World Jersey Cattle Bureau (WJCB) Africa Report 2024

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Summary :-

2023 has been another year of substantial growth of the Jersey cow across Africa, with hundreds of animals supplied from South Africa, both pure and cross breeds into Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Zambia to name a few. Other countries have grown their herds of Jerseys via Artificial insemination with both conventional and increasingly sexed semen. The reduction in cost of sexed semen and its increase in conception rates may well provide further growth in the attractiveness of the Jersey on the continent.

The 3rd Africa Jersey Forum was held in Blantyre, Malawi with delegates from across the continue and supported by the WJCB President Steve Le Feuvre, RJA&HS President Robert Perchard and Jersey Island Minister for International Development Deputy Carolyn Labey. This was a great success with wonderful collaboration and discussions had by all. Thank you to Shire Highland Milk Producers for hosting and to RJA&HS D4D for supporting. The AJF site has all the information https://africanjerseyforum.com/

WJCB has one anchor National member Jersey South Africa on the continent building on this foundation by expanding its reach through Associate countries and Life members across the continent allowing much more interesting and relevant conversations to local context.

Jerseys in South Africa

Interesting “happenings” in 2023 in South Africa

After 5 years of cancelations due to COVID and Foot-and-Mouth Disease we were able to have our National Championships in George during August. A total of 67 animals were on show. Other shows that were held were the Southern Cape Championships in Heidelberg, Western Cape in February and the Swellendam Jersey Show in March.

The two big exhibitions Jersey SA attended were Nampo – Bothaville & Nampo-Cape – we feel that these two events are the ones to support and that brings the most visitors our way. We were able to hold another Cow Evaluation course in October in George, where we mainly focused on identifying traits in a cow, keeping it really basic beginner phase education – this was received really positively by the attendees.

We currently have a registered national herd of 36,300 animals. Determining the commercial animals is a bit trickier in South Africa as there are many that do not make use of registration or even milk recording. South Africa has two milk recording service providers ARC & Logix Milk.

Our classifications for 2023 stand at around 3,500. We are also very proud to be able to say that our technical services have been requested by quite a few Holstein-Friesian breeders – and we have been able to render this service to them. The total amount of semen that has been applied to be imported into the country was just over 900,000 straws. Many of these obviously go into the commercial herds.

Jersey SA has implemented new bull standards to comply with before a bull will be considered for registration – these being all bulls must be genomically tested and the dam must have a minimum value of 100 on our locally developed index - SAINET.

Jerseys from South Africa from both pure and commercial herds continue to provide breeding stock across Africa, from Zimbabwe, Zambia, Mozambique to Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya.

Jerseys in the Shire Highlands of **Malawi**

The Shire Highlands Milk Producers Association (SHMPA) provides support to approximately 12,500 smallholder dairy farmers (46% women) who produce 93% of Malawi's milk with approximately 20,000 Jersey cross animals. Extreme weather events have been a feature of the last year for Malawian dairy farmers, starting with the devastating deluge from cyclone Freddy a year ago, followed by recent droughts brought by El Niño. Milk is down of course but when feed is short the tough little Jersey crosses come into their own. They will eat enough to keep productive and will be around for the next season. It has been a disastrous year for maize, but the rain that came too late for crops has left enough grass to keep the animals fed until the next rains in 6 months' time. Few farmers harvested enough grain for themselves and the prices will be high, but at least those with milk to sell will be able to buy food for their families and avoid the worst of the hunger.

For many years beef cattle here were all colours and, dairy cows were known to be black and white, so the Jerseys had to perform to earn their place on the farm. Now over 90% of inseminations done by the farmer AI (Artificial Insemination) technicians are with Jersey Island sires, and brown heifers fetch the highest prices. Bulls are still popular with many farmers so SHMPA is growing it's herd of Jersey bulls for places where AI is difficult. It is interesting to watch 'survival of the fittest' in action as the herd becomes browner and the tall Holstein genes that dominated in the 90's are on their way to extinction.

In coming months, efforts will begin towards the expansion of the Jersey herd outside of the Shire Highlands region, in Central and Northern Malawi, areas administered by the national umbrella organisation the Malawi Milk Producers' Association (MMPA). With RJA&HS support, MMPA seeks to expand it's community breeding programme with a focus on using Jersey semen, taking advantage of the Jersey's feed conversion efficiency and fertility traits to support smallholders who are increasingly stretched for resources.

Jerseys in **Rwanda**

The Jersey breed's profile and popularity in Rwanda continues to go from strength to strength. While a smattering of pure and crossbred Jersey herds existed for a number of decades, widespread use of Jersey genetics began twenty years ago, with the first donations of Jersey Island semen by the RJA&HS coinciding with a visit to the Island by H.E Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda. Since this date, cross breeding using Jersey genetics has expanded exponentially in Rwanda, first with the *Girinka* (One Cow Per Poor Family) programme led by the Rwandan government, and in recent years with Dairy for Development (D4D) initiatives combining breeding efforts with farmer training, with the support of Jersey Overseas Aid (JOA). The *Jersey Inka Nziza* ('Jersey Good Cow') programme, in its second phase from 2019-2021, recorded over 6,000 Jersey and Jersey cross calves born to the circa 12,000 project beneficiary smallholder farmers.

During the 2019 World Jersey Cattle Bureau annual meetings and tour, a visit took place to the Rwanda Agriculture & Animal Resources Development Board's (RAB) Songa Station farm, a near 400Ha grassland farm south of capital city Kigali. Rwanda's then Hon Minister for Agriculture, Dr Gerardine

Mukeshimana, announced to the local, continental, and global delegates attending that day's field visit, that it was her wish to see Songa Station developed into a hub for the Jersey breed. In effect a national centre of excellence for dairy, but the aspirations reached not just Rwanda but potentially across the East African region. Subsequently, this vision took its first steps towards reality, with the RJA&HS recently concluding a two-year (2021-2023) feasibility study into the development of this concept, which it is hoped the Government of Rwanda will be able to put into practice in coming years.

During the last two years under the Songa project, the RJA&HS has also supplied nearly 100,000 additional units of Jersey semen to Rwanda (the majority conventional, alongside a small amount of sexed semen, and Jersey embryos). Rwanda has also been supported to establish a national electronic cattle database, registered 1.4 million cattle belonging to circa 635k farmers in only six months. However, as breed type is primarily determined purely phenotypically, it is difficult to estimate the number of dairy cattle in the country that would, elsewhere, qualify as 'Jersey', though year on year, numbers are increasing.

Also under the Songa project, the Rwanda Jersey Farmers & Breeders Association has recently been established. The first general meeting gathering potential members was convened on 19th January 2024. During the meeting, participants decided to form the association, and elected an interim leadership team composed of a Chairperson, Vice Chair, Secretary and Two Advisors. At present, the interim leadership committee is developing the Statute of Association and having more recently convened a general assembly for consultation, and will complete the legal obligations within weeks. It is hoped this will provide a template for newly emerging breed societies in developing markets as the Jersey's popularity grows.

Jerseys in **Zambia**

Zambia's livestock population is dominated by beef cattle, but with a small and growing dairy sector. Like much of Southern Africa, Zambia is increasingly stressed by severe weather, declaring a major drought as a national emergency in early 2024. This drought has decimated maize harvests, prompting many smallholders to sell off cattle, and has also caused ongoing disruption to the national power supply which is heavily reliant on hydroelectric power from the Kariba dam. Increasingly, farmers in Zambia will be looking to improved efficiency and improved genetics. Though pure Jerseys are massively outnumbered by indigenous and beef breeds, they are the most populous exotic dairy breed (outnumbering Holstein-Friesians and others) and are expected to increase in number. Current initiatives include a Jersey breed focused dairy project in Southern and Central Zambia, led by the RJA&HS, which hopes to supply over 3,000 smallholder farmers with improved Jersey and Jersey-cross dairy cattle. A 2023 study by Dr Kola Odubote, senior lecturer in the Department of Animal Sciences at the University of Zambia (UNZA), combined genetic sampling with productivity and fertility evaluation in a diverse sample of cattle belonging to smallholder farmers in Southern Province, the main cattle keeping area of Zambia. Results supported adoption of the Jersey as the breed of choice for resource-poor smallholders, which performed above average on traits such as milk production, age at first calving, lactation length and longevity. The RJA&HS intends to work with Dr Kola and UNZA to carry out further research into the potential benefits of the Jersey breed in the Zambian context.

Jerseys in **Tanzania**

A history of the Jersey breed in Tanzania

The Jersey breed is known to have been introduced in Tanzania in the 1970s, and is very much the third breed behind Black and Whites and the Ayrshire. The first place to have the breed was Zanzibar, where approximately 400 head were introduced at a place called Maruhubi where the current bull

station is. The firm was owned by the Government and managed by an American. This situation likely encouraged the state of Zanzibar to import Jersey semen to maintain the Jersey herd. Later the state bought Jersey bulls and established a bull centre to collect semen for breeding purposes. The pure herd is no longer maintained there, instead it a mix of crosses of Jersey, Ayshire and Friesian.

In Tanzania's mainland, the Jersey breed was first introduced in 1973 at the Livestock training institute. About 20 pregnant heifers were brought to Tengeru to start a pure Jersey herd. The Livestock Training Institute at Tengeru was a farm which maintained a pure Jersey herd until 2005 when the purity started to disintegrate.

Other places with pure Jersey in Tanzania include Iringa in Lutuba farm which have about 240 head of pure Jerseys, a world class herd which is a site to behold and has provided a source of cross-breds for a number of surrounding farmers. There have been a number of Jerseys also imported from South Africa which supplement the local Jersey herd. These are often crossed with Black and Whites. In Arusha there are a few farmers with about 30 head of grade Jerseys and large numbers of cross bred Jerseys in the hot Tanga and Coast areas.

At the Government-owned National Artificial Insemination Centre (NAIC) facility there are four breeding bulls, originally imported from South Africa and New Zealand. These bulls account for approx. 7,000 doses of semen per year (9%) of the total straws produced and sold within the country. Black and Whites account for 52 % and Ayrshires 25 %. The NAIC also recently acquired 1,000 Jersey straws of sexed semen from Viking Genetics Denmark to trial and the farmers are awaiting the results. The Jersey breed is a small but important part of the Tanzanian industry especially in the warmer regions of the country.

Jerseys in **Ethiopia**

Ethiopia is blessed with the largest population of cattle on the continent – approx. 65 million. Of these, approx. 6.7 million are milked, producing approx. 3.6 billion liters of milk per year. 95 % of this milk is produced from indigenous animals, from resource poor households. The Livestock Development Institute have over 20 Jersey bulls, mainly imported from South Africa, and supply over 250,000 doses of Jersey straws, 32% of the just under 1 million straws produced per year. Four other regional bull stations also supplement the supply with the smaller Jerseys and their crosses recommended for the tougher environments. Jerseys are one of only two exotic dairy breeds registered to be used within the country and have significant impact on the national herd. They are not as well known as the black and whites but in recent years there has been an active approach to address this. There are various studies that have been disseminated which support the competitiveness of the smaller-framed animal. There are a few larger herds developing to supply milk into the Addis markets and clusters of small holders also using the breed. The JOA-supported RJA&HS dairy project in the Amhara Region for example has contributed to over 800 Jersey-cross calves born since 2020, with this number increasing every day. There are also significant programs underway to increase availability of sexed semen in Ethiopia with a large proportion of that being Jersey to allow the herd to continue to grow. We expect slow but steady growth.

Jerseys In **Kenya**

Jerseys are the third most popular dairy animal in the country but significantly smaller in population than the Black and White and the extremely popular Ayrshire. There is an active Jersey society which, if possible, holds shows within the Brookside cattle event. There is a significant shortage of Jersey breeding stock with demand outstripping supply. With much of the milk sold direct to consumer via milk bars, the high fat content and yellow colour is a preference from many consumers. There are numerous papers on the advantages of the smaller-framed Jersey, the active promotion has yet to

achieve significant increase in use of Jersey genetics although, there are more large-scale breeding operations crossing these with local Borans to produce a hardy dairy breed.

Jerseys in **Mozambique**

Dairy Cattle have recently been introduced (last 10-15 years) into Mozambique.

Amongst these, Jerseys have been the preferred breed in Mozambique due to their heat tolerance, smaller, more manageable size, and superior feed conversion.

To date there are an estimated 1,000 Jerseys in the Beira Corridor with the population on a consistent upward trajectory. Of these 1000 about half (500) are based on a commercial farm whilst the balance spread among small scale producers. Jerseys have been instrumental in creating value across industries. Before the importation of Jerseys many feed by-products ended up rotting or in landfill as there were no secondary industry (Dairy) to make us of them. Ultimately millers of maize, sunflower, cotton seed etc have benefited with a market for their previously discarded feedstuffs.

Milk is currently being collected from a commercial producer, 2 small scale producers and a milk collection centre with several members. The dairy industry not only generates significant upstream and downstream economic value for the country, but also affords the local population diversity in diet normally inaccessible with more expensive imported dairy products.

Furthermore, Jerseys have also been bred with local Zebu type cattle creating a robust 'indigenous' breed with both hardiness and sufficient milk production.

Jerseys in **Zimbabwe**

Zimbabwe like many Southern African countries has be hard hit with extremely variable weather and poor rainfall in the last season. This and the tough economic conditions have made dairy farming in Zimbabwe extremely challenging. Both the farmers and the cows need to be resilient, and hence the increasing growth of **the Jersey and the cross spreading across the country, with herds spread across the country as farmers are now preferring smaller framed animals.** No longer are the Jersey confined to the Lowveld around Bulawayo. There are approx. 5,000 pure bred jerseys and 6,000 cross bred making up the second largest breed group in dairy (18%) of the approx. 60,000 dairy animals. This appears to be growing year on year as farmers cite, they have smaller frames, have higher feed conversion efficiency, highly adaptable, hardy to diseases, high butterfat, produce significant volumes of milk, calving ease if well managed and high fertility. Zimbabwe imports significant numbers of stock from South Africa with over 1,500 Jersey and JxH coming into the country. The demand for milk continues to grow significantly as does the resolve of the farmers to supply it.