

2.12 Connétable J. Gallichan of St. Mary of the Minister for Economic Development regarding steps to eliminate the use of non pure bred bull semen in the future within the dairy industry:

Given certain assurances made during the debate on P.43/2008 that robust checks would be undertaken by the Royal Jersey Agricultural and Horticultural Society to eliminate the possibility of a mistake involving animal identity or the inclusion of another breed, and following the recent revelations that semen from bulls with non-Jersey lineage has been used in error, what steps, if any, will the Minister be taking to ensure that the risks of repetition are minimised?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean (The Minister for Economic Development):

Could I ask my Assistant Minister to deal with this question, please?

Connétable L. Norman of St. Clement (Assistant Minister for Economic Development - rapporteur):

I have received confirmation from the Royal Jersey Agricultural and Horticultural Society that the assurances made during the debate on P.43/2008 have been met. Bovine D.N.A. (deoxyribonucleic acid) testing has advanced rapidly over the last 18 months. The American Jersey Cattle Association has used D.N.A. testing widely to advance breed improvement and as a consequence has to date tested the genetic purity of over 3,000 pedigree male animals in their herd book. The results of this testing has identified only one animal that contained D.N.A. from another breed, illustrating the accuracy of the farmer declarations of parentage which is the basis of any herd book. But mistakes happen. The Royal Jersey Agricultural and Horticultural Society have rules and procedures in place for such an eventuality and these have been implemented swiftly and effectively. The important thing is the Jersey herd has not been compromised, nor even come close to being compromised. The R.J.A.H.S. (Royal Jersey Agricultural and Horticultural Society) and the department will be co-operating fully in this matter and are determined to defend the heritage of Jersey cattle. Due diligence and further developments in the genome project will protect the pedigree of the Island's breeding herd.

2.12.1 The Connétable of St. Mary:

Last week the spokesman for the American agency involved in the supply of the rogue genetic material said that the advances which had made the detection of the error possible had only been made in the last 8 months and that without them, and I quote: "We still would not know about the error." Does the Minister acknowledge that despite the assurances given at the time of the debate on the reliability and the extent of the testing, in fact the current problems indicate that the system was simply not as robust as States Members and the public were led to believe and, in fact, not capable of assuring the genetic makeup and provenance of the semen supplied at that time?

The Connétable of St. Clement:

As I said in my answer, bovine genome D.N.A. testing has advanced rapidly over the last 18 months and will advance even more into the future to the extent that in the not too distant future cattle subject to D.N.A. testing will be able to go right back to the very first cow and that is going to provide some interesting challenges and thoughts and decisions for the cattle industry and particularly the pedigree cattle industry, because every cow alive today has come from an original cow and it is going to be interesting to find out how [Laughter] [Aside] the Jersey breed developed in its

distinctive way and why it developed in its distinctive way. The important thing is that the testing is getting more and more rigorous, more and more robust, and with absolute certainty the Jersey herd has not been compromised and, as I said before, not even close to being compromised.

2.12.2 The Connétable of St. Mary:

Notwithstanding the answer that the Assistant Minister has just given when he has said we have not come close to compromising the integrity of the herd, does the Assistant Minister not understand the concerns of many that if these recent advances had been made, for example, years after the insemination programme began rather than months we might still be blissfully unaware at today's date that the problem had arisen? How can that not compromise the integrity of the herd?

[11:30]

The Connétable of St. Clement:

It is perfectly possible that over the centuries there has been some evidence or possibility of other breeds having mixed with the Jersey cow. In fact, that must have happened otherwise the Jersey cow would not be able to exist. Every breed has developed separately and distinctively and in time we will be able to understand why and when.

2.12.3 The Deputy of St. Peter:

Will the Assistant Minister firstly admit to an error of judgment when he made his broadcast on BBC Radio Jersey where he said this was a rogue straw and accept the fact this is not a rogue straw, this was a fundamental error in the importing of semen from a particular bull? Secondly, would he not accept that the fact that at the moment the genome testing is being carried out in America and because of the change in law that we made - that we were seduced into making in 2008 - that the testing may not be completed in other areas, including the Danish importation, and, therefore, there is still a possibility that our herd could be compromised?

The Connétable of St. Clement:

The semen was imported quite legally and quite properly, no question about that. The motivation of why people supported P.43/2008, the Deputy will have to ask each individual Member why they voted in a particular way. I supported it at the time because I support very strongly the Jersey dairy industry and want a strong, successful future for the Jersey industry and the Jersey cow. As I said in my opening remarks, yes, mistakes can happen, errors can happen, but the important thing is that the techniques and the safeguards are there to avoid compromising the Jersey herd. Secondly, the D.N.A. testing and the genome project takes place not only in the United States - although they are very much ahead of the game - but also in many parts of Europe and the United Kingdom as well.

2.12.4 Deputy K.C. Lewis:

It is my information that there are approximately 10 calves that have the Holstein gene remaining in Jersey. Would the Assistant Minister inform the Assembly what will be the fate of these calves? Will they be allowed to live, will they be put down, or will they be exported?

The Connétable of St. Clement:

In due course, there will be closer to 80 or 90 calves with this Holstein gene going back 4 generations. It will be up to the individual owners - the individual farmers - to decide what happens to them. Certainly, we have heard already that some have been culled and no doubt others will be. Others will be reared and bred for the meat. Others will be sold to non-pedigree herds in the United Kingdom. Because whatever the situation, the cows that come from this wonderful animal genome with the part Holstein gene in it, they will be superb milking animals. Because of the high bar that we place on allowing them to be mixed with the Jersey herd, they cannot be part of the Jersey herd book, but there are many non-pedigree herds particularly in the United Kingdom who we are very confident will welcome these excellent animals into their herd.

2.12.5 Connétable K.P. Vibert of St. Ouen:

The Assistant Minister has given us an assurance that the Royal Jersey Agricultural and Horticultural Society does have in place the necessary regulations to deal with this matter. Would he assure me that that is correct because it is my understanding that that may not be correct?

The Connétable of St. Clement:

It is my understanding that it is correct.