



The Agerolese breed. Photo: Riccardo Fortina, RARE.



In Cremona there has been an impressive display of Jerseys for many years.



Jersey heifers in the Italian Alps where some herds have changed from the traditional breed to the Jersey.

ers. The breed proved itself to be an excellent performer, even in the most specialized and traditional local productions of cheese. Mozzarella, Parmigiano-Reggiano, Grana Padano, Asiago, Taleggio and, Provolone are just some of the varieties that Jersey milk successfully improved in taste and yield.

“As for type, Italian farmers also showed a preference for a kind that breeds dairyness and style. Famous Canadian sires, J Imperial and Juno, were very popular and produced excellent daughters with very good imprinting in the families.” (Marie Vida, 1999)

Jersey increase in Italy

In 1999 there were 394 herds with 4,021 milk cows recorded, producing in 305 days 5,061 kg with 5.67% fat and 4.09% protein.

In 2009, there were 736 herds and 6,506 cows producing 5,949 kg milk with 5.08% fat and 4.02% protein (percentages are given weight on weight – weight on volume percentages are 5.36% fat and 4.12% protein).

The average number of annual registrations is around 300 head. Demand for heifers is still exceeding the domestic availability and nearly 40% of heifers are imported from Denmark. All cows are milk recorded once a month and type evaluated at least once in their lifetime, more upon request from the breeder.

The national herd size average for Jerseys is nine cows per herd. Although there are few entire Jersey herds, most of the Jersey cows are bred in mixed herds with Holsteins and some with other breeds. The majority of Jerseys live in intensive herds from 40 to 800 head, with free stalls (cubicles), bedding or pack bedding. They are fed on total mixed rations with no, or very limited pasture. Jersey cows clearly showed their adaptability in intensive conditions, being very competitive in terms of longevity, health resistance, heat and cold tolerance. However, farming conditions in Italy include very different situations for climate and environment; there are Jerseys in the Alps or near the Mediterranean Sea, where they also adapted very well. (WJCB Country Profile)

Italy took advantage of the concentrated Jersey milk

There is some evidence of the presence of Jersey cattle in scattered areas of Italy in the 19th century. Agerolese, for instance, emerged around 1850 in the hills of Sorrento, Campania, in the vicinity of Agerola by using Jersey, Brown Swiss and Dutch-Friesian bulls on Apulian Podolian cows. (Source: Marleen Felius. 1995)

Prior to 1988 Jerseys were almost unknown in Italy until a group of 10 breeders in southern Italy decided to set up a Jersey cattle association. The foundation Jerseys in Italy came mainly from Denmark, and some from England.

In 1995, Italy had 1,700 milk-recorded Jerseys with an average production of 4,339 kg (956,576 lbs) milk at 5.72% fat and 4.11% protein. And it was believed that there were a further 1,000 Jersey cows in Italy yet to be registered or milk-recorded.

Since 1995 the Italian Holstein Association ANAFI has done classification work for the Italian Jersey Association and in 1998 ANAFI also became responsible for the herd book. Many Holstein breeders also have Jerseys.

Excellent milk for mozzarella

The breeders who formed the Italian association recognised the superior quality of Jersey milk for making a typical mozzarella cheese, replacing buffalo milk. Not only did the Jersey milk compete successfully with the high fat and protein content of the buffalo milk, giving the cheese the same creamy taste, but with greater ease of breeding.

The Jerseys were found mostly in small groups, usually in Holstein herds. With the Jersey increasing in popularity in southern Italy as a result, the breed also spread to northern Italy in the Po Valley where the most intensive Italian cattle breeding takes place. (Source: WJCB 1996)

The numbers of Jersey cattle have since 1990 consistently increased. Jerseys started the Millennium with a high reputation and popularity in Italy.



“The first Italian National Jersey Show took place on September 25, 1999 during the International Cremona Fair. A small number of animals and classes competed in



Jersey cattle in Bergamo, Italy, imported from Denmark.

the show with an attentive and enthusiastic group of exhibitors. Jersey enthusiasts were attending the first Jersey show which captured the public interest in Cremona fairgrounds, where Holstein and Brown Swiss cattle usually play big roles. Exhibitors and cows came from all parts of Italy to be in the show. The distribution of Jersey herds was now spread out across Italy.

Jerseys were becoming increasingly popular among grade A milk and cheese produc-

Country	Italy	
First importation of purebred Jerseys	1988	
Name of the national Jersey association (in English)	Associazione Nazionale Jersey Italiana (Italian Jersey Cattle Association)	
Year of formation (possibly end year) of association	1988	
Date of 1 st herd book (1 st edition or earliest)	1993	
Size of Jersey population, latest figures (registered and total)	9,000 registered	
Jerseys as a % of the national dairy cattle population	0.8%	
Average herd size	9 cows	
Average production	N/A	
Average 305-day production	5949 kg milk 5.08% fat 4.02% protein	
Breeding program with bull testing?	No	
Number of bulls tested per annum	In future planning to have 5 new Italian bulls in progeny test every year	
General management in your country	N/A	
		
% of organic herds	N/A	
Use of sexed semen	Yes	
Names of the oldest herds	N/A	