

American Milking Devon Cattle Association
Member's Gathering – Sanford NC
November 3, 2007

In connection with the ALBC annual meeting, approximately 24 AMDCA members gathered at the Hampton Inn in Sanford NC to talk cattle and discuss topics of current interest. Those present included six Directors as well as members from several mid-Atlantic states, New England and even one from Colorado. Those present appeared to range from “new owner” to master breeder in terms of experience with the breed.

Most of the lively discussion centered on embryo transfer, its potential effect on the breed (positive and negative) and what in anything should be done to control the practice as applied to the American Milking Devon. Secretary Bill Blaiklock summarized the dozen or so ET survey forms returned so far. Nearly all favored “Restricted use”; one was in favor of prohibition and one wanted no restrictions at all. Comments by those present are summarized below in note form.

- Texas A&M professor Gus Cothran can help us develop a “genotype”.
- Potential for 30-40 embryos per flush. (But, see below.) Expensive.
- Would need advice to select the right (donor) cows. ET could result in faster herd build up.
- “Mess up” potential is high; breeding full siblings etc. Affects both male and female lines; in contrast A/I affects bulls only. Set an annual limit to a certain % of the (rolling) average 5-year population.
- That would require advance planning (and data) that may be impractical for the Board to manage.
- Maintain a balance among breeding lines.
- The breed doesn't respond well to the drugs involved. Yields are low. The procedure is invasive and breeding back the cows involved takes a long time.
- Economics will control. It is doubtful that ET will work economically.
- If the natural mortality (of embryos) is high (reports of only 1-5 survivors), is regulation necessary?
- Concern for safety of the gene pool, ET producing “factory model” clones.
- Dr. Splann (ca. 2002) investigated the AMD population and concluded that the large number of bulls in the herd (and presumably used in breeding) provided some safeguard against excessive in-breeding.
- “Absolutely no”

The question was asked: “What is the productive life of a bull?” Answer: It all depends, there are viable bulls in their twenties, working oxen in their thirties.

Related question: “How close to breed?” The only consensus was to avoid full-sibling and father-daughter mating. Much depends on the previous history of the animals involved. “Its line breeding when it works, in-breeding when it doesn't.”

It was noted that Sue Randall would like to be advised when a registered animal dies; without this information we have no way of knowing the actual size of the herd. In this connection Sue is about to conduct a census by mail and phone; the members cooperation will be greatly appreciated.