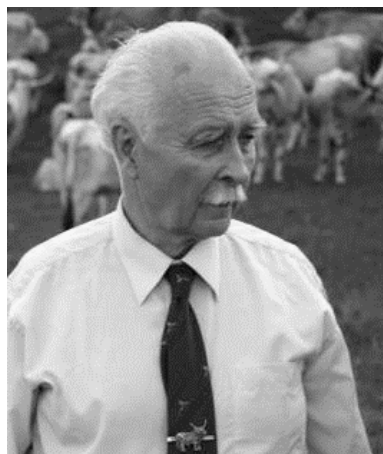


DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59913/dagr.2024.17981>

In memoriam Professor Emeritus Dr. Imre Bodó (1932-2023)



Imre Bodó was born on October 4, 1932 in Budapest. His father, Imre Bodó Sr., was a military officer and teacher at the Riding Instructor Training Institute in Örkénytábor.

After his primary schooling in Budapest and Örkénytábor, he attended the Hunyadi Mátyás Military Secondary School in Kőszeg (“Cögerei”) and the Piarist Gymnasium in Budapest (Gymnasium Scholarum Piarum); in the latter, he passed his matriculation examination with excellent results in 1951. During World War II, as a student, he was taken prisoner by the Americans in Germany, but – although severely frostbitten – he managed to get home safely.

He graduated with honors from the Gödöllő University of Agricultural Sciences in 1956. His excellent academic performance saved him from expulsion, because they wanted to expel him from the university because of his origin. During the revolution, he worked as an intern, away from the fighting, at the university's training farm Herceghalom. Despite this, during the 1957 reprisal, he was imprisoned for questioning on trumped-up charges, which were not without violence - from where he was released for lack of evidence and the proceedings were terminated, but he lost his job, was banned from the capital, and had no opportunity to find a job in the field of research or education.

Thus, he got a job in agricultural enterprises. From 1961, he worked at the Hortobágy State Farm, where he was initially assigned the position of livestock breeder responsible for cattle breeding. Eventually, he held the position of chief livestock breeder. On an area of 70 thousand hectares, he managed 4,000 cattle, 7,500 sheep, 800 horses (including the Nonius stud), 600 sows and their offspring, and the production of several million poultry (chickens, ducks, guinea fowl, geese). The Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party ordered in the late 1950s that the breeding of Hungarian Grey Cattle should be suspended; in this spirit, all bull calves were ordered to be sent to the slaughterhouse, and the cows were ordered to be crossed with the Soviet Kostroma breed. This would have meant the end of purebred breeding of Hungarian Grey Cattle. Imre Bodó did not carry out this order at the time, although sabotage was still considered a capital offense in the sixties. With the help of the goulash, among whom he quickly gained great respect due to his professional competence and humane attitude, he managed to hide eight bull calves, that is, save them for breeding. The anecdote is literally true that the illegally

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59913/dagr.2024.17981>

introduced bull named Morgó was still in breeding when the leader who ordered the Kostroma crossbreeding was no longer in office. When new winds finally began to blow in the party in the second half of the 1960s, they would have restarted the breeding of the Hungarian Grey breed in pure blood. At that time, at a meeting organized at the National Center of State Farms in Budapest, it turned out that not a single farm breeding Greys had bulls left. It was a dramatic scene when Imre Bodó stood up in the back row and announced that there were indeed eight more bulls in Hortobágy.

He managed to win the decision to keep a herd of 200 cows purebred. The Hungarian Grey herd, now considered a Hungarikum and numbering 10,000 animals, is the offspring of these eight bulls!

Imre Bodó changed jobs and positions in 1971 in order to make it easier for his seven children to attend school.

He first worked in the horse breeding department at the Animal Breeding Research Institute Herceghalom, then became involved in the work of starting beef cattle breeding in Hungary, and from 1978 he became a consultant to the joint venture of cattle breeding cooperatives called TAURINA.

At the invitation of Academician Artúr Horn, he joined the Department of Animal Husbandry at the University of Veterinary Medicine in 1975, where he was appointed a university professor in 1984. He was the head of the department until his retirement, and with his participation the teaching of animal husbandry in English was also launched. His university lectures were uniquely attractive not only because of his subject knowledge, but also because of his lived professional practice and experience, and his friendly and direct relationship with his students was authentic. From 1998, he transferred his knowledge and experience to the Department of Animal Husbandry and Animal Nutrition of the University of Agricultural Sciences Debrecen, and his teaching field also covered general animal husbandry, cattle, horse and dog breeding, and gene conservation. He was the head of the doctoral school for ten years.

He obtained his university doctorate in 1967 with a dissertation on the issues of Hungarian Grey Cattle breeding. He received the title of candidate for the defense of his thesis on population genetic issues of horse breeding in 1977, and he defended his academic doctoral thesis in 1991 with the title Preservation of gene reserves in animal breeding. He was inaugurated as an honorary doctor at the University of Agricultural Sciences Debrecen in 1995.

His scientific interests, in addition to the breeding issues of various domestic animal species, were primarily the description and protection of genetic diversity. He was a lecturer and debater in English, French and German.

He has published a large number of publications in various languages (8 books, 10 book chapters, 40 journal articles, over 100 communications). His important works

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59913/dagr.2024.17981>

published in the authorship community are Genetic Conservation of Domestic Livestock (1992), Conservation Genetics of endangered horse breeds (2005), and Der Lipizzaner im Spiegel der Wissenschaft (2011). His international professional recognition is reflected in the fact that he was invited, among other things, to organize the discussion session on genetic resources and genetic reserves at the Fourth World Congress of Applied Genetics (Edinburgh, Scotland, 1990) and to give a lecture there. In 1995, he gave the introductory lecture at the international conference on a similar topic in Tsukuba (Japan). He was invited to co-author the report on Europe at the Fifth World Congress of Applied Genetics (Guelph, Canada). He was the initiator of a successful INCO-COPERNICUS project (in collaboration with Austrian, Slovenian and Swiss universities), in which the genetic diversity within the Lipizzaner breed was explored using animal breeding and molecular genetic parameters.

He maintained a constant living connection with practice. Imre Bodó is an indelible and most notable merit in saving our unique national value, the Hungarian Grey Cattle breed. As soon as the organization of domestic livestock breeding associations began in 1991, he became the founder and first president of the Hungarian Grey Cattle Breeders Association, and from 2012 its perpetual president. He was also the first president (honorary president from 2010) of the Furioso-North Star Horse Breeding Association.

He was a member of the board of the Hungarian Livestock Breeders Association (MÁSZ), and between 2008 and 2017, he was the president, then honorary president, of the MÁSZ Animal Breeding History Committee.

In addition to his domestic activities, he also actively participated in the work of various international organizations. From 1982 until its dissolution in 1992, he was a member of the FAO Expert Panel for Conservation of Animal Genetic Resources, which dealt with the global conservation of endangered domestic animal breeds. From 1985 to 2000, he was a member of the working group operating within the framework of the European Federation of Animal Science (EAAP), which aimed to register and preserve the genetic diversity existing on the European continent.

From 1986 to 1992 he was vice-president of the Horse Breeding Department of the European Livestock Breeders' Association. From 1985 to 1990 he headed the breeding committee of the International Lipizzaner Breeders' Association (LIF), and was elected its president for the period from 1990 to 1994.

From 1991 he was a board member of the Rare Breeds International NGO, founded in Budapest and active throughout the world.

In December 1997, he was elected Deputy Director and member of the Executive Committee of SAVE (Safeguard of Agricultural Varieties in Europe). This organization is dedicated to the discovery and preservation of rare and endangered domestic animal breeds, as well as plant and horticultural values in Europe.

He was the initiator of the establishment of the DAGENE (International Association for the Conservation of Animal Breeds in the Danube Region), an association that

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59913/dagr.2024.17981>

organizes cooperation between neighboring countries; since its foundation in 1989, he was its Vice President, and between 1998 and 2010, its President, and then its Honorary President.

He has received numerous awards: Imre Újhelyi Award, János Nagyváthy Memorial Medal, EAAP Distinguished Service Award, Pro Natura Memorial Medal, Artúr Horn Award, Knight's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Hungary, Pro Scientiis Agriculturae Debrecen, Academic Award, Konkoly-Thege Award, Életfa Award, Silver Grade of the Életfa Memorial Plaque, Andor Jánossy Award, Ferenc Kozma Award and posthumous Hungarian Heritage Award.

In our time, it is unprecedented that after nearly two decades of practical work in “rubber boots”, anyone can be so successful in the scientific field, and at the same time not be separated from their former colleagues and the everyday worries of the profession for a moment. Without Imre Bodó’s optimism, diligence, and work ethic, all this would have been unthinkable. What else can give strength to this than a strong faith and a loving family? Imre Bodó wrote the following in a previous issue of Új Ember. *“And this requires sacrifice. Many consider this concept to be outdated. Yet without it, it is impossible to imagine the development of society. Moreover, there is no question of a truly great sacrifice. The happiness of life is not given by money, but by joy. For parents, children mean greater joy than what can be obtained with money. Joy, happiness, is very important in earthly life. Everyone strives for this in some form. Of course, money can also bring joy, but this cannot be compared to what a child can give a parent. Unfortunately, many people only wake up to this truth late or never. Yet it is at this point that the true interests of the individual and the nation meet.”*

On the occasion of his 90th birthday, we greeted Imre Bodó in a ceremonial setting at the University of Veterinary Medicine. He was unable to appear in person at the “festive meeting organized on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the founding of the first independent animal husbandry department (1973-2023)” at the end of November. Professor Emeritus Imre Bodó, a renowned professor of the Department of Animal Husbandry and an outstanding animal husbandry expert, passed away on December 18, 2023, at the age of 92. His funeral took place in Budapest on January 11, 2024, as part of a Catholic mass. His loss is touched by the of Veterinary Medicine at a personal level. Rector Péter Sótonyi described Imre Bodó as an opinion-forming teacher, Walter Hecker as a cooperative friend, and the Franciscan priest who presented the funeral mass described him as a pillar that we can all look up to and rely on.

He was the man, a dear friend, a colleague, whom we always think of with fondness and respect and whose memory we will cherish forever.

May he rest in peace!

Dr. András Gáspárdy
President of DAGENE