Friends & Colleagues of the Galloway Breeders of the World

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Introduction

It is difficult to review the last ten years of beef production in Britain without mentioning BSE, so it's probably best to do so now and then move on to other aspects of Beef Production in Britain ending up, hopefully, looking at Galloways in particular.

BSE

First identified in Britain in 1986. BSE is probably the most significant thing to affect the cattle industry in the last fifty or so years.

Whilst other epidemics such as foot and mouth or Riderpest may have affected some countries and numbers of cattle involved much more, BSE has had the effect of causing a fall in beef consumption in many parts of the World and certainly affected all the beef producing countries in one way or another. This is a situation which may well take a considerable time to secure even a partial recovery.

Over the past ten years one of the most significant casualties of the outbreak has been the truth, from the moment when one of our National newspapers printed a headline and coined the phrase "MAD COW DISEASE" the media vied with each other in their efforts to come up with more lurid headlines and stories.

It was soon to become an open house for experts and so called experts many of them with completely opposing points of view, preferably the more controversial the better. Scientists, many with theories long since proved inconclusive, some who revelled in the limelight and especially if they prophesied a doomsday scenario were very much in demand. On the fringe the usual people with grievences, either real or imagined, against the Government, the eating of meat, the farming community were soon to find a radio or TV producer ready to give them full rein for their prejudices.

The British Government, however, did little or nothing positively; like most politicians they talked a good case for bringing in various measures to deal with the epidemic, unfortunately as the full saga unfolded these Acts or Parliament when put in place NO measures were taken to ensure Feed Producers, Slaughter Houses, Farmers complied with them. In fact farmers and the general public were astonished and somewhat stunned to learn in March 1996 that despite the assurances given they really were not worth the paper they had been written on.

It really took the crisis following the announcements made in the House of Commons by the Minister for Health and the Minister of Agriculture in March 1996 which resulted in the considerable drop in Beef consumption throughout Europe and the complete loss of our export market for all things Bovine, to set a zero hour and for maximum efforts to be made to deal with the problem of BSE. It is still the subject of debate if the measures put in place were the right ones.

At this time the number of cases continue to drop each month but as yet there is little indication that the beef industry is on its way to any sort of recovery.

European Union Cattle Numbers

We shall now move on to looking at Beef production in Europe and in Britain.

The latest published figures on European Union Cattle numbers is taken from the census taken at the end of 1995 and published last year. This shows that France has the greatest number at twenty and a half million head, this showed a slight increase from the previous year. Germany comes next with almost sixteen million and Britain is in third place with eleven and a half million, it is only in Britain that the numbers are in decline.

Whilst the overall picture throughout the European Union Community showed cattle numbers virtually unchanged, dairy cow numbers continued to fall but these were offset by increases in beef cow numbers, this is particularly noticeable In Greece and Spain.

Beef Consumption in the United Kingdom

Looking at beef consumption in Britain over the past forty years shows the following:-

Year	Beef Consumed	Poultry Consumed
(Kgs. per head adult population)		
1955	21.5	2.9
1965	20.8	7.6
1975	23.6	12.3
1985	19	15.6
1995	15.3	27
1996	12.5	27.9

Over the same period the consumption of lamb has dropped from 11.1 to 6.4 whilst pork has increased from 8.1 to 20.9.

The eating habits of the British people were supplied by around 30,000 Butchers shops in 1955 and by 1996 their numbers had dropped to just over 11,000, obviously the great majority of today's housewives no longer use the traditional butchers shop but buys from the supermarket chains.

At the beginning of 1996 even though the share of beef in the home market had fallen, this market was still worth £4,000 million and accounted for 900,000 tonnes (carcase weight). Of the beef consumed in Britain about 45% was for use in the home, 30% was used as processed beef and 25% was used by the catering trade.

World Consumption of Beef and Veal

The United States tops the demand and consumes around 44.3 kgs. of meat per head in a year. Australia is next at 37.1 kgs. In Europe France consumes around 27.4 kgs. whilst Britain lags well behind at 15.3 kgs.

Beef Exports from Britain - 1995 Figures		
to:	000 tonnes	% of export Market
France	79.7	32.4
Italy	41.7	17
South Africa	27.1	11
Netherlands	17.4	7.1
Spain	6.8	2.8
Denmark	6.3	2.6
Belgium	2.9	1.2

Galloways in Britain

First of all if we look at the administration of pedigree Galloways.

> Registrations. Breeders are requested to register their heifer calves within 90 days of their birth (late registrations are permitted but this incurs a penalty to the cost).

The birth of bull calves are required to be notified and the breeder has 18 months in which to register a bull (again late entries are permitted and again this attracts a penalty clause.

Identification of Cattle in Britain

For the past two years all our pedigree Galloways have been identified by the use of the standard European Ear Tag system. This will change slightly in 1998 when all cattle will be required to be double tagged. Pedigree Galloways are no longer required to be tattooed, however breeders may if they wish continue to tattoo animals in addition to the official EU ear marking system. In addition to the records maintained by the Society all cattle in Britain are now recorded on an official

Government data-base and all animals movements require to be notified.

Records Maintained by Society

Calving Records

The Society holds two copies of each pedigree raised on an animal.

All breeders are requested to notify the birth of all calves, including those sired by other breed bulls, the aim of this is to maintain an accurate calving record for all females (around 33% actually comply).

Transfers

Cattle sold at sales held under the auspices of the Galloway Cattle Society are automatically transferred by the Society to their new owners.

The private sale of a pedigree animal should be notified by the vendor and when this is done the animals records will show the detail of the transfer of ownership.

Galloway Breeding Herds and Numbers

It is estimated that there are at least 4000 breeding females in around 150 to 160 pedigree herds in Britain, of course there are at least another thousand or so first class breeding females which are pure Galloway but which are not registered.

Galloways are good crossing animals so there are many first and second crosses also to be found.

Registration of Females over last 9 years, yearly to 31st August

1988	1445
1989	1486
1990	1460
1991	1388
1992	1546
1993	1577
1994	1608
1995	1312
1996	1316

Exports of Galloways

A ban was placed on the importation of breeding stock by the then European Community from 1st March 1990, until that date in the previous ten years from 1980 to 1990 a total of 3659 females and 302 males were exported mostly to Germany.

In the years 87 and 88 the demand was at its greatest with the great majority of cattle on offer at pedigree sales going for export. Dealers from Germany also toured the Galloway producing areas in Britain and purchased animals privately. In 1989 the average price for females at the Castle Douglas Spring sale was £1526 which was a price well in excess of what breeders would have normally known.

This great interest from Europe was to meet the demand from various ecologists and the methods put in place to improve the natural resources of these countries usually be providing funds and grants to plant natural woodlands and the use of animals such as cattle and horses able to look after themselves and utilise and control the fauna and flora in these areas. As a spin off from this surplus cattle were slaughtered and entered the food chain and Galloways were found to have tremendous eating quality and so the demand grew.

The export of all these Galloways whilst obviously good news to breeders also had a down side and this has become more noticeable over the past few years.

Originally Galloway females not used for pedigree breeding were bought for crossing, mainly with the Whitebred Shorthorn to produce the famous Blue-grey cow, an extremely versatile female with good mothering and fleshing qualities who produced quality calves when crossed by any of the continental bulls.

The demand for females for export, often at inflated prices, meant that the commercial breeder could not compete and other sources of breeding stock had to be sought. We often hear today complaints that good Blue-grey cows are no longer available.

Another problem which has manifested itself over the past few years was a demand also from Europe for a small compact animal which suited the "Natural" environment it was used to sustain which has resulted in females coming forth at recent pedigree sales which are too small to be of interest to either a commercial or pedigree breeder.

Criticism over the quality of the bulls coming forward has also been received, this is undoubtedly the result of so many first class breeding females being sold in the 1980's which has depleted the foundation breeding stock. There is a glimmer of hope here as it was noted at the last pedigree sale that there was a much better show of bulls forward.

In Britain the basic use of a breed such as the Galloway is very much tied in to how land is used and managed. By far the great majority of herds are used on the less favoured areas of moorland and upland. Over the past few years more and more of this land has been taken out of farming and used for afforestation or even the leisure industry. Should this trend continue then the Galloway population is likely to continue to diminish.

It is not easy to see if this will be the case as the loss of hill farms means the loss of small local communities and this opens a completely new debate, which is now exercising the minds of the various interested bodies and is likely to do so for some time to come.

Galloways have also proved to be invaluable in the maintenance of these natural moorlands, the removal of cattle and over grazing by additional numbers of sheep caused problems on Exmoor and badly affected their eco-system and in a very short time the system broke down. Fortunately it was recognised in time and cattle were re-introduced and the problem now appears to be diminishing. Had they consulted people with knowledge of moorland management before getting rid of the cattle the problem would not have existed.

Farmers/breeders in all parts of the World will have to realise that they depend on the consumer and his wishes much more than the consumer depends on them. Although famine is still to be found in some of the poorer countries this is usually caused more by Politicians than Nature.

In Britain the aftermath of the BSE crisis is likely to dominate our beef industry for some considerable time, however, it is inevitable that because of this a more efficient beef producing system will emerge.

Handy Statistics

	Total Cattle (000 head)	
	1994	*1995*
France	**20524**	**20662**
Germany	**15962**	**15890**
U.K.	**11868**	**11673**
Italy	**7272**	**7128**
Irish Republic`	**6410**	**6532**
Spain	**5237**	**5432**
Netherlands	**4588**	**4558**
Belgium	**3161**	**3147**
Austria	**2329**	**2323**
Denmark	**2082**	**2094**

The Future

Who would be foolish enough to try to predict the future, far less the future of the Beef industry? We only need to look at the development of science, technology and communication over the past 15 years to realise that progress advances in leaps and bounds.

Increase in World Population

Especially in what is considered as the 3rd World countries the population continues to expand needing more food. Religious and local customs will of course still prevent meat being consumed by some but the demand for medicines and food additives will continue to increase.

As more and more countries become more affluent, this will help raise living standards in many countries and there will continue to be a demand for meat of the highest quality for the gourmets.

World trade and trade agreements are likely to continue to dominate supply and demand for the Worlds produce. We may well see some of the power at present exercised by the so called Western Nations diminish and move to Central and Eastern Asia.

Cattle Breeding

Scientists are likely to play a more prominent role in genetics, meat and milk production and the like. The ability to clone animals may well remove the need for the very specialist breeders and breeding methods we have witnessed over the past 100 years or so,

Records which have been a cornerstone of all Breed Societies are certainly easier to keep now and are demanded now by most Governments for all cattle kept. Animals have to be identified from birth to eventual disposal and whilst some breeders may still consider this to be an un-neccesary incursion into their farming methods it will be demanded by the consumer.