

2009 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Reported at the 2009 Annual General Meeting of Devon Cattle Breeders Society of Australia Ltd

The three foremost objectives of the Society are to;

1. To maintain the purity of Devon Cattle in the Commonwealth of Australia and elsewhere-
2. To promote the improvement and popularity of Devon cattle in the Commonwealth of Australia and elsewhere;
3. To promote in any way whatsoever the interests of breeders of Devon cattle.....

It is with these three key objectives in mind that I can report to you that 2008 was indeed an eventful and fulfilling year.

Not only did our members fulfil objectives 2 & 3 magnificently during the September 2008 World Conference with all the publicity and news related to that event, they have indirectly assisted manifestly in the maintenance of the purity of the Breed.

The new pedigree recording system clearly highlights the percentage of purity each and every one of the animals registered on the ABRI database and so empowers any breeder to make the decisions that need to be made to maintain the level of purity he or she desires.

The 2008 World Conference highlighted the diversity of the favoured requirements International breeders require of our Breed.

In the UK, where most of the animals are wintered in barns the emphasis was on medium sized animals say frame score 4 to 5 and naturally fed. In North America the favoured frame score was 4 to 5 with a real emphasis on natural pasture fattening ability whilst the South favoured shorter haired slick coated animals of a bigger stature. In Brazil slick coated, clean lined animals with high potency and frame score above 5 were favoured.

Luckily in Australia we have great diversity in our Devons and can to all intentional purposes supply any nation in the World with Top class genetics. It is in the diversity of our climate and landscapes that makes Australian Devons unique.

Breeding Devons, breeding the Universal breed, is not an easy task. It takes courage and time to lift the standard. Breeding to the average requires close attention to the extremes. Breeding from the average over the average is not a long-term pursuit. As Robert Frost said – *“The middle of the road is where the white line is - and that's the worst place to drive”* and so it is that I am encouraged that our Society has a system that can give you a clear, concise, factual base from which you can make your decisions. (The newly adopted Australian Beef cattle Genetics export standards)

However if a breed departs or changes to rapidly from its “accepted” phenotypic average, controversy is encouraged. So if the Devon breed were to change its shape to fit a market such as the feedlot market and change its phenotype so radically that it reduces its advantage in other markets such as the natural pasture fattened product then this change would not be universally accepted.

But if the Devon breed is to re gain its mainstream status in the beef industry in Australia it has to show it has modernised, is flexible and can be quickly adapted to meet ever changing markets without sacrificing its most favoured attributes- fertility and feed efficiency.

I ask these questions of you today to help me find the answers to our Societies most pressing issue and that is – To gain greater market share of the Australian Beef Industry.

Robert F Kennedy was quoted as saying; *“ Progress is a nice word. But change is the motivator and change has its enemies”* or as Alfred North Whitehead said, *“ The art of progress is to preserve order amid change and to preserve change amid order”*

I wonder whether you as members of the Devon Cattle Breeders Society are ready to clear from our rules the ability to grade up from either a Saler or South Devon animal, for some of these breeds have changed significantly since the time the rules were set.

In Australia we are fortunate to have sufficient diversity in the size, shape and outlook of our animals to say that the Devon is one of the oldest breeds of the past, the universal breed of the future.

During the year the Society marginally increased its membership base and registration numbers. The level of finance a Society needs to run its business is always increasing.

To help the financial situation the board in 2009 hopes to introduce the **Devons Fightback campaign 2009/2012**. This will be a bonus point type of campaign based on a member's action whether it is measured by an increase in registrations or participation in some activity that enhances the marketability of Devons and the bonus may be a monetary payback at some future date. Watch out for details!

All of last years progress and success would not have been possible without the efforts of Board members, the Society's administration officer and the members of the various subcommittee especially the World Conference sub committee. I wish to acknowledge the tremendous effort by these members.

I know there are also many members who strive through their various functions to make funds for the Society. All the members who attend and man the various functions, field days and events such as Agquip need also to be congratulated and thanked for their efforts. Sally Edwards through her effort to produce the special Edition of the Bulldust must be congratulated. Loma and Paul Wright who contributed so much to the success of the 2008 Conference. Members who made their properties and cattle available for inspection – Thankyou.

Last but not least – Jo Crawford who had in her minds eye the tour and all its components right from the very start over 4 years ago a big thankyou for it was you who kept me on track with all the finer detail.

This coming year should be a year in which the Society capitalises on the gains from 2008. Lets make it so.

Bob Crawford
President of the Devon Cattle Breeders Society of Australia Ltd.
March 2009