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 **EDITORIAL.**

Welcome to our latest newsletter for the spring of 2011, at least, in the southern hemisphere anyway.

The last few weeks have been very busy for us and there have been some good signs as far as the interest in our system goes. We are continuing to get a growing number of inquiries about what we do and this has been encouraging.

I would like to apologise though for the delay in getting this quarter’s newsletter out. As has been the case over the past couple of years I have delayed this newsletter until after our annual meeting at the end of the first week in October so that I can include any information about what we have planned that may come out of that meeting and be of interest to our readers.

I also plan to include some of the information about Gearld Fry’s visit to Australia in August along with his colleague and fellow beef breeder from Missouri in the USA, Dennis Macdonald. It was great to have these two gentlemen in Australia for a few days and to share some valuable time with them. Gearld was in Australia to judge at the Brisbane Show (Ekka) in August and was gracious enough to share several days with several us in between judging. It was very good to be able to spend time with Gearld and compare notes with him about what we have been doing over the last 2 – 3 years. We have both been spending quite a lot of time researching various indicators on cattle to substantiate what we thought they meant and in particular to do with milk quality and its importance in raising a good calf. Gearld and Dennis also visited Bob Crawford’s Devon Stud at Moulamein in NSW after the Ekka and from all reports also had a very interesting and rewarding visit there.

**WHAT’S HAPPENING**

**\***We have just received the results of the last lot of fat samples we sent off for testing, but have not had a chance to fully analyse them as yet. In the end we could only fit 26 samples in the cooler pack we sent off so have 4 samples from grass fed cattle to go in another small lot we plan to send in the next month to take the total number of samples to 60. More of this last lot will be grass fed though.

The results from this last selection confirm that the grass fed cattle are all higher in omega 3 than the grain fed cattle. Again there was around 75 - 80% of those grading as 3 or better on our grading system that were higher in omega 3.

One of the interesting comparisons is with the balance between omega 3 and omega 6 fats in the samples. In a perfect world, the samples should contain approximately equal amounts of each. However, when we compared our samples we found that the ratio of omega 3 to omega 6 in the grass fed cattle was 1:2.7 and in the grain fed cattle it was in excess of 1:8 with one individual sample being 1:20. Again this is another example of in-balance in our food chain. We speak of balance as being critical in breeding and beef production systems and this highlights another example of where it could be improved with a change of practice.

\*We were able to hold a successful field day at Nanango on the 15th. of August with Gearld Fry as our guest presenter. There were between 35 and 40 people in attendance all together which was very encouraging, especially as some had travelled from as far afield as Aramac in Central Qld. and Ebor in Northern NSW. Gearld and his friend, Dennis McDonald, a beef breeder from Missouri were in Australia because Gearld had been invited to judge the Devon, Red Poll and Dexter breeds at the Royal Brisbane Show. Several of us were able to watch Gearld judge these cattle and spend time with him during the show. Gearld and Dennis had several days between the judging of the Devons and Red Polls and then the Dexters so we did a short tour around several properties in SE Qld. to see how the owners were breeding their herds and this included a couple of line bred herds and an A2 herd with the trip culminating in the field day at Nanango. Thank you to all those who travelled and made the time to attend the field day and to all those who made cattle available for us to examine at the field day. Thank you as well to all those producers who were gracious enough to allow us to spend time on their properties.

I will discuss in more detail some of the topics that we discussed with Gearld and Dennis later in the newsletter.

\*I have left this section in from the last newsletter as it is an extremely important part of our future and the future of those who have entrusted us to evaluate their cattle. We are continuing to talk to people in all sections of the meat production chain to establish a market pathway for CLMS graded meat. We have a small abattoir willing to process cattle and we have some producers who could supply a limited quantity of graded cattle at present. I have also spoken to a couple of butchers who would consider selling a CLMS branded product. There are still a few more details to get in place and then coordinate the whole operation so that we can ensure that it works. Another option is to develop an online market which could end up being logistically more workable than the traditional market chain. We welcome any input from any people in the market chain who would be willing to work with us.

 **ANNUAL MEETING.**

The company held its annual meeting recently and it was one of the most positive meetings we have held. One of the main reasons for this is probably because the last few months has seen us move our emphasis as a company from mainly research to more of a focus on evaluating. We believed that it was important to try and add as much objectivity as possible to our system and that is why we have spent so many years concentrating on this area. We also felt it was important to have a record of what we are doing and have planned for the future and hence the decision to put our book “The Vision Tender” together for this purpose and to support the evaluating side of the business.

* Whilst we are now starting to go more public with the system, we will still be working on developing more objectivity for the system and using technology to assist us to identify and measure the traits we know are important in producing quality beef.
* During the meeting we had more discussion on using ultrasound to identify the shape of the jaw and rib bones in cattle. We know that we can now get a reasonable image of these bones using a suitably adapted ultrasound machine. We see the next step as being able to take that image and electronically convert it to our current grading system. This would remove much of the subjectivity from that part of our system although there is room for some human error in the actual way in which the bone is scanned and we are also looking at ways to eliminate that.
* As mentioned in “What’s Happening”, we are continuing to gather fat samples for more trials. We are hoping to have had 60 samples tested by the end of the year and we feel that number should give us enough samples to get some idea of the omega 3 levels in cattle fed different diets and what the correlation between omega 3 meat and the CLMS tenderness grade is.
* With the emphasis on a more public face for the company now, we have held three field days over the last 3 months including the one with Gearld Fry at Nanango. The other two were held in Young in NSW and Kingaroy in Qld. with local beef producer groups interested in what we are doing. There were 10 – 12 producers in attendance at each and this number means that all present have a good opportunity to participate in the identification of the more important traits we look for in the cattle. To support these days we have now developed a power point presentation which we show at the start of each session to explain something about the company and its philosophy before moving on to some of the traits we look for before then moving to look at live cattle and look at identifying these traits on live animals.
* As part of our move to more public promotion there was discussion on whether the company should have a site at next year’s Beef Week in Rockhampton in Qld. There was general consensus that this would be a good idea so we are going to look at booking a site in the near future. This would also continue to build support for the system in Northern Australia where the interest in the system is currently growing fastest. There seems to be more interest in the north than is some of the more intensive areas. Most of those present felt that this was, at least, in part due to the recent set back to live exports in the north and the fact that northern producers are looking for a marketing edge for their cattle and our system certainly has the potential to provide this.

 **BREED OF THE QUARTER**

 **BRITISH WHITE**

In the last few newsletters I have featured bos indicus cattle. By way of change, I thought we could look at some of the features of one of the less popular, but very good quality British breeds this quarter. Whilst their numbers are not high, they do produce very good quality meat on the whole and the few we have evaluated have rated well on our system.

The British White, as the name implies, are mainly white in colour on blue or dark pigmented skin with usually fairly short white hair, with darker black or sometimes red points on extremities e.g muzzle, nose, ears, eyelids, teats of cows, and hooves. They are a naturally polled breed of medium size although mature cows can weigh up to 650 kg. and bulls up to 1000kg. Generally speaking, their body is marked with a splash or spots of colour on the neck, as well as spots on the flanks or back and some breech marks.

Like many British cattle, they were originally a dual purpose breed, but in more recent years the emphasis has been on beef production and their ability to convert grass into meat has been an advantage for them. They are particularly good at converting natural and poorer quality pastures and marshlands, especially in temperate climates, into meat and milk. Given their heritage, the cows are also good milk producers and so have little trouble rearing their calf through to 9 – 10 months before weaning provided they have a reasonable amount of feed.

Generally, the cows have a regular flow of milk with good butter fat content. They are well known for their mothering ability and are one of the few breeds that have a natural instinct for individual cows to guard the calves in the herd while other herd members go off to graze or water.

The British White bulls are also a good choice for mating with dairy cattle and particularly heifers to get good first cross calves for meat or even to be incorporated into a milking herd.

British White cattle are a hardy breed and have been shown to perform well in both their natural temperate climates as well as some of the warmer Australian climates in South East Qld. and in Texas in the USA. They have a high parasite, disease and heat tolerance and easy calving and high fertility.

There is some debate about the origin of the cattle. They have many characteristics of the white Bos Urus cattle of the Scandanavian countries and some of these may have been brought to Britian during the Viking invasions in the ninth century when some Viking farmers settled in Northern England around Northumbria. Others believe they are a descendant of the ancient indigenous wild white cattle of Great Britain that roamed the Lancashire region at Whalley Abbey and are known to be one of the oldest British breeds. They were referred to as park cattle and originally included both horned and polled herds, from which the British White reportedly later emerged. They were also popular amongst the nobility and were kept as ornamental and sporting animals in enclosed parks for many centuries. They are a close relative of another British white breed, the White Park.

 **THE CREAM IN BEEF**

One of the things that seems to have been forgotten to a large degree in discussions about beef production is the importance that milk plays in producing an animal capable of yielding quality meat. The trend has basically been to produce big, fast growing animals for the feed lot market and this has resulted in the neglect of some of the more feminine or cow related traits in our cattle. As a result, things like conception rates and calving percentages as well as a cow’s ability to produce high quality milk have suffered.

This was one of the topics that we discussed at length with Gearld Fry during his visit and we did so in a number of contexts as we travelled around looking at several herds of cattle with differing histories. Gearld has been focusing on the importance of calves receiving high quality milk from their birth right through to ten months of age when they are weaned. The future potential of a calf starts well before they are born and particularly during the last three months of the gestation. This is often the time when last year’s calves are weaned and the cows are put on lower quality feed until they calve again. This practice is not going to give the unborn calf a good start in life. If a cow is going to reach her full lifetime production potential of at least 12 good quality calves consistently, given the variations in climate and seasonal conditions, she needs to be fed adequately for 12 months of the year.

This is particularly important for heifer calves because they are going to form the nucleus of your herd in the future and they need to be on a consistent nutritional plain for the first 18 months of their lives to ensure that they can pass on their genetic potential to their offspring. The ability to produce good quality milk is part genetic and part nutrition. A cow must first have the genetic potential to produce an adequate quantity of milk with a butterfat percentage of at least 4%. This can be identified by the indicators that we have discussed previously and are in our book and some of Gearld Fry’s writings. Secondly, she must have access to adequate, good quality feed so that she can reach her genetic potential. Nutritional requirements will vary depending on the animal’s environment and it is up to each individual producer to assess his animal’s nutritional requirements.

As Gearld indicated, his research has shown that a lack of nutrition can greatly affect the development of a calf. One of the things he explained was that a lack of nutrition for a calf will produce high, prominent hips and pins and a high chine and these features will stay with the animal all its life. It will impair its ability to carry the amount of muscle, and therefore meat, that it would have otherwise been able to do. If you want some proof of this then consider how many very young calves prior to them not getting colostrum milk have you seen that have prominent hips and pins and a high chine. It would pay to take a note of this next time you are going around your cows at calving time. There will be a lot less beef calves showing these features than dairy calves. As Gearld explained, if you think about it, beef calves are with their mothers for 24 hours a day every day and will suckle their mother several times during a day. On the other hand, a dairy calf usually only has access to its mother’s milk for a couple of days at the most after they are born. They may get a little cow’s milk for a few days after that, but generally speaking, they are then fed a supplementary milk and after about 3 months weaned onto a pellet or grain ration and grass. Added to that, they are usually only fed twice a day and then with more than they can digest in a short time. All of this adds up to an unnatural start and usually nutritionally inadequate diet for their early life. It is little wonder that we are only getting 4 -5 lactations out of our dairy cows today.

In this regard, beef calves certainly get a more natural start to their lives. However, we should not lose site of the fact that even though they are eventually going to primarily produce meat, beef calves need access to good quality milk, especially in the first three months of their lives before they really start eating any grass. Therefore we need to ensure we are diligent in selecting cows that have the potential to be good milkers when we are selecting our replacement heifers.

It was interesting to observe Gearld Fry judging the cattle at the Brisbane Show. He was the only judge I saw who looked for skin flakes in the animal’s tail that gives a strong indication that the cow will produce good quantities of butter fat or who looked under the tail to see how large and what shape the escutcheon was to get an indication of how much milk the cow would produce. He also placed a lot of emphasis on the scrotum when judging the bulls because this is also an indicator of what the udders and teats of a bull’s daughters will look like. It was obvious by the shape and lack of epididymis on some of the prize winning bulls that other judges didn’t place the same emphasis on these features.

One of the herds that we looked at during our trip with Gearld and Dennis had been selected for milk production for many years now and this was obvious both by the milk indicators that they displayed and by the fact that most of the calves were weaned straight to the processor at between 180 and 200 kg. dressed weight at 7 - 9 months of age.

As beef producers, we cannot place too much emphasis on our cow’s ability to produce good quality milk and we need to be aware of and learn the indicators that the cow shows us that tell us what her production potential is.

I will discuss more of the topics that we shared with Gearld on his recent visit in our next newsletter.

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 **MARGIE AND GEARLD**

Since Gearld returned home, we have heard that his wife Margie’s health has deteriorated somewhat after she had been going really well for some time now so our thoughts and prayers are with Margie and Gearld as they battle their ongoing health challenges. If faith and courage have anything to do with things improving then no two people have more of these qualities to help them succeed in their battle. We wish them every bit of peace and tranquillity that they deserve as they face an uncertain future over the coming months.

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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 NEW MANUAL. WE WELCOME PRODUCER INPUT AND INTEREST AND WANT TO INVOLVE YOU IN WHAT WE ARE DOING.**

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