

3rd International Gathering of Highland Breeders - Press Release

Information on speakers for 29th & 30th September 2010

"The future of our Highland Breed"

Cattle Breeders from the four corners of the world will congregate in Pollok Park in the city of Glasgow on 29th September at the start of the third International Gathering of Highland Cattle Breeders. The object of the conference, which will take place over 2 days within the Burrell Collection, is to define the role of the Highland Breed in the 21st Century, and to identify the best methods by which we can be sure we are breeding the right type of cattle thus ensuring the survival of the Highland Breed, by increasing the popularity throughout the cattle breeding world and to develop a greater understanding of the environment to which the breed is best suited.

A number of prominent Highland Cattle Breeders and cattle industry experts have been invited to address the delegates over the first two days of the gathering.

From the traditional homeland of the breed "The West Highlands of Scotland" comes a young hill farmer, Iain Mackay, who 15 years ago started off on the first steps of the farming ladder with a few Highland cows, to-day he is the tenant farmer of 3000 hectares on the Isle of Mull running 60 Highland cows, 30 to the Highland Bull and 30 to the Simmental bull. This along with 1,000 Blackface and Cheviot ewes. How does he see the future of cattle breeding in the Highlands and how big a part will the Highland breed play?

Robert Phillip comes from the south of the border and he along with many others carry on the long tradition of Highland Cattle in the north of England. Over the centuries from the days of the drove roads to the present day, the biggest buyers of Highland cattle have come from south of the border, the majority of which went on to Yorkshire or the Norfolk fens. Robert, a dairy farmer all his days, decided 10 years ago to give up the milking parlour and go into Highland cattle "big time". This was purely a commercial decision based on the Highland breed's ability to convert inexpensive feed into high quality beef, can he convince more of his fellow farmers to follow his example?

From the country which can boast the greatest number of Highland Cattle, America, we are delighted to have the president of the American Highland Cattle Association, Jacquelyn Becker Chotkowski. A successful Highland breeder of long standing, Jacquelyn's enthusiasm for the breed is one hundred percent commercially based and is focused on grass fed beef production on her farm in New York State. Is this where the future lies for the breed in the land of the cowboy? Or do Highland genetics have a much bigger role to play in one of the largest cattle producing countries in the world?

It is now over 30 years since the Back to the Land movement saw hundreds of Highland cattle exported to Germany, with large numbers going to Denmark, Holland, Austria and Switzerland, and within more recent years growing interest in the breed has come from Finland, France and Italy. The well known and highly regarded German breeder Dr Stephan Janz has watched this expansion in the Highland breeds popularity with great interest. He has made many study trips to Scotland over the past twenty years researching the development of the breed. He writes regularly for the German Highland Breeders Journal in which he expresses his concern for the future of the breed and he asks the question – Are the breeders of today forgetting what the Highland breed is all about?

The proceedings of the second day of the Gathering will focus on breeding and how we as breeders can ensure that we are producing the right type of cattle, thus ensuring a successful future for this great breed.

Former Society president and society fieldsman David Soutar will explain the role Highland genetics has to play in the large beef enterprise on the Glamis estate, of which he is the Farms Director. David's introduction to the Highland breed started as a young lad assisting the stockman of the once famous Scone Palace fold and has been involved with the breed ever since. With his eye firmly focused on the Highlander's commercial attributes, the breed is much more than just a pretty face.

Our second speaker from across the Atlantic is veterinarian Pat White. Pat has been breeding Highlanders for over 20 years and is a strong advocate of performance recording. Pat was instrumental in starting up the Central Bull Testing programme along with the Impact Sire and Dam Performance programmes. She is also a regular contributor to the American Highland Breeders quarterly journal The Bagpipe on all matters relating to cattle health and performance.

Few names are more synonymous with the Highland breed than Jack Ramsay. Throughout his life long association with the Millerston Fold Jack has won almost every honour the show ring has to offer. Although the show ring has played a large part in the outstanding success of the Millerston Fold over the past 30 years, Jack firmly believes in the commercial attributes of the Highland breed and that they should never be overshadowed by the show ring. Jack will give us an insight into the breeding policies he has adopted to ensure success.

Those of you who attended the first International Gathering in June 1995 will need no introduction to Dr Basil Lowman, Genetics and Behavioural Sciences, Scottish Agricultural College, Edinburgh. How big a part should science have in the animal breeding, could Highland genetics play a bigger role in quality beef production? How can we as cattle breeders ensure the future of our breed? Will Dr Lowman have some of the answers.

You will have to join us at the 3rd International Gathering of Highland Breeders to find out, what he and all our speakers have to say on "The Future of our Highland Breed"

For more information contact

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