

# From dairying to breeding elite show jumpers

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**I**n 2004, Gerry Marron from Corduff, Co. Monaghan switched from dairy farming to breeding elite show jumpers. Gerry's wife Mary, a teacher at Lisdoonan national school and his three sons Eamon, Cillian and Diarmuid are all actively involved in the business.

Gerry first started breeding horses over 30 years ago. "I always kept two broodmares and purchased the odd foal along with running the dairy business." The progeny from these mares were sold as foals or three-year-olds.

"If I had a real nice horse I would keep and produce it with international rider Dermott Lennon, a real gentleman who I have worked with for 25 years."

One of Gerry's foundation mares was Hallo Beag by Hallo.

"I bought her because of her pedigree as she was well related to Kilbaha (ISH) that Capt. John Ledingham used to ride. Today, most of my own breeding is from that line through her daughters and grand-daughters who are really starting to make an impact on the show jumping circuit," Gerry recalls.

Officially founded in 2009, Kinmar Stud is only now seeing the fruits of hard work. Kinmar Quality Hero, Kinmar Agalux, Absolutely Kinmar Z, Attoucha Hero Z, Alana Hero Z and the stallions Akarad Hero Z and Ganesh Hero Z were all bred there.

In 2019, Gerry's homebred Kinmar Quality Hero (O.B.O.S. Quality 004 X Moujik De Sohan) was selected to represent the Irish Sport Horse Studbook at the FEI/WBFSH World Breeding Jumping Championships for Young Horses at Lanaken, Belgium, in September.

Kinmar Quality Hero was ridden by Damian Griffin and reached the six-year-old final, a major achievement given that there were 712 of the best young horses in the world at Lanaken competing from 36 different stud-

books from 45 different nations.

## How it started

"My father milked cows all his life and that was my plan too," says Gerry who milked cows for over 10 years and had a milk quota of 40,000 gallons and 50 cows. He built a new parlour, drained land, and reseeded paddocks with advice from Teagasc advisors Michael O'Dowd and Sean O'Sullivan.

"The dairy business was profitable and I liked milking but I wanted to do something which he loved." His passion was for working with horses. "I got a brainwave to start a horse livery business in 2003, and after some deliberation, I decided to make a go of it. There was great demand and I attracted both Irish and international clients".

In 2004, with the livery business going well, Gerry left dairying; selling his milk quota. "At the time it was a huge risk but I was willing to take it purely for the love of working with horses." Gerry converted much of the dairy into housing for young stock, built stables and an outdoor arena.

## Partnership

The business model changed when Gerry met Luc Henry in 2011. Luc is one of the best-known breeders in Belgium and has bred numerous 1.60m international show jumping horses. "I met Luc through Dermott Lennon as Luc wanted to start sending recipient mares from his embryo transfer programme to Ireland to be foaled.

"Luc loved the green grass and the fact horses were outdoors most of the year. Dermott gave Luc my number and ultimately we became business partners and great friends." Gerry decided to quit all other livery and focus solely on his partnership with Luc.

Gerry had 10 mares himself, and each year Luc would send 10 recipient mares carrying embryos. Once the mares had reared their foals they were returned to Belgium. "Foals stayed here as foals / yearlings / two year olds etc. all different ages, when Luc had a customer they would go.



Gerry Marron (left) and Alan Hurley are pictured with Kinmar Quality Hero the horse that reached the 6 year old final at the FEI/WBFSH World Breeding Jumping Championships for Young Horses at Lanaken, in September 2019.

"Luc taught me about better breeding and how to make improvements. When he first arrived he said you will breed Olympic horses here in 10 years and have people coming to buy horses."

Today, Irish and international clients visit Kinmar stud to buy high end horses. Gerry says the stallion Ganesh Hero Z is likely to be his Olympic horse.

"He is a real modern blood stallion from one of the best dam lines in the Europe," says Gerry.

In August 2019, the dam of Ganesh Hero Z produced the €40K embryo that topped the Flanders Embryo Auction in Dublin.

In addition to working with rider Dermott Lennon, Gerry also works with Damian Griffin who produces a lot of his stock.

"Damian Griffin was given the task to ride and produce Ganesh Hero Z and that's how we got in touch. We get on really well and we have been working closely for three years now."





### Grassland management

"As when dairy farming, I soil test all paddocks every few years to make sure the soil is balanced in terms of nutrients; fertiliser and lime are then applied as required. Good quality grass is crucial for milk production, equally so for horses. Gerry finishes a few beef cattle every year solely to maintain grass quality.

"In spring time if grass beats me I give it to a zero grazing neighbour who takes out the extra paddocks. In return he spreads slurry to fertilise the land. All the land is paddocked which makes it much easier to manage."

### Breeding

The majority of the better horses come from good bloodlines. Usually, the major factor lacking in breeding is the strength of the dam line. When breeding for a particular discipline you must have a clearly defined breeding goal. The knowledge gained through Luc has encouraged Gerry to make major genetic improvements to his own stock and breed high class horses including Magician Hero, Kinmar Quality Hero and Kinmar Agalux.

**What qualities do you look for in a**

### potential elite show jumper?

"First you need to look at the overall model. Key characteristics include conformation, scope and technical ability over a fence. Ride-ability and the brain needed to reach the top are also crucial, but difficult to find. You can estimate the potential of young horses as they show their ability nearly straight away," says Gerry.

### How do you pick a stallion to suit your mare?

"Look at her faults objectively, and select a stallion to complement her. You have to be super critical of your own stock and have realistic progeny expectations given pedigree and performance. Eliminate poor stock as they are only costing you money. Get a second opinion.

"I would advise breeders to attend foal sales, young horse classes such as at Lanaken and the RDS to watch for any progressive sires and to see how stallions are stamping their stock. Stallion shows are also very important. Such events are also a source of feedback from other breeders."

### If you were starting again, would you change anything?

"I would consult the best breeder, one who is breeding good horses consist-

ently. Knowledge is the key; I would have saved lots of time if I had met Luc earlier and improved my breeding sooner.

"You have to be always learning and making improvements."

### Is there an opportunity for others to offer contract rearing of horses?

"Definitely, I could have done more international contract rearing only that I got more involved in the breeding side and didn't have the space. The financial returns are very good for full board grass livery (usually €35-40/week or €2,000/year).

"People in Europe, particularly Belgium and Holland, will send animals over. You do, however, need horsemanship skills.

Social media, particularly Facebook and YouTube, are proving to be an excellent promotional and sales tool for the business." Michael Doherty keeps me updated on the latest results internationally."

Gerry has steadily grown his followers to almost 1,000 which has widened his customer base. His big dream is to breed an Olympic horse. Given the success Gerry has achieved to date, it won't be long until he fulfils that dream.