

## Irish Delegates travel to National Concours of the Blonde Cattle in France

British Blonde council members Alistair Martin and William McElroy were joined by Ian and Sue Archer from the Midlands, to represent the British blonde society at the National Contest of Blondes held in Les Herbiers, France last week in the Vendee region which is the second largest French blonde d'Aquitaine region. Production in this area has increased by over ten percent in the past year.



William McElroy said The National Concours of the Blonde d'Aquitaine was an impressive event with over Seven hundred and seventy Blonde cattle from two hundred and thirty breeders across France, with Cattle of all ages competing for numerous championships throughout the show. It was impressive to see rows of bulls and females in classes with over twenty entries, all of which had to qualify at shows prior to the event. The Atmosphere and hospitality was excellent and would recommend anyone who has an interest in blondes to visit a show in the future.





The trip also involved a number of herd visits to breeder's farms, some of which had over one hundred head of breeding cows. These visits highlighted some of the differences in the French market compared to our own. For example in this region all young bulls were exported at seven to twelve months old with the exception of a number of bull calves which were selected by the farmer and a technician from 'Blonde Genetique'. Selected bulls went to Casteljaloux, which is the main research body for the blonde breed in France. Only female cattle go for meat in this region mainly cows at around five years old, which are fed on a twenty six percent protein diet with a little grass. This consisted of approximately thirteen kilograms of meal per day for ninety days before being slaughtered. These cows were killing out with an average kill out of seventy percent.



The trip was organised by INTERCO AQUITAINE who are an international cooperation agency of the Regional Council of Aquitaine whose aim is to help build markets between European Livestock breeders and companies from both foreign and international countries. It was a pleasure to meet the French Blonde d'Aquitaine President, Jean Blanc, and delegations from numerous countries which gave us the opportunity to build and develop contacts and promote British genetics. The trip proved to be a huge success for everyone with enquiries for semen, pedigree, and commercial livestock from a number of foreign delegates. One of the company's who we had the opportunity to discuss business with, due to a new Import law being released for importing into their country, are looking for in the region of fifty thousand straws of semen and fifty thousand commercial blondes at around two hundred and ninety to three hundred Kilograms for export from Ireland.

A huge thank you must go to INTERCO AQUITAINE who organised the trip, to Jean Blanc President, the technicians, farmers and everyone else who contributed to making it a most enjoyable week.