

SUSSEX CATTLE SOCIETY

LARGE HERDS COMPETITION 2023

JUDGES: Mr. D. Stevens & Mrs. S. Harmer

- 1st E.H. Holdstock & Son, Elbridge Herd
- 2nd Chandler & Dunn Ltd., Goldstone Herd
- 3rd S. & F. Carr & Daughters, Oxendean Herd
- 4th Mr. G.A. Innes, Titsey Herd

Best Stock Bull in Class: Goldstone Poll General 2nd at the Goldstone Herd

Best Cow/Heifer and Calf in Class: Intwood Buttercup 1st at the Intwood Herd

Judges' General Comment

Thanks to all the competitors for their time and hospitality. We enjoyed our 4 days judging and saw some very impressive cattle including over 700 cows. The overall Stock Bull quality was good. The top two herds in the competition both used Signet recording and have used this to their advantage.

We recommend that all herds record now that the Society is providing this service free of charge.

All six large herds were thriving, and all are very well managed. The cattle were doing the job that each owner required, some on very poor pasture on which Sussex cattle excel.

The top bull was Goldstone Poll General 2nd for the second year running with reserve Windsor Regent at the Intwood herd. The top cow and calf was Bruce Lockhart's Intwood Buttercup 1st with her calf.



INTERMEDIATE HERDS COMPETITION 2023

JUDGES: Ms. J. Howard & Mr. J. Giffin

- 1st C.E. & W.S. Millson, Trottenden Herd
- 2nd D. Spanton & F. Peterson, Maygate Herd
- 3rd Buchanan Family, Black Ven Herd
- 4th The Montreal Estate, Montreal Herd

Best Stock Bull in Class: Petworth Regent 11th at the Trottenden Herd

Best Cow/Heifer and Calf in Class: Maygate Poll Shadow 2nd at the Maygate Herd

Judges' General Comment

Thank you to everyone for showing us round your herds, it was a very close competition, with very little to choose between the top three.

We saw many many different management systems from those using Sussex on very extensive grazing, some with no inputs at all, to those using common land with all the issues that plenty of public access brings and others contending with floods! It will be very interesting to come back next year to see how those of you switching to various versions of mob grazing get on in Year 2.

There were some excellent cows and followers but sadly the bulls less so and most of the better bulls seen were older. This continues to be a problem for the breed though having said that there were a few excellent yearlings flying the flag.

We were impressed by the enthusiasm of all the owners / managers with most having a clear vision of where they are going with their cattle and we thank you for your time and enthusiasm.



SMALL HERDS COMPETITION 2023

JUDGES: Mr. R. Dunn & Mrs. B. Hide

- 1st Mrs. J. Howard, Coopers Herd
- 2nd Mrs. V. Deradour, Wren's Herd
- 3rd Mr. S. & Mrs. N. Bish, Saxonhurst Herd
- 4th Mrs. S. Watts, Montgomery's Herd

Best Stock Bull in Class: Coopers Poll Regent 3rd at the Coopers Herd

Best Cow/Heifer and Calf in Class: Saxonhurst Lock Heedless 32nd at the Saxonhurst Herd

Judges' General Comment

What a contrast from last year's drought to this year's abundance of grass. All cattle looked extremely well and calves shone in the sunshine, which we were lucky to choose the best days.

The standard of all herds was very good, the established herds maintaining a consistent level while younger herds continue to progress.

Different management styles that these cattle seem to fit all, an interesting mob grazing system the cattle seemed very content and very placid.

We would like to thank all the competitors for their time and hospitality, it makes judging a very enjoyable experience.

Herne Valley Rose Bowl for the highest place novice entrant in the Herd Competition: Oxendean Herd



CHAMPION HERD

Judge: Mr. Alan Mummery

I was honoured to be asked to judge the Supreme Champion Herd of the Year 2023 for the Sussex Cattle Society. I enjoyed visits to 3 outstanding, but quite different herds, and I congratulate the owners on their success in winning their individual classes. My task was not easy but I was charged with the great responsibility of choosing a Supreme Champion for 2023.

It was fascinating see such high quality breeding herds all with very different management systems and farm environments. The judging took place after one of the wettest summers in history so there was plenty of grass around so the cattle all looked in great condition.

I am grateful to all of the owners who spent time showing me around their farms and all 3 should be very proud of their herds and the progress that they are making with the breed. It has proved to be a much more difficult decision than I anticipated and I have decided to award the Supreme Champion award to the **Elbridge Herd** for the following reasons:-

Stockmanship of all 3 class winners was of the highest quality so I could not differentiate of this basis. My decision to favour the Elbridge Herd is because I saw cattle being managed very successfully on some very challenging marginal ground and the herd looked extremely impressive- a great advert for the breed. This, coupled with the consistent herd type from the breeding cows, to the intakes of in-calf and maiden heifers which is the aim of any breeder to achieve. I congratulate E H Holdstock & Son on their success.

Finally, I thoroughly enjoyed my tour and put me rather wanting to return to my previous times as one of the auctioneers to the Society!



2023 HERD COMPETITION

Beef farmers choose Sussex cattle for lots of different reasons, as was highlighted by the recent annual herd competition which saw judges visit pedigree Sussex herds throughout the country to discover more.

The competition is split into three categories – large, intermediate and small – and with a panel of six judges having chosen their three winners it fell to Alan Mummery of Lambert and Foster to visit the winning herds and find his overall champion. This year that honour went to the Elbridge herd near Canterbury.

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“It was fascinating to see such high quality herds all with very different management systems, different farm environments but all making Sussex cattle work as part of a profitable enterprise. Great attention was paid across all three to breeding values with decisions being data driven, something The Sussex Cattle Society is keen to encourage and has recently made Signet recording free to all its members.

“It was not an easy choice, stockmanship

across all three was of the highest quality, but I decided to make The Elbridge Herd the Supreme Champion because I saw cattle being managed very successfully on some very challenging marginal ground and the herd looked extremely impressive – a great advert for the breed. This, coupled with the consistent herd type from the breeding cows, to the intakes of in-calf and maiden heifers which is the aim of any breeder and I congratulate E H Holdstock & Son on their success.

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Alan Mummery

WINNER OF THE LARGE HERD CATEGORY: THE ELBRIDGE HERD – E.H. HOLDSTOCK

“The Elbridge herd is part of a mixed farm outside Canterbury. The farm is red tractor and LEAF accredited and signed up to Signet beef breeder recording.

“Over the years the cow numbers have increased to currently stand at around 190 which is split between spring and autumn calving (around 110 spring and 80 autumn). All calving is outside and the spring calving cows are outside all year, grazing on stubble turnips through the winter months. We are firmly convinced that the Sussex breed is ideally suited for our farming system. The qualities of easy

care, well-natured cows that thrive off poor quality forage (which makes up a lot of our grazing) and calve mainly unassisted outside, works well for us.

“We currently have around 20 different female lines, four working pedigree bull lines and four other lines within our young bulls. We are very selective in choosing our breeding stock and we ensure that we maintain the especially desirable Sussex traits of good temperament, milkiness, sound feet, longevity and good food conversion.”

Verity Holdstock

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WINNER OF THE INTERMEDIATE HERD CATEGORY: THE TROTTENDEN HERD – C E & W S MILLSON

“Trottenden is a 75 Ha farm outside Goudhurst of which 68 Ha is permanent pasture with the remainder in small parcels of woodland. The pedigree Sussex herd was started here in 1972. We now run around 30 suckler cows, keeping their followers to sell for breeding or finishing in our beef box scheme. The cows are kept outside for as long as the ground allows, and then fed on grass silage during housing – this low input system together with their easy calving and docile nature makes Sussex our preferred breed.

“The farm has been in stewardship schemes since they have been available, and from 2024 we have been accepted for Higher Level Stewardship, so with our pedigree Sussex herd we will benefit from the native breed at risk supplement on land in GS7 (regeneration towards species rich grassland) and WD6 (creation of wood pasture).”

Vanessa McNaughton



WINNER OF THE SMALL HERD CATEGORY: THE COOPERS HERD – J HOWARD & A BREWER

“Coopers Farm is a typical High Weald farm near Wadhurst of 100 acres of permanent grass and woodland. The herd of around 18 suckler cows was established in 2002 and grazes unimproved pastures until late autumn when they are overwintered inside on hay alone. The cattle are Signet recorded – which gives us a good indication of the milkiness of the cows – which, together with high herd status, is increasingly important to buyers looking for breeding stock, especially bulls.

“Two or three bull calves are kept each year and about two-thirds of the heifer calves are kept for replacements or sale for breeding, with the rest being sold through Hailsham Market. We chose Sussex as they thrive on our low input system and being the native breed of the South East

are much sought after by the public and local butchers. They are extremely docile, biddable and easy to calve; we rarely need to assist and I probably shouldn't say it but

on an autumn morning the picture of those dark brown cows against the High Weald background is hard to beat.”

Jane Howard



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