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# Council Update: March 2019

**We welcomed the new President Paul Jeenes and newly nominated Council members; Will Chrystal, Henk Rennie and Andrew Hodge, along with co-opted members Duncan Morrison and past President Angus Stovold. During the build up to the Council meeting, there had been a drive to make things happen and the outcome was the development of some sub-committees to handle various parts and projects going forward. If you would like to raise any matters, the first point of contact should be your area's Council representatives who can bring things to the attention of the committees and sub-committees as they feel appropriate. Updates from each committee are provided under their dedicated titles which follow.**

## Health

The Health Committee, under the chairmanship of Angus Stovold, co-opted Owen Tunney for his veterinary expertise and a number of topics were considered for review over the coming months.

The herd health questionnaire on the website should be revisited to encourage full completion, ensuring members are aware of their obligations. This will also help to flag how everyone can improve herd health in their own particular operation. Information will be available to help them make the next steps towards ensuring they are aware of health matters that can affect herd performance, with options available for the control of issues that can seriously compromise their unit's performance. We will also look to implement a health status page on the website as both an educational and informative platform that can assist breeders in combating challenges whilst making them aware of the risks they face. Neospora, a relatively new but serious disease, and IBR which has been around for some time, need to be addressed and an informative and educational description with some suggested preventative measures on the website will be a useful resource.

We need ideas on how we might pull together Society policies on health and increase awareness to the membership and the wider beef industry of the care that needs to be taken to preserve and maintain herd health. Any ideas should be submitted to the Health Committee and are very welcome, however large or small.

Semen testing of bulls at Society sales was discussed and breeders should be encouraged to do this. It offers a security to purchasers who will have much more confidence and therefore pay more at the

hammer for semen tested bulls. Work will be beginning on updating our excellent health publication with the addition of information around new technology available and the new aforementioned diseases.

Electronic Identification (EID) was discussed with differing views and there seems to be a little variance between countries as to the preferred route, with Scotland being required to EID tag all cattle from 2020. We will be working towards a nationwide acceptance of the frequency of the readers, as it makes no sense to have both.

## Breed Promotions

The latest edition of the Review was very well-received and following this Spring newsletter, we will be producing the second issue of "The Cud" after the August Council meetings. These are to communicate Council business to the membership and input about content to include is welcome from all, from news items to technical articles.

All being well, the new website is set to be launched at the beginning of April and will feature the new branding and easier navigation. All Breed Promotions Committee members have been given a link to test drive it and further content is being assimilated which, alongside the better functionality, should make it a better and more usable resource.

Show stands have all been booked for the same programme as last year with some minor adjustments to some of the shows with club approval, and beef expos being supported. A review of the Society sales structure will be carried out with our auctioneers, and from an internal perspective, to encourage breeders to understand the benefits to both

themselves and the buyers of using the Society structure to sell their stock.

There was also discussion about giving greater support to Ireland and the Irish Aberdeen-Angus Association will come back in August with a proposal on how Breed Promotions can help further the cause.

A small group has been formed to pull the 2019 open day together and we are looking to have it in Yorkshire this year. The date for the diary would be 3rd July 2019 and final details will be widely circulated in the near future. This promises to be a highly interesting and informative day with some great suggestions so far for keynote speakers and demonstrations being lined up. The NE England Aberdeen-Angus Club will be co-operating with the group to organise the event. It promises to be a day not to be missed!

Advertising strategies were on the agenda and it was agreed that the use of social media will be prominent moving forward, with less use of the printed publications as they are becoming more expensive and circulation numbers are down.

A show and sales sub-committee has been formed for all show and sale matters, with some expertise in export also called in. Dallas Allen has kindly agreed to chair the group and is looking for people to join him going forward. If you are interested in having an input, please contact your local Council representative.

## Finance

As the Council meetings took place earlier than usual, a financial update was provided, but comparative figures were not yet available. However, the normal pattern of our overall finances was pretty much as usual. The first part of the year normally shows a deficit until the registrations income starts to coincide with calving patterns, so nothing out of the ordinary to report. We will be actively seeking sponsorship to support many of our initiatives, along with grant funding availability.

Pedigree Cattle Services accounts are in line with costs for this time of year and the revenue from the Certified Aberdeen-Angus Beef Scheme is showing a slight increase on the year to date, reflecting the demand from customers for Aberdeen-Angus beef.





Owing to the uncertainty of the current political situation, our investments are not performing so well compared to previous years, but that is the nature of the beast and both brokers are reporting a similar picture. We continue to monitor this going forward and are taking the best advice possible to ensure the best possible performance.

### Technical

With regards to DNA, we continue to work with our suppliers to improve the rates of success with the samples that we have taken and had tested. We also continue to drill into the reasons why we have failures slightly higher than expected. We are focusing on the process and working towards reshaping it to make it as robust as possible. It was agreed that a working group should be set up to take this forward.

Maternal Index has been on the table for a number of years and the onus is now on the Society to deliver a Maternal Index to provide EBV values for a number of key parameters. We have the reputation for being a terminal breed and this linked with our Breed Promotions Committee should give us great tools to take the advantages of Aberdeen-Angus females to the market as a very good option as a suckler cow. We have again deemed it appropriate to have a working party or sub-committee dedicated to pushing this through to completion.

Calf inspections have been set up for the year and will be enforced and done, so please allow access to an inspector and offer as much assistance as you can to help them to complete the task.

With regards to Beef Feed Efficiency, different options were discussed and costs put forward. It has been suggested that we again set up a working party of interested committee members and outside experts to progress this initiative through to a suitable conclusion.

It was noted at the Technical Committee meeting that there are many outstanding intimations. As a minimum, all calves must be intimated within 27 days, this is a rule in the bye-laws of the Society which is not being adhered to. There will be a letter coming out from the Society in



the next week or two to explain why it is imperative to get into the habit of doing the British Cattle Movement Service (BCMS) registrations, and to intimate with the Society at the same time whilst online.

The Europ Grading Scheme has been on the agenda for some time now and as the leading native breed, we possibly need to take the initiative on this. Suggestions on how it may be taken forward were provided for the CEO to peruse.

### Youth Development Programme

A major initiative in the YDP is its restructuring following Gayle Bersey's decision to move on, and we have made wonderful progress with this alongside running a very successful and educational Senior Conference. We have appointed National and Regional Co-ordinators who will drive the programme, contact details of which can be found on the website in the coming weeks. Congratulations go to:

- Ireland – Niall Lynch**
- Scotland - Stephanie Dick**
- England North – Jess Musk**
- England South – Ruth Perry**
- National Co-ordinator – Tina Russell**

The Future Leaders Programme, which was run for the first time last year, will be revisited under the auspices of the new team to ascertain what was learned from the first course and define how we should structure the advancement of the more senior end of the age range.

The Finals Weekend venue at Carrick-on-Shannon in Ireland was sourced by the Irish Association and visited recently by the CEO Barrie Turner, and the setup looks

great. More details of this will follow, but it is set to be an excellent weekend for all the finalists to compete head-to-head.

An advertising campaign and press release will be prepared to launch this year's programme, with a view to gaining some national and international coverage. With the new team in place, the management of the social media platforms of the YDP should become more frequent and regular.

### Council

All of the aforementioned initiatives were reviewed and discussed, with some further addendums to take other parts of the Society forward. The restructuring of the Council and the presidential team was also discussed, and past president Angela McGregor has agreed to work on this, bringing together as many views as possible and working towards an effective solution.

Pedigree House has been our HQ for a number of years. As the Society has grown and continues to grow, we need to grow the building too! We have set up a sub-committee of interested people who can look at this and investigate options on how we develop Pedigree House to help meet the needs of our Society.

It has been agreed that the Society Bye-laws and Articles of Association need to be revisited and brought up to date with the needs of the breed and its membership in today's world. We are also revisiting the Certified Aberdeen-Angus Beef Scheme structure to align it with modern procedures and the requirements of the retail environment which has massively changed shape since the regulations were put together.

# Type Classification: a potentially interesting addition to our breed portfolio? *By Meurig James, Head of Breed Development at NBDC*



Type Classification was set up back in the 1960s to identify the strengths and weaknesses in dairy cows. After all these years, it remains as one of the most respected and important management tools with the majority of breeders and farmers.

One of our strengths as an organisation is that we have always been prepared to make slight changes to our system when we think that changes are needed, as the type of cow required by farmers and the industry does sometimes change.

After many years of only classifying dairy cows of all breeds, we ventured into the beef cattle world and now score 17 beef breeds in total and are currently in discussion with another two well-known breeds. There is a difference between scoring dairy and beef, but there are also many similarities in finding that well-balanced, correct, functional cow that everyone wants.

When we score cows, we break them down into four main categories:

- Body Conformation - Weighting of 25%**
- Beef & Breed Character - Weighting of 25%**
- Legs and Feet - Weighting of 30%**
- Mammary - Weighting of 20%**

These four categories are made up of different linear traits. Although every beef breed bar one scores the same traits, it is up to every Breed Society to tell us what traits they want us to score, which depends mainly on what weaknesses they have in their breed that they want to improve.

We have six different grades on our scoring system:

<b>EX (Excellent)</b> .....	<b>90 to 97</b>
<b>VG (Very Good)</b> .....	<b>85 to 89</b>
<b>GP (Good Plus)</b> .....	<b>80 to 84</b>
<b>G (Good)</b> .....	<b>75 to 79</b>
<b>F (Fair)</b> .....	<b>65 to 74</b>
<b>P (Poor)</b> .....	<b>50 to 64</b>

Another great strength of Type Classification is that it is actual and not just a prediction. Animals that score the highest points in most cases make the highest prices if sold at sales. They also last longer within the herd because their legs and feet etc. are better and when you read catalogues, if the dam, grandam and sisters are highly scored, then you know that it is a really good cow family that breeds well. I think the shift from classifying one breed in

the late 90s to 17 today and more on the way, tells the whole story. If you are interested in having your herd classified, register your interest with the Registrations Team at Pedigree House.

## Key events:

- Worcester Spring Show and Sale:**  
06/04/2019
- Dungannon Show and Sale:** 23/04/2019
- Stirling Spring Show and Sale:**  
05/05/2019 – 06/05/2019
- Balmoral Show:**  
15/05/2019 – 18/05/2019
- NBA Beef Expo:** 23/05/2019
- Carlisle Show and Sale:** 24/05/2019
- Scotland's Beef Event:** 30/05/2019
- Royal Cornwall Show:**  
06/06/2019 - 08/06/2019
- Royal Highland Show:**  
20/06/2019 – 23/06/2019
- Great Yorkshire Show:**  
09/07/2019 – 11/07/2019
- Royal Welsh Show (Summer National):**  
22/07/2019 – 25/07/2019
- Tullamore Show:** 11/08/2019
- Dualla Show (All-Ireland):** 25/08/2019

The Society is currently looking into renewing the telephone system at Pedigree House. Watch out for a new and improved way to communicate with the office moving forward!

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