

## Reflections on WJCB Conference



Thomas Houmøller Søgård reflects on trip to Ohio and WJCB Conference

Thomas Houmøller Søgård from Tastum Jerseys, Stoholm, Denmark, was one of the recipients of a Jersey Scholarship to attend the WJCB conference and herd visits in the US earlier this year. Thomas became part of a wide Jersey network and at the same time gained a thorough insight into the cattle breeding in the United States. Cattle breeding controlled by competition, far removed from the Danish co-operative approach.

In Denmark, the vast majority of farmers contribute registrations and data into the national Database that everyone can benefit from. We have a common understanding that we all become wiser with common knowledge and that it makes sense to contribute a lot. In the United States, it is quite different. It surprised Thomas Houmøller Søgård, when he visited the USA in June with the Danish delegation of Jersey farmers, who there to attend the World Jersey Conference and visit local herds, as well as two major semen companies, Sexing Technologies and Select Sires:

“Everything in dairy-farming is commercial in the United States. Large companies have their computers out on the farms, and many of the big farmers want money to deliver data to them. I do hope that it will never be like this at home,” Thomas says, continuing:

“We really need to take care of our collective data collection, because that’s the cornerstone of everything, and we’re not getting stronger to compete with each other. Quite the contrary.”



*Tastum Organic Jerseys grazing at Nygaard*

## The Danish “techno-crates”

Thomas does not doubt that we have an advantage in the Nordic region with our approach to the breed. Even if you are perceived as a bit of a talking shop at the World Jersey Conference:

“The lack of data and registrations in the United States means that you do not have particularly high reliability, especially on the lower traits, and therefore they sell lots of tested bulls. The one that corresponds to ‘general health by the way’ has just come along, so here they are challenged, while we are far ahead, ‘Thomas says, continuing:

“Our foreign colleagues sometimes think we may seem like some arrogant technocrats with our registrations and genomic tests, but that’s just because we trust so much in what we have and what we do.”

Although Thomas clearly prefers the Danish approach to the breed, the United States also has something to offer, he believes:

“They are good when grazing at pasture, and the cows have good body, size and type, because they have bred with this in mind, for many years. In addition, Danish Jerseys can get new blood lines from the USA, so we can avoid inbreeding. “



*Nygaard open to the general public where they could taste organic produce made by Thise Dairies, purchaser of Tatum’s milk*



*Cow welfare and public image of dairy farming is important to Thomas. The farm is frequently opened to the general public*

The ten days in Ohio has given Thomas a lot of new contacts all over the world, and he has exchanged experiences with farmers from far and wide. And everyone has become wiser, he thinks:

“It was incredibly exciting to hear how differently we look at cows and breeding. We all could learn a little from each other – and everyone would benefit.

**Source VikingGenetics, Translated from Danish**

Thomas Søgaard is part of Tastum Jerseys, farmed in partnership with his parents. The farm has long been established as fully organic farm, a principle they are fully committed to. They have recently expanded to 450 cows and in 2017 I visited the farm along with a party of Jersey Breeders from Jersey Island who were very impressed with both the herd and the management. As part of the organic regime they graze daily and cannot engage in ET or use Danish Blue (Belgian Blue) semen and must restrict the slaughter of new-born male calves along with other fertiliser and chemical restrictions.



*Thomas with one of his show cows Miss Agro-Nord 2018-Production-Inspection*

**The herd currently yields: –**

**7800kgs at 5.85% 456 kgs Butterfat 4.2% 328 kgs Prot. = 784 kgs F+P**