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EDITORIAL

There has certainly been a lot happening and a lot of change, at least, here in Australia in recent times. In some instances, I hope that other countries haven't had some of the less positive events happen that many of us here have. I hope that our overseas readers will bear with me as I discuss these in this editorial.

In Australia in the last four years, we have had four things happen that have all had a major impact on our cattle industry in one form or another and, though thankfully, not all on a countrywide basis.

We started with one of the worst droughts in history in some of our farming and grazing areas about 4 years ago. Then a number of areas were burnt out with some of the nation's most horrendous bushfires which resulted in further loss of livestock.

As with the rest of the world, we were then hit by the COVID -19 pandemic, which brought with it a whole range of restrictions which added hardships to people's lives and made marketing of farm produce, including meat, that much more challenging with the closure of some abattoirs and markets, especially local produce markets where a number of producers, who did their own marketing, were prevented from so doing. Now, just in recent weeks, the East Coast of our country has experienced serious floods which has also meant stock loss and disrupted markets because of road closures and difficulties in mustering cattle.

These recent floods, whilst necessary in overcoming drought conditions, have also caused a number of stock losses and our thoughts are with those producers who have suffered because of their losses.

A couple of years ago, we had major floods in the far north of our country that resulted in the loss of over half a million cattle. The recent floods on the East Coast have resulted in far fewer loss of cattle. However, whilst there were less actual individual businesses and people impacted in the first instance, there were many more smaller businesses affected in the coastal regions. In both cases, our

thoughts are with those who have experienced these losses along with the individual pain and grief.

WHAT'S (BEEN) HAPPENING

* We are pleased to advise that the cattle evaluation course we have been planning is now definitely going to be held from Monday the 2nd. of May through to and including Friday the 6th. of May. Planning is well under way and all the necessary site etc. bookings have been made. I have circulated information to our mailing list so I hope you have all received it. If not, or if you know of anyone else who may like to attend, please contact us. We already have several producers who have indicated that they would like to attend so that is a source of encouragement for us. We would appreciate it if you could let us know as early as possible if you would like to attend so that we can plan to have plenty of resources prepared. It would definitely assist with catering for morning and afternoon teas and lunches as well as all the printed material that we need to share with those who attend as part of the course. We will also be sending out the Introductory Manual at least 2 weeks before the course.
* We were finally able to travel to New South Wales to visit some breeders there after not being able to do so for well over two years. It was very enjoyable and interesting to spend time with both old and some new producers who have been using our system. It was also great to be able to see how herds have progressed over the last two years and all are heading in the right direction, at least from our perspective.
* We are grateful to "Sudsy" Sutherland, Sans Peurs Herefords, at Tullamore, for arranging around 10 other breeders to attend his property while we were there to watch us grade some of his heifers and discuss our system with them.
*Just to repeat, we are still very keen to hold more one day field days over the next few months now that border restrictions etc. have been lifted. If you would like one in your area, please let myself, Albert Hancock (0267334666) or other company directors know and we will get it under way. We would like to be as flexible as possible in our future planning and would welcome and appreciate any input that you can provide for us in this regard.

*Coodardie Brahman bulls and cows are now available for private sale and an online catalogue is available on their website – www.coodardie.com.au.

*The 2022 JAD Speckle Park Bull + Female sale will be held on April 1, 2022. The sale catalogue is now online and available for viewing. Check it out here: https://jadspecklepark.com.au/sale/

*We now have linear measuring callipers available for sale for $100.00 plus freight so if you are interested, please let me know.
*We remain keen to get some marketing of graded cattle going and are happy to advertise for any of our clients here in the newsletter or on our website.

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST
*We are also happy to promote sales for any breeders, stud or otherwise, who would like to put them in our newsletter, so please let me know the details.
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Breed of the Quarter - Brangus

The first known attempt to breed and develop Brangus cattle involved the use of Red Angus rather than black Angus and was conducted in 1912 in Louisiana, United States of America. The trial cross bred a pool of Red Angus and Brahman cattle producing the Red Brangus. Subsequently, the trial was also used to determine the suitability of the breed when exposed to adverse climatic conditions.

Following this trial, Red Brangus breeders from over 16 states and Canada, organised the American Brangus Breeders Association, which later changed its title to the International Brangus Breeders Association (IBBA).
More serious attempts at developing the breed and the use of black Angus gathered

momentum in the 1930s and 1940s. The breed in the USA has been standardized with three-eighths Brahman and five-eighths Angus breeding. The theory behind the program was to utilise the superior traits of Angus and Brahman cattle.

The combination results in a breed which unites the traits of two highly successful parent breeds. The Brahman, through rigorous natural selection, developed disease resistance, overall hardiness and outstanding maternal instincts. Angus are known for their superior carcass qualities. They are also extremely functional females which excel in both fertility and milking

Black Angus were used in the program in increasing numbers. Brangus were first developed in the United States and later developed independently in Australia as the Australian Brangus.

The early breeders from 16 states and Canada met in Vinita, Oklahoma, on July 2, 1949, and organised the American Brangus Breeders Association, later renamed the International Brangus Breeders Association (IBBA), with headquarters in Kansas City, Missouri, and eventually San Antonio, Texas, where the permanent headquarters has been located since January, 1973. There are now members in nearly every state, Canada, Mexico, Australia, Central America, Argentina, and South Rhodesia in Africa.

The breed was developed to establish higher tick and heat tolerance than that of other cattle breeds. Australian Brangus are a polled breed of beef cattle, developed in the tropical coastal areas of Queensland, Australia by cross breeding Brahman and Angus cattle during the 1950s. The Australian Brangus cattle are about $^{3}/_{8}$ Brahman and $^{5}/_{8}$ Angus in their genetic makeup, however, the Brahman content can range from 25% to 75%. This allows beef producers to select cattle suitable for their local environment.

The breed is confined largely to Queensland and northern New South Wales, with small pockets in other states.

The Brangus can be found all over the USA, Canada, Mexico, Australia, Argentina and South Rhodesia in Africa

The Australian Brangus Cattle Association Ltd. performance records the herd using the internationally recognized Breed plan for monitoring fertility, growth, milk and carcase quality.

Brangus cows have medium to large ears. They are also naturally polled, or horn-less. There are otherwise no distinct facial characteristics to Brangus cows. Their ability to do well in the hot areas of the north and their resistance to ticks and bloat as well as long periods of heat are important attributes.

Characteristics

Brangus cattle are black or red, polled, with a sleek coat and pigmented skin. Their ears are medium to large and the skin is loose, with neck folds. The rump is slightly rounded, and the bulls have a moderate hump. Their head is of a medium length with a broad muzzle and forehead. Australian Brangus are also good walkers and foragers and "do well" in a wide variety of situations. Australian Brangus are also good walkers and foragers and "do well" in a wide variety of situations.

The Brangus have a good temperament which was originally selected for when the breed was created.

Mature Brangus bulls generally weigh between 1,800 and 2,000 pounds, while mature females generally weigh around 1,100 to 1,200 pounds.

Bulls mature by two years of age and are ready to go into service by 18 months. Heifers

are ready to breed by 14 months of age and deliver their first calf at 24 months of age. The bulls can remain in service through age 12, while the cows can produce calves beyond the age of 14.
This breed is considered to be very versatile being high performers on pasture and in the feed yard and have also proven resistant to heat and high humidity. Under conditions of cool and cold climate they seem to produce enough hair for adequate protection.

The cows are good mothers and the calves are usually of medium size at birth.

Other features

*Resistant to heat and high humidity

* Hardy in cold climates

* Good mothers

* Resistance to ticks and bloat

* A good forager

* Rapid weight gain

* Average to slightly late maturing

* A carcase without excessive fat

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Remember This

I thought that in this edition I would cover 3 – 4 topics that I have discussed previously in our newsletters that we believe are important considerations when selecting animals as breeders in a herd. My apologies for any boredom that this may induce, though I hope it does serve as a small refresher for you as well as possibly introducing some new factors that we have observed more recently.

Is bigger better?

We are continuing to hear many producers highlighting animal size as being the key to profitability and productivity. It is a shame that there hasn't been more research into the ideal cow/bull size here in this country to agree with, or not, the work carried out by the University of Nebraska in the USA that has identified the ideal cow size in most average breeds to be a maximum of 550 kg.
The following is the link to the latest full research report on this topic:
Agricultural Research Division
University of Nebraska Extension
Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources
University of Nebraska–Lincoln
2022 Beef Cattle Report
Impact of Cow Size on Economic Profitability in Cow-Calf and Feedlot Production Systems
In this research, two separate herds were studied, one consisting of small-sized (1,000

lb – 450kg.) cows and another consisting of large-sized cows (1,220 lb – 550 kg). A previous study that I have used information from on this topic was conducted at Nebraska between 2015 and 2017.
This research identified the animals' endocrine system as the key to their ability to produce efficiently and effectively. The endocrine system can be likened to an animal's engine and it has been found that they operate best at up to the above weight.
To put this into a simple feed requirement context then look at it this way. If a 550 kg. cow requires 5.5kg. (in reality this would be a higher figure, but for simplicity I am just using this figure as an example) of feed to maintain her body condition and functionality, then a 700 kg. cow will require around 8 kg. of feed to do the same thing. Because of her bigger body, more feed is needed to be turned into energy to operate the heavier body and carry out normal endocrine functions such as blood circulation, milk production and all other hormonal functions within the animal.
A medium sized animal that has a well-balanced, well conformed body will usually require lower maintenance and be a more efficient feed convertor that a larger animal. Overall, they will produce a calf or kg. of meat more efficiently and profitably as well if the Nebraska research is to be justified.

Measuring – practical indicators

By measuring I am referring to linear measuring. We have found that since we have been linear measuring, it has added to the number of assessment tools we have and the accuracy of our evaluations.
I am not going to go into the how's and why's of linear measuring here. They are all available in our book or in earlier newsletters.
Whilst there are many producers who are very good at visually looking at animals and being able to judge their heart girth, body depth, flank size, length etc., we have still found that there are times when the eye can be deceived and that measuring gives the only truly accurate and objective result.
I would like to add a further comment in regard to the heart girth to true top line measurement. The circumference of the heart girth should at least equal the measurement from the top knot on the animal's head to the pin bones. Private research measuring and then processing 20,000 head of cattle, again in Nebraska, has shown that for every inch bigger the heart girth measurement is in comparison to the top line, the animal will have an increase yield of around 16 kg. of meat. Since we have been measuring cattle, we have measured animals that have been up to 12 inches greater in the heart girth. Whilst this is good from a meat production perspective. When you look at those animals though, you need to question their mobility. They are very short in the legs as a rule and so are not the cattle that you would expect to be suitable for range country in particular. Just on observation, I would suggest that around the 6 inches longer is about a good maximum difference.
Have measured plenty of Bos Indicus with 1 – 3 inch bigger heart girths that are very athletic and suitable for range country and have the potential to sire high yielding offspring.

As you can gather from the above, heart girth is a very important conformation trait for all animals. If you want to make a quick, visual evaluation in the paddock, for example, of this trait, then draw an imaginary line from the knee to the hock and observe the amount of space between that line and the bottom of the stomach/flank/chest. The less daylight you can see in this space, then the more likely that the heart girth to top-line measurement will be positive The under belly should not cut up significantly behind the front legs or in front of the rear legs/ shank.

Another measurement outside linear measuring you can make that assists with assessing the overall confirmation balance of an animal is to measure from the triangle formed from the knee to shoulder to pins and compare to the one from the hock to pins to shoulder. They should form two right angled triangles of the same area where one could be turned around and super-imposed on the other.

Meat yield and quality

Again, I would just like to highlight a couple of other indicators that you can bear in mend when observing your cattle. Eventually, we hope that a method of assessment and payment for saleable meat yield can be adopted and become mainstream in the industry and then producers will be paid for producing meat and not fat and bone.

One of the areas I like to look for when assessing for meat yield is the loin area. We can get a reasonable idea of the loin length by the 2/3 and true top-line measurements using the linear measuring method. I also believe that loin width is important to give the potential for a larger volume of meat. It is also important in supporting the spine of the animal. We have all seen cattle that tend to sag in the loin area and when you look closely at these animals, you will see that they are generally narrow across the loin area compared to their length.

Another indicator of saleable meat yield is the prominence of the shank muscle. The more prominent and well rounded this muscle is the more likely the animal with have a high meat yield. Talking about the shank reminds me that we should also be aware that the front of the shank bone needs to be directly under a bull's hook bones to ensure that he can carry his own weight when he is serving a cow and doesn't expect the cow to bear his weight.

Tenderness – I also wanted to give an idea to those of you who are using our system, in particular, of how each grade in our tenderness scoring system should convert from the external grade into an edible product.

As I have explained previously, our system is not fool proof or Mother Nature proof. However, we have yet to find a more accurate way of assessing animals on the hoof for tenderness. So, some of the reasons why very occasional differences may occur between our assessments and the actual eating quality include human error and the differences between each side of the jaw and ribs. We seem to be finding more and more cattle with variations in bone structure between the assessing sites that we use. The thing that we have not been able to determine is which one is the most accurate in these variations or do we take an average over them all. We have not documented, but regularly notice in herds that have used the same or similar genetics over a long period that the variations between the jaw and rib sides are a lot less. Also bulls jaw variations in particular will show up in their progeny. For example, I have graded herds where one bull was used for 2 weeks in a group of heifers and then swapped for another one and the older heifers all had a more prominent concave shape on the near side jaw, but then the younger heifers were all different.

This has happened in a number of herds over the years. I can identify which heifers are by the same bull fairly accurately by their bone shape. It also re-enforces that tenderness is a mainly genetic trait.

The following is a guide to what to expect in terms of eating quality from each of our tenderness grades:-

Grade 1 – (purple tag) cut with back of the knife – melt in your mouth – no chewing

Grade 2 & 2.5 – (blue tag) Cuts easily and melts in your mouth – no chewing

Grade 3 - cuts easily – (red tag) very soft and tender - no excess chewing needed

Grade 3.5 – (red tag – notched) Soft but somewhat chewy

Grade 4 (yellow tag & 5 (white tag) – course and stringy and chewy – good jaw exercise – especially for your dog.

Genetics influences – tenderness and butterfat – usually only half a grade at

most between them. Larger differences – from larger gene pool.
Hormonal activity and milk yield – more influenced by nutrition.

Thank you for your continued interest in our newsletters, our website and our book. Please feel free to order one of our books and become familiar with the CLMS system and the directions we are taking in the overall scheme of animal and food production for human consumption.

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT US ABOUT ANY ITEMS IN THIS NEWSLETTER, ON OUR WEBSITE OR IN OUR BOOK. WE WELCOME PRODUCER INPUT AND INTEREST AND WANT TO INVOLVE YOU IN WHAT WE ARE DOING.