

A NOTE FROM



Alice

OCTOBER 2023
EDITION

DEAR MEMBERS

My go-to 'ice breaker' since moving away from the family farm, to help people visualise where I'm from, hit a new level of 'engagement' with the news the 'Robin Hood Tree' had been felled! I'm still stunned and saddened that someone would vandalise and permanently damage a unique landmark. A stark reminder not to take what we have for granted.

September has flown by, and the team are busy preparing for the October Bull Sales and prioritising the completion of New Taurus scopes.

I met with Council following the Societies 52nd AGM and it was a pleasure to welcome Brian McAuley (Northern

Ireland), Jim Gammie (Scotland) and Keith Redpath (National) as newly elected Trustees. Whilst the Societies office-bearers roles are for a three-year term, these positions are 're elected' annually. The Council elected Jonathan Watson as Chairman, Dyfan James as Vice Chairman and Karl Suddes as Treasurer.



HERD BOOK INTEGRITY

Since joining British Limousin, the area that surprised and excited me the most is the huge genomic data set we have built over the last five years.

We own SNP genotypes for 35,000 Limousins, the largest UK data set of



LIMOUSIN

its kind for a single beef breed and we are the only beef breed to use that information in our genomic breeding values (GEBVs). These breeding values identify the performers for Age to Slaughter and Carcase Weight and are vital to all users of Limousin genetics. The new Taurus platform coupled with our calf inspection programme brings opportunity to strengthen the integrity of our wider on-farm performance records, focusing keenly around areas such as calving records and growth data.

However, a factor that challenges us today as a breed is the lack of trust in our performance figures owing to a lack of independently verified data (i.e. weights, calving ease).

My time in France earlier in the year, visiting the French Society and subsequent support from their technical team who operate the calf inspections has spurred us on to complete more calf inspections. Every time the 200th calf is registered on Taurus, Laura in the Herd Book team gets a notification to set up a visit with the member to weigh the calf (and others newly born at the time of visit) and take DNA hair samples from the dam. The introduction of the 28 day birth notification Bye Law/Brand Standard by Council is proving instrumental in facilitating credible calf assessments and creating a level playing field.

Assessing calves under 28 days allows us to capture accurate calf weight data that helps us solve problems by removing personal opinion and emotion from decision making. Basing decisions on facts removes bias, which can only be a good thing for breed integrity. The purpose of the calf inspections is to create a level playing field for members and build trust in Limousin calving figures. There is a massive opportunity for us to work together to do all we can to accurately record birth weights and subsequent 30, 60, 90 day weights to establish robust daily live weight gain figures that champion Limousin's growth ability. This data will help hugely in quantifying the value of Limousin genetics to the beef industry.

If it's not possible for you to weigh your calves at birth, it is important to better estimate birth weights as some calves at inspection have produced impossible daily live weight gains which can lead to the de-registration of the calf.



BREED PROMOTION

Limousin's greatest qualities are speed to slaughter and carcass yield. I firmly believe the beef industry needs to champion and reward those that are breeding cattle with optimum growth rates to reduce days to slaughter.

Meeting with beef processors and agriculture teams within the supermarkets is helping us understand their needs which are driven by consumer buying habits and corporate responsibilities. I am often dismayed when I read industry opinion formers stating the answer for consumers to cope with food inflation is for families to deprioritise holidays and spend more on food. If only it was that simple. As an industry, our focus needs to be on selecting genetics that are geared towards maximum carcass yields and speed to slaughter which, in turn, reduces days on the planet and delivers tender tasty beef that customers keep coming back to buy.

As a Society we have learnt an enormous amount over the last five years on how we can protect and grow our brand and I am delighted the Council are united in making strategic decisions that will push us forward as a breed so we can build partnerships within the beef industry.



MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

It's been a busy month on the road joining Club Open Days and AGMs, as well as travelling to Anglesey, Thirsk and Cornwall to meet and listen to members. It's these days that fill me with hope and optimism that the breed is in safe hands and I am proud to represent you and your cattle.

Next stop is Carlisle where we'll kick start the October Bull Sales, along with the dispersal sale of the renowned Meadowrig Herd.

If you have animals destined for Red Ladies and the February sales, I would be grateful if you could get DNA samples in ASAP - turnaround times for the February sales will inevitably be impacted during the festive period. Wishing you a healthy October.

Alice Swift

CEO, BRITISH LIMOUSIN CATTLE SOCIETY