and come from CHeCS approved Johnes monitored herds. From January 2011 this will be the norm at all official sales. Council's thanks are duly extended to all breeders who have raised their game and made this happen. Council are also investigating a means of assisting breeders, who are not currently members of a CHeCS approved health scheme, with the initial costs of joining such a scheme. If approved, this incentive programme would run for one calendar year from January 2011 and its uptake would be reviewed after twelve months. Herd health has a major impact on the performance of your beef enterprise and many diseases show little or no clinical signs. Don't assume it's someone else's problem or that the problem will just go away. It will only get worse if you don't act now. Another change in the offing is that from October 2010, the minimum price for bulls at all official Society sales will be raised from the current 1250gns to 1500gns. This merely reflects the increase in value for cull bulls and breeders must be aiming to bring out bulls that make over 2000gns if they are to make any sort of return on their time and effort.

The following judges are to take centre stage at our major shows and sales over the coming year:

Carlisle Sale May 21st	Wanda Hobbs
Royal Highland Show	John Coultrip (appointed by the RHAS).
National Show Kelso, 30th July	Mr Victor Wallace
October Perth Bull Sale (Stirling)	Mr Ian Campbell, Lockerbie
October Carlisle Sale	Mr Angus Stovold
National Angus Winter Show (Carlisle Beef Expo)	Mrs Marion Tilson
Bristol Autumn Sale	Mr Bryan Ronan
Perth Bull Sales February 2011	Mr William McLaren Jnr

DNA & GENOMICS:

Thanks to all those very generous breeders who have donated 2 straws of semen for the genomic profiling tests and to see how the results compare with the EBV information currently available through the BreedPlan performance recording programme. This new technology will undoubtedly play a significant part in the future of performance recording and the results will help us evaluate the best options going forward.

These tests are now commercially available. Very considerable sums of money have been invested in this new technology by large multinational companies who are keen to see a return on their investment. However a degree of caution has to be exercised. This is an evolving science and whilst very important, members should not be coerced into believing that these tests are in any way obligatory or indeed necessarily an integral part of their future breeding decisions. They are simply one more tool in the box and should be treated as such.

CURLY CALF (AM) SYNDROME:

Following on from the piece in the last Newsletter on curly Calf (AM) Syndrome, the initial run of our database using the GeneProb® software revealed only 19 possible carriers which is proportionally very low compared with a number of overseas societies. There were no AI bulls in the cases identified. Council agreed that these animals should be DNA tested to determine their carrier status and if positive, their status publicised and any progeny which are already registered should be tested until their status is known. From 2011 no tested carriers will be eligible to be registered. We have to stress that this is an ongoing situation and new carriers will be identified in overseas Herd Books and their progeny traced and the process repeated. Nothing in life is simple but we are committed to keeping our Herd Book free from genetic disorders as and when they arise.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (YDP) 2010:

Big changes are underway. Have a look at the new YDP pages on the Society's website to see all the action so far and the planned events ahead.

This year the finals will be held at Rugby Market (Stoneleigh) on the 2nd and 3rd October and will be staged on a completely new and larger format. Spread over a weekend, the National YDP finals will focus on intensive training, competition and team building designed to develop a true sense of camaraderie and rivalry and also to develop our industry leaders of tomorrow. Our last two winners have been true ambassadors for the breed when they have represented us abroad. The format of the weekend is likely to involve some form of cattle handling finals, speaker presentations from the members, knowledge quizzes and some more light hearted farm visits to surrounding commercial and pedigree farms as well as some form of entertainment in the evening.

The Society is actively pursuing sponsorship for the finals to ensure that the cost of participation is kept to an affordable level. Council would encourage any member who is minded to help this very worthwhile cause by perhaps donating a heifer, semen or embryos for sale to get in touch with the office so we can advise on how best to make this happen. As breeders of Aberdeen-Angus cattle we are all focussed on the next generation of calves but without the youngsters to make it all happen it becomes a rather pointless exercise. Your support would be greatly appreciated.

ABERDEEN-ANGUS FAMILY NAMES:

Following a review of the current family names by some very learned individuals (Rainy-Brown and a few helpers), Council agreed with Norma Service’s revised family naming list, a copy of which is enclosed for every active breeder. This is essentially a tidying up exercise but it is important that we maintain this family naming tradition within the Society and we encourage all breeders to make every effort to raise their knowledge and use of the system. If you are still confused then call Norma who is the fount of knowledge for family naming issues.

2009 HERD BOOK:

The 2009 Herd Book is currently being printed and contains no fewer than 13,361 registrations which is the highest number ever. The Aberdeen-Angus breed is now comfortably established as the second largest beef breed in the UK in terms of pedigree registrations. Council extends their thanks to all breeders for helping the Society reach this historic milestone. To reserve your copy of the latest blockbuster then please complete the enclosed yellow slip and return it to the office and we will do the rest.

CALVING AT TWO YEARS OF AGE:

Having written a short piece in the last Newsletter about calving at two, I have had a number of calls asking if this was now ‘Society policy’. The age at which pedigree breeders choose to calve their heifers is a matter of personal choice and will depend on the type of cattle they have and the geography and topography of their individual farm. What works for you is likely best for you, but there is a very strong financial argument for commercial beef farmers calving down at two years old.

For example take two separate herds, each starting with 8 heifers, the first calving at 2 years of age and the second calving at three years of age. Assume for arguments sake that all heifer calves are retained for breeding and that the split between bull and heifer calves is 50:50.

Year	Calving at 2 years old	Calving at 3 years old
2010	8 calves born	0 calves born
2011	8 calves born	8 calves born
2012	12 calves born	8 calves born
2013	16 calves born	8 calves born
2014	22 calves born	12 calves born
Total calves born over 5 years	64	34

I appreciate that this is a theoretical model but you cannot fault the maths. So the next time you are selling your Aberdeen-Angus heifers to either pedigree or commercial beef farmers then it is well worth accentuating the fact that Aberdeen-Angus are well capable of calving at two and can produce a calf every 12 months which is more than can be said for some of the more popular breeds in the UK beef industry.

LLOYDS TSB BANK OF SCOTLAND SUCKLER HERD OF THE YEAR COMPETITION:

Still time to enter one of the most prestigious competitions in the livestock sector. Entries close on the 15th August. You will all know well managed commercial beef enterprises that are using Aberdeen-Angus bulls, most probably some of your commercial bull buyers. They don’t need to have the newest buildings or shiniest tractors but they should have well run, sustainable beef enterprises. Entering couldn’t be simpler. All they need to do is go to the Society’s website and download a form or you can phone the office and we will send some out to you. Just imagine getting £1000 from a bank and not being charged for the privilege. It’s the stuff that dreams are made of!

PERFORMANCE RECORDING:

The June BLUP run will soon be on us and Barbara and Helena are keen to have everyone’s weights and scanning data entered on time. The end of May is the absolute final deadline. So if you haven’t done it then please get on to it.

USING A NEW BULL THIS YEAR?:

There is one other thing in life that is certain as well as death and taxes and that is, if you use a bull which is not DNA profiled, then you won’t get the calves registered. Furthermore if the bull dies after you have used him and before you got him DNA’d then you might as well phone the Samaritans now because you’ll never get the calves registered. Don’t let this happen to you.

So please remember if you’re turning out a new boy with the girls then please get him DNA’d before it’s too late. Mistakes are better sorted before your new bull serves any of your cows rather than waiting till there are calves on the ground. “New Bull then Order a DNA Kit!”

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The date of the next Council meeting is scheduled for 18th August 2010.