

WORLD JERSEY CATTLE BUREAU

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

for the Annual Council Meetings and International Conference
Denmark – June 2024

With my last report being just six months ago for the annual Council meetings in Guatemala, this report will be an opportunity to provide the membership with a catch-up on events since then; and also it being my last report as President, please allow me to briefly summarise the past six years when I have had the honour and privilege of leading the World Jersey Cattle Bureau through what turned out to be some unprecedented years that no one could have foreseen when I was elected in June 2018 in Ohio, USA.

We have around one hundred people from sixteen countries attending the 2024 International Conference and tour in Denmark, and I am extremely grateful to Danish Jerseys for organising such a great event with an impressive and diverse programme showing us the progress that is being realised in one of the genetic powerhouses of our breed.

The programme for the annual meetings of the European Jersey Forum has been neatly dovetailed in with the Bureau conference schedule, and with the post tour to Norway, the overall result will be a great platform for everyone to celebrate the strengths and adaptability of our wonderful Jersey cow.

The Council meetings and tour in Guatemala in November 2023 were fabulous, and thanks must go to the membership and board of Jersey Guatemala for putting on such a great programme. The Council unanimously approved the Strategy Report and Recommendations, and work since then has been on-going to prepare the groundwork for the future. A presentation will be given in Denmark on the initial progress that has been made towards the proposed pathways and initiatives, but suffice to say, exciting times are ahead for the Bureau in the next few years as the Strategy is implemented, leading to a much more streamlined working relationship between the Bureau, national organisations and the membership.

Going back through my years as President, 2018 went pretty much as planned post the conference in Ohio, and the new officer team settled in very well to their tasks. 2019 was a normal year with our annual Council meeting and tour taking place in Rwanda and Kenya midway through the year, where we saw first-hand how the Jersey cow is making such a huge and positive difference to the lives of many thousands of families. It is just so amazing to see how one or two cows on a small plot of land can be so life-changing, bringing people out of poverty and providing food security and a sustainable income for their future. The experiences on WJCB tours are truly unique, and we get to see just how versatile the Jersey cow is in a whole variety of management systems and climatic conditions. But the influence of the Jersey breed in Africa through the work being done by the RJA&HS with the financial support of the Island of Jersey's Overseas Aid Commission, is on a scale not seen before.

2020!! Well, what can I say? None of us ever saw that one coming, or the effect that it would have on all our lives. There was a period of fear and uncertainty in the nine months before they developed effective vaccines for Covid-19, and I know that many of us have experienced the shocking realisation of losing loved ones and friends to this terrible virus.

Worldwide travel restrictions prevented us from meeting for our planned annual meetings and tour in Canada in 2020, and the administration of the Bureau activities resorted to something that became known as “virtual meetings”, although of course being an international organisation with members and officers spread out around the world, much of our day to day working model has always been through some sort of telephonic or electronic communication.

Formal meetings via Zoom became the “new normal” for many of us, and the Officers soon got into the routine of meeting regularly on this platform. It works very well, and is probably one of the very few positives that has come out of the Covid pandemic.

Our 2021 International Conference in Australia had to be cancelled, as whilst much of the world had resumed travel in a very controlled and restricted manner, Australia had not yet opened its borders to foreigners. I am grateful to Jersey Australia for putting on a virtual programme with some very interesting speakers, and whilst this did not take the place of meeting people face to face, it certainly was an intellectually stimulating and learning exercise.

Later on in 2021 we held our annual Council meetings, as well as a Bureau members’ meeting as we always do during a conference year, but it was necessary to hold these virtually. It was very challenging to organise this and to hold an election of officers in a virtual environment, but we did succeed, and it shows the resilience and determination of us Jersey folk.

Initially it was hoped that Australia would step in to host our 2022 annual meetings and tour, but again the timing of the opening up of their borders to foreign travellers did not quite align with the advance planning process that we have to undertake to organise our meetings. So, instead, we decided to go for a safer option of accepting the offer of France to host, and this coincided with the annual meeting of the European Jersey Forum.

It was great to see a good number of people from across the world in France in September 2022, and those from Europe supported us in great numbers. We were treated to a fabulous programme of events including time at the SPACE 2022 in Rennes, a very large international livestock show where we found the quality of Jerseys to be worldclass. We held the first part of our annual Council meeting in person, and then later in the year finalised the process with a virtual meeting so that those who were unable to travel to France did not miss out entirely. Thank you Jersiaise France for stepping in at relatively short notice and to get the Bureau on track to resuming some form of normality with its annual meetings and tours.

As previously mentioned, in November 2023 we gathered in Guatemala for the first solely in-person Council meetings since 2019, and were very pleased with the numbers attending from around the world. The Jersey is the dominant dairy breed in this country, and it was great to see the younger generation committing themselves to dairy farming and milk and milk product processing throughout the country. The Jersey Expo show was one of the highlights of the tour, and showed off the very best of the breed in this stunningly beautiful country.

The Latin American Jersey Forum held their annual meetings alongside the Bureau programme in Guatemala, and the enthusiasm and passion for the Jersey cow in this part of the world is plain to see, ensuring that the Jersey breed has a very bright future.

Bringing us to the present, the reports from my Vice Presidents for our five regions show that the Jersey cow continues to flourish globally despite the numerous challenges that the whole of agriculture and particularly dairy farming faces. The Jersey breed is clearly extremely strong in certain parts of the world and continues to be the only dairy breed that is growing numerically worldwide, and is the second-most numerous globally to the Holstein/Friesian.

Throughout my life I have always been confident from practical experience that the Jersey cow is the most adaptable and practical of all dairy breeds to provide viable livelihoods across all the regions of the world. As I get older, I am even more convinced that this is so, and as the guardians of this fabulous “brown cow” it is up to us to nurture her natural qualities for the benefit of the whole world.

The Vice Presidents continue to do sterling work to keep the Jersey flag flying in their respective regions, and their reports give us an insight in to where the breed is in their part of the world. The support from the national associations and breeders is crucial to keep the Jersey cow prominent and relevant in an ever-changing dairy environment around the world.

My sincere thanks go to our out-going Secretary, Roger Trehwella, who steps down from the post after many years of service to the Bureau, and also to Trevor Saunders our Hon Treasurer, for providing the support mechanism to me for the running of the Bureau’s day-to-day business which covers a surprisingly wide range of topics and responsibilities.

I make no apologies for reusing a closing paragraph of one of my previous reports, as I believe it sums up my thoughts perfectly:

To all Bureau members and Jersey breeders and enthusiasts and their families around the world, I wish you continued success with your Jerseys and businesses. We have a tremendous cow that is increasingly playing a more prominent and important role in the global dairy industry to help feed the world. We are perhaps sometimes reticent about extolling the virtues of our wonderful Jersey cow, and I believe we must all make a concerted effort to change this by being more effective in spreading the good news story about our little gem.

It has been an absolute honour and privilege to serve as your President for the past six years, and I look back on this unique experience with great fondness. Due to events outside of my control, I have not been able to do quite as much travel to countries as I had originally hoped during my tenure, but what I have been able to achieve has given me great reassurance that Jerseys around the world are in great hands for an extremely bright and prosperous future.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen V Le Feuvre
President, WJCB
May 2024