

WORLD CHAROLAIS CONGRESS



Canadian Delegates standing l-r: Neil Gillies; Roger Goldsmith; Deborah Jones; Cam and Kerrie Sparrow; Don and Mindy Good; John and Rowana Rudiger; Brian and Grace Jozwiak; Garner Deobald; Lyle and Wendy Bignelli; Ursula Corpataux; John and Brenda Wilgenbusch, John and Cathie Chomiak; Marcel, Anne Alexandre and Jeffrey Dumont. Kneeling l-r: Travis Jozwiak, Candace and Helge By.

The Charolais people of Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia planned a Congress for Charolais enthusiasts around the world and were rewarded with a wonderful turnout of over 200 participants from 17 countries and unbelievable weather. There was only one day of cooler temperatures, which was a break from the heat we had experienced to that point.

The participants were rewarded with a beautiful view of the landscapes, wonderful locally produced wines, fruit trees heavy-laden with produce on the roadsides and rose gardens and flowerbeds in full bloom in every household we drove past; not to mention a program that encompassed the sights, tastes, cultures and livestock of their homeland. Even the palenka seemed to be at its best for us.

The Pre-Congress Tour began with a walking tour through an old Hungarian village name Veszprém that gave us our first taste of the history of the area. Many of the buildings we saw were older than

western Canada. The devastation from wars to their land and people was hard to fathom. As the trip progressed, we learned more of the details of how people coped, the changes in the borders and the way it changed their culture. Everyone tried to remember their history from high school while attempting to link it to the new details and experiences we heard about.

As nations, these countries have experienced great growth since the Velvet Revolution marking the end of communism in November 1989. Taking land that had been 'nationalized' and returning it to its previous owners has only been successful in a small percentage of instances. In many cases, businesses and properties were sold to those who had been managing them for very good value.

It has been less than twenty years for everyone to adapt to the changes. Privatization has led to upgrades, renovations, innovations and commercialization that develop faster through pride of ownership.

Most of our lunches started with delicious soups that were always served in abundance. Many took the opportunity to add some heat to their day by stirring a bit of hot paprika sauce into the soup. We enjoyed the cuisine of the area and indulged ourselves beyond capacity.



Visiting the Herend Porcelain factory where hand-painted china is being made was interesting. Watching some cowboys create their own porcelain rose was quite entertaining.

Castles, abbeys and churches along with more historic villages were toured and each had something unique to offer. The opportunity provided to purchase Hungarian

embroidery for souvenirs and gifts in Tihany and the Regional Peasant House Museum of Folk Art was like a feeding frenzy for the international guests. Their beauty was something we thought we just couldn't live without. We learned that blue was a very common colour for decorating houses in Hungary because flies do not like it. I am sure we all tucked that bit of information away for future reference. Turning flies away seems to be a desire common to all nations.

After the long journey to Hungary, many participants took the opportunity to rejuvenate in the mineral baths along our tour. We drove past miles and miles of corn and sunflower fields. We were told that some of the corn is exported to Italy and Germany to be used in fattening cattle and that much of the corn is used in ethanol production.



Some cattle operations are fortunate enough to have their cattle graze state national parks for very nominal amounts. There are environmental conditions that must be met, but the ability to graze cattle and in some cases be paid for it, is a huge advantage. In pastures where two sires walk, all progeny are DNA tested for parentage verification.

Most feeder cattle are exported to Italy for fattening and slaughter. These countries are currently looking at ways to develop these industries in hopes that beef consumption will improve. For years they only had dairy operations, so the beef was not the most tender produced and many consumers still believe that the only

good beef is imported from overseas. This is a misconception they are working to change. Our friend, Ferenc Szabó is currently working on ideas to improve this situation. The Czech Republic Minister of Agriculture also spoke about the need to develop the industries within their country to discontinue this loss of economic development and increase beef consumption. Milan

Štrudl, Vice-President of the Czech Beef Cattle Breeders Association told us about a beef cookbook they produced recently. The results were very encouraging because they sold 60,000 within one month. To increase consumption they must promote the attributes of beef while providing consumers with access to a quality product.

Hubertus Agricultural Enterprise was a state owned farm until 1990 when it became German owned with a rental agreement for 99 years. The operation includes a game farm, hunting lodge with restaurant and catering where we

were accommodated and fed very well. Hunters visit the lodge from Germany, Austria, Hungary and Sweden. It is for trophy hunting only and the farm owns all of the meat. A pheasant costs about 15 EU, but there is also hunting for wild boar and deer. They have a herd of Red Angus cattle that they raise for breeding purposes. The cattle they do not retain in the breeding program are crossed with Charolais for fattening. They use only Full French Charolais as they believe



Hungarian Grey x Charolais at Anka Farm

that unless it is French, it isn't Charolais. The cattle are watched at all times. They employ three people specifically to be with the cattle, pump water for them and act as security against theft.

We toured Gábor Szabó's farm at Sükösd. 80% of their calves are from AI semen from France. They spring and fall calve this herd which has some polled Canadian genetics in the background. The nice farm utilizes some of the sandiest land I have seen grow grass.

Anka Farm, Kunadacs – was the first stop of congress program, this operation grasses national park as well as their own land. They also have two calving periods in the spring and autumn. While there, we also walked through a commercial herd of Hungarian Grey females with Charolais calves at side. This is a very popular cross with the Hungarian Grey cattle as Charolais adds performance and meat.



Francisco González, Rowana Rudiger, Judith González, Garner Deobald and John Rudiger in front of some of the impressive display at Charolais Ltd.

Many people in Canada know Márton Bujdosó, Charolais Ltd., of Hungary, as he attended World Congress in 2006. He also has imported many embryos from Canada so has some Canadian influence in the herd. We had the opportunity to tour his good operation and see the development of his program. We saw some of his females grazing in a National park and then toured his yard site where he winters the cattle. We got a close look at his herdbulls, young bulls and a interesting open air sale ring. We were treated to a wide variety of palenkas and food for lunch at this very informative visit. The time they invested in decorating was extensive. Even the bull pens had flowers planted in the walkways. It was a very impressive display.



Bull at Charolais Ltd. from a Canadian embryo

As people of Agriculture, we are always interested in different crops and farming practises. Learning about paprika in Hungary was a highlight after eating it, seeing it growing in the fields and hanging in yards to dry for storage. At the farm of Márton Bujdosó, we got an up close look at a crop. He winters his cattle on about 30 hectares of light, sandy soil. Every two weeks the bedding and manure is worked into the field. When the cattle are moved to grazing in the spring, paprika is planted in this area. No fertilizer is necessary but irrigation lines are placed along the rows at planting time. The crop yields 15 tonnes/hectare and sells for 150 HU forint/kg (1 Canadian dollar = 159 HUF). He does this year after year with no need to fertilize, but it is a very labour intensive crop. The paprika must all be hand planted and hand picked. It is sold to large grocers in 10 kg packages and is also exported

to Austria and Russia. Paprika is used three ways: fresh, dried or cut up into little chunks as hot sauce. There are two types of paprika – very hot and sweet. None of the paprika I have seen in Canada equals the heat of the Hungarian hot paprika.



The day ended with an ox-grilled supper at the Equestrian Park at Lajosmizse. The horse show was entertaining and everyone's camera had a workout.

The Hungarian Charolais breeders went to a lot of trouble to hold a show for the breeders. Stalls, seats, awnings for shade and a show ring were all put in place to hold the event on the same grounds as the Charolais International meeting, which is reported separately in this issue. At the show, a visit with Dr. János Tözsér told us of some research he has done on EPD from both France and Australia. He has followed different bulls through both systems and found that their ranking doesn't change much. There are only minor degrees of difference in the two sets of numbers. János does a lot of research and writing for the Hungarian Charolais Association. Supper with live music and dancing ended the evening.



The calves are tied to the cow to show



Grand Champion Bull

All of the International participants were taken on a wagon tour to see a herd of Hungarian Grey cattle in a national park, Hortobágy, which also has World Heritage Site status. The ride on the Great Plains of Hungary was scenically very different from the lush vegetation of the Lake Balaton region. It was a wide-open, flat space with cattle grazing on very dry ground. Hungarian Grey cattle are very hardy and winter well in harsh conditions. They are able to paw through snow to find food in the winter. Nearing extinction, they were put on the protected list in Hungary. The numbers have now grown to the point that one scientist told me they have too many of them as they, although hardy, are not the best beef cattle. They are no longer on the protected list but are interesting large horned animals.



We were also pleased to see a herd of Mangalica or Hungarian hairy pigs. There are three colours and each is bred separately without crossbreeding to preserve the breed at this heritage site.

Racka, the screw-horned sheep, are raised for wool used in making carpets and shepherd's clothes. They are sheared once per year and are kept



in harems of fifty females to one male. There are black or white and they are not crossbred. Breeding occurs one time each year.

We also saw a couple of herds of domesticated buffalo. These are descendants of Water buffalo that came to Hungary in the 15th century from Asia. They are very strong animals and were used to pull the plows of the farmers and for transportation. They were put on the protected animal list in Hungary and their population is now secure.



Watching the Csikós (pronounced chee koash) ride the Hungarian horses, Nonius, on the open plain in traditional dress was something we will remember as a distinctly

Hungarian experience. The Nonius are an extremely well trained, trusting breed that will obediently do what is requested of it while the csikós snap whips around their heads. The sound is meant as a warning to bandits who believe it sounds like gunshots.



They ride on saddles with no girth requiring superior riding skills. The horses were found to be sturdy enough to pull ploughs and adaptable enough to be used later in the army. The colourful costumes of the csikós require six metres of cloth for one pair of pants.

Csikós also start training oxen at three years of age. The older oxen are placed at the front of the team. The photo we have shows a twelve-year-old at the front with a four-year-old behind it. It is most interesting to note they are trained only by sound.

Abauji Charolais enters another scenic region of Hungary where big rolling hills necessitates structural soundness in their cattle. Management of the hilly areas with ecologically friendly practices is a priority for István Jancsó and Sándor Papp. This was the first herd we visited where the females are dehorned. This was a beautiful,



Garner Deobald, Pál Bérés, István Jancsó, Sándor Papp, Ursula Corpataux, Cam and Kerrie Sparrow, Helge and Candace By

excellent managed farm with 70 employees, great crops and one of the largest Charolais herds. It is family operation and Sándor's daughter, Anikó was the only girl to show at the Hungarian exhibition and exhibited both the Grand Champion Bull and Female.

The cultural landscape of Tokaj graphically demonstrated the long tradition of wine production in the Tokaj region of low hills and river valleys. Historical records show that vineyards have been established in Tokaj as early as the 12th century. Louis the 14th called the Hungarian sweet wine "the wine of kings and the king of wines". We toured the Tokaj five km long wine cellar containing 5000 barrels. Four hundred years ago it was a quarry and now also contains 185,000 bottles in its museum. The oldest wine was produced in 1920 and a 1947 half-litre bottle is now worth 1500 EU. Dining and wine tasting in the cellar was an unequalled experience.

The Flower Parade at Debrecen was just one of the ways we celebrated





There are many spectacular old churches with tremendous amounts of history and art. Every city also has a memorial tribute to all those who died of the black plague. This one is in the historic city of Komarno, Slovakia.

St. Stephen's Day. St. Stephen was the first king of Hungary and August 20th is designated as a national holiday each year to celebrate his reign, the Hungarian constitution and to ceremoniously welcome the first new bread from the recent crop of July wheat. The celebrations in Budapest were numerous on this day and the park around our hotel had many activities happening. That evening we dined on a boat while cruising the Danube River. It was a very special, beautiful evening that ended with a remarkable fireworks display being launched from two bridges crossing the Danube. A half million people were out along the shorelines to see the grand finale of this national holiday and we felt like royalty docked between the two bridges for the celebration. What a way to spend our last night in Hungary!

The Slovakia portion of the Congress started in Bratislava, the capital city. Although Helge and I missed the city tour, we hear such wonderful things about it we will have to return someday to see it ourselves. While they were on the bus trip, Márton Bojdosó treated Bill Dunlop, Australian President and new

Charolais International President, Helge and me to a tour of some Charolais heifers owned by Charolais Ltd. The 135 heifers were grazing on a 180-hectare island on the Danube. It is a national park

where the Hungarian king's horses were once kept. Along with the national park came people roughing it over night in tents and packing up their bikes to move on. It is a unique setting and the heifers are trucked 170 km to this grazing site that costs very little to use. There was a mix of two-year-old bred heifers and yearling open heifers. The two-year-old heifers were well grown out and in good condition while the yearling heifers were starting to grow on the lush pastures. Again some polled heifers showed the Canadian influence in the genetics.

Slovakia contains the Carpathian Mountains and sixty percent of the land is covered in trees. The landscape is beautiful with the villages set in valleys, surrounded by lush crops, backdropped with forests and mountains in the distance. Each country has its own drink and Slovakia is no exception. Slow berries are used to make borovicka, a clear, distilled drink that is drunk as most European drinks – straight. We tasted vicka made from various other fruits and unfortunately never got to bring any home.

Our first meal in Slovakia marked another celebration, only this time involving Canadians. A cake was decorated to honour John and Rowana Rudiger for breeding Charolais cattle for 50 years. It is an accomplishment that István Pomichal, President of the Slovakian World Congress Organizing Committee, felt had to be highlighted and celebrated. He had read their ads in the Charolais Banner and was impressed with their dedication and continued involvement.



This nine-year-old Charolais bull was paraded at the show in Nitra

The morning was spent learning about the Slovakian cattle industry with numerous presenters in a lecture hall setting.

We attended the 35th International Agricultural and Food Fair Agrokomplex in Nitra. The show displayed the best bull and female of each breed exhibited. It was a good opportunity to see not only Charolais, but also the development of all breeds in Slovakia. The show was followed by a visit to the house István Pomichal built last year to entertain visitors that came by to see his cattle at the fair. His family was on hand in traditional costume to offer warm hospitality, food and cold drinks in the shade of their open-air home on site. The fair also had large equipment displays, which were of interest to the Canadians.

The Slovakian cattle industry is relatively small and breeders like István and others who had crossbred Charolais cattle as well as purebreds were working hard to promote the breed.

Malanta Castle was the location of our last dinner in Slovakia and it was a grand affair. We were greeted by the playing of traditional music and ladies offering the blessing of small biscuits and salt.





The mansion garden was set with tables for the evening and a scrumptious meal tempted us to overeat once again. The musicians followed us to the garden to play and sing during dinner and later entertained us with traditional dancing.

Many of us had the opportunity to dance with them and appreciate the energy and stamina required to perform for us. It was a beautiful evening in an exceptional setting.

Czech Republic started importing Charolais from Hungary in 1990. In 1992, they imported from France and Canada. Since 2003, they have imported more than 900 heifers from France. A growing number of farmers are starting to raise beef. The show in Pterov was organized and featured the genetics of the French company Genoservice. Like in France, all the heifers are bred at two to calve at three years of age. The diminished efficiency of larger cows is thought to be offset by the higher slaughter values when they are finished producing.

In Pterov we were fed a traditional

Czech lunch served with the beverage that Czech people are famous for, beer. Their beer was definitely good and it was always available. It was different to be able to buy beer and carry it around an exhibition, not something we are allowed to do in Canada. It was often cheaper than bottled water to buy.

At the Sokolovska Coal Mining Company we were able to see the strip mining that is being done as well as the reclaiming of land after the mining is completed. Reclaiming is mostly done through forestation but they are also grazing cattle on reclaimed land. In their attempts to make use of the reclaimed land they have learned that using more than 30 cm of topsoil on top of the clay gives them the best growth and drought protection. Cattle were brought in to maintain the pastures instead of hiring people to maintain the grass. Part of the reclaimed land is also used for an 18-hole golf course. This is a huge mining operation with a large cowherd managed by Milan Štrudl, the president of the Czech Charolais

Association. After our tour we were treated to a great meal in the club house.

Visiting the Gallery and Museum of the Moser Glass Factory was another feeding frenzy for the tourists. Between the beautiful blown glass selection and the Czech red garnet jewelry, the staff was kept hopping for the duration of our stop.

Tromazi Charolais Farm which is managed by Milan Zahrádník was another stop on our tour. His main cowherd was very functional with some good, growthy cattle. A couple of his main herdsires are sons of Genk and Jumper which have been used here in Canada. They are expanding and want to increase to 600 breeding females. From the pasture where his bulls were running you could see Boveria, Germany and it was told that there are fresh water pearls in the river that is the border between the two countries.

Our closing gala in Czech Republic to mark the end of the Congress was held in the Grand Hotel Pupp in Karlovy Vary. Part of the James Bond





Honey Cake is a popular Czech dessert

movie, *Casino Royale* was filmed in this hotel and the glamour and details of the old ballroom were astounding. It was an elegant setting for a special night that included traditional song and dance, outstanding food and many heartfelt presentations to the host committees. The American International Charolais Association invited everyone to the next World Charolais Congress, which will be held in Oklahoma and Texas in May of 2010. The dancing and celebrating of a successful event went on until the buses came to take us home.

We were able to visit a Test Station exhibit and sale at the Cunkov Performance Test Station. There was a show where animals were displayed in the sale ring individually and each judge picked their champion. The sale that followed showed strong demand for French blood. The floor price is listed for each animal and the bidding starts with a bid above the floor price. This was not the traditional time for a sale at the Test Station; bulls normally sell earlier in the spring, which made an untrue picture of the market for the buyers, sellers and guests. The female sale was much stronger with a top of 4600 EU for a bred heifer.



A herd bull at Tromazy Charolais Farm

The day ended with the arrival into Prague as we got a brief look at the city. Everyone toured over the evening to see the historic city square and taste the tempting menus available. The morning brought another beautiful day to walk through the sites of Prague: King Garden, the Castle, St. Vitus Cathedral, St. Nicolas church, Charles bridge and the Old Town Square. We were served lunch while cruising the Danube and viewing the sights from the water. We were given free time in the afternoon and took full advantage of it to see everything that interested us in more depth and explore areas yet uncovered. It was an enjoyable day that ended the trip for many people.



Nine Canadians continued on the Post Congress Tour, along with other guests from New Zealand, Australia, Tasmania and the United States. Our first destination was a tour of the largest of one hundred corporate farms in Czech. Our guide's primary job was to make sure they received all of the subsidies possible for their production. There are one thousand shareholders in this operation, each with equal shares. The dairy operation uses both Čestr (a Flekvieh-like Czech



James Bond want to bes

dairy breed) and Holsteins. The Čestr produce a smaller amount of milk than Holsteins, but their milk contains higher butterfat content. They are also starting to produce effluent ethanol. They currently have a hog operation, but are not finding it profitable enough to continue.

The Konopiště chateau and the historic town of Český Krumlov were the filming sites of the movie *The Illusionist*. They were very interesting places to stop and explore. The Konopiště chateau used to be the summer resort of Archduke Franz Ferdinand d'Este, the successor to the throne whose assassination in Sarajevo in the summer of 1914 resulted in World War I. Český Krumlov, the second most visited tourist destination after Prague, with



Entrance hall of the Konopiště chateau



its cobblestone streets with intriguing shops and winding Vltava river was a delight to those attending. The castle has a colourful Renaissance tower, which offers a beautiful view, but the town as a whole has preserved its old appearance making this a stop of beauty.

One of our cattle stops in the Post Congress tour was an interesting stop indeed. Tegro Těšenov has 150 Holstein cows and 200 head of Angus cattle. They have used Canadian Angus semen and embryos in the past and would like to obtain more, but the health restrictions limit his ability to import semen. Many of the tourists encouraged him to breed his Holstein females to Charolais bulls instead of Belgian Blue and he was very open to

receiving information and help. It was interesting to note that they receive a premium for Red Angus over Black Angus in feeder prices. It is believed that the meat from the Red Angus is better. This probably stems from the fact that they have been producing meat from Holsteins for years, as the beef industry is relatively new in Czech Republic. It is just further evidence of the work the cattle breeders must do to increase beef consumption.

The evening ended with a wine cellar tour and tasting, supper and live music, which inspired all attending to take a trip around the tiny dance floor. When the guests started singing "Roll out the Barrel" with the band, they were most pleased. The song apparently originated in Czech Republic and seeing so many people from different nations singing it was amusing to the Czech people.

Seeing the remains of the Iron Curtain was a definite highlight for many of us. Even though it was only one row of fence where there were as many as ten in the past and only part of the area still had the cement pilons remaining to stop vehicles, we still got the overwhelming feeling of despair this created for the people it was meant to contain. Our guide was very helpful in helping us understand how it affected not only the people, but also the soldiers who had to patrol it. This kind of information is helpful in understanding these countries, their political history and things they have had to overcome to prosper since 1990. Attending the pre and post Congress tour, gave us a more

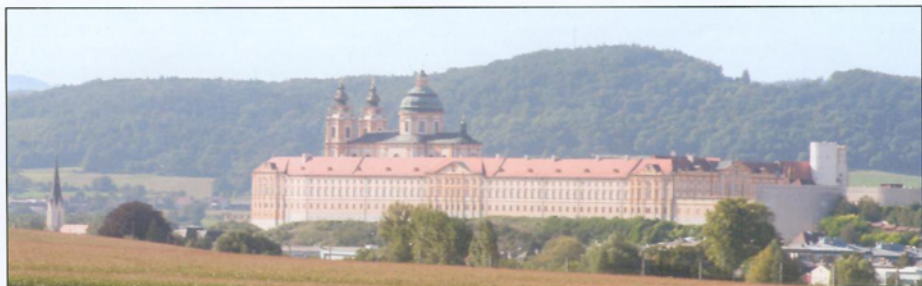
rounded view of the nations allowing us to ask more questions, talk to more people and establish an understanding of the market.

The many hours on the buses gave us a much broader spectrum of the topography of the countries and



allowed us more time to really get to know and visit with the many breeders from around the world who also took part in these extra tours.

The post tour ended in Austria and touring the countryside and Vienna gave us a perspective of the difference between private operations and operations that we nationalized for many years. Many people made our trip special and helped to explain differences in the industry to us. Special thanks must be extended to Zoltán Domokos, Ferenc Szabó, Kamil Malát and our tour guides who never tired of our endless questions. It was a wonderful trip and I seem to be running out of adjectives to describe the food, the people, the cattle and the places. We came home with over 1100 pictures, many new acquaintances and many renewals with old friends. The Charolais industry is truly a business of friends.



Melk Abbey, a historic Austrian Benedictine Abbey and one of the world's most famous monastic sites. There are 4 hectares under roof. It was founded in 1089.