

Canadian Luing Cattle Association Newsletter

Volume 9, No. 1

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MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY

Iain Aitken

I'd like to wish all our readers a Happy New Year. Hopefully the strong cattle markets we experienced last year will continue. After the tough times we have come through in the last decade it is a welcome turn of events but it will take more than one year to rebuild the equity lost out on many cattle operations.

At the same time I think we should remain cautious in our spending habits if we are to benefit from the upturn. I've already heard of some American bull sales averaging over \$9000. I see no justification to pay that much for a bull to use in a commercial setting. If the bulls cost that much to produce they likely won't survive on a working ranch and with a sale average that high across a large number it can't be rarity value either. It's ironic that some of these bull sellers are promoters of "low input" ranching but apparently when it comes to their bull sales they seem to favor the rancher spending lavishly!

I came across this quote recently from the late Larry Leonhardt of Shoshone Angus, regarding his Truline concept of cattle breeding that I have written about in previous Newsletters.

"I believe more can be done to develop these populations by breeder cooperation with common objectives....the way breeds were formed in the first place.... birds of a feather flock together....The objective is to feather the nests of the commercial sector, and then our own nests will be feathered accordingly....not with riches but with genuine value exchange."

I like to think that as a breed this is what Luing has always offered - perhaps because we are a breed that was created relatively recently, and were formed out of a disillusionment with the mainstream registered cattle industry. The objective at the outset was to breed cattle for commercial cattlemen, it still is, and I see no reason why we would want to depart from that.

At time of writing there are still a few bulls available for 2015 use but I expect they will sell out quickly following this reminder.

One of our bull customers has 80 April/May born Luing x Red Angus replacement heifers for sale, located SE Saskatchewan. These are the only replacements kept back from a 400 cow herd this year. For further details on bulls or these heifers please contact me.

We thank the following first time Luings buyers in 2014 and trust their purchases do well for them:

Lyle & Dolores Bowles, Maple Creek, SK

Ken Briggs, Flatbush, AB

James Dick, Ridgedale, SK

Ian Griebel, Castor, AB

Otto Krauskopf, Tomslake, BC

Grant Lastiwka, Innisfail, AB

Roy Runzer Glendon, AB

Grant Weir, North Battleford, SK

As a Breed Association we are keen to encourage breeders to register their cattle and help build the gene pool of purebred, registered Luings to meet the growing demand. Our Association currently offers free first year membership to anyone interested in registering their cattle. Please contact me for further information.

Finally, as some of you already know, our family is in the process of relocating from Rimbey to Belmont in southern Manitoba. We have bought a larger property there and look forward to developing it and expanding our Luing herd.

Effective July 1st 2015 the mailing address for the Canadian Luing Association will be:

Box 130, Belmont, MB, R0K 0K0

An updated phone number will appear in the next newsletter but my email and website address will remain the same.

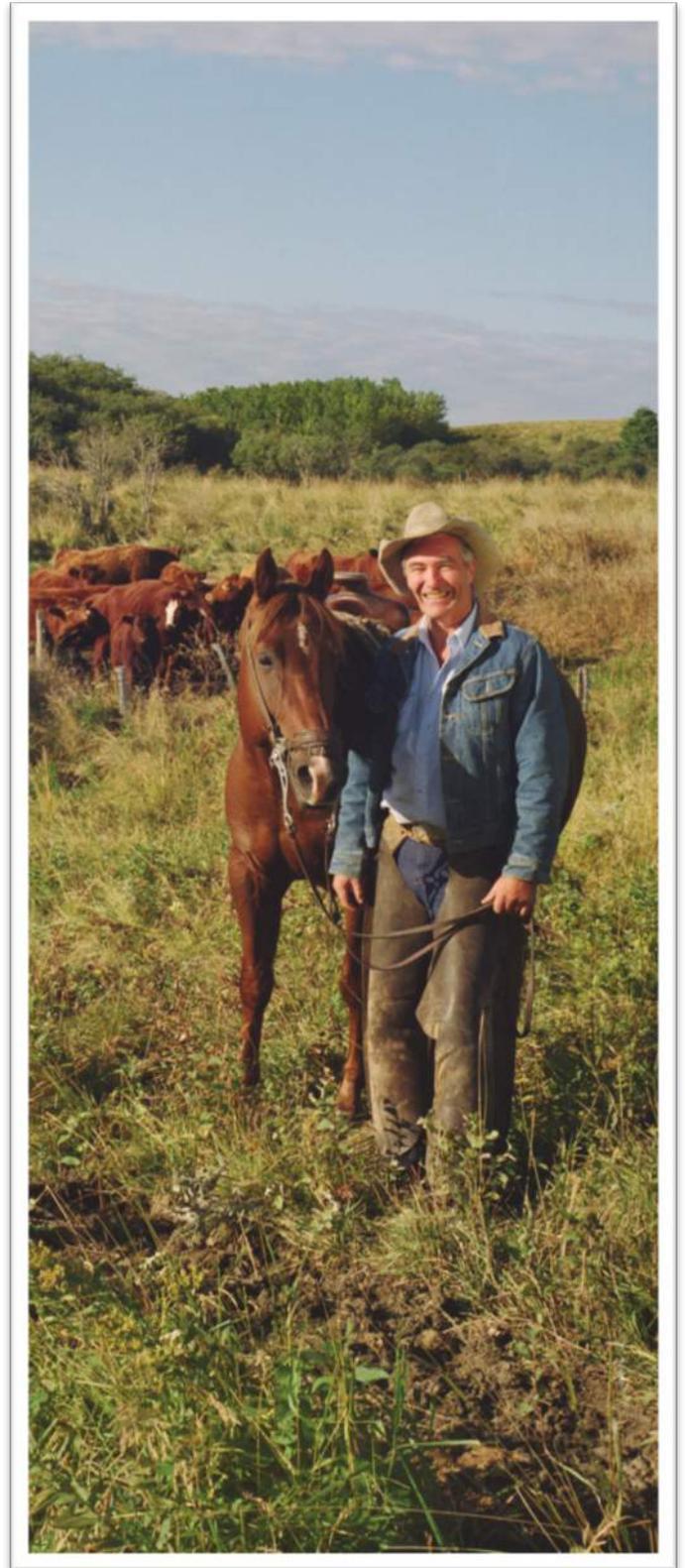


FOUNDING MEMBER PROFILE

BOB CHURCH

For the benefit of our new members and readers I'd like to share an article about Dr. Robert Church, the remarkable man largely responsible for the existence of Luing cattle in Canada today.

Dr. Church, or simply "Bob" to anyone that has met him, came from a pioneer Alberta farming/ranching family based on the northern outskirts of present day Calgary. The original Church homestead is underneath the QE2 highway beside the Cross Iron Mills shopping mall at Balzac. Bob's career, however, was to take him far beyond these ranching roots and his influence as a scientist, innovator and leader has extended around the globe. It is beyond the scope of this article to cover the vast array of Bob's professional accomplishments but I will list a few. He was a pioneer of embryo transfer technology in cattle and an internationally respected expert in transferring the technologies of genetics, reproductive physiology and molecular biology to the agricultural and biotechnology industries. He was a founding member of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Calgary and it's first Head of the Department of Medical Biochemistry. He has authored hundreds of scientific publications and has served in a scientific advisory capacity to numerous companies, organizations and governments around the world. He is one of the world's foremost experts on Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSEs) and served on the British Government's BSE Advisory Committee when the disease was first diagnosed in 1986.



Bob Church at Lochend Luing Ranch

What has always struck me most about Bob, though, are his human connections around the globe. It matters not if you come from a farm in Scotland or a town in the southern hemisphere, chances are Bob will not only know someone in the area, he has likely been there and can describe the geography to you. As a student, Bob visited communist China and later, during the Cold War, was a visiting scientist at the Soviet Academy of Sciences in Moscow. With his ranching background he became friends with the then Agriculture Minister (later to become President) Mikhail Gorbachev! Despite rubbing shoulders with world leaders and some of the world's greatest minds, Bob retained his capacity to teach, motivate and encourage people of all ability levels.

With such a high profile, globe-trotting career you might wonder how Bob ever had time for Luings. His first contact with the breed came in the early 1960s while studying for his PhD at the University of Edinburgh's Institute of Animal Genetics. A fellow student turned out to be a member of the Cadzow family, the founders of the Luing breed in Scotland. With Bob's knowledge and interest in animal genetics he was asked to visit and look over the Cadzow brother's genetic blueprint for the development of their breed. This led to a lifelong friendship and association with the Cadzows and the Luing cattle breed. There are few very Luing breeders, even in Scotland, that have the knowledge of the breed that Bob has, having been involved almost since it's inception.

By the early 1970s the Cadzows were exporting their cattle to establish Luing populations in Australia, New Zealand, South America and Canada. Bob was instrumental in organizing the first importations into Canada as well as helping set up the Canadian Luing Cattle Association. In 1974 Bob and his family established the Lochend Luing Ranch in the

foothills northwest of Airdrie. In the decade that followed, Bob (along with other early breeders - notably the late Sandy Cross of Rothney and the Lufts from Kathyryn) made further trips to Scotland to source Luing genetics. Also at this time the Canadian Luing Association introduced the polled gene from Charlie Flick's Snowlander strain of cattle into the breed. Bob felt these were the toughest cattle he had ever seen, coming from a mountain environment, and would be a great fit with the Luing gene pool. In time polled Lochend Luing semen would be exported to New Zealand, Australia and Argentina.



Photo of Some of Original Luing Cows Imported to Canada

When some of the original breeders passed on or retired, Bob always added some of their animals to his Lochend herd to preserve the genetic diversity within the breed. Through the 1990s the Lochend herd accounted for almost all the registrations in the Luing herdbook. Since my first buying trip to Lochend in the Fall of 2001 a number of new herds have started up but our cattle all trace back to Bob's genetics. Whatever future breeders do with the gene pool, the fact that there will always be Lochend Luing Ranch ancestry in the cattle is testament to Bob's influence on the breed in Canada.

Bob's choice of Luing for his ranch was not coincidental if you understood his philosophy of what he called "back to the future" range management - seamlessly blending horseback ranching tradition, pioneer Holistic Management and his knowledge of leading edge science and genetics. To a casual observer it may have looked like a simple ranch set-up to accommodate the owner's overly busy off-farm career. Once you understood it you could see how well the Lochend Luing herd were adapted to their rugged environment, how self-sufficient they were and how healthy the ranch's overall ecosystem was under Bob's management. This unconventional style of seed-stock management produced cattle that were naturally selected for functional efficiency in a real-world environment which mirrored the Cadzow vision for the breed.



Pencil Sketch of Lochend Luing Bulls

Decades before the current "grass-fed beef" craze, Lochend Luing steer calves were shipped by train to Ontario where they were further fattened and sold as "grass-fat

natural beef" through a butcher chain based in Smith's Falls. As a result, Bob initiated the first verified production protocol for producing, processing, quality control and marketing of a retail-ready product branded "natural choice" in Canada. He later wrote the carcass protocols for Presidents Choice, Natural Choice and the Certified Angus Beef program for the American Angus Association.

Bob is taking life easier now, living with his wife Gina in Calgary, although "easier" is only relative for someone used to being so busy. Now that he no longer has cows to tend daily, Bob has more time to devote to a central pillar of his life - building community. Throughout his life Bob has generously contributed time and resources to serve everything from small local organizations to the Calgary Stampede to projects overseas.

In recognition of his achievements Bob has received numerous accolades and awards over the years, two important ones being the Alberta Order of Excellence in 1993 and being appointed a member of the Order of Canada in 2000. Bob was also inducted into both the Alberta and Canadian Agriculture Halls of Fame. With his knowledge, work ethic and love of the land Bob Church exemplifies the pioneer spirit that built Alberta.

Canadian Luing Cattle Association

c/o Mr. Iain Aitken (Secretary/Treasurer)

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