

CITATIONS
National Medal for Science and Technology

The late Hon. Dr. THOMAS P. LECKY
O.M., O.B.E., B.Sc., Ph.D.
1904 - 1994

Thomas Lecky grew up on the small family farm in the hills of Portland. After leaving elementary school, the bright youngster was admitted to the Jamaica School of Agriculture, commonly known as the Farm School at Hope. The Farm School, more oriented to practical studies, produced graduates who were prepared for work on the sugar and banana plantations. There was not much interest in the production of beef and milk as these were not a regular part of the Jamaican diet. Lecky, a brilliant student at the school, had a preference for animal husbandry and he had the vision to realize that a new breed was required which would be more suitable to the Jamaican conditions. His academic career was to take him to McGill University in Montreal and to the University of Toronto in Canada.

Dr. Lecky returned to Jamaica and went to work at Hope in 1925. In those days, the cattle were remnants of the early Spanish imports mixed with British imports from India. The breeds that emerged were resistant to disease (tick fever), strong in pulling the carts that were the major means of agricultural transport but poor in their production of beef and milk. Lecky dreamed of a breed that a small Jamaica farmer could keep in his back yard and which would help to feed and economically support the family.

Having the responsibility to assess the breeds of cattle introduced into Jamaica for their suitability to local conditions, he decided that what

Jamaica needed was an animal that would produce enough milk and also be light enough to move up and down the hillsides. His dream of a new Jamaican breed of cattle would later be realized. Using the techniques of selective breeding and his understanding of genetics, he intensified the selection process based on observation of the performance of dominant individuals in each new generation.

Contrary to the accepted wisdom of the times, he was able in a twenty-year period to produce what was a new breed of cattle – the Jamaica Hope – developed out of the British Jersey (small) with genes from the Holstein (heavy milk producer) and the Indian Sahiwal (disease resistant). He demonstrated his new breed in a grand parade in 1952 at Bodles Agricultural Station. He was awarded the Ph.D. from the University of Edinburgh for his seminal work in genetics and cattle breeding, the first Jamaican to gain a doctorate in agriculture. Later, he was awarded the Norman Manley Award for Excellence in Agriculture, the Order of Merit and the Order of the British Empire (O.B.E.).

The Jamaica Red was next. In this case, he scientifically crossbred the Indian Brahman with imported Red Polls from Britain, thereby developing a new breed that was strongly resistant to disease and resulted in a good beef product.

His final great achievement was to produce an animal, which was more suited to the cooler areas of Jamaica. In this case, he bred the Scottish Aberdeen Angus with the Indian Brahman to produce a well-fleshed animal, which he called the Jamaica Black. His work in agriculture and specifically in animal genetics revolutionized the Jamaican dairy

industry and improved the lives of countless small farmers for which he is truly recognized as the Father of the Jamaica Cattle Industry. Dr. Lecky died in 1994.

The Government of Jamaica is pleased to recognise the pioneering and internationally acclaimed work of the late Honourable Dr. Thomas Lecky and to award him posthumously **THE NATIONAL MEDAL FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY.**

November 27, 2003