Holstein Friesian Cattle Breeders Society

Mrs. Mary Nevill

At the Societies AGM held early this year, Mrs. Mary Nevill stood down as Chairman. She has been a prime mover in the Livestock Industry in Kenya as well as Chairman of the Holstein Friesian Society. Her Tintawn Herd are well known throughout the country and sought after by many Holstein Friesian Breeders. She has provided Central A.I. Station with many bulls to ensure that her knowledge of breeding is carried to the farmers who use Tintawn bull semen. The Field Day held at Tintawn in 2008 was a great success and we are all very grateful to her for allowing us to hold this on her farm and for all the work and effort she put into making it such a memorable occasion.

The new Chairman of the Society is Mr. T. van Helden who has worked closely with Mrs. Nevill for many years. He was unanimously elected as the new Chairman.

Mr. T. van Helden

With the help of his Committee Members there are many plans afoot for the Society to encourage more members to join and enjoy the benefits of the Society.

Development of the Tintawn Herd

by Mrs. Mary Nevill.

Having lived all my life with cows - some good and some not so good. Gerald and I decided to do some serious breeding - we decided to breed a pedigree registered herd of Friesians. My father was a breeder of Friesians in the late 40s up to 1962 when he left Kenya, he had an excellent herd of unregistered animals on the South Kinangop and subsequently in Limuru. It was difficult to import semen in those days, so he imported a bull from Holland called Piets Plutos. He used him on his best cows and bred a bull named "Satuni Wizard" who became very well known in the district, not only from his progeny but because he was stolen in the Emergency and was recovered minutes before he was slaughtered.

Dad won many prizes at the Nairobi Show. So, as you see we did not need much persuading to take breeding seriously. It was in 1968 that Jomo Kenyatta imported a number of pedigree in calf heifers from Holland, most of which went to Gicheha Farm at Rongai, and the nucleus was sent to Updown Farm in Limuru and were put up for sale.

I must mention a very important fact here - with these heifers came a young and enthusiastic Dutchman named Kees van Velzen, he and the Dutch contingent who came out to Kenya at this time, established themselves at Naivasha. Kees and indeed the whole contingent played a very big part in lifting the standard of Friesians in this country. Kees was an enormous inspiration to us all and spread enthusiasm and knowledge to so many breeders all round the
Development of the Tintawn Herd cont.

Country. He has been back to Kenya to judge the Friesians several times and is now retired. We were lucky to buy the last two heifers standing at Updown. Reino 32 and Kekke our first pedigree animals - what excitement!!!

After taking Kees's advice which was - "you won't go wrong if you buy Reino, I know that family". It soon became apparent to me that Reino was a better cow than Kekke, so we sold Kekke leaving Reino to start our pedigree herd on her own. She gave us a good heifer calf which we called Rosenne. Rosenne turned out to be a good cow but lacked quality in her udder.

G.B. had been showing at the Nairobi Show and Nakuru for some years. International judges had been invited to judge, in fact there was a roster where judges from different countries were asked to come to Kenya in rotation. In 1968 Mr. Frank Abbey came to Kenya, a very well known cattle expert from England. He came up to Tintawn to see our up and coming herd and give us some advice on what semen to import to improve the udders. He recommended a bull called PLASNWYD LEO who was known as an "udder bull". We duly imported the semen and Rosenne was inseminated. Nine months later she had a beautiful heifer calf which we named Rosaleen. She developed into a wonderful cow with a smashing udder! She was our first serious show cow winning several championships with a very high production as well as looks. Her progeny was excellent giving us two Champions at the Nairobi Show.

We were now encouraged to improve the herd and imported semen from U.K. Holland, Canada and U.S.A. intending to concentrate on udders and legs and feet. I have talked about breeding but have failed to mention feeding and management. I have always

A line up of some of the cows in the Tintawn Holstein Friesian herd.
Development of the Tintawn Herd cont.

felt that these two issues go hand in hand and are of equal importance. Of course start with the calves, from day 1. From the moment that the little miracle appears in the world it needs tender loving care. I have always tried to feed the calf as soon as possible, leave it with the mother for two to three days, unless she rejects it - if she does, take it away immediately. The area of calving must be clean, I always pour tincture of iodine down the umbilical chord as soon as possible (about an egg cup full), it stops a very common infection. Colostrum is important, we all know that. Warmth, fresh air, hygiene, space then when they are starting to nibble feed them. Your herd will grow up very quickly. I have been very careful to keep up with my vaccinations especially Foot and Mouth Disease. The disease control is very poor in this Country - we keep hoping for improvement, but alas, year in year out, we bring it up at every meeting we attend - there is no change. Tick control is handled by the farmer very well himself. With care and attention it should be plain sailing once your calves are weaned but there are always bugs and bacteria lurking about. In normal circumstances I don't think you should ever lose calves. There seems to be a danger period of calf scour between three and four weeks, I always treat it as soon as there's a suggestion of scour. The rest you know I am sure. Before you know where you are, you are looking for the most suitable semen to put into your heifers. No problem, there are several good Companies who will sell you imported semen, not forgetting CAIS, very good and very reasonable. We all demand quite a lot from our cows - a good calving interval, good butterfat, high production and the same time you hope she will stay fit and strong - it all depends on management.

Having gone through very roughly how I have brought up my herd successfully in the last 38 years since Tintawn was born, you may ask - has she made any money? My cows have not made me a rich woman, but my life at Tintawn has been rich with interest, enjoyment, love of my cows and the friendship of all my farming friends - I don't wish for any more.

The history of the Holstein Friesian Breed in Kenya

by Mrs. Liz Fowler

The first known Friesians imported into Kenya came in 1908 to the Government Stock Farm at Naivasha. In 1920 several bulls, cows and heifers were imported from South Africa, carrying mainly Dutch, but with some Holstein, bloodlines. In 1938 five bulls and eight cows were imported from the Carnation herd in the USA and 11 bulls and 3 cows from the Oldambster herd in Holland. After 1945 imported animals increased, coming mainly from Holland, New Zealand and Germany. Today, the Kenya Holstein Friesian is an excellent commercial cow, giving a lot of milk in her lifetime. Many Holstein Friesians are kept in zero grazing units as well as on medium sized and larger farms. The production of the Holstein Friesian is dependent upon good management skills, including breeding, feeding, dipping, veterinary, labour and other relevant factors that go to make a dairy cow
comfortable.
Kenya was one of the pioneers of Artificial Insemination, starting in 1935 in Naivasha. The Central Artificial Insemination Station at Kabete was founded in 1946 and bulls for the Station were imported from Holland, USA, Germany, Britain and Sweden. With the advent of liquid nitrogen for the storage of semen, semen was imported through CAIS from progeny tested bulls from all the above countries, as well as Italy and Israel, in larger doses. Frozen embryos have also been imported. This has helped build the breed's genetic base to international standards.

In 1972 CAIS inaugurated a Contract Mating scheme, identifying the best local cows as bull dams, inseminating them with the best progeny tested bull semen from other countries worldwide, to produce bulls for Kabete. This scheme has been most successful and the entire Holstein Friesian bull Stud at CAIS is now locally bred and some of the bulls have sired very useful progeny.

The Kenya Livestock Breeder's Organisation, (which is under the umbrella of the Agricultural Society of Kenya) based in Nakuru, maintains the Kenya Stud Book. The first volume of the East African Stud Book was published in 1921, and now, is the register of all pedigree (purebred) cattle in the country and also run a Grade Register. This is an invaluable resource. The KLBO is also the home of the Dairy Recording Service of Kenya, which milk records all dairy and dual purpose breeds, and has a butterfat and protein testing facility. Milk recording has not been as consistent as pedigree registration. The first computerised milk recording scheme was started by the Kenya Holstein Friesian Cattle Society in 1993 and was incorporated in the Dairy Recording Service of Kenya in 1994.

Now DRSK needs many more committed members so that results from milk recording can be of real value for research into progeny testing to help breeders improve their herds. Few farmers do butterfat & protein testing, which is growing more and more important with some milk processors asking for a minimum butterfat percentage in milk that they buy from the farmers, and some even pay more for quality milk. Few breeders appreciate the fact that butterfat percentage is more heritable than milk production and need to look hard at the figures produced by the semen available if they want to improve the overall quality of their milk.

The Friesian herd today comprises 45% of the national dairy herd. Friesian Breeders are keen supporters of the Kenya Stud Book and its Grading-up Scheme, and also of the Dairy Recording Services of Kenya.

Some of the largest Friesian herds include ADC Namandala, Wangu Embori, Kenana, Ivaini, Gicheha, Sasini Mweiga, Deneside and Amboni.

KHFCs was formed in 1946 as the East African Friesland Society. Members now include large and small scale farmers, ADC farms, Government institutions and commercial companies with interests in the livestock industry.