



Miniature Zebu in Austria

By Lonnie Hoover

As printed in the March/April 2007 issue of the Rare Breeds Journal

This saga began in June, 2004, when Dean Shocker, an IMZA Board Member, received the following e-mail from Alfons Maier, Graz, Austria:

"I would very much like to contact you for getting information about your experiences with the Zebu cows. Would it be possible to send me fotos of them? I send you hereby fotos of our Zebus. I would be very interested if you have the same race. Kind regards, Alfons Maier."

Dean then forwarded the message to other IMZA members and the rest, as we say, is history.

By a sheer stroke of luck, my wife who is a Cat Fanciers Association (CFA) cat show judge, had been invited to judge a show in Vienna, Austria, in October, 2004. We thought this must have been divine intervention because we had already planned to do some serious sight-seeing while we were in Austria. We contacted Mr. Maier via e-mail and he said he would be happy for us to come to his ranch and see his cattle.

Neither my wife nor I speak a word of German, but again we were very lucky to have one of our fellow cat fanciers who live in Graz, Juergen Steinbrenner, act as an interpreter. Mr. Maier was the ultimate host. When we arrived, he had homemade coffee cake and tea, complete with a homemade liqueur type brandy that the Austrians put in their tea. Not wanting to appear to be an ungrateful American, I drank the tea, complete with the brandy. It was not bad, kind of like our moonshine. We were also treated to some German Folk Music, as another hobby of Mr. Maier's was being a player in a German Band.

Mr. Maier's "real job" is a Pumpkin Seed Oil dealer. Pumpkin seeds are a popular commodity in Graz. The seeds are used in salads, as well as crushed and used in main dishes. Alfons stated that the oil could only be found in New York and San Francisco. He stated that he is currently working to market the oil in more states.

Mr. Maier had a very beautiful ranch tucked away in the rolling hills of Austria. His extended family included his parents living in the same house, which seems to be a custom in that country.

There were four Zebus on the ranch, two reddish bulls and two white heifers with black spots. The older bull was very aggressive, apparently not liking strangers entering his territory! The older bull was about 40" tall and had very good conformation. The two heifers were about 36-38" tall; I would add them to my herd in a minute!!

Mr. Maier purchased his four Zebus from Mr. Johann Muster for 3,100 Euro (around \$4,000 dollars). Mr. Muster has over 70 Zebu with both Austrian and German bloodlines. Check out Mr. Musters Zebu on his web site at www.zebu.at he has a beautiful breeder bull (white with black spots). None of the Zebu in Austria are registered, that we are aware of.

We were told that there are 12-15 Zebu breeders in the province of Styria, with around 120-150 zebu in their herds. Apparently, the predominant colors are red, black, white, and white with black spots. We saw no gray Zebu in their herds