

EBLEX Improved Herd Awards 2012

Goldstone Herd wins Most Improved Herd Award for the Sussex breed



Regent 5th of Goldstone of the Goldstone Sussex Herd EBLEX Improved Herd Award Winners 2012.

The Goldstone Herd owned by Messrs Chandler & Dunn, of Ash near Canterbury in Kent, has been recognised by EBLEX as the Most Improved Herd of Sussex cattle in England for 2012.

The award is presented by the EBLEX Beef Better Returns Programme (Beef BRP) to the recorded herd that shows the greatest genetic gain for commercial characteristics over a 12-month period. There is a separate award for each of 11 UK breeds.

Ideal breed

The Sussex breed is a good converter of forage that manages well in the harsh winters of Kent on marshland grazing. They have a docile nature and are easy-calvers. Over the past 30-40 years the breed has gradually increased in size and become more commercial.

The herd were first performance recorded 40 years ago with the Meat and Livestock Commission (MLC). Estimated Breeding Values (EBVs) are used to select which animals to breed from and which to sell or cull, along with weight and scan data.

Mr Dunn operates both spring and autumn calving herds. Bull calves not retained for breeding from the autumn calving cows are kept entire and finished at 550kg indoors on an intensive ration.

The top third index heifers are selected for breeding based on their EBVs, size and docility. The rest are finished and retailed through the farm shop.

At weaning the top bulls are selected to keep for breeding or sale based on their weight and conformation. Mr Dunn sells mainly to pedigree breeders through Breed Society Sales, with a few going to commercial producers who seem particularly interested in their performance figures.

Five of the best bulls from the herd run with the cows for as long as possible, swapped around within the herd to maximise their period of use.

“Figures are now appearing on boards at shows and sales,” says Mr. Dunn. “And this has been helped by the Sussex Breed Society incentives.

“Producing animals with good overall conformation and solid figures is my aim. When you have an animal that combines both of these it boosts your confidence when selling to buyers.”

“I have also shown at the South of England, Norfolk and Kent Shows,” said Mr. Dunn. “It is good to be able to compare my animals to other pedigree Sussex breeders to see how we are progressing.”