

MURRAY GREY

BEEF CATTLE SOCIETY LTD



Year Book

2013 / 2014



Murray Grey Breed Origins

Murray Grey cattle originated in the Murray river valley, on the New South Wales and Victoria border, in Australia, from a series of crosses between Aberdeen Angus bulls and a roan Shorthorn cow. The grey progeny from this cross were found to bear grey calves when crossed back to Aberdeen Angus sires, and to breed true when interbred.

The first grey calf was born in 1905.

Early market resistance to these unusually coloured cattle was overcome in the mid 1950s, when they first commanded a premium from buyers for the depth and quality of their meat.

They had already demonstrated superior weight-gaining ability, and when this was allied with recognition of their meat quality their popularity spread.

New Australian price records for beef cattle were set by Murray Greys in 1960, on their first appearance at Melbourne sale yards at Newmarket, encouraging a further surge of interest.

The Murray Grey Beef Cattle Society was formed in Melbourne in 1962. The first Murray Greys were imported into Great Britain in 1972, consisting of 70 females and 6 males. The Murray Grey Society was founded in the UK in 1973.

Breed Traits

- Docile • Naturally polled • Easy calving • Meat from grass • Marbling
- Low cost suckler cow • Tenderness

Murray Greys exported to Germany

First of all I want to introduce us: I am a farmer's daughter and we are Dexter breeders from the north of Germany, near Hamburg. We started breeding in 1993, when there were only 36 Dexter cows all over Germany. That meant: no choice, many faults (defects) we didn't want to see, very big "non short legged" or very small dwarfs, and you would have been lucky to get one.

Meanwhile we have a very nice herd of Dexters, about 15 breeding cows, all non carriers of the bulldog-gene – small by selection not by gene defect. We have all three colours and we are the first breeder of polled Dexters in Germany (with British help!). Our young Scottish bull produces absolutely brilliant calves, some are exported to Switzerland and others sold all over Germany – thanks to Duncan MacIntyre in Scotland!

And there the problem starts, because we are sold out, we have nothing to sell to our meat customers, who are spoilt with superb Dexter meat.

What can we do? I was thinking of other breeds, that produce more meat of the same quality: Limousin, too nervous and a bit aggressive (at one show a heifer jumped on my car!), Charolais:

calving problems – my father had bad experience, Galloway, Highlands – too common, everybody has them, "we do not want to jump on a running train", as we say in Germany . . .

And of course we want to produce "grass fed beef", not grain fed beef.

I studied nutrition and my husband is a medical doctor, so we want to produce the good meat quality with more omega 3 fatty acids instead of omega 6, which are not so healthy.

Then everything started with a book: *Das andere Kuhbuch – The other cow book*, by Michael Brackmann (a vet, who is a cow specialist and cow lover), 40 breed portraits and more. Looking through the index: Murray Grey – I remembered that I heard of them before . . .

"Grey meatloaf from fifth Continent," says the book – that sounds attractive! I read the three pages about Murray Grey and I was sure that I found what we wanted!

You know how it is today: three evenings on the internet and you have enough information and pictures in your mind that you get a good idea of that special subject you are looking for.



Sabine and Maik in Germany

The first contact to the Greys in Britain was with the secretary of the Murray Grey Beef Cattle Society, Mrs Rosemary Kent. She gave me information and was so kind to send me the yearbooks 2010 and 2011. We, that means my husband, my father and of course me, were impressed by what we saw and knew that we had to start moving. "I want to go as well," said my father, (aged 78) on a trip that is a bit of a challenge. But once a farmer, always a farmer.

More phone calls with a question list by the telephone: how many breeding cows, what size, what about the health status of your herd, which area and so on. We made crosses on the GB map for herds and there were quite a few in Wales, where none of us has been before!

September is a good time for us to travel and to look around; haylage and straw will be already in, animals still on the meadow and Murray Grey calves big enough to get a good impression and maybe to choose some heifers . . .

It was January, we booked a flight for September, B&B, car and you would not believe how slowly the months were passing by.

The Darose herd was our first place to go.

Rosemary showed us the first group on top of the hill. Maik and I saw a heifer and were both drawn to her like by a magnet. We were not even able to see all the others, we were so fascinated by her. "No, sorry, you can't have her." What a shock. Not knowing, my father chose her little sister, a dark one. He prefers the darker ones that do not remind him of Charolais. She said, "Oh no, sorry, you can't have her . . ." She had us on a hook! The second

place she took us, was better, we had the chance to choose! What a perfect herd of cows, straight backs, good feet, nice udders, fantastic deep bodies . . . all correct. "This cow is 9 years old and that is her 10 yearold sister." She showed two wonderful cows. "And that is the mother of the two sisters". It seems to be a very

good line, when you see three older cows in that perfect condition and shape. To make it short – they had daughters and our first deal was done!

Because of our excitement seeing our first Murray Greys, we were a bit late for our next appointment: Tim Ling and the Vroe herd. I have not known that it was possible to increase our excitement – what a farm! So many cows and calves that we were not able to pick one out.



Leonhard, Maik and Tim Ling

Only my father was able to hang his eye on one particular brown one. We saw a group of cows with calves from March, one group with June calves and a heifer and steer group and bulls, where you can dream of. The yearlings came very close to us and meanwhile our blood pressure came down to a nearly normal region. We instantly fell in love with a yearling heifer: "Oh no, sorry, I have only this one out of a very good mother . . ." Finally we were allowed to pick two heifers – tentatively! Then the group with heifers in calf – same game! I told Tim: "Number 123 said to me 'I want to come to Germany'". "Oh no, she just said to me: 'I want to stay with you Daddy!'" We had a nice meal with Tim and Pauline in the historic farmhouse, of course talking about cows.

Before we left, Tim told us, he will be happy when his animals go to us, making good publicity for the Murray Greys in Germany. What a brilliant day was that – hundreds of nice pictures in our head, we will never forget, and we are the future owner of 7 heifers!

The next day was a sightseeing tour through beautiful sunny landscape, up and down the hills. Just by luck we met Alun Davies, Pen-y-gaer Murray Greys, but we never got him on the phone

to make an appointment. He's got a group of imposing cows and a breathtaking view. Again two perfect heifers, which we can't have, they'll go on a show next year . . .

To make it short, we saw three farms and were really impressed by the high quality of the animals, perfect top line, good udders, good feet and the best, all had a very friendly temperament. It was as we expected and hoped, even better and we saw not only some good animals, no, all herds where in a very high standard.

On the last of our incredibly four sunny days, we went for a trip to the Murray Grey open day to see JAC's herd. Thank you for the invitation! What a wonderful day in a fantastic garden, a superb meal and so interesting company. I pinched myself to find out if I was in a dream! Nice to meet other breeders and talk to them, there's always something new you can hear or you can learn. It was new for us to see three different

calves drinking from one mother, again a sign of very friendly cows. On the way back we made a stop in Marlborough – an impressive high street for the market, hundreds of years old, easy to imagine the middle Ages citizen going shopping . . .

Meanwhile, and a heap of paperwork, quarantine days, blood samples, phone calls and



Maik and Alun Davies

emails later, you can call us the first Murray Grey breeder (soon . . .) in Germany. It was necessary to change our plans and timetable a bit. So we will have two groups in separate transports, one already delivered, the other group coming in spring, maybe just arrived when you have your freshly printed yearbook in hands!

Six lovely Darose spring calves are in Germany now, we had a welcome party on December 21st for them, inviting all interested farmers we know. About 12 farmers and their apprentices and

families came, about 40 people. We made a little exhibition with all the photos we took, in a very large format, to give other people a little impression of what we saw. In spring, Tim's Vroe heifers will come. We are extremely happy for such a good start with a homogeneously group of best Murray Greys. Many thanks to Rosemary, Tim and their families for their confidence, for their time and patience, photos and help.

Sabine, Maik & Leonhard



Darose heifers in Germany