

Brazil – a very large country with ever more Jerseys

Brazil is the largest of the Latin American countries. Covering nearly half (47%) of the South American continent, it occupies an area of 3,286,470 sq miles (8,511,965 sq km). It is the fifth largest country in the world and bigger than Europe or the USA. With the exception of a small number of islands, Brazil consists of a single, unbroken landmass. The Atlantic Ocean extends along the entire eastern side of the country, giving it a coastline of 4,578 miles (7,367 km), peculiarities and beauties.

Jersey cattle were introduced to Brazil in 1895, by Dr. Joaquim Francisco de Assis Brasil who at the time, was the Brazilian Ambassador in Great Britain. He decided to import his first Jerseys after having seen the Jerseys in the royal herd of Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle. Assis Brasil was a famous Brazilian diplomat who was married to a Portuguese lady and travelled extensively all over the world. He was also the first to import Arab horses, Karocul sheep and Devon beef cattle to Brazil. He took his Jersey cattle (two cows and a bull calf) from Jersey Island to Portugal where they stayed on a friend's farm before being transferred to Brazil in 1895.*

These three Jerseys initially remained in Ibirapuitã, Alegrete, in the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul. Later, in 1904, they moved to Pedras Altas in the same state of Rio Grande do Sul, where the Assis Brasil family developed their Jersey herd and started up the Pedras Altas Herd Book in 1904 or 1905 [which later included all the Jerseys of Rio Grande do Sul the southern most state which borders with Uruguay]. The state government maintained the herd books until they were transferred to the national association that had been founded in 1938. (David Stiles, 1995)

Jerseys officially recognized in 1930

The Jersey breed was officially recognized by the Brazilian government in 1930, due to the efforts of Ms. Joaquina, daughter of Dr. Joaquim Francisco de Assis Brasil.

The Associação dos Criadores de Gado

*The Brazilian Jersey Association celebrated its centenary in 1996.



Jersey do Brasil (Brazilian society of Jersey cattle breeders) was established in 1938 in the city of Rio de Janeiro and later moved its office to São Paulo. This society is responsible for the registration of pure bred Jerseys in Brazil, as well as the crossbred cow registrations.

Jersey cattle, due to their adaptability, rusticity and productivity, successfully spread throughout Brazil, from the south to the north. Today, the Jersey is present mostly in the southern region (Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, Paraná, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais) where the most important breeders are located. But going north (Ceará) and northeast (Bahia, Pernambuco and Rio Grande do Norte) or the central region (Brasília and Goiás) Jerseys are developing rapidly.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Jerseys were mainly imported from England, Jersey and New Zealand, and later on from the United States and Canada. Presently, there is a predominance of Canadian genetics.

The technology of AI is strongly developed in Brazil among the dairy breeders and results of its regular use are noticeable all over the country, in small or large herds. The quality of the animals is the consequence of the correctness of sire selection. Also embryo transfer and IVF techniques are well developed among the Brazilian Jersey Breeders and are important in the structure of the Jersey cow quality in Brazil.

More than 600 members and 50,000 registered cows are recorded for Brazilian Jerseys. Each year 5,000 to 6,000 births are registered. In 2007, some 675,619 straws of semen (461,358 imported straws and 214,261 Brazilian) were used.

Most of the Brazilian milk production is paid by volume only. A new direction for solids payment has begun and will probably increase from now on. Due to this tendency, Jersey semen sales are developing faster and Holstein breeders are using the Jersey breed to crossbreed their cows to develop the production of solids and improving the quality of their milk. (WJCB, 2008)

Falling milk price is a big challenge

Since mid 2008 the dairy industry in



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Brazil has faced a very strong fall in its economic performance. To understand the whole picture, it is necessary to remember that this industry had a wonderful period from 2006 to early 2008, when the fluid milk price increased tremendously and every breeder was really excited with the market forecast for the dairy industry in general.

The consequence of this optimistic forecast was the growth of investment in the dairy industry, and the good weather conditions during the same period caused the increase in the milk production.

After that wonderful period, the price of fluid milk to the breeder halved from mid 2008, from the average R\$ 0.90/1.00 (reais) to the present R\$ 0.50 (reais), whilst production costs have remained the same.

That situation of current prices lower than production costs is responsible for many breeders taking the decision to quit the business. Despite this difficult situation, Jersey breeders are confident in the Jersey cow and in its productivity, and their development is sustainable.

The use of Jersey semen has increased 10% a year over the last five years, from 425,000 straws in 2004, to 683,000 straws in 2008. That represents a 61% increase in five years.

Cloned Jersey heifers born

Some exciting news from the Brazilian national Jersey association is that, the Cabanha da Maya, owned by Ms. Zuleika Borges Torrealba, from Rio Grande do Sul, produced two Jersey cloned animals. These are the first clones from dairy breeds in Brazil and are considered a real landmark in national dairy breed improvement. These two heifers are already recognized by the Brazilian agricultural department and had their registrations formally approved. (WJCB, 2009)

