

Charolais at 60

Breeder Profile

Brendan McFeely

Daisy Hill, Navenny, Ballybofey, Lifford, Co. Donegal

Herd: DAISYHILL CHAROLAIS

210th Member of the Society

Date of Membership: 1st August 1979

Q & A

1. Why Charolais? what first attracted you to become involved in Charolais Breeding.

My Father, Brendan Snr, was working as a vet in North County Dublin in the mid-seventies. Some of his clients were the late John Mooney and Omer VanLandeghem who were among the first to introduce Charolais cattle onto the island of Ireland. Dad was hugely impressed by this relatively new French breed that left a lasting impression on him. Their stature and impressive weight for age were far superior to the more traditional breeds he was familiar with.

2. When and where was the herds first Charolais purchased?

Dad bought his first Charolais bull from the aforementioned John Mooney in the mid 70's for his commercial suckler herd back in Ballybofey. He purchased his first Pedigree females in 1978 from James Kelly, Edenmore at a dispersal sale in Carrick-on-Shannon. The Daisyhill herd prefix was established in 1979 with the registration of two calves Daisyhill Prince and Daisyhill Princess.

3. What has been the biggest enjoyment/achievement from breeding Charolais cattle?

Winning is always nice but I'd have to say that the biggest enjoyment for me is in the friendships made through breeding Charolais over the years. Further to this, I should mention the importance of the regional clubs in fostering these relationships, encouraging young breeders and promoting the breed. One very proud moment was when I was Chairman of our Donegal Club and we won the very first "Club of the Year" competition.

4. What do you think of the standard of Charolais in Ireland today compared to when the herd was first established?

It would be easy to look back through rose-tinted glasses, although I do think the very top cattle from the '90's and noughties would compete well today. But in general, the standard had definitely improved. You just have to look at the National Show in Tullamore this year and the October born heifer calf class – truly outstanding.

5. What do you look for in a good bull?

Good function, locomotion, feet, and legs are all important. Length, width, good muscling and squareness behind and over the plates. Natural fleshing and a snug head. In the ring, a bull that has presence, commands your attention, and owns the arena.

6. What do you look for in a good breeding female?

Most importantly, she must be feminine with a good head and big lugs. Again, good function, locomotion, feet and legs. Good pelvic width, length, "lift", some width, a little muscling and squareness behind and over the plates. A heifer/cow that struts her stuff with confidence and has that "X-Factor".

7. Do you have any special feeding regimes; (a) prior to calving; (b) when preparing animals for show/sales?

(a) Dry cow mineral for at least 6 weeks prior to calving. Soya bean and rolled oats fed 50-50. Feed for three weeks prior to calving starting at 1kg/day rising to 2kg/day 10 days to calving. Good quality silage and a little clean barley-straw (helps to keep dung firm and calving boxes dry). This feeding regime helps calf vigour and colostrum quality and quantity.
(b) Always use a specialist Pedigree ration to help minimise digestive upsets, feet issues and hair loss. For forage I use good clean barley straw ad-lib and a little silage.

8. What advice would you give to new breeders who are just starting out on their journey breeding Charolais cattle?

To young breeders – get involved in your local Charolais club. Take part in workshops for young members organised by the Society. Go to shows/sales and see what sires are breeding well. Study genetics and the good female breeding lines.

9. What's the biggest change in farming you've seen over the nearly 50 years since the herd was established?

Genetics and technology – especially genotyping and robotics.

10. Where do you see the breed in 10 years-time?

Charolais are the best all-round cattle breed, but we cannot be complacent. We shouldn't allow an emphasis on heavy muscling compromise fertility and function. I am confident that with the continued good guidance from our Society on breeding policy and the sourcing of the best genetics, the future is bright and white!

11. What is/was the best piece of advice you received re. Charolais?

Breed for females and the bulls will come!



Brendan Snr



Brendan Jnr



Bull calf in the Daisyhill Herd



Daisyhill Orlando - Finn Valley Show 2019



Daisyhill Bulls at the Christmas Cracker 2023