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Council Meeting

A full review of the latest meeting of Council in March

**WHAT'S
INSIDE...**



At the time of writing this report, COVID-19 is rapidly advancing and we have all eyes on what and how we do things to protect the staff, their families, and the Society from being adversely affected by this crisis. It is an unknown quantity and we are looking to adapt and adjust as the evermoving goal posts change.

The Council and Committee meetings were held in March 2020, with all the elected Council members descending on Pedigree house to discuss, assess, and implement matters that can take the Aberdeen-Angus breed and the brand forward in the short, medium and longer term.

All the Committees were formed with an eye on the interest and expertise of each Council member. And if the member had expressed an interest in Technical and Breed Promotions for example, the President elected to have them on one or the other Committee rather than both. These subjects are huge for us and this arrangement would mean that the available time to dedicate to Society business in busy home lives would be focussed on one or the other, rather than dilute the resource available to Council.

The new Council and President settled in very quickly and got down to business following any declaration of interest and the agreement of the ways of working going forward this year. The main thrust of the

President's message was to prioritise matters that were in hand and focus on the issues that would bring added value to the Society and the wider membership. This would enable individual initiatives to focus the Committees' effort on the important matters at hand and above all deliver projects in full for the betterment of the breed.

The Committees met on Wednesday the 11th March and we have the following to report.

YDP

The new regime is now settled in and the second year's organisation is under our belts. A meeting of all the team was held on the 4th January 2020 where ways of working going forward were agreed and it was a highly successful initiative to start the year. The selection process for qualification to be part of a team representing the Society at the World Forum in Australia 2021 has begun, with a really well qualified panel making the decisions. A weekend as part of this selection process has

been arranged at the Committee Chair Will Chrystal's farm in County Durham, with a range of tasks set based on merit and ability in all aspects of cattle management. The aim of the day is to bring to the table a shortlist of 10 competitors, who would then be assembled into two teams of four with two reserves, to compete on the World Stage in Australia. We are looking for sponsorship for the teams, and any donations for the cause that might allow us to organise an auction at some point would be gratefully received.

The City and Guilds programme that was being worked upon has taken a bit of a backward step in terms of cost, and we are continuing to look for a way to bring vocational qualifications to the YDP. With the thirst for extra knowledge of our seniors, it was also agreed we should hold an extra Senior Conference in the Autumn to create a second opportunity for them to broaden their knowledge of the husbandry aspect of keeping Aberdeen-Angus.



Technical

Under steerage of Committee Chair Andrew Hodge, a great deal of work has gone on in the background developing the DNA programme. This was presented to Council following lengthy discussion at the Committee meeting. There are two elements that make this programme a must-do, as we have both the breed and brand to protect.

There has been a great deal of publicity lately about mistakes in parentage within the pedigree cattle world, escalating to trading standards queries resulting in the involvement of BCMS. The Society and membership must adopt all technologies available for due diligence before issuing Pedigree Certificates. We believe that stepping up to 50k SNP is the best way forward.

We must now prepare infrastructure to ensure what was agreed at Council for future testing can be administered effectively. There are far more benefits to the Society, administration, and advancement of the breeding programme by doing this, as well as taking impartial advice on the best way forward, and we believe this will secure the breed and the Certified Aberdeen-Angus Beef scheme and will take us back to being the leaders in the field with DNA. The details of the new scheme and the ways of working going forward will be released along with a launch date for changes in practicalities as soon as possible.

Our relationship with ABRI was discussed and the wish to have someone across from ABRI to talk through the possibilities of updating and modernising the look of the site as well as a review of usability for the members was also tabled. We have a good relationship with them and their expertise in the field of performance recording on a global scale is renowned. We have the opportunity to bring Genomics into our performance recording if we move to

the larger SNP chip. This would be a natural progression to make, and again taking outside advice would take us to the front of the pack as a breed with this enhancement which could be put into place very quickly.

Tags is a topic that is always on the table and the Chair reported that Caisley would only be supplying liquid tags from 1st April to the membership. It has been deemed that the DNA quality of samples within liquid vials is consistently higher than dry tags. There is little science behind this, only the feedback from labs handling our samples, and thousands of others, on an annual basis. We are thus moving ahead on their advice.

The maternal index sub-Committee has been strengthened with two members with previous experience with the programming, to advance the long running project to fruition once and for all.

The rules that the Society adopts for triggering inspections have been changed and the detail of how inspections can be instigated is on the back of this newsletter. This is part of the Breeding Programme that the Society has had to develop to comply with the Zootechnical Regulations to maintain our export market to Europe. These also include the penalties for anyone found to be transgressing the rules, and the procedure of the process including an appeal structure which is included in the programme.

The semen royalty scheme was discussed as it is becoming a very onerous task, with the numbers of bulls now on the list having increased tenfold since it started. It was agreed from the 12th March 2020 at Council that no new Bulls would be accepted for the Society to collect and process royalty fees. It was also agreed that the existing royalty system would carry on being administered by the Society until February 2025. Thereafter we would no longer collect royalties on behalf of the breeders.

The commission rate to cover administration would also be increased from the current 10% to 20% from the 1st November 2020.

Finance

A run through the past finances under the guidance of the Committee Chair Paul Jeenes was undertaken. Angela Cumming has had to go off work for an undetermined period owing to circumstances beyond her or our control. The recent developments in the COVID-19 virus and measures to be put in place to control the spread of the virus could possibly mean that she would be off for a prolonged length of time. We wish Angela well and our full support during this time and are in the process of arranging cover for her position.

It has become apparent that there are no real terms of payment for members who use our services, this was addressed, and a system put into place to manage the debtors and avoid any confusion. The terms of invoice payments going forward with immediate effect are to be 'end of month following the month of the invoice'. Procedures were also put in place to address any member falling out of that category in order that we can manage our debtor situation. Full details will be formalised and communicated to the membership in a separate statement.

The stocks that we hold in our reserves have suffered at the hand of the market crash following the COVID-19 outbreak and we have seen a considerable fall in the value of our shares. This is only an issue if we need to sell shares to raise cash when their value is low. We have nothing on the horizon that would mean we have to do that at this point, but it is important that the membership pays to terms to keep the Society afloat from revenues raised from the services we supply.

Breed Promotion

We had an elongated Breed Promotion Committee meeting under new Committee Chair Alan Morrison as Breed Promotion and technical are our two biggest subjects. There is a will to change our approach to the market, looking at engaging with the whole supply chain from farm to consumer and aiming editorials at the four press sectors that can help us do so.

The farming press can outline the benefits of using Aberdeen-Angus in suckler herds by linking this through to the boxes that can be ticked i.e. functional females that are a great option as a suckler cow, with a smaller carcass size that finishes perfectly for a market moving in that direction.

The meat processing press can deliver a new message, that we are engaged with meat processors and want to bring our membership closer to them, while highlighting the advantages of engaging and supporting them to create a bigger demand for Aberdeen-Angus beef going forward, in whatever form.

The retail press can ensure that retailers are aware of the great credentials Aberdeen-Angus offers them; environmental, welfare, consistency, quality etc. Let's make sure that we remind them of all the boxes that they need to tick and let's make them aware that we can tick them!

The food service press can speak to a market we have not really engaged with up to now. We need to start the ball rolling with messages about what we can do to help them deliver a consistent offering to their ever more discerning customers, keeping them coming back and to order the premium menu choices.

We have grown in BCMS registrations exponentially and we need to keep the foot on the gas to maintain and create more demand for Aberdeen-Angus Certified Beef as we head towards being the number one breed in the UK measured on numbers of Aberdeen-Angus and Aberdeen-Angus cross cattle.



Since the meeting and the time of writing this, the show and sale season has come under pressure through many cancellations, and postponements including the Society open day at Ripon and a celebration of 200 years of cattle at Ballindalloch. As the COVID-19 develops going forward, there will be more show cancellations and this summer will present an opportunity to change our breed promotion strategy in our endeavour to create increases in the market for every aspect of our activities.

We have ordered some pull up banners for each of the clubs. These are expected soon and will be distributed for use at any events, markets, shows, sales and anywhere else the club can fly the flag with a consistent message.

Health

Angus Stovold, being Junior Vice President, handed the Chair of the Health Committee over to Dallas Allen for the forthcoming year, and in true Angus fashion promised his continued support.

The drive to improve the health status of the Aberdeen-Angus herd continues to gain momentum with engagement at the highest level, with CHecS to ensure that we do all we can to ensure a healthy herd. IBR testing and accreditation was discussed at length and it would seem that there is a school of thought that this is an irrelevant curable disease. No disease can ever be viewed as irrelevant; disease costs the industry many millions of pounds every year, and complacency leading to risk of spreading this burden

further is a serious issue. There is now a new challenge out there. Mycoplasma Bovis is reported to be emerging in some herds and causing serious production issues. It was agreed we need to look into this further and make the membership aware of the symptoms, causes, treatment, and most of all the options to minimise risk to your herd. We will keep the membership posted on any developments.

There has been some discussion amongst some of the membership about the display of Health Cards at sales. We must reiterate to all sale vendors that it is essential that you have Health Cards from your CHecS health provider for each animal at a sale. Please ensure that you apply for your Health Cards and display them above animals at all Society sales. It was agreed at Council that if Health Cards are not displayed animals are at risk of being removed from the sale.

Executive

The chairs of each Committee and the presidential team review their meetings and decide what goes forward to Council the following day, much was discussed on technical and breed promotions as you would expect and is reported above. The other main discussion of the executive was to establish parameters on where we need to get to by setting some tangible goals and establishing the end game. This would then give the CEO a target to aim for while setting his priorities for the forthcoming months and years, to get us where we need to be and position us to present a plan to Council on how we would get there.





Herd Inspection Rules & Procedures



It has been deemed necessary to revisit the Society policy on herd inspections going forward and, as part of the Breeding Programme, to have rules, procedures, and punitive measures clearly defined for all. To this end we have taken steps to make the herd inspection process more robust by replacing the 100th calf system with the policy below.

The Society is committed to the equal and fair treatment of breeders in all respects. Council reserves the right to check selected herds. The owner will be given 48hrs oral notice of the visit by the Inspector. An owner with genuine reason is allowed an additional 24hrs before the inspection. Owners cannot refuse admission to Inspectors, unless in exceptional circumstances. The Society has a system in place for random inspecting of herds and data, where every 100th calf registered triggers an inspection.

After refusal to cooperate with an inspection for 3 weeks, all calves under 3 months of age (at time of first notification) could be banned from Society run events for life, with the entire herd banned from Society events for two years and no Herd Book Certificates printed until after an inspection at the breeder's expense.

When an Inspector finds that any rules of the Society have been compromised, the breeder receives a letter within 20 working days of inspection. Following such written notification, which acts as initial evidence of a rules breach, a breeder shall have an agreed period of time, including the date of the notification, to make written submissions and/or to produce evidence

in writing to the Society's representative, that they might wish to submit in defence of the Inspector's findings.

Should no submissions or evidence in writing be made within five working days, the initial finding of the Inspector shall be final and the Society's Council Representative shall submit the findings to the Council of the Society at their next meeting, where they shall proceed to impose the sanctions set out hereunder.

Should the breeder make a written submission and/or produce any evidence in writing in defence of the breach of any rule to the Society's representative/CEO appealing the Inspector's report - within the agreed period - such submissions and/or evidence will be submitted to Council with the Inspector's report.

The matter shall be initially considered by Council to determine whether the initial findings of the Inspectors report have been satisfactorily rebutted, answered, or explained by the breeder's written submissions and/or written evidence. If so, the breeder shall be informed in writing and the matter ends.

Should this not be found by the council, the breeder shall be given a minimum fifteen working days' notice of an agreed time, place, and date for an appeal hearing before the Council, or a sub-Committee of at least 3 Council members (appointed by Council), which shall be an oral hearing.

Prior to the appeal hearing, the breeder shall outline in writing; the basis of appeal, a list of witnesses intended to give evidence, a summary of their oral evidence, and a copy of any Veterinary or other expert reports the breeder intends

to rely upon. Failure to comply with this aspect of the Rule, in whole or in part, shall leave the Council or its representatives with discretion whether or not to allow undisclosed evidence into the hearing.

In the privately-held appeal hearing, rules of natural justice apply. There is no right to be represented by a solicitor or barrister. However, at least 7 working days prior to the hearing date, the breeder may nominate a Society member, family member, representative of a farm representative organisation, Agricultural Consultant, or Veterinary Surgeon to represent them.

The case against the breeder shall be made by the Inspector. Evidence shall not be taken under oath or affirmation. Appeal hearings shall be chaired by the President or Chair of the Technical Committee, and if either are unable to attend, by a Council member (or sub-Committee thereof) nominated by the Chairman. The Council (or sub-Committee) hearing the appeal shall operate by simple majority, with the Chairman having a casting vote. The decision, which shall be in writing, may be reserved or given on the day of the hearing and shall be final.

In operating this procedure, there should be a rebuttable presumption that any findings of the Inspector regarding age, weight, sex, tag number and all other initial report findings, are correct and accurate. For this procedure, all written notifications from the Society to the breeder shall be by ordinary pre-paid certified post - deemed to be received by the breeder in the ordinary course of post. All written notifications from the breeder to the Society shall be by prepaid registered post to the Society's registered office.



After the declaration of interest and the ways of working we moved on to the business for the day. Council had reviewed the submission on the restructuring of Council for everyone to see. It was a very comprehensive catalogue of where we are today and a good starting point for establishing if any changes are necessary, and some discussion ensued.

The Breeding Programme that had been in development for two years was then discussed; approval had been received on the 21st of February from the Scottish Government that it was compliant with the Zootechnical regulations required to continue our trading relationship with EU countries with pedigree genetics. The programme has been circulated to all Council members for review and feedback as it is a comprehensive document. The task of incorporating the new document into the bye-laws can now begin.

After every Council meeting, we follow the minutes with a list of actions after the meeting, the list was reviewed in detail and tidied up so that many of the matters on there that had been dealt with would not appear on the next list. This again was time well spent in establishing

the priorities that both Committees and Council need to focus on delivering to have the best effect on the Society.

As we continue to further develop the CAAB scheme, it is deemed appropriate that we re-establish our connections with the trade and keep them posted of our activities on updating the scheme with the sire verified database, as well as progress with the existing scheme, until such time as we can verify the completeness of the database to the store products. This is a priority for the CEO this year.

The Irish Aberdeen-Angus Association

The project on the genomic testing of more animals was underway and being funded, by themselves, from funds accrued for that purpose. Streamlining

of the registration system continues with a visit to ICBF to establish some further improvements to the reporting software that may save time and ultimately cost. Bull royalties were brought to the table as still being an issue with our competitor Society in the Republic.

Sales were reported, with bulls so far this year being in strong demand. The project in engaging with a journalist for press releases through case studies promoting the practice of buying genetically better bulls to go into dairy was progressing nicely, and the first fruits of this project should be hitting the press soon. It was also specifically requested that the CEO should attend the IAAA AGM on an annual basis to give a report to the membership in addition to attending Tullamore Show and the All Ireland.





Staffing and Pedigree House

A discussion on the future look of the roles and task allocation within Pedigree House took place and the restructure of the staffing is of paramount importance to getting things right going forward.

The initial plan which was due to be implemented has been put on hold, owing to a key member having to be covered at this time and also subject to a little realignment which has been highlighted by the absence of a key member of the team. We have also had a project running to look at our asset known as Pedigree House and what we can do to enhance the facility, make it better to work in, or relocate.

Owing to other commitments, the Chair of that Committee has been unable to make any progress on this project but at this point it is not a priority and it will be progressed at an appropriate time.

Summary

The Committee and Council days for March 2020 went extremely well with some great commitment from the Council members, old and new, to the cause going forward this year.

The President's vision of being able to focus and deliver on the priorities was taken on board by all present and a really positive energy has ensued following the meeting, with follow up tasks being completed within days. We are set for a great year with some great people at the helm of the Society.

As always, a reminder to all the membership, the Council members are there to help you and should be the first point of contact with anything you wish to bring to the attention of Council. They are keen, ready, willing and able to deal with many things at a local level. Please also invite them to the club meetings, as we really need to engage with more legs on the ground to get the great message of what our breed can deliver into every domain that we can. The more legs on the ground the faster we can make this happen. Involvement at every level is paramount to our success and the more enthusiastic, likeminded people we can take with us the faster we can spread the "Virus" known as the Aberdeen-Angus Breed and Brand!

Barrie L Turner
CEO - on behalf of Council and Committee members 2020



Performance Recording on Entries at Society Sales

It was passed by a majority at Council on the 5th December 2019 that bulls entered for Stirling sales, from and including October 2020, must all be performance recorded through Breedplan.

The intention to make performance recording mandatory for animals entered to all Society sales, run under the auspices of the Society, will quickly follow.

To register for performance recording and to take the first steps, or to revisit your figures if you have let them drift, please contact Breedplan at the Society offices.

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The team in Pedigree Cattle Services will be happy to help ensure your future at the sales.

Myostatin Testing and Reporting Update

The Society has been testing all sires for the deleted Myostatin variant nt821 and monitoring carriers of variant F94L, both associated with double muscling. It was agreed at Council, 12th March 2020, that we should announce rule amendments surrounding this matter and offer clarity to members: double carriers of either nt821 or F94L will not be allowed to register in the Herd Book, single carriers of either nt821 or F94L will be allowed to register, with status noted on the pedigree certificate and database, single carriers of both nt821 and F94L are deemed a double carrier and will not be allowed to register in the Herd Book.

Myostatin carrier status	Registration allowed
nt821 single carrier	Yes
F94L single carrier	Yes
nt821 double carrier	No
F94L double carrier	No
Single carrier of both variants nt821 and F94L	No

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