

FOR THE PUBLICATION OF A HERD BOOK

The draft Constitution of 1868 describes “the publication of a herd book” as the sole object of the “association of Jersey breeders . . . styled The American Jersey Cattle Club.” Today, as has been the case for 130 years, animal identification is the foundation upon which the AJCA can pursue its charter to “improve and promote the Jersey breed.”

In document form, a pedigree of animal parentage was essentially unknown on the Island of Jersey in the mid-1800s. In most Jersey farmers’ minds, there was little need for such records. Thomas Quayle wrote that the “general purity (of the cattle) is guarded by the rooted opinions of the inhabitants.” Given the centuries of isolation from mainland influences, Col. John Le Couteur would claim an identity for the cattle of Jersey as “the ancient race.”

It wasn’t until 1866, just two years before The American Jersey Cattle Club was organized and created its Herd Register, that a formal system for recording ancestors was adopted by the Royal Jersey Agricultural and Horticultural Society.

It is instructive to review the early organization of the Jersey Herd Book, for it is a story of how mundane bookkeeping was made important by economic interests.

The Jersey Herd Book

The first effort to guard the identity of the cattle of Jersey Island came not by a group of farmers organizing a herd book, but by law, a law adopted to protect the country’s most valuable agricultural product. Desired for copious production of “rich milk,” Jersey cattle were being exported to England at great profit. There were some cattle traders, mostly from France, who saw a way to take advantage of this market. French cattle, considered by Jersey farmers to be of lesser quality, would be shipped

to Jersey Island, then sold to English purchasers as “Jerseys” or “Alderneys.”

The misrepresentation “menaces with total ruin one of the most profitable branches of the commerce of this island with England.” The States of Jersey acted in 1789 to curtail such activity by creating a law to prohibit the “fraudulent importation of cattle from France.”

Although French cattle were prohibited from landing on Jersey, cattle from other Channel Islands could be imported. An 1826 law specifically allowed importation of breeding cattle from Guernsey, Alderney, or Sark, but only if accompanied by a certificate attesting that they were originally from that island.

When the Jersey Herd Book was conceived in the spring of 1866, its rules were designed to prevent inferior animals from entering the Herd Book. At the outset, its Foundation Stock were defined as animals “from which produce is to be hereafter registered.” The first published volume of the *Jersey Herd Book* (1873) listed 150 bulls and 724 females recorded as foundation stock.

Only progeny of *qualified* stock, sired after qualification, were eligible for registration (Pedigree Stock). To qualify, bulls over 12 months of age and milking females had to be brought to the Cattle Market in St. Helier and stand inspection by judges selected by the Royal Jersey Agricultural and Horticultural Society.

When a calf sired by qualified par-

ents was born, an official of the Society had to be called within 24 hours to attest to the birth, and the identity of its dam. Color markings were the only unique form of identification available and were carefully noted by the Society’s representative. Registrations had to be filed within eight days of the calf’s birth, with the owner presenting both a certificate of service and the birth certificate provided by the Society official.

The AJCC Herd Register

The AJCC pioneers—Samuel J. Sharpless, Charles M. Beach, Thomas J. Hand, and George E. Waring, Jr.—were “johnnies-come-lately” in their efforts in the United States to construct and maintain a herd book of Jersey cattle.

In the few years before 1868, S. R. Gridley and Wallace Barnes had published a list of 150 Jerseys owned in Connecticut herds, and a N.R. Pike of Winthrop, Maine had also published another local list. O. B. Hadwen of Massachusetts had published “a number of volumes,” but R. M. Gow remarked that “there was a current belief that any pedigree a breeder sent in with a fee was accepted without examination.”

To create a herd book that would lend pedigrees credibility, Thomas Hand first suggested that it be given a unique title. “We should adopt the title of Herd Register,” the first Treasurer of the AJCC wrote, arguing that the word “register” would also serve as an adjective for labeling animals recorded with AJCC. They would be *Registered* Jerseys.

More difficult was determining the requirements for the first entries, or “foundation stock.” Members attending the first annual meeting on April 5, 1869, resolved:

That only such animals shall be admitted into the “Herd Book” as are proved to be either imported from the Island of Jersey, or descended only from such imported animals, or such as the

Executive Committee shall unanimously believe to be of pure Jersey stock... (emphasis in original minutes).

The first cattle to be registered by the AJCC were imported from Jersey Island in 1850 and their pedigrees, as might be surmised from the above history, are less than complete. Birth dates are missing, as are the identity of sires and/or dams. R. M. Gow wrote in retrospect, "Many puzzling cases came up for decision. Animals were admitted on trustworthy evidence as to their purity of blood, although their descent from imported ancestors could not always be traced through every generation."

On February 1, 1877, Rules for Entry were adopted which allowed recording only of "cattle exported from the Island of Jersey, their descendants, and no others . . . No animal bred elsewhere than on the Island of Jersey can be admitted to entry until every ancestor, back to exportation from the Island of Jersey, shall have been recorded in the Herd Register." A grace period was instituted that extended until October 31, 1878.

In 1883, the By-Laws governing registration were amended to allow recording of Canadian purebred Jerseys. Minor amendments were made in the following years, such as requiring twins to be registered at the same time.

Requiring Positive Identification

Before June 1, 1872, it was possible

AMENDMENT CREATING GENETIC RECOVERY

In the May 5, 1974 issue of *Jersey Journal*, the Board of Directors announced its intention to establish a "Genetic Recovery" program, the first significant change in the By-Laws governing animal identification since their formal adoption in 1880. Nearly 25 years later—and exactly as predicted—Genetic Recovery has been a significant force for breed improvement and the vitality and growth of the American Jersey Cattle Association.

Genetic Recovery was described as "a program for the genetic improvement of the Jersey breed through the identification of superior unregistered animals with eventual registration of resulting generations."

The amendment to Article III of the By-Laws had been previously reviewed and endorsed by 27 different state Jersey organizations, plus two regional groups. It was passed by the membership on a vote of 660 in favor, 426 opposed at the 106th Annual Meeting in Seattle, Wash., on June 21, 1974.

In the original rules, unregistered but purebred Jerseys were eligible. The Original Animal (OA), as well as her female progeny sired by a Registered Jersey sire, had to be inspected for "characteristic Jersey type and color and (be) free from serious defects."

Step 3 in the process, Genetic Recovery (GR), involved meeting production and type requirements, something never before required of any animal recorded in the Herd Register. To be recorded as a GR animal, the dam had to score at least Desirable-76% and have a standardized lactation record that was at least equal to both the herd's m.e. average and the DHI breed average for milk or fat.

Like the rules for entry to the AJCA Herd Register, the rules for Genetic Recovery have been revised to meet changing circumstances. The inspection and production requirements were eliminated by the Board of Directors in the mid-1980s. Then, in 1994, the Genetic Recovery bylaw was amended by membership vote to read that "animals that exhibit the characteristics of Jersey cattle may be registered . . ."

Today, it is estimated that a minimum of 40% of the animals now registered by the AJCA have entered the herd book through Genetic Recovery, including the maternal great-granddam of the bull that has led the Production Type Index list for most of this decade, Mason Boomer Sooner Berretta.

for animals from the Island of Jersey to be imported and recorded in the AJCC Herd Register without being previously recorded in the Island's Herd Book. Gow commented, "There had been much difficulty in securing reliable identification of imported animals."

To remedy this concern, the Board of Directors required that animals be reg-

istered in the *Jersey Herd Book* before their importation and subsequent recording in the AJCC Herd Register. The Island certificate alone, however, did not necessarily ensure that the animal shipped was the animal described, so a requirement that imported animals be photographed was added in 1876. This was soon abandoned.

Finally, in 1882, the AJCC required that animals leaving Jersey for the United States be branded on the hoof with the letters "A. J. C. C." and that an agent of the Club place a chain around the animal's horns secured with a padlock engraved with the animal's number. The only persons to hold the keys to this padlock were the agent and the AJCC Secretary. These rules continued until World War II interrupted importation.

In the United States, positive identification was also a concern. Following the lead of the original *Jersey Herd Book*, the Board of Directors in this country required that applications provide a description of the calf to be registered. Color and

other distinguishing marks (e.g., white tail switch, black tongue) were to be reported. Color, however, proved to be an unreliable way to identify Jerseys, so the By-Laws governing registration were amended in 1929 to require a permanent tattoo in the ear, using both a letter and a number. The rules of registration were now well established.