

HEREFORD BREED PURITY TRUTH & INTEGRITY or DECEIT & PREJUDICE

There has been much discussion over the past many months about the problem of the purity of many of the registered Hereford cattle in the UK. The object of these discussions is an attempt to establish the truth of the matter and to obtain an acceptance of that truth, in order to move forward with integrity as a Breed.

Much of this discussion has taken place on the international stage and much of it informed by current and developing scientific research, as well as circumstantial evidence.

Inevitably, it has generated many claims and counter claims and in some cases much concern and anguish and in others much heat.

It is important, I believe, that we do all we can to keep our emotions in check and look at and carefully analyse the facts. It is also most important that we do not resort to insulting each other or the type of cattle we choose to breed. Again, we must make our judgements based on sound and available facts and not on predetermined prejudices.

To give you an example of how this critical discussion should not be conducted, I will provide you with an excerpt from an email in which the author criticises Original Population Herefords (HOPs) and where emotion and prejudice overwhelm fact.

Let me quote a few of the statements made by the author of this correspondence.

"Having seen plenty of Traditional Hereford cattle in this country there are very very few that I would consider commercially viable and far too many are "hobby" cattle poorly managed on faux organic principles. The dished faces and protruding eyes suggests inbreeding and fertility seems poor"

Well, that certainly is an outpouring of prejudice not backed up by facts.

Let us look more closely at some of the content of this statement. What is the author's test of commercial viability? We are not told. Is it the margin between input cost and sale price? How were the different types of Hereford cattle managed, what was the basis of their feeding regimes? We are not told, so we are left in the dark with an unsubstantiated statement.

Then we are told that the breeders of HOPs are "hobby" farmers. I am not sure what that actually means. However an analysis of the 2016 calving records of West Midland Hereford breeders indicates that the average herd size of North American Poll Hereford(NAPH) breeders is 12 and that of HOP breeders is 15. So, perhaps the breeders of both types of Hereford are "hobby" breeders.

And then, the insult. *"The dished faces and protruding eyes suggests in-breeding and fertility seems poor"*. Again, these are comments of extraordinary prejudice. I have also seen many HOP cattle and although a very few may have 'dished faces or protruding eyes', it is big jump from this to suggest either, in-breeding or fertility problems.

Looking at facts, in her DNA analysis of Herefords, presented to the Hereford Cattle Society, Sarah Blott, then of Roslyn Institute, pointed out that the dangers of in-breeding were more apparent in the stock of imported NAPHs than in the HOP population. As to fertility problems, I have found no evidence for the author's assertion of their existence in HOPs.

I am unsure what the author means by the statement 'faux organic'. So I will not endeavour to comment about this.

The author then moves on to talk about cattle genetics. In one statement, the author states 'genetic modification happens in many ways'. and then 'The selection of breeding cattle is driven primarily by commercial gain and secondly by fashion'.

And so it does and is. But and it is a big but where a breed is part of a 'Closed' Herd Book which is the case of the Hereford, then phenotypical changes can be brought about by a careful and determined process of selection. The desired changes will take time, 60 to 80 years to achieve and fix. This type of selection process has taken place in the Hereford

breed during the period of its existence and since the closing of the Herd Book in 1886. The phenotypical changes made to the breed have been relatively limited, and, yes, it can be driven by commercial gain and fashion. However, in this case, the fundamental makeup of the breed's DNA is and will be very little changed.

It is also possible to change the phenotype of the breed over a very much shorter time scale, through the introduction of the genetic material of another breed, deemed to contain the features desired by the breeder.

In this case, the DNA profile of the cross bred animal will be identifiably different from that of the original pure bred animal. Effectively, a 'new' breed, masquerading as a Hereford, has been created. The phenotypical and genetic makeup of this 'new' un-named breed need to be fixed to create a predictable certainty in its ongoing breeding. Importantly, in this case, the 'Closed' Herd Book will have been disregarded or abandoned without the specific agreement of the members of the Hereford Cattle Society, to re-open the Herd Book, in order to allow this cross breeding to take place.

The author admits to the fact that the HOP and the NAPH are phenotypically different and also that they are probably genetically different. What the author appears unable to either accept, admit to or perhaps even understand is, that if NAPHs are genetically different through the introduction of non-Hereford genetics, which is probable and has been identified by widely conducted and published DNA research and analysis, then the 'Objects' for which the Hereford Cattle Society exists have been broken and further, that as a registered Charity the Hereford Cattle Society which **Must** comply with its founding 'Objects', is therefor in breach of its Charitable status.

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