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# PEDIGREE BREEDER

124-PAGE GUIDE TO PEDIGREE BREEDING IN IRELAND

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# 2017

IN REVIEW

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## FOREWORD

# QUALITY OVER QUANTITY



SHANE  
MURPHY

**T**he 2017 year produced one of the biggest pedigree calf crops Ireland has seen, with expectations that 2018 will be bigger again. With the national calf crop increasing, quality needs to become a priority to maintain the reputation Ireland carries for pedigree cattle. Whether it's cattle or sheep your breeding, one thing will remain the same – quality will always demand a premium price.

In this second edition of *Irish Pedigree Breeder*, we see many of the country's top breeders who are already reaping the rewards of breeding for quality. With increasing numbers, mindsets need to change with regard to every purebred animal going on to breed. Just because an animal has papers does not mean it has met the standard of quality to be used for breeding.

Countries throughout the world are already doing this, where only the top percentage goes for breeding and the rest for beef. A similar practice must now be undertaken in Ireland to ensure that only the best bloodlines are used to progress both our national pedigree and commercial herds. Selling lower-quality bulls for beef and maintaining a lower level of bulls for sale will in turn lead to stronger demand and increased sale prices across the board.

Ireland has grown a remarkable reputation for pedigree exports, particularly in later years with traditional beef breeds leaving the country by the thousand. These markets have been driven by two key points, Ireland's reputation for quality cattle and the national herd health status. Herd health is important to all farmers but, particularly, pedigree breeders. The introduction of a diseased bull from a pedigree breeder to a clear herd has the ability to cause serious financial losses for that farmer. This is

why it's of utmost importance that pedigree breeders take actions to minimise the spread of disease both inside and outside their own farm gate. On page 18, Dr Doreen Corridan outlines best practice when it comes to herd health in the pedigree herd, with particular reference to how to protect animals which may be out at shows and sales.

### Breeding decisions

Shows and sales are a detrimental part of the pedigree world. The best of all breeds are exhibited and it's where many breeders decide what bulls to use – or not use – in the coming year. This year's edition will again focus on a number of the top events across the UK, and from page 56 onwards we look at how the 2017 year went for each of the breeds in Ireland.

Phenotypic characteristics will always take preference through the breeder's eyes but in today's age there are many other aids which can be used.

DNA testing has now become the norm on many farms, but in many cases there is so much more that can be got from this small sample. Of course, genomics will play a huge part in years to come, but samples can also be used to identify different muscle genes. On page 5, Dr Alan Kelly outlines what each of the genes mean, how they interact with each other and how they can be used to our advantage or disadvantage.

Another aid which can be used in breeding decisions is the classifying of animals. Dairy breeders have been classifying cattle for years but with its introduction to beef breeds in the UK last year it can now also be looked at as a valuable tool for the beef sector. On page 16, we outline what exactly is involved and why it should become the norm across all breeds.

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# SOMMET DE L'ÉLEVAGE.

## THE FRENCH WAY



Shane Murphy travelled to France to see the Sommet de l'Élevage one of France's largest agricultural shows

**E**very October the Sommet de l'Élevage is held in Clermont-Ferrand in central France. Over 88,000 people flocked to the event over the three days to what can only be described as a mini National Ploughing Championships crossed with the Tullamore Show. Livestock stands as one of the main highlights at the event, with over 2,000 competing in their own classes.

While similar numbers to Tullamore Show, it's done a bit different over there with all animals under cover. This meant massive temporary sheds for each of the sectors, for example in the beef shed alone there was near 1,000 animals.

The French way of commercial farming is a lot different to Irish, with the vast majority of commercially ran farms using all pedigree stock. Driving through the countryside it was nearly impossible to see a field of cattle which weren't all the same breed. This way of farming meant even if breeders weren't selling on bulls or heifers for breeding instead to the factory, they still followed all the goings-on in the pedigree sector and hence large crowds flooded into the main arena each day to see the shows.

The Limousin breed represented the largest number at the Sommet with 400 livestock on display. This was mainly down to the French society this year holding their national finals at the event. Cattle in the breed varied massively as can be expected with such a large

number, however the French breeding seemed to want that taller ranger cow compared to that of its Irish comrade which would pay more emphasis on width. The cream still rose to the top, with the upper end capable of standing out anywhere in the world which would be expected giving the Sommet is held in the heart of the Limousin region in France.

Each year the Sommet de l'Élevage chooses one breed to highlight at the event, in 2016 it was the Charolais and last year the Limosuin. This usually consists of a grand auction being held on the Thursday evening of a select few from that breed. This year was no different with 24 select lots chosen for the Limousin breed. This ranged from heifer calves down to 10 months to senior proven bulls of five years of age.

Buyers from this sale were from all over Europe with buyers from Switzerland and Portugal in particular securing a number of notable lots.

Topping trade on the Thursday evening was a two-year-old bull by the name of Laser. This bull, bred and exhibited by Ramousse Bruno, turned quite a few heads in the ring when he entered the ring. Having opened at €3,500 he moved up in €100 bids until he finally settled at the top price of €15,000. Sired behind this bull was Hamac, a bull which topped the Grand Auction when it was last held for the breed back in 2014 and later went on to claim the grand Italian champion in his new home just last year.

A total of eight of the 24 lots forward on the night sold for a price tag of €10,000 or more. Next highest after the leader was another two year-old-bull, this time by the name of Latino. This bull came backed with figures



**DESPITE AN ANIMAL BEING PEDIGREE DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN IT SHOULD GO FOR BREEDING**

and having opened at €6,000 sold for €11,600. Latino is sired by Coluche, a bull that has bred more than 40 sons who have qualified in the high-performance Lanaud station.

The oldest bull forward for the sale met trade of €11,300 and headed across the water to a breeder in Wales. This five-year-old bull went by the name of Hirohito and was sired by Bavardage, a bull also available in Ireland. This proven bull had a selection of calves in the 400 line up of animals which took part in the show over the three days. Top of the female selection was the November 2015-born Lumiere. She sold for €11,000 and was sired by Idefixand and out of Arnac-bred dam Ethnic. Hambourg daughter Mangué headed to Portugal at €10,600 while a further three lots traded at €10,000.

### What can we learn from the Sommet de l'Élevage?

The key learning point – and I've mentioned this before – is that despite an animal being pedigree, it does not necessarily mean it should go for breeding.

France emphasises this in abundance with the majority of stock in country 100% pure yet only a select few go on to breed with the rest going for slaughter. This ensures only the best most proven bloodlines leave a mark on the breed.

France has a long standing reputation for producing top-class cattle, which can be seen by the number of major breeds which have originated from there. At the show it was easy to see why, with massive efforts gone in to highlight all that's good about their cattle breeds. The way the cattle were displayed for the show in a big arena with cameras everywhere looking out to large seating platform is definitely something that can be replicated in Ireland.

**Number of spectators watching:** Over 1,000 people filled the seats to watch the Limousin championship and this is largely down to the two previous points. Firstly, every farmer has an interest in it because most farmers are all pedigree and secondly the way which the display was undertaken would draw in any bystanders.

**The way winners are announced:** Lights, cameras and music built momentum and excitement before each winner was announced, counting backwards from three.

**Commentary:** Similar with dairy shows the judge provided reasoning following the winners being announced in each class.

Finally, as I walked through the rows upon rows of cattle at the show I was again reminded that Ireland's top-end of cattle across all breeds can compete anywhere in the world even when compared with the best from the breed's origin country.

### What can still be learnt by French breeders?

Probably the most noticeable part of the trip was the French breeders' preparation of animals. Both clipping and grooming skills were a nice step back from the top people here in Ireland.

While granted the cattle generally have less hair than Irish-bred stock due to the heat, there is still a lot that could've been done to make their animal stand out from the crowd.

### Show stick

French breeders only carried a small wooden stick of 2-3ft which was just used to hit the head of the animal if it didn't stop. Not one breeder had a show stick to line up animals to show them to their best advantage.



# SOMMET DE L'ÉLEVAGE 2018

**I**n 2018, Salers will be headlining the exhibition with its national championships and its 400 best animals competing for best-of-breed at the Zénith Ring Arena. The International Salers Federation will also hold its tri-annual convention during the Sommet.

With its unique and imposing mahogany coat, Salers has its origins in the Massif Central region and is the fourth-largest suckling breed of France. This breed has been increasing its number due to qualities such as body-set, longevity, foraging ability and stress-free calving. It is also well adapted to a rocky, damp or even steep terrain. A high numerical productivity rate – one calf per year – is the key factor influencing the revenue of the breeder. Their good milk production allows calves to be fed with little if any supplementary feed.

With 2,000 pedigreed animals on display and 1,500 exhibitors running stands, including 300 businesses from 32 different countries worldwide, the Sommet de l'Élevage will deliver a full package of solutions for every link in the livestock farming, all showcased in 180,000m<sup>2</sup> of exhibition space.

The 2018 show will host a packed three day event, from national or inter-regional breed competitions to breed shows and auctions, demonstrations, and more.

The event will organise more than 40 top-flight seminars and conferences on hot issues in farming, the international livestock evening, and a packed schedule of 35 tours to farms and agribusiness centres, offering to its international visitors and delegations a real VIP experience.

To host visitors in the best possible conditions, the International Lounge provides a service package tailored to cover everything foreign visitors could need: catering and workspace, accommodation bookings centre, free shuttle links from the exhibition centre to town centre and airport, interpreters, guided tours of the show and more.

For further details, contact Charlotte Jehanno, About France, mobile: +353 86 604 9133, e-mail: charlotte@aboutfrance.ie, website: www.sommet-elevage.fr



**IRELAND'S TOP-END OF CATTLE ACROSS ALL BREEDS CAN COMPETE ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD EVEN WHEN COMPARED WITH THE BEST FROM THE BREED'S ORIGIN COUNTRY**





# SALERS

## DEMAND GROWING FOR SALERS BREED

**W**hile the BDGP's focus on star evaluations may not be working for every breed, it is having a positive effect for Salers. The breed is now seen as an alternative to some of the more common continental breeds given their ease of calving and high valued replacement traits.

Last April the Irish Salers cattle society held its annual spring show and sale in Tullamore Mart. Once again, the breed saw an increase in average sale price on the previous year, with bulls up by over €300 and heifers up by €90.

The sale saw haltered and un-haltered animals exhibited, with a top of €3,500 achieved. This was realised by the pre-sale show reserve male champion Ballyconneely Poseidon. Bred and exhibited by Sean and Terence Sweeney, Ballyconneely, Co Galway, this two-year-old Rio son carried a replacement index of €165.

The overall male championship was awarded to Lisbawn Paul from Brian McNulty, Swinford, Co Mayo. Sired by French-bred AI bull Vanlooy, this stylish 15-month-old bull was out of dam Sligo Miata. Carrying five stars on the terminal index with a calving figure of 1.9% he sold for €3,000.

The September 2015 born Powerstown Pablo was next in the money for the haltered males when he sold for €2,500. Sired by Ublo and out of an Ugolin-bred dam, he sold with a replacement value of €118. Females didn't quite reach the highs of the males, but haltered heifers still sold to average at €1,800. Topping the female prices was the 14-month-old Highfield Rebel. Bred by Niall O'Connell, Macroom, Co Cork, this five-star heifer is sired by his French imported stock bull Icare and sold for €2,500.

Claiming the championship in the female section was Connemara Riona from John O'Malley, Recess, Co Galway. This young heifer sired by Bronson carried five stars across breeds on the replacement index and found a new home in Northern Ireland at €2,500. Close behind at €2,200 was the reserve champion Glenmore Robin owned by Thomas Mulcahy, Strand, Co Limerick. Sired by homebred stock bull Glenmore Oscar, Robin is out of French import Eclipse. Only 11 months old, she sold with a replacement index of €164.

The small number of in-calf heifers forward saw a top of €2,400 for Highfield Petal. This 26-month-old heifer by Whitebog Convener was again exhibited by Niall O'Connell.

Just like the haltered animals, the un-haltered animals also had to go through a pre-sale inspection. Topping the prices for this section was Cuan Princess from Tadgh Crowley, Stradbally, Co Waterford. He secured €2,450 for his two-year-old heifer sired by stock bull Knottown Hermes.

Crowley also exhibited the Salers heifer with the overall highest replacement index at the sale with a value of €197, making her five stars both within and across breed. Again sired by stock bull Knottown Hermes, this two-year-old sold for €1,900.



Reserve male champion Ballyconneely Poseidon from Sean Sweeney, Co Galway who sold for €3,500. \ Tricia Kennedy



Male champion Lisbawn Paul from Brian and John McNulty, Co Mayo, sold for €3,000. \ Tricia Kennedy



Reserve champion female Glenmore Robin from Thomas Mulcahy who sold €2,200. \ Tricia Kennedy



# INCREASED NUMBERS FOR SALERS CALF CHAMPIONSHIPS

Tullamore Show was the new venue for the Irish Salers Cattle Society's national calf championships, writes **Shane Murphy**

**W**ith cattle numbers constantly rising for the Salers breed in recent years, so too is the amount of new exhibitors. Last year, the society made Tullamore the host of the national calf finals.

While the championships would usually be held alongside the society's autumn sale, due to a gap year last year, exhibitors were keen to make sure the 2017 calf finals went ahead again, thus making it part of the Tullamore Show was an easy choice.

The finals consisted of two main classes for animals born between September and December 2016, with a class for both males and females. These classes carried a prize fund of €500 each, with €200 for the first-place winner.

## YOUNG BULLS

Judge on the day was Peter Donger of the Seawell Salers herd in Towcester, England. First into the ring were the young bulls. Coming out on top of this class was Manusmore Result from John Burke, Ennis, Co Clare.

This September 2016-born bull is homebred on both sides, with Baltazar and Seducteur standing as the grandsires.

Following close on his heels was Bernard Hunt with Sligo Rebel, who secured the reserve spot. This November 2016-born bull was one of the youngest bulls in the class and was sired by the Dovea Genetics bull Ulsan.

The female championship saw much larger entries forward, with Donger taking time to go over each animal before making his final decision.

After much deliberation, he found his first prizewinner in the form of Ballyvonnavan Ria from Declan Bell, Clarecastle, Co Clare. This November 2016-born heifer is sired by Manusmore Norris, a bull which has produced a number of prize-winners for Declan already this year.

Bernard Hunt also secured the reserve female calf championship with Sligo Rachel. Born the last day of December, Rachel was the youngest calf forward at the finals. She was sired by Beguin and out-of-homebred



**Top: Female and overall Salers calf champion Ballyvonnavan Ria. Middle: Reserve female and reserve overall Salers calf champion Sligo Rachel. Bottom: Overall Salers calf champion Manusmore Nikita.** \ Tricia Kennedy

Sligo Jasmine.

Both bulls and heifers were then pitted against each other for the overall calf championship. Securing both the overall and reserve overall spots were the females. Declan Bell was awarded the overall championship, while Bernard Hunt took the reserve.

Peter Donger also took the helm for the judging of the normal Salers classes. He was faced with an impressive championship lineup by day's end, which included the calf champion along with senior animal first-prize-winners.

Eventually he found his champion in the form of John Burke's junior cow Manusmore Nikita. This three-year-old cow was sired by the well-known Rio and has competed successfully at a number of shows since she was a calf.

Claiming the reserve title was again John Burke, this time with his junior heifer winner Clew Bay Pretty, a Laois Nathan daughter.