

# The Lincoln Letter

Publisher-North American Lincoln Red Association

Summer 2017

## Brian Harper, Sandy MacDougald, Robert Latimer and Family Visit the UK

Brian Harper; Circle H Farms; Brandon, Manitoba



As all Lincoln Red breeders know and many have experienced, finding Lincoln Red genetics in North America is difficult! Finding those genetics unrelated to most of what is prevalent here today is even more difficult. Most difficult of all is finding the original bloodlines that have not had any upgrading or influence by other breeds!

This put myself, Robert Latimer and family together with Sandy and Julia MacDougald on a quest to find some, minimal or ultimately, completely unrelated “original” or “P” bloodlines of Lincoln Red cattle. Where better to start but in the place of their origin?

We planned our visit to coincide with the very popular Lincolnshire Cattle show. There were many animals taking part in this event and we were told that we had picked the best show to attend as this show would have the greatest number of Lincoln Red cattle exhibited of all the shows in Britain. We were surely not disappointed as there were many top notch animals here! However, as we were in search of the “Original” bloodlines, most of these show animals did not fall within our parameters. Unfortunately, the majority were out of breeding up programs.

The upside though, besides some great cattle, was that we met many of the breeders and learned the history behind their herds! Everyone involved with the Lincoln Reds treated



us like long lost friends, it was fabulous! Also, as guests we were included as exhibitors to the entire show! We were invited to the Society BBQ as well, now that was tremendous! An overwhelming amount of food and just as important a lot of socializing and networking. This resulted in many new friendships being made that I am certain will last for years!



After the two day Lincolnshire show we did some on farm visits and saw some amazing countryside!

First stop... Day 1: The Woodlands Herd with fourth generation owner Andrew Dennis. This was our first introduction to a large number of the “P” cattle, close enough in numbers that he called it 100 head! A good number of these are unrelated to a lot of what we have in North America, some good prospects!

The 2<sup>nd</sup> stop of Day 1: The Rumford Herd, another large herd of mostly Original bloodlines. It was nearly like being a youngster and having your pick of all the candy on the shelf! Many top quality cattle here as well!

First stop of Day 2 of farm visits, June 24<sup>th</sup>. We began with the Banovallum Herd, which are kept by the Wildlife Trust Park. Here we could only view the steers that they were grass finishing as the cow herd was kept further away at another farm. The steers looked impressive for being on grass only and some were scheduled to go to the butcher soon. They were a good indication as to what the cows must be like but with the time restraints we will have to visit that cow herd another time.



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2<sup>nd</sup> stop of Day 2 was to be at the Manor Herd, with Roger Wardle. A light lunch to start with the most amazing cheesecake for dessert! It was delightful to visit another herd of the original Lincoln Red bloodlines. The original cattle really are different from what we saw at the show ring! Once again more possible prospects to use to get some new blood to North America!



Day 3 of farm visits had us start on what would turn out to be a journey of over 8 hours to the St Fort herd in Scotland. 1st stop on this leg was at the Fellbeck Herd in North Yorkshire. Andy Aldridge is likely one of the newest members to the society but he is committed to having only the heritage cattle of the original population. Although this herd is small at present, Andy has made and plans to continue with some very disciplined selections in the building of his program. Due to his commitments and selections he too has some great prospects with which to draw genetics from.



The morning of June 26<sup>th</sup> had us excited to visit the St. Fort Herd, another multi-generational operation! St Fort Herd is also home of some of the most impressive Lincoln Red cattle! The scenery here was also most unbelievable!

In summary, I feel that our trip was very rewarding in regards to finding acceptable animals

for what we feel is needed to broaden our genetic pool both in our own herds and in North America. I encourage all of our North American Lincoln Red members to try and make a trip to the UK and see the cattle. Meeting the UK breeders is something I'll never forget, they are so welcoming, interesting and willing to work with us here in the west. More than once members made the comment to me that, "We need to work together and spread our resources across both organizations to ensure the continued survival of a truly fascinating heritage breed of beef cattle." I am confident that the Lincoln Red cattle breed does have a place into today's beef programs!

## Lincoln Red crossbred calves shown by the Schmaltz family



The North American Lincoln Red Association gave windbreakers as a thank you to our youth for helping promote Lincoln Reds in the showing.



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## When Is Your Harvest Time?

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It's fun to watch the calves scamper and play during the summer months. They really begin to grow and develop and it's fun to see which sires and cows combined to make the most impressive calves. The cooler fall weather brings a harvest season that not only measures bushels of corn or beans per acre but also pounds of calf weaning weight. Autumn is always filled with eager anticipation to see if all of our planning and continual work will pay dividends to our bottom line. Yes, fall is the traditional harvest season for the beef producer, but over the years I have come to think my "harvest season" comes much earlier in the year.

I (meaning my wife, Amanda, and I) prefer to measure the success of our production endeavors during calving season which begins in early April. Here is where we truly see if our selection efforts are paying dividends that help to make our operation profitable as well as enjoyable. The sires we choose to use every July during AI and natural breeding are certainly represented during calving. Our selection criteria, listed below, designs cows that, we feel, require fewer costly inputs of feed and labor.

### Calving Ease (CE)

This is our "flag ship" trait. While many studies have documented that it is not uncommon to average a 20% assistance rate for 2-year olds, we aim for zero assistance and most years we achieve that goal. We unroll our hay at 5pm to utilize the Konefal method for daytime calving and over 80% of our calves are born during the daylight hours. We do not check them at night after feeding. We expect the cows to deliver a calf on their own. We occasionally experience a calving issue, but not due to extreme calf weight or size. Winter calving, resuscitating cold calves and herd checks every two hours got really old really fast during our early years. We found it was much easier to select sires with high accuracy calving ease scores which made calving season much less stressful. Their sons and daughters carry on this built-in convenience trait that makes bull buyers very happy. Contrary to some theories, generations of selection for calving ease does not cause birthing problems (dystocia) by decreasing pelvic size.

Another major advantage of CE deals with fertility. Heifers that lay down and calve quickly without difficulty tend to breed back considerably faster than heifers with a prolonged labor. A lengthy labor also wears out a heifer. I've seen some that just don't want to get up to lick off the calf. This is a short, critical time period because the calf may have placenta over its head and nostrils. Many heavy milking 2-year olds raise big calves but then have trouble re-breeding or are considerably delayed in their return to estrus. Look at when your 3-year olds calve. Are they keeping in a 365 day window? Failure of these first-timers to rebreed is a huge expense. Some operations in the dairy industry don't even try to re-breed them because they have such a poor success rate. It's cheaper for them just to buy bred replacement heifers.

### Fertility

This trait encompasses several areas. How many coming two's will calve in the first 21 days of the calving season? How long does it take for the entire herd to calve? What if all of the cows calved within 30 days? With no stragglers, weaning weight increases just because more of the calves have more days to gain weight. When selecting replacement heifers, the highly fertile are the heifers born early in the calving season. Analyze the lineage of your cows and see how many are from families that always calve early. On top of that, find bulls to use that are from these exceptional cows. Too many times fertility takes a back seat to other traits that look more impressive but have much less importance to producing a self-sufficient cow herd.

### Moderate Size, Easy Fleshing

Most cows are culled because they are "open" at pregnancy check time. Excellent research done on cow size at Iowa State University documented that larger framed cows left the herd at an accelerated rate due to not being pregnant when compared to their smaller framed herd mates. Big cows need more groceries to function at the same level as smaller cows. Big cows wean big calves, but they also require lots of inputs to raise that calf and breed back. Unfortunately, many of them don't. More and more producers are finally recognizing that beef cows today are too big and too milky. Smaller, easy fleshing cows more readily adapt to harsh winter

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conditions and do it on less feed than their larger counterparts. Heifers in excellent condition prior to calving produce higher quality colostrum which bolsters calf health and immunity to pathogens. Additionally, they tend to produce less milk, so regain their body condition faster which allows them to rebreed on time to maintain their early position in the next calving season.

## Disposition

This is probably as important to our program as calving ease. For most of our customers, disposition and calving ease are the two traits they most want in a bull. We find disposition to be highly heritable. Quiet bulls make quiet cows. The Angus Association provides disposition scores (Docility EPD) for the breed. We find it to be quite accurate and have not used several "good" bulls because they had very low scores. We did not want to inject that into our herd. At calving time we enjoy cows that are protective, but docile. Quiet cows also make quiet calves. We chute score all of our calves every time we work them. A "1" is quiet, a "2" is restless and a "3" is very nervous. Most all of our calves are 1's when we run them through the chute the first time at weaning. Some 2's become 1's after a couple of times. Most 3's, when we do get them, don't improve, and they are sold as feeders.

## Maternal Ability and Instinct

Some cows excel at this while some are just average. Some cows polish up their calves at birth and pay close attention to them while some never know where they are. With some 2-year olds it's just inexperience, but, it pays to keep track of the top performers. A good rule is to only keep replacement heifers from cows that were "perfect", that had absolutely no problems. In time, they will produce an attentive, low-labor herd.

## Udder Quality

Calving time is the very best time to evaluate udders. If there are udder problems, this is the time when it becomes apparent. We score from "5" (best) to "1", with a "3" as average. A 5 has to have small teats and tight suspension. When buying a bull, it is always prudent to see the bull's dam if you are interested in maintaining quality udders. We score all of our sale bulls for dam's udder score as well as disposition.

In summary, while the fall weaning weight is important, it is not a profit driver in our operation. We feel that our selection for growth is close to optimum, so we tend to put more priority and pressure on the "convenience" traits listed above that, we feel, reduce inputs, particularly labor. The cattle business is a combination of work and quality of life. The ratio of each is up to you.

## **Presidents Report**

Be careful for what you wish for, last summer was extremely hot and dry in southwestern Ontario and this year was a late wet spring with unstable weather continuing into the summer. First cut hay will not be finished in July this year but we were fortunate to get the majority of our hay cut and in the barn a few weeks ago. Time goes by very quickly. Our son, Davis, has joined the Dufferin County 4-H club and has been very enthusiastic about showing his Lincoln Red heifer, Delphine, for his project. It appears his enthusiasm has rubbed off on his sister Norah who is already out in the herd looking for her first 4-H calf for her first year in 2018.

There continues to be many enquiries from people interested Lincoln Red herds and I continue to encourage you to register your calves to keep your herd up to date and to make available select animals to interested beef producers.

Have a great summer,

Scott

### **Help us save money Receive your newsletter electronically!**

As an Association, we are always trying to minimize expenses. Printing and mailing the Lincoln Letter is one area we hope to reduce costs. May we send the Lincoln Letter to you electronically? **If you would like to continue receiving the newsletter via email please email your Name, Address, and the Email address(s) that you would like us to send the newsletter to the Association Secretary Sarah Pedelty at [sarahpedelty@gmail.com](mailto:sarahpedelty@gmail.com).**



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## **SEEING IS BELIEVING!**

Take a look at Lincoln Reds at one of these farms:

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