

The **BLOONDE** Connection



2008
Volume 5



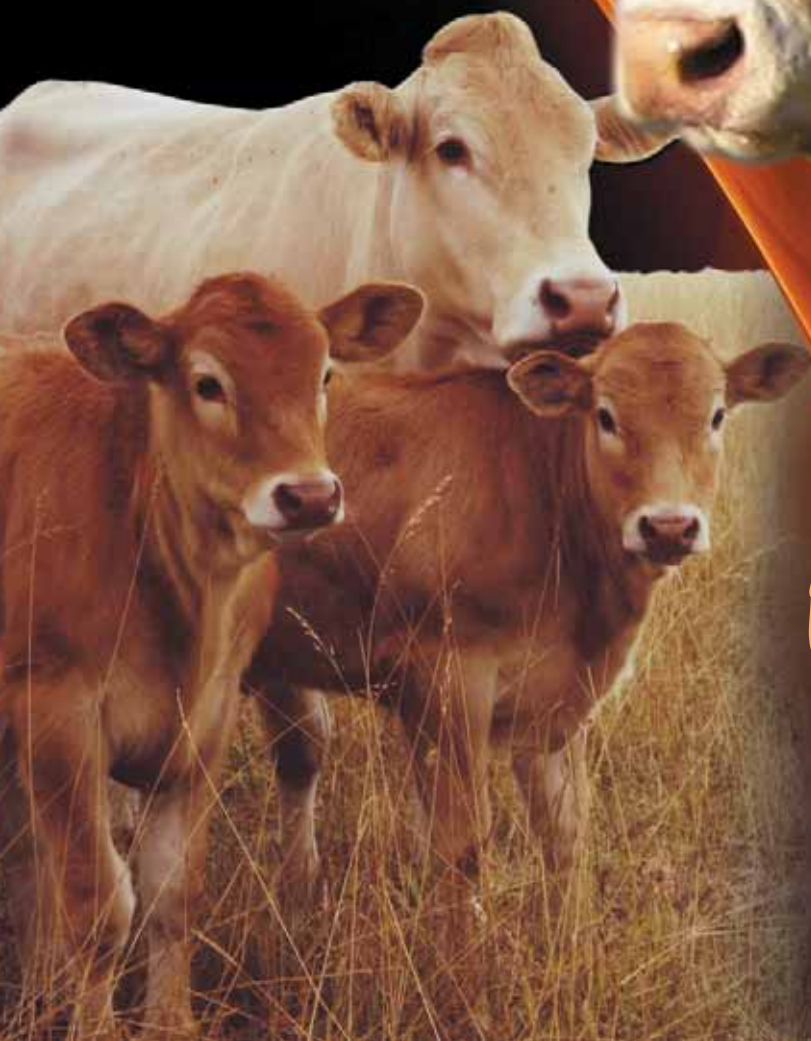
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The **BLONDE** Connection

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The Official Publication of the Canadian Blonde d'Aquitaine Association

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FRONT COVER:

Winning photographs from the Canadian Blonde d'Aquitaine Assoc. photography contest -

Top right - Fall 2006 Winner -

"Mindi's Calf" Credit John & Ilse Vink -
Halcyon Farms, Wooler, Ontario

Center - Winter 2006 Winner -

"Relaxing" Credit Ilse Vink -
Halcyon Farms, Wooler, Ontario

Top left - Spring 2007 Winner -

"Cattle" Credit Bill Van Bakel -
Van Bakel Blondes, Dublin, Ontario

Bottom right - Fall 2007 Winner -

"0042" Credit Ann Musgrove -
KAM Blondes, Charlie Lake, BC

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**Myrna Flesch - President
Cdn. Blonde d'Aquitaine Assn.**

The opening of the American Border on November 19, 2007 to animals over 30 months of age marked an historic event for the Canadian purebred industry. It placed the BSE situation behind us and has allowed Canadian purebred genetics to meet the demand pent up since May 2003.

The Blonde d'Aquitaine breed had a 5% decrease in registrations in 2007 over 2006 but in the same period enjoyed a 9% increase in transfers. Our membership increased 38% in 2007 over 2006 bring the membership to a total of 186.

Blondes excel in Lean Meat Yield (LMY) – approaching 70% in established herds across Canada. This has increased market share and market value through specialty programs like Laura's Lean. Today's health conscious consumer is after lean beef products to complement his/her food basket and that emphasis on health is an untapped market advantage for the Blonde breed.

The purebred industry will undergo several critical changes over the next decade. The introduction of marker panels within the industry by the various genome players – to enable the cattleman to be able to identify tenderness genes, to identify feed efficient genetics, to isolate disease susceptibility, to assist the commercial man with identification of calves in multi-sire pastures, to identify homozygous traits for polled and coat colour in addition to parentage to name but a few items, will change the traditional market place. Science with the advent of the SNPS technique of sampling animal genetics will also modernize the method for collection of DNA. Our traditional ways of identifying market place leaders will need to embrace these new technologies.

This publication highlights the actions of the Board of the Canadian Blonde Association to streamline the inner workings of the association. Your Board over the past four year period has introduced several initiatives that have reduced overhead pri-

marily through transfer of the administration functions to Canadian Livestock Records Corporation (CLRC) in Ottawa. The Board, itself, must operate at a very responsible level for this to be effective. Our day-to-day accounting is now handled through CLRC with the Annual Financial Statements being prepared by Allan Chartered Accountant Professional Corporation of Perth, Ontario. This firm has proven themselves with a number of purebred breed associations and prepares the necessary statements in a cost effective manner.

Your Board took full advantage of the Sustaining the Genetic Quality of Ruminants (SGQR) program offered by Agriculture Canada as a way to breathe life into the purebred sector in Fiscal years 2005-06 and 2006-07. Under this program each purebred cattle association received \$30 for each animal registered in the preceding three year period. These funds were to be used to encourage purebred sector awareness and maintain vitality of the sector of the industry that suffered during the BSE crisis. Your Board utilized this funding initiative to encourage increased registrations, advertise and collect additional performance data – particularly ultrasound data in the various Bull Tests and Heifer Evaluations held across Canada in those years. As your President, I have represented the breed on the Purebred Risk Assessment Project through Canadian Beef Breeds Council (CBBC), attended regular CBBC Meetings, attended Saskatchewan Research Council Meetings (Bova-Can Labs), and attended other industry presentations on genomics. Several of the new and upcoming changes to the beef industry make these exciting times.

The Blonde d'Aquitaine breed has an important place in the commercial cattle industry particularly as a terminal sire breed. This has made sire selection within the breed a very pertinent factor. It also accentuates the fact that it takes a good momma cow to produce the bulls required by the commercial cattleman.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those who have advertised in the Blonde Connection and for making it possible to bring the Blonde voice to the purebred and commercial industry after a four-year hiatus. The editorial we trust will provide you with information to better assist your operation which in turn ensures the growth of the breed in Canada.

M. Flesch
Myrna Flesch

L'ouverture de la Frontière américaine le 19 novembre, 2007 aux animaux qui ont moins de 30 mois a marqué un événement historique pour l'industrie de purebred canadienne. Cela a placé la situation de BSE derrière nous et nous a permis la génétique de purebred canadienne pour répondre à la demande renfermé depuis mai 2000.

L'espèce Blonde a eu une 5% diminution dans les enregistrements en 2007 mais dans la même période a apprécié une augmentation de 9% dans les transferts. Nos membres qui se sont inscrits a augmenté 38% en 2007 amenant à un total de 186 membres.

Blondes excelle dans le Lean Meat Yield (LMY) – approchant 70% dans les troupeaux établis à travers Canada. Ceci a augmenté la part du marché et la valeur en marché par les programmes de spécialité comme Laura's Lean. Les consommateurs d'aujourd'hui sont conscient à la santé. Cela est un avantage du marché que nous pouvons exploité avec l'espèce blonde.

L'industrie de purebred subira plusieurs changements critiques dans la décennie prochaine. L'introduction de panneaux de borne dans l'industrie par les divers joueurs de génome – rendre capable l'éleveur de bétail pour pouvoir identifier les gènes de sensibilité, identifier nourrir la génétique efficace, isoler la susceptibilité de maladie, aider l'homme commercial avec l'identification de mollets dans les pâtures de multi-seigneur, identifier les traits de homozygous pour a interrogé et revêt la couleur en plus de la naissance pour nommer mais quelques articles, changera l'endroit du marché traditionnel. La science avec la venue de la technique de SNPS d'essai la génétique animale modernisera aussi la méthode pour la collection d'ADN. Nos façons traditionnelles de dirigeants d'endroit de marché distinctifs auront besoin d'embrasser ces nouvelles technologies.

Cette publication souligne les actions du Conseil de l'Association Blonde Canadienne pour caréner les fonctionnements intérieurs de l'association. Depuis ces derniers quatre ans votre Conseil a introduit plusieurs initiatives qui ont réduit principalement par le transfert des fonctions d'administration au Canadian Livestock Records Corporation (CLRC) à Ottawa. Le Conseil, lui-même, doit fonctionner à un niveau très responsable pour que cela reste efficace. Notre comptabilité de tous les jours est maintenant contrôlée par CLRC avec les états financiers annuels qui sont préparés

par l'expert-comptable d'Allan la Société Professionnelle de Perth, Ontario. Cette entreprise a prouvé avec un nombre d'associations et a prépare les déclarations nécessaires dans une manière du rapport efficace.

Votre Conseil a pris l'avantage plein du Soutenir la Qualité Génétique de Ruminants (SGQR) le programme offert par L'Agriculture du Canada comme une façon pour respirer la vie dans le secteur de purebred dans les années Fiscales 2005-06 et 2006-07. Sous ce programme chaque association de bétail de purebred a reçu 30\$ pour chaque animal inscrit dans la période de trois ans précédant. Ces fonds étaient utilisés pour encourager la conscience de secteur de purebred et maintientait la vitalité du secteur de l'industrie qui a souffert pendant la crise de BSE. Votre Conseil a utilisé cette initiative de subvention pour encourager des enregistrements augmentés, faire de la publicité pour recueillir les données d'exécution supplémentaires – particulièrement les données d'ultrasons dans les divers tests et les évaluations de génisse à l'hausse tenues à travers Canada dans ces années. Comme votre Président, j'ai représenté l'espèce sur le Projet d'Evaluation de Risque de Conseil d'Espèces de Boeuf Canadien (CBBC), a assisté les Réunions de CBBC régulières, la Recherche de Saskatchewan assistée les Réunions Municipales (les Laboratoires de Bova-Boîte), et les autres présentations d'industrie assistées sur genomics. Beaucoup des nouvelles et suivant changements à l'industrie de boeuf font ces temps passionnants.

L'espèce Blonde a un endroit important dans l'industrie de bétail commerciale particulièrement comme une espèce de. Ceci a fait la sélection des taureaux dans l'espèce un facteur très pertinent. Il accentue aussi le fait qu'il prend une bonne vache pour produire les taureaux exigés par l'éleveur des bétails commerciaux.

J'aimerais saisir cette occasion pour remercier ceux qui ont fait de la publicité dans la Blonde Connection cette année. Cela nous permet de avoir une voix Blonde au purebred et l'industrie commerciale depuis quelques années. Nous espérons que l'éditorial vous offrez l'information pour améliorer vos opérations et que cela nous assure la croissance de notre race au Canada.

M. Flesch
Myrna Flesch



Hello to all readers of the 2008 Blonde Connection from Canadian Livestock Records Corporation (CLRC).

Since the Canadian Blonde d'Aquitaine Association (CBDA) closed the office in Calgary, CLRC has been the office for all aspects of the operation of the Association, in addition to maintaining the CBDA registry, which CLRC has done since 2000. In particular, CLRC's address, phone, fax and e-mail are now the contact points for the CBDA. All correspondence for the CBDA that is received by CLRC is then directed to the respective members of the CBDA Board of Directors who are responsible for the matter concerned.

As of January 2008, CLRC is also responsible for maintaining the financial records of the CBDA. This is a responsibility that we currently carry out for five other member associations as well.

As General Manager of CLRC, a position I have held since April 1999, I also have the overall responsibility for overseeing the day-to-day affairs of the CBDA. I will be working in close cooperation with designated members of the Board of Directors, particularly the President and Treasurer, and am also assisted by various other members of the CLRC staff.

We at CLRC look forward to playing an increased role in the affairs of the CBDA and to serving its members.

Ron Black - General Manager - CLRC

CATTLE NUMBERS DWINDLE, EXPORTS UP

Canada's cattle herd declined in 2007 as exports to the U.S. increased and higher feed costs forced some producers to send animals to slaughterhouses sooner than normal.

About 13.9 million head of cattle were on Canadian ranches as of January 1, down 1.5 percent from a year earlier, according to Statistics Canada. Feedlot herds declined 8.6 percent to 1.435 million head, and exports jumped 35 percent to 1.4 million head for the year.

A record-high rally in the price of corn has increased the cost of feeding livestock, and Canadian producers are holding fewer cattle since BSE hit in 2003.



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Reed Rigney - President
Alberta & BC Blonde
Association



- The Association represents breeders from Alberta and B.C.
- Our annual meeting is held every fall in late November or early December.
- We hold a summer tour in June or July, which allows our breeders (and other interested parties) to see Blonde cattle and meet fellow breeders.
- Our members receive regular updates of breed and board activities (quarterly or as information becomes available).
- The Alberta Blonde Association is planning a fall sale to provide marketing opportunities for our members and purchasing opportunities for new breeders.

“Blonde d’Aquitaine cattle are first and foremost a terminal sire breed. We are a beef breed that excels in the feedlot and on the rail, and we can’t lose sight of that. If we try to be everything to everybody we’ll end up being nothing to anybody!”

We have to be careful not to breed our cattle towards the fads of the day. We are in a fad right now and few people realize it; you never do when you’re in the middle of it. I’m sure the cattleman in the 50’s and 60’s thought that their belt buckle high cattle were the right type, just as we thought the Skyscraper cattle of the 80’s were the right direction for the industry. Today we hear the buzzwords; marbling, deep-ribbed and moderate framed. Most breeds are moving in a similar direction, and in fact it is getting harder to tell some of them apart. We see the British cattle breeding for more growth and muscle, and the French breeds being bred for more moderate size, marbling and lower birth weights. However the British cattle will never equal the French cattle in lean meat yield and efficiency of gain, and the French cattle will never equal the British cattle in the maternal traits such as mothering ability, calf vigour and the ability to lay down back fat. In the end they will end up being average for the new traits they are seeking, most likely at the expense of the traits that defined their breed.

Cross breeding has a purpose; breeding the maternal breeds to the terminal breeds gives you the best of both worlds. You have a cow herd that functions with low inputs of resources and labour, and their offspring will gain and yield in the feedlot.

Many of our producers seem to have forgotten about this system, and the proven advantages of hybrid vigour. Hybrid vigour is one of the few things in life that is free.

So what does this have to do with us as Blonde breeders? I still hear too many purebred and commercial breeders talking about, and promoting Blondes in terms of maternal traits. I will say it again; we are a terminal sire breed. It is up to us as breeders to educate our bull buyers and the industry on the merits of Blondes as a terminal sire. Few breeds can combine lean meat yield, feed conversions and calving ease as well as our breed can. We should not be promoting the milking ability and mothering qualities of Blonde cows; the crossbred heifers belong in the feedlot not the cowherd.

The Blonde breed is one of the best-kept secrets in the beef industry. We as breeders just need to focus on marketing the strengths of the breed, not diluting our strengths to improve our perceived weaknesses”.

Reed Rigney
 President
 Alberta and British Columbia Blonde Association



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The Chino, Calif., packing facility responsible for the largest meat recall in U.S. history will likely shut down permanently, according to Reuters.

Westland/Hallmark Meat Co. general manager Anthony Magidow told The Wall Street Journal, “I don’t see any way we could reopen.” Especially if the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) seeks payment for losses, Magidow added.

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- ✦ Memberships are due on or before January 1st each year.
- ✦ The Canadian Blonde d'Aquitaine Association invites you to be a part of the Association, please contact us for information.

2008
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Compiled by Canadian Livestock Records
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2008 Membership Directory

Membership as of January 15, 2008

**Memberships are due on or before
January 1st each year.**

Membership Directory compiled by
Canadian Livestock Records Corporation
(CLRC) as at 01/15/08

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Be sure to include your name and contact information!!

What's BRED in the BEEF



Beef genomics are providing the key to superior cattle.

Reprinted courtesy Reach & Discover

Testing an animal for certain traits before breeding can be tantamount to killing the goose that laid the golden egg.

“You have to slaughter the cow to know if its meat is tender – and then it’s pretty tough to breed it,” says Reynold Bergen of the Alberta Beef Producers, with a laugh. For that reason, and because when dealing with cattle it can take years to get a sense of a bloodline’s genetic merit, there’s great potential benefit to bovine genomic research.

Since the U.S. National Institute of Health announced in 2004 that the bovine genome had been sequenced at the Baylor College of Medicine in Texas, Alberta researchers have been playing a significant role in the international effort to turn the genome’s three billion base pairs into a recipe for superior beef and dairy cattle.

Dr. Stephen Moore, Chair of Bovine Genomics for the University of Alberta’s Beef Genomics Initiative, and his team have made great strides in the past few years.

“We’ve been looking at the genetic basis of production efficiency and product quality,” he explains. “We have identified a number of genetic markers that relate to important economic traits.”

Moore has taken the University of Alberta initiative from a one-man operation when he arrived in 1999 to a thriving hub of activity that is building local, national, and international partnerships. His team has grown to about 30 researchers, including students, technicians, and three other professors.

LINKING MARKERS AND TRAITS

One of those is Dr. Zhiqian Wang, Associate Professor of Quantitative and Statistical Genetics. He has helped make use of the massive amounts of molecular data that are being generated by the research. Noting that “data is of no use if you can’t use it,” he’s lent his expertise to developing an effective data management and processing system.

Although the initiative’s focus remains on beef cattle, Wang’s 13 years of experience in dairy research has also led to new projects. “The opportunities in bovine genomics should not be missed in the dairy industry. It’s the same animal, the same genome, so some of the research may apply,” he says.

The dairy industry, he points out, has a much more established recording system for tracking performance and pedigree that allows researchers to trace backwards through many generations with accuracy. Access to such records can provide important clues about the inheritance of genetic markers that affect economically important traits.

The result will be simple, cost-effective tests that offer valuable genetic insight.

“From a drop of blood we will be able to scan the DNA and structure, and from birth we can judge that animal’s worth: does the animal have a good genetic architecture, a good constitution which can bring production to a higher level?” Wang says. “This will be economically very beneficial to producers.” In addition to cutting years off predicting an animal’s genetic merit, accuracy in breeding will also be improved. “Previously, without knowing the bovine genome, we only used the phenotype records obtained from the animal and its relatives to predict the genotypic value of the animal,” Wang says. “For some economically important traits, we can only observe the phenotype from one sex – milk production in the female is a good example – but of course the bull is also a genetic contributor.”

According to Bergen, the promise of DNA testing is generating excitement. “Some producers are ready to jump on the new technology, especially in the purebred industry,” he says, noting, however, that there’s still some skepticism. “Others have a wait-and-see attitude.”

From the sound of it, they won’t have to wait long. As Wang asserts, “The work is moving very fast.”

VALIDATING FINDINGS

According to Moore, his team has developed at least a dozen tests – one of which has already been fully patented and others are well on their way.



The patented test relates to a genetic marker for body condition and fat that was first validated in dairy cattle – again because the structure of the dairy industry facilitates easier tracking – but will also be validated in beef cattle.

“Nothing is going out of this lab without independent validation tests,” Moore says. A Canadian system of validation, similar to one being used at Cornell University in the U.S., is under development. The system will ensure each gene-marker test is tried on a minimum of 1,000 animals from an unrelated population – probably two or three separate populations, he notes – before being released on the market.

“We want to apply some rigour, in order to ensure people get what they pay for.”

GENE-TO-GENE INTERACTION

Moore also wants to ensure the tests for individual markers are used in combination. “Unless you understand how these things are interacting, you can make mistakes,” he explains. “Animals have got to perform well in a number of circumstances.” For example, breeding only for lean animals could lead to females with reproductive problems.

Therefore, just as producers don’t select based on a single trait, the genetic tests should not be marketed in isolation

from one another. Moore envisions “suites” of diagnostic tests to avoid unintended consequences.

In 2006, the University of Alberta entered into a commercial partnership with the United States Department of Agriculture and the University of Missouri to conduct research for a U.S. company called Illumina. Moore explains researchers will make use of new technology to analyze tens of thousands of mutations together to understand gene-to-gene interaction – and whether a mutation in one gene will adversely or beneficially affect another.

He calls this “the next big thing.” “Ultimately, this will allow researchers to assess the genome of an animal as a whole. The practical application will result in a test that can predict how an animal’s offspring will perform.”

Pointing to the tremendous cost-saving to producers of such a test, he adds, “It’s going to be bigger than anything anybody has seen before.”

And that test could be right around the corner. Moore says the collaborators are in a race to the finish line, and he expects results to start coming in soon. Of course, months of analysis and validation will follow before a test is ready for the commercial market.

In addition, Moore, who is also the Scientific Director of Alberta Prion Research, hopes to release findings in 2008 from another study into susceptibility and resistance to BSE and chronic wasting disease, for which genetic samples from the United Kingdom are being used.

Bergen believes this new technology won’t completely supplant traditional selection methods. “Other things like environment are always going to affect how genes behave,” he notes. “Ideally producers can take the traditional methods such as EPDs (expected progeny differences) and the new genetic marker tests, and down the road merge them into one excellent predictor.” It all adds up to better beef.

Reprinted courtesy Reach & Discover





**Dave Gerega - President
Manitoba & Saskatchewan
Blonde Association**

**AS 2008 ROLLS ON, AN AIR OF OPTIMISM IS
ENTERING AGRICULTURE.**

Commodity prices are impacting us the greatest. Grains and oil seeds have gone to new record highs. This can only mean good things. The cattle industry however is seeing some of the lowest prices in recent times, even during BSE prices were not at the same levels as now, considering input costs.

"The ray of sunshine that I see in this is that I am a Blonde d'Aquitaine breeder and raising the best quality of beef on the market."

The recent rise in consumer awareness of quality and safety and nutritional value of the foods they buy has put our product in high demand. The natural beef and organic beef market is strong and growing steadily. There are companies out there that pay a premium for high quality lean beef. The protocols that are needed to qualify for being in these programs are stringent and give the consumer the peace of mind that the beef they are buying is locally grown, safe and nutritious. Being in the Blonde d'Aquitaine business gives us a clear advantage over other breeds. Our breed has the growth, with the high lean meat yield that commands the highest premiums. In the past years at the Douglas Bull test station the Blonde d'Aquitaine animals have captured the highest lean meat yield score of all breeds tested.

There are feedlots that do pay extra for Blonde d'Aquitaine calves. For the producer that finishes out his own

animals there are yet more bonuses paid to have a farm to plate traceability. The purebred producer has now an extra selling point to the commercial sector. The bulls can give the commercial operator a calf that will always top the market. The females can be sold to commercial producers, this to increase the higher Blonde d'Aquitaine blood line in that herd. The purer the blood line, the higher the lean meat yield.

I think the time has come for the Blonde d'Aquitaine breed. Don't sit back. Spread the good news around and take the opportunities that are out there. Call a Canadian Blonde d'Aquitaine Association or Provincial Blonde d'Aquitaine Association board member today to get full details.

Dave Gerega - President
Man-Sask Blonde d'Aquitaine
Association

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NOTICE TO BUYERS AND SELLERS OF BREEDING CATTLE

Sellers of purebred and registered animals of recognized breeds in Canada, are bound by the **ANIMAL PEDIGREE ACT**. A list of recognized breeds and authorized breed associations is available from the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada website, www.agr.gc.ca/redmeat/apamain.htm

The **ANIMAL PEDIGREE ACT** makes it a federal offence to sell an animal of a recognized breed as purebred, registered, or eligible to be registered if it is not. An exception may exist where a foreign registered animal is clearly represented as such to the buyer.

The term "purebred" is a confirmation of genetic background and adherence to breed characteristics, in accordance with requirements of the Act and the bylaws of the authorized breed association. The term "registered" is confirmation that all the rules of eligibility of the authorized breed association in Canada have been met. If an animal of a recognized breed is sold as purebred, registered or eligible to be registered, the seller is obligated to provide a duly transferred certificate of registration to the buyer not later than six months after the sale.

GOLF - LADIES & GENTLEMAN

It is a popular myth that the name of the popular Scottish game, "Golf", stands for "Gentlemen Only, Ladies Forbidden." The word "golf" originates from medieval Scottish & Dutch dialects. Back before the creation of dictionaries, there was no standardized spelling so it is believed that word golf originates from Dutch word "kolf" or "kolve" which meant "club." Later on old Scots dialect transformed the word into "gouf" or "golfe."