



# Your Living Environment

Vol. III No. 6

June, 1972

## HOW "DIVERSE" ARE YOUR "KINE"?

In our last issue we were reporting what was said and some things one might like to say, to *The Shorthorn Society*. It was pointed out that we are always in danger of losing perspective. The role of the cattle industry is to produce *animal protein* for human nutrition, *NOT* special *cattle breeds* for the gratification of stockmen! We looked at the rise to international popularity of the versatile Shorthorn. Then came sudden collapse, with the breed being swept from the dairy industry almost over-night!

We now want to continue our survey of this particular breed of cattle, showing just what a dramatic reversal they have suffered, the steps with which they and other threatened breeds are countering and contrast these steps with the story of Shorthorns at Ambassador College, U.K.

Unless you are engaged in the cattle industry you may not realise that the English-speaking world is now witnessing its most dramatic period in cattle history, but many even *in* the industry have not as yet comprehended the historic nature of the events taking place! However, reports are daily shaking stud-breeders of British livestock to their boots in many countries around the world.

### THE TURNING POINT

Since the Second World War, Friesians have driven Dairy Shorthorns from the cow-bail and their cross-bred calves have dominated the beef industry of Britain. The Ministry of Agriculture has supplied figures which depict this great dairy transformation through the invasion of Continental Friesian bulls and show just when the Shorthorn breed really '*died*':

### TOTAL BULL REGISTRATIONS

Year	Friesians	Shorthorns
1945/46	8,200	14,600
1950/51	6,400	8,000
1956/57	7,100	4,000

(Ministry Census Figures)

A decrease in bull registrations of 1,100 in 11 years may not look like a very successful Friesian invasion, but this period also coincides with the great increase in *Artificial Insemination* of dairy cattle. Therefore the real significance of the figures lies in the fact that *SHORTHORN* registrations decreased by 70% but the *FRIESIANS* fell by only 13½%.

In our last issue we described the long-standing dominance of Dairy Shorthorns, especially in Britain, but by 1970 the industry in this country was rated as being 76% *FRIESIAN* and only 2.5% *DAIRY SHORTHORN*! Quite a reversal!!

### TROUBLE FOR BEEF SHORTHORNS TOO!

For as far back as the 1830's authorities have remarked on the lack of *milking* ability in the *Hereford* breed, but opinion has been quite the contrary regarding *Shorthorns* in Britain. However, on being exported to other areas, breeders soon began specializing in *BEEF* production. Different climatic conditions, larger-scale operations and distances from dairy produce markets were mainly responsible for this.

At the same time, one should not overlook *FASHION*! There has always been more evidence of *mass-mindedness* in the rise and fall of animal breeds than the non-farmer would ever believe.

AMBASSADOR COLLEGE, AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT, RESEARCH NEWS

AMBASSADOR COLLEGE (U.K.) LTD.  
Copyright © 1972 by Ambassador College  
All Rights Reserved

Friesians as we have seen, accounted for the demise of the Dairy Shorthorn, but the fall from popularity of the *BEEF* Shorthorn resulted largely from cattlemen turning their attention toward the *ANGUS* breed and the *ANGUS-type* carcass. (Though it was stated earlier that Friesian-cross calves dominated the beef industry, this was confined to Britain. And even here the owners of Friesians willingly used beef bulls of the *Angus-TYPE* to produce their cross-breeds.)

This Angus syndrome hit *Beef* Shorthorns from TWO directions: *First*, by a sharp increase in Angus popularity, thus eroding traditional Shorthorn territory, especially in Argentina. And *secondly*, Shorthorn and some Hereford men mounted a not very successful counter-attack by *copying* the carcass conformation of the Angus. This miniaturization gave rise to types very unsuitable for the dry and hotter zones. And even in the most favourable areas the counter-attack achieved little success against the compact little Angus.

It may be argued that scaling-down the conformation of British breeds had nothing to do with the success of 'exotic' Brahman and Zebu crosses in the hot areas. But these two events are *NOT* totally unrelated through *cause* and *effect*. The new Santa Gertrudis breed — Shorthorns with a dash of Brahman — are numerically one of the fastest growing 'exotic' breeds! Developed in Texas, they are now making a strong take-over bid in Australia's tick-infested subtropical *North*.

#### THE GREAT CATTLE DISCOVERY!

Once the fashion-change towards Angus-type beef cattle and Friesian dairy domination was accomplished, another change soon loomed up. Cattle breeders, especially from Britain, suddenly started out-bidding each other for the limited surplus cattle of Western Europe. *Why?* First, to get more *size back* into British *beef* breeds! Secondly to *REGAIN MILKING ABILITY* in beef cattle and put *FLESH* back on the *dairy* types! This is a total *reversal* of all that the producers of British stud cattle have recently striven for! A humiliating admission of gross error! Read the story yourself:

"With almost 30 foreign breeds queueing up for import licences, the Scottish livestock scene could be at a turning point such as that experienced nearly 140 years ago. No foreign breeds were involved on the first occasion however, unless the English Teeswater could be classed as such" (*The Scottish Farmer*, March 25, 1972).

Britain's national rural press reports:

"The release from Scottish quarantine of CHAROLAIS heifers and bulls valued at £200,000. Also authorized within the next few months are first-ever importations of two other French breeds — 165 MAINE-ANJOU costing £1,000 a head, and an equal number of highly-priced BLONDE d'AQUITAINE cattle" (*Farmers' Weekly*, U.K. March 10, 1972).

Yet another heading reads:

"*THE BREED IN DEMAND* — The 'GO-AHEAD' given recently by the Ministry of Agriculture to the importation of 200 SIMMENTAL cattle will bring the total number of imported Simmental in this country up to 1,300 head by July. This, together with the massive demand for Simmental semen and with intense interest in the society's grading-up register, makes the breed one of the most sought-after in the country... Inseminations have topped the 25,000 mark over 12 months" (*The Scottish Farmer*, March 11, 1972).

#### BREEDS IN THE MELTING POT

Just what do all these importations mean? You might naively imagine that the British cattle industry is simply diversifying into a few extra breeds. We want you to see for yourself where the industry is *really* heading:

"Cross-bred stock by European bulls out of British cows will be included in the live exhibits at many... centres" (*The Scottish Farmer*, April 8, 1972).

This refers to what will soon be *commonly* seen at Britain's long-standing and world famous livestock exhibitions. Even the thought of parading such genetic chaos and confusion makes some sick in the stomach and it would not have been tolerated earlier! Mr. R. L. Fraser, one of this nation's best known personalities of the cattle industry has been so moved by the latest trends that he has written to *Farmers' Weekly* in the following strong terms:

"Sir, it seems to me that Britain is soon to become what might be termed a cattle breeders' curiosity. ... We talk nowadays of a permissive society, and obviously the Minister feels that this should be carried into cattle breeding. With the virtually wholesale use of cross-bred bulls on the cards, the mind boggles at the infinite variety of favourite crosses which may be used for breeding" (*Farmers' Weekly*, U.K. April 28, 1972).

#### GOOD OR BAD RESULTS?

Obviously Mr. Fraser is worried and is far from convinced that the end results will be good for the industry's British breeds. (Remember it is around these breeds that the world's export trade in beef and dairy products has been built.) Mr.

Fraser's letter represents the views of many cattle breeders, but at the same time the surprising thing is that breeders of British *stud* stock are far from united in their approach to the great bovine upheaval.

We might expect money-conscious commercial cattlemen to plunge the stud-stock industry into chaos and confusion, but *NOT* those who have *moulded* and *maintained* it! However, the following quotes show that some *BREED SOCIETIES* are officially encouraging and even *WELCOMING* this genetic revolution:

"Bigger, juicier steaks are being produced by cross-breeding two well-established breeds... Angus and the French Charolais... The Aberdeen Angus Society is taking a cross-bred to the Paris Agricultural Show in the spring" (*Sunday Telegraph*, December 12, 1972).

They did too! We attended this internationally famous exhibition and there it was, the prime exhibit of a world-famous pedigree Society — *A MONGREL* (at least that's what "cross-breds" used to be called)! Make no mistake, this halfbred Charolais/Angus looked like a good beast, but it would take a lot of mental gymnastics for some old stud breeders to conclude that our present wave of indiscriminate cross-breeding is the right course.

As the Angus Society secretary stated: "The new type is still in the early stages of development." There is only *ONE* stage in producing half-breds, so more crossing and back-crossing must be contemplated.

This is also the plan of the Shorthorn Society — multiple crossing of their breed with European stock. Not with just *ONE* breed, but at least *two* or *three*! Breed societies and farmers are not the only ones involved. Reporting a recent £220,000 cattle purchase from France, the British rural press states:

"Maine-Anjou... heifers go to 75 buyers... *The Milk Board* is taking four... Maine-Anjou bulls, and the *Scottish MMB* two. *The Aberdeen and District AI Centre* and *Cattle Breed Improvement Services* have each bought one bull". The report goes on to describe these cattle as — "dual-purpose beasts which carry the blood of the old Durham Shorthorns" (*Farmers' Weekly*, U.K. March 31, 1972).

We might expect cattle traffic between here and Europe to at least be a two-way affair and a proven success, but this recent report shows that *NEITHER* is the case:

"*U.K. EXPORTERS SEETHE OVER BREED CURBS*... Regulations which re-

strict the flow of UK breeding cattle to French farms angered breeders [British, NOT French]. One said: 'It was an infuriating situation... when Britain had... opened the door for an inflow of hundreds of European breeding stock' (*Farmers' Weekly*, U.K. March 10, 1972).

Those whom Britain thought of as *backward European peasants* are obviously not half as keen as we are to rush in and *scramble* their cattle with our world-famous breeds! Could it be that they are just "*backward*" enough to *know better*?

The cattle are *here*, but scientists leading British farmers down this path are only *now* getting out their *PLANS*! Notice the report:

"*BEEF BLUEPRINT!* The Meat and Livestock Commission's blueprint for more efficient beef production — its work schedule for the next decade... was prepared by a group of 12 scientists." It continues: "One of the difficulties of assessing imported breeds is the scale of operation... So the Commission will have to make a subjective judgement on which breeds to test" [and that is before they even begin to assess the results] (*FW Extra — Cattle Breeding*, April 28, 1972).

Not very encouraging to studbreeders who have thrown up a life-time's work to follow this new programme! Admittedly the stud cattle industry made mistakes prior to boffin intervention but is their present *moment of truth* any excuse to panic and lose faith in the very breeds which have brought this industry international fame and no small fortune?

New, science-based breeding programmes are by no means solely responsible for the current upheaval. Every cattle breeder is a *free moral agent*. They are not *compelled* to follow blindly. But it sounds from the current rash of reports that Continental cattle are being snapped up so fast by British buyers and rushed across the Channel that no-one appears to know just how much has been spent, or on which breeds! That which was a Charolais *trickle* is fast becoming a raging *torrent* of multiple breeds!

The truth is that Britain's cattle industry has fallen prey to *fashion* and *specialization*, both *IN* and *OUT* of the show-ring. And it is now relying on Science to lead it out of trouble. That which follows is a beautifully-descriptive press headline sounding a timely warning:

"*FARMER-BOFFIN GAP MUST CLOSE*

— Closer links are needed between farmers, advisers and research workers to avoid breakdowns in new farming systems, says Sir Emrys Jones, Director General of ADAS [Agricultural Development and Advisory Service]. It had become clear that modern

methods had produced new and unaccustomed biological relationships on the farm” (*Farmers' Weekly*, March 31, 1972).

You'd believe it too, if you could only see some of the weird animal research that is going on inside our halls of science!

#### CATTLE AT AMBASSADOR COLLEGE

Both *Beef* and *Dairy* Shorthorns have looked like dying breeds recently and in fact most of Britain's renowned old breeds are in grave danger of being wiped out! The basic problems are closely tied-in with *IN-BREEDING* and *WRONG SELECTION*, but these could be corrected without resorting to suicidal genetic confusion. Traditional U.K. breeds could then confidently enter a new phase of international influence and prosperity. The current Press flurry shows an industry in the painful throes of correcting some of its worst mistakes. God's word however, seems to indicate that men are going about it the *WRONG* way (Lev. 19:19)! And it is hard to see how anything other than *UTTER CONFUSION* can result.

May we remind you that *The Plain Truth Magazine* identified the problem and the solution 9 years ago? Five years ago, (this August) a *Department of Agriculture and Environmental Research* was set up at Ambassador College in England and this problem was one of the *first* we started working on. Our solution to breed specialization is to re-create true dual-purpose animals (in our case Shorthorns). There was nothing special about *Shorthorns*, it was just that they are a single breed now split into *beef* and *dairy* types, which we felt could be re-united without cross-breeding. Some questioned our sanity and even the author of this experiment felt our approach was certainly idealistic (but our old worldly ideas *die hard* don't they — especially if we have had years of practical experience)!

Without the constant prod of Lev. 19:19 such a programme may never have been undertaken. Why? Because of a doctrine among cattlemen called — *Inevitable Dual-purpose Inferiority*. This false doctrine is both widespread and deeply entrenched and we were TWO years in finding *PROOF* that dual-purpose cattle are *NOT* necessarily *INFERIOR*. Of course we were not really looking for it as we did not know the proof existed. We thought we would have to breed it, but we stumbled on it accidentally, ahead of time. *Where?* On a little 23-acre farm in the Bern Canton of Central Switzerland! A visit (not directly connected with stock) produced this

astounding side-benefit. There we found a breed of cattle whose females *milked* like Friesians and *killed-out* like old-time heavy Shorthorn bullocks! No three or four lactations either — these cows averaged *EIGHT* to *TEN*. That was 1969 and they were the same *SIMMENTALS that are today causing such a stir in the British cattle industry!*

*Our reaction was — if it can be done with Simmentals, it can be done with other popular breeds. So instead of switching to a desperate cross-breeding programme we just returned to England wiser for the trip, thankful we had seen with our own eyes that a single breed could be proficient in both MEAT and MILK production and carried on with the job we had already begun.*

We have for some time been dealing with the *cause*, but the cattle industry is only now rushing in to treat *symptoms* of the problem. And they may yet make the biggest mess in cattle history! Men must eventually run out of new breed combinations, even if they scour the world as they have done for plants. Then at least someone will have to settle down to some serious straight breeding, even if it is only to give future generations of geneticists more material from which to breed tomorrow's cross-breeds!

Meanwhile, our results are *slow*. Theirs are *quick* and the fruits of multiple crosses and half-breeds often look good (take for example the Angus-cross steer in Paris)! But will there be an unhappy pay-off? There certainly will if they are being achieved by breaking God's laws of animal breeding!

#### PROBLEMS OF SELECTION

Our job was to mate the right animals in a new breeding programme. We aimed to secure good milkers with plenty of size in both frame and bone. Our first bull was of the best beef-type available, but typically, he lacked size in body and milk in his pedigree. He bred predictably and we are now improving his progeny by further selection and mating to other bulls. The last two have come from dairy herds, but with ancestors carrying plenty of meat, plus a good milk record.

We have only just bought the youngest bull, and progeny from his predecessor are still too young to know how effective he has been. Cattle breeding is a long project, but we feel that our approach will produce outstanding dual-purpose animals. We also feel that it can show the British-based international cattle industry that there is absolutely no justification for stampeding into the cesspool of hybridization!