I farm with my parents, Kimaiyo Arap Sego and Jepkorir Sego, in the Rift Valley Province of Kenya. I attend the school of Veterinary Medicine of the University of Nairobi where I am in my third year reading for a degree in Veterinary Medicine. I am currently studying Surgery, Medicine, Theriogenology, Pharmacology and Toxicology, Animal Breeding and Non-ruminant Production.

The main enterprise on the farm is growing maize. In addition there is a dairy herd of mixed origin that has been bred to Guernsey semen for the past 3 years. The young cattle are of excellent Guernsey stock. The current service bull is Mr. Luck. Future prospects include ADC Lanet Goliath and the South African bull Jimmy.

The herd is grazed on Kikuyu grass, a high protein grass 18-19% P which is supplemented with fish meal and maize meal. This caters for up to 28 litres of milk.

During the dry season the cows are fed on Napier grass, molasses and maize stover. We do not push cows to produce a lot of milk due to low and fluctuating milk prices. Milk is paid on volume basis.

Cows have to be dipped every two weeks to control tick borne diseases like Theleriosis and Anaplasma and are vaccinated for foot and mouth disease every 6 months. Heifers calve at 32 months; its important to have well grown heifers at calving.

Agriculture is currently depressed by the high cost of fertiliser, seed and pesticides, poor rural infrastructure and poor producer prices. Crop marketing is not well organised. Cereal prices are depressed with maize prices at an all time low. Passion fruit for export, timber and high value horticultural crops such as flowers and fruit followed by tea offer better financial prospects. The dairy industry is constrained by fluctuating milk prices and the high cost of Acaridide veterinary drugs and feed. There is an overall growth in the use of AI every year. Dairy farmers who are successful do so because of their own initiative. A base price for milk would go along way towards stabilising this important industry.

Guernseys number about 12,000 animals. The largest numbers are found in the Rift Valley, Eastern and Coast Provinces. These are termed the ‘medium potential zones’. Guernseys do exceptionally well in the zones where mean temperatures are about 25C. There are two outstanding herds at the Coast, one in the lake basin and several in the Rift valley. Many Guernsey are found in black and white herds. Guernsey have been used very successfully in cross breeding programmes. The Guernsey x Boran is a useful animal in dairy ranching operations. The medium sized Guernsey with strength and adequate dairyness seems to be the best type for Kenya. Frailness is greatly discouraged.

The KGS is involved in promoting bulls that transmit desirable qualities. High milk production with good rear udder is considered to be most important. If rear udder is high and wide, then we don’t worry about the udder depth. We have semen of Rocky, Mr Luck, Luxury, Pansy, Jimmy, Cooper and Greg competing with our local bulls.

CAIS (the Central AI Station) our AI stud, is funded by grant from the Ministry of Agriculture and from sales of semen and liquid nitrogen. Full privatisation is intended. The station is run by Dr. Kariuki Muchemi, a veterinarian who is appoint-
ed by the Minister of Agriculture.

All the bulls at CAIS are out of North American semen. Some are excellent but others have been a disappointment.

Able (US) sired five contract mated bull calves, two were rejected by KGB at one year of age, two had poor progeny test results and one is a high milk sire though daughters are narrow. Tannery Hill Champion’s Claude, the famous Canadian bull, sired four bull calves. All later became top type & milk bulls. Jeans Jay sired six calves, three are high milk sires, two acceptable and one was rejected. Current contract sires are Utopia Premier Playboy, Goliath and Ambionic.

Our bulls keep getting bigger; 494 ADC Lanet Updown sired by Jupiter Playboy is almost the size of a Holstein. The contract mating dams are the top 3 producers in a herd every year. They must be 15% above herd average for production and of good conformation. It takes a long time to produce progeny test figure because of the low numbers of tested herds for all breeds and the low use of young sires.

Our best young sire is a son of Goliath, he is out of a top type and production dam, one of the best Guernseys ever bred in Kenya.

The Kenya Guernsey Cattle Breeders Society is run on a volunteer basis. There are no full time paid officers. There is a current drive to resurrect the society and to activate membership and Guernsey activity.

There are 5 major shows where Guernseys are featured. The premier show is the livestock breeders show and sale organised by the breed societies where the best cattle in Kenya are exhibited. This show is a livestock only show and so is very popular with breeders because all the attention is given to their animals. Prize awards are very high too.

CAIS organises a field day once a year where all the bulls are paraded for the breeders to see. There is also a seminar on breeding, genetics and other relevant topics.

The future of the Guernsey or any other dairy breed is in the breeding of top type and milk bulls. Such qualities popularise bulls of the breed they belong to especially to the commercial dairy producer.