

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 27 (2000)
Heft: 2

Vorwort: The quest for the real cow
Autor: Baumann, Alice

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 17.04.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

The quest for the real cow

It was a cow and bull that taught me about the birds and bees. They had been brought together for mating purposes. I was five years old and knew nothing about love, but I sensed that something momentous was happening.

Cows also taught me how to argue. In Denmark, where as a child I visited my cousin, they had only black and white cows. I was convinced that the only true cows – the brown and white ones – ate Swiss grass. You could tell that our cows were the genuine ones because they wore bells and adorned chocolate wrappers, postcards and leather belts. Danish cows were only featured on butter wrapping and milk cartons. And since I didn't like milk, that was all the proof I needed!

My Danish uncle, the proud owner of cows, horses and pigs, prophesied a life of chastity for me. "Unless you drink milk straight from the cow, you'll not find a farmer. And



Alice Baumann

"When it comes to the association of Switzerland with cows, the nation hovers between scepticism and enthusiasm"

the only real men are farmers," he used to threaten me. I believed him.

Now I am no longer so certain about what constitutes a real man or a genuine cow. In the sense that it embodies the myth of a strong, free country, the cow is the archetypal symbol of Switzerland. It supplies us with milk (at 78 cents a kilo for the farmer), meat and leather, and embodies the image of an untouched, idyllic Switzerland. We prefer to ignore the fact that many cows are fattened on fodder additives and that certain breeds have been eradicated. Our identification is too deep-seated.

Then the revival happened: Zurich invented the plastic cow, with coloured hides embellished by various artists. For an entire tourist season brightly-coloured cows adorned the city on the Limmat. They stood guard over watch shops, clothes boutiques and museums in place of stone lions, and even paraded along building facades. They even travelled abroad to conquer New York and Chicago.

In the mid-1960s the horned flesh-and-blood variety travelled from Zurich to the Indian town of Mattupatty. There, amidst Kerala's hills, they were paired under Swiss observation. As so often with cows, the goal was not to enjoy sex but to increase milk production. This rare liquid is an important ingredient in Indian chai and curry recipes. Although the cross-breeds look like nephews of the Swiss cow, experts can tell them apart at a glance: they are brown and white, but smaller than the Swiss high-yield cow. And instead of grazing in meadows to the accompaniment of bells, they wander soundlessly along the central strips of busy roads. In the evening they find their own way home, but not to the byre. Despite their holy status, Indian cows live behind the house.

Is the export of bull semen to India a noble act? It certainly serves a highly practical purpose. Yet the Swiss nation hovers between scepticism and enthusiasm when it comes our country's close association with the cow. As if afraid of slipping on a cowpat, we seem unable to decide which cow better represents Switzerland: the real or the artificial. It's all the same to me. As far as I am concerned, the main thing is that I don't have my Danish cousin's name: Lisi, a typical Swiss cow's name. *Alice Baumann*



FOCUS

The cow over the ages **4**

HISTORY

The refugee report **8**

OFFICIAL NEWS

9

OSA NEWS

11

SRI NEWS

12

SOLISWISS

13

MAILBAG

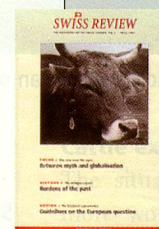
14

VOTING

Results of referendum of 12 March 2000 **15**
 Preview of bilateral agreements **16**

MOSAIC

18



Wary of the future? The cow is an integral part of the Swiss landscape. Yet its day-to-day use to promote the physical well-being of the population is not always unilaterally approved. Milk lakes and meat mountains repeatedly turn it into a football between opposing economic interests.

(Cover: JEAN-JACQUES RUCHTI)

SWISS REVIEW

Swiss Review, the magazine for the Swiss Abroad, is in its 27th year of issue and is published in German, French, Italian, English and Spanish in more than 20 regional editions. It has a total circulation of over 355,000. Regional news appears four times a year.

Editors: Lukas M. Schneider (LS), Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad (Chairman); Alice Baumann (AB), Press Bureau Alice Baumann Conception, Berne; Pierre-André Tschanz (PAT), Swiss Radio International, Berne; Dario Ballanti (DB), parliamentary correspondent of Corriere del Ticino; Editor of Official News: Robert Nyffeler (NYF), Service for the Swiss Abroad, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, CH-3003 Berne. Translator: Nicolette Chisholm.

Publisher, Editorial Office, Advertising: Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad, Alpenstrasse 26, CH-3000 Berne 16; Tel: +41 31 351 61 00, Fax: +41 31 351 61 50, Postal Cheque Account (Swiss National Giro): 30-6768-9.

Printed by: Buri Druck AG, CH-3084 Wabern.

Change of address: Please advise your local Embassy or Consulate – do not write to Berne.

Internet: <http://www.revue.ch> **E-mail:** revue@aso.ch