THE HORMONAL MAIL

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to this edition of our quarterly newsletter. It is certainly a buoyant time for many beef producers, especially in Australia. At last, returns are starting to justify the many rising production costs that are always a huge challenge in our businesses. A number of producers I have spoken with are grateful of the better prices, but always remain wary of the boom/bust cycle. Currently, the situation in Australia, at least, looks quite rosy in the shorter term. The local prices are being supported by the processing demand as well as the demand from producers looking at restocking in drought areas that have recently received good rain. Unfortunately, the lower herd numbers are forcing processors into buying more heifers for processing and adding competition for those producers wishing to restock.

The other factor to consider is that there is a reported decline in the demand for Australian beef and greater competition from countries such as Brazil and the USA. I hope that producers see this as a time when, for Australian beef to remain competitive on the world market, and not just in a few low consumption top end markets, the quality must improve. It is the high consumption markets that we have been supplying with ungraded meat that puts the floor price in our products and as the world demand for protein increases, I believe we need to be more aware of the general quality we produce and grade all our animals at the breeding stage rather than the after they have hit the kill floor. It is too late then to breed from elite stock that we have failed to identify and keep to build quality into our herds on a much deeper basis than we currently have. Having said that, it is pleasing to see an improvement in herd quality over the last 15 – 20 years I have been grading cattle more frequently. Back then, it was not unusual to grade a herd and find less than 25% were anything like tender. Over the last 4 – 5 years, I have graded some new herds with closer to 50% tender cattle. Some of our producers who have been using our grading system for longer are now getting from 75 – 90% of their herd as grading in our recommended tender range.

WHAT'S (BEEN) HAPPENING

* We recently attended the Coodardie Brahman stud's 40th. Anniversary sale held on the property at Mataranka. It was well attended with plenty of past and present buyers in attendance. The sale was the most successful that the O'Brien family have had in recent years with a complete clearance of the 49 bulls and 15 heifers offered. It was very gratifying to see 7 bulls sold to Qld., 5 of which went to CLMS clients. The O'Brien's have worked hard to get their yards etc. set up to be able to sell cattle on the property with a sale ring etc. and as usual their hospitality was first rate for all who attended.

*I will be travelling to NSW and Victoria in early October to visit clients and attend our annual meeting at Tallangatta. I also hope to have a couple of days in Western Vic. after we have had a number of inquiries from that area. I also plan to visit Central Qld. again in late Oct./early Nov.

*Following the 5 day courses we have held over the last year and the one day field day at Clermont in Qld., there has been continued interest from producers wishing to attend more courses in the future. We are certainly open to holding these and currently have nearly enough producers that have indicated they would attend a course if they were held in the Armidale and Clermont areas. The current plans are to hold another course near Armidale in Feb. 2017 and Clermont in April or May 2017. If you are interested, please let me know.

*It was certainly great to drive through Western Qld. on the way to the Nth. Territory in early August and see the difference in the country compared to last year. There was feed right through to Cloncurry and every bridge we crossed up until about 50 kms. east of Cloncurry was over water. Unfortunately, we saw few cattle and even less kangaroos, a stark contrast to last year when there were kangaroos and/or kangaroo carcasses every few metres. On the return journey it was similar from Cloncurry through to Townsville with only isolated areas, especially as we got closer to Townsville, that weren't quiet as green. The challenge now for so many producers who have had to destock because of the drought is that cattle prices are at very high levels now and rebuilding their herds is going to be a very expensive exercise. It will take several years for many to get their numbers back to a profitable level of carrying capacity and much longer to get the quality they need would like back into their herds. On the other hand it is certainly good news for those producers that were not affected by drought who are now finally reaping some just rewards for their efforts over many years.

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Breed of the Quarter
Brahman origins

In this newsletter, I would like to consider the origin of the Brahman breed. Despite it being one of the most popular breeds in the world, the Brahman breed is a relatively new breed and is not yet 100 years old. Like many of the breeds of cattle we are familiar with today, it is not an ancient, traditional breed, but has been developed from the crossing of older Zebu species animals. It originated in the United States of America in the early 1900s as a cross of four different Indian cattle breeds: Gyr, Guzarat, Ongole and Krishna Valley and possibly a little British breeds bloodlines.

Today's Brahman breed inherited its characteristics from the above breeds.

1. Krankrej cattle originated in the northern Gujarat area of India and were exported to Brazil where they were bred and called Guzarat. They are very highly prized as fast, powerful draft cattle. They are also fair producers of milk. These cattle are resistant to Tick fever and they show very little incidence of contagious abortion and tuberculosis. It has also been observed that the red color is recessive.
2. Gyr – Also originated in the Guzarat region of India and are known for their milking ability. They vary in color from pure red to speckles, yellowish red to white with large red spots. Their undercoat is red so it is probably safe to say that they made a major contribution to the origin of the Red Brahman cattle that we know today.
3. Ongole cattle origins can be traced back over 2000 years. However, when they were imported into Brazil and used in breeding programs there, the Brazilians started calling them Nellores and that is a name they are more commonly known as today. This is a similar story to what happened to the Krankrej becoming known as the Guzarat in Brazil and then more widely. They are the whitest colour of the breeds used to

develop the Brahman breed and are dominant in today's whiter strains of the breed.

4. The Krishna Valley breed is the newest of the breeds used in the development of today's Brahman breed and is itself the result of a mixture of breeds developed in India about 200 years ago to adapt to heavier black soil plains along the flats of the Krishna River. The breeds used in their development included Gir cattle from Kathiawar, Ongole cattle from Madras, possibly Kankrej from Gujarat, and local cattle having Mysore-type blood in them. The Krishna Valley breed was therefore bred to be a heavy draft breed suitable for cultivation purposes.

The Brahman is undoubtedly the most popular breed developed over the last 100 years from cross breeding programs. Some of the reasons for this include:-

a) They were bred for dryer, tropical type climates and because so much of the world is made up of such climatic conditions, the area of available to them as a breed is greater than that which other breeds perform well in.
b) Their adaptability to these areas and having outperformed other traditional tropical breeds in such environments.
c) They have shown a high resistance to parasites that have proven the downfall of many Bos Tauras breeds in tropical environments.
d) They have low maintenance requirements in harsh conditions and have a keen sense of survival in such conditions.

The Brahman breed is based on Indian Breeds that have through centuries of exposure to inadequate food supplies, insect pests, parasites, diseases and the weather extremes of tropical India, developed some remarkable adaptations for survival.

Characteristics include the fact that all the *Bos indicus* cattle have a large hump over the top of the shoulder and neck. Spinal processes below the hump are extended, and there is considerable muscular tissue covering the processes. The other characteristics of these cattle are their horns, which usually curve upward and are sometimes tilted to the rear, their ears, which are generally large and pendulous, and the throatlatch and dewlap, which have a large amount of excess skin. They also have more highly developed sweat glands than European cattle (*Bos taurus*) and so can perspire more freely. *Bos indicus* cattle produce an oily secretion from the sebaceous glands which has a distinctive odor and is reported to assist in repelling insects.

The first Indian cattle, of which there is any record, were imported in 1849 by Dr. James Bolton Davis of Fairfield County, South Carolina. The success of these early imports led to the importation of two more Indian bulls in 1885 into Texas. By mating these two bulls to the offspring of the earlier imports known locally as Barrows, the first attempt to concentrate the blood of *Bos indicus* cattle in the United States was undertaken.

In 1905 and 1906, the Pierce Ranch of Pierce, Texas, assisted by Thomas M. O'Connor of Victoria, Texas, imported thirty bulls and three females of several Indian types. These were personally selected by Able P. Borden, manager of the Pierce Ranch.

In 1923-24, 90 bulls of the Guzerat, Gir and Nellore types were imported from Brazil. In 1925, a second importation from Brazil, including 120 bulls and 18 females, reached the USA. Both groups were shipped to Mexico and driven overland to the United States.

Eighteen Brazilian bulls were brought to Texas by way of Mexico in 1946. It is said that during the period from 1910 to 1920, many cattle in the south-western part of Texas and the coastal country along the Gulf of Mexico showed considerable evidence of *Bos indicus* breeding. Naturally, many of the bulls that were used were the result of crosses with other breeds.

Since there are records of less than 300 imported Brahmans, most of which were bulls, it must be assumed that other breeds supplied the foundation animals for the breed. The bulls were used on cows of the European breeds and on the descendants of these crosses. By the fifth generation (31/32) the offspring carried not only a large proportion of Bos Indicus breeding, but selection pressure had permitted the development of an animal generally regarded as superior to the original imports for beef production.

Early Australian importations of Brahman-type cattle can be traced back to the turn of the century. However, it was not until 1933 that significant numbers were imported by a syndicate of Queensland cattlemen in conjunction with the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research. Further imports of US bloodline Brahmans

recommenced in 1982 with the opening of the Australian Government's Cocos Island Quarantine Station facility. Our Australian Brahman breeders have welcomed this new genetic material. To early 1987, USA and Brazilian blood Brahman imports through Cocos Island have topped 300 head with further shipments in the pipeline.

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Sensory influence

I have touched on the part our senses play in our lives in a couple of our previous newsletters and I would like to expand a bit more on it again here at the risk of repetition. I will add some more information about them before I offer comments on how they can relate to our meat eating experience. They are particularly crucial to us when we are evaluating our cattle live and can also relate to other factors related to eating the product.

Our five senses are basically how we take in all that is happening in the world around us, our learnings and experiences and how we give out and communicate with the world. They are the foundation on which we build our contact with our world. There has been quite a lot of research on how they work and how they form our world. This has revealed that around 40% of us are dominant in the visual sense, about the same are dominant in the feeling sense and about 20% of us are dominant in the sound sense. There are only about 1% of the population that are dominant in taste and smell. However, these are important secondary senses. Usually, our dominant sense doesn't change much during our lives though it can if we, say, for example, change vocations. You can easily work out which you are most dominant in by becoming aware of words that you use often or where your eyes move when asked a question and you are searching for the answer. Each of our senses has words and phrases related to them so if you listen to the words that you use, this will give you a good indication of your primary sense.

Visual – see, light, dark, bright, look, clear, notice, picture, draw, aim, reflect, show, round, watch etc.

Auditory – hear, speak, discuss, say, shout, utter, describe, question, whisper, mention, contact etc.

Feeling – calm, firm, hard, touch, pressure, cold, tangible, tired, glad, heavy, hold, handle, drive etc.

Taste – sweet, oily, flavour, juicy, chomp, meaty etc.

Smell – aroma, scent, stale, fresh, perfume, sniff etc.

In the same way, if you become aware of your eye movements when you are asked a question or are thinking about something, you can work out your primary sense. For visually dominant people, their first eye movement will be up. For sound dominant people, they will look straight ahead and for feeling dominant people, they will look down and to their right if they are right handed, left if left handed.

The first three also have internal and external parts.

Visual – External – what we see around us – the objects in front of us – their shape, size, colour etc.

Internal – the pictures we see in our "mind's eye" – how we can recall the colour, shape, size of our car, house, prize bull etc. when we can't see them physically.

Feelings – External - the feel of things we touch with any part of our bodies – their hardness, softness, sharpness, roughness etc.

Internal – our emotions – happiness, joy, sadness, anger, patience, creativity, fear etc.

Sound – External – the sounds that we hear that come from things around us – other people's voices, traffic noise, television etc.

Internal – the thoughts in our head – what we are working out in our minds or recalling voices or sounds we have heard, the voices in our head, working out future plans etc.

One of the un-wonders of our mind is that it can't tell the difference between what is happening on our outside and what is happening on the inside. So if we change something about, say, the picture in our mind, e.g. try changing the colour of your car and see if that changes what you think about or feel about it. If changing the colour doesn't make any difference, try changing another of the picture's details e.g. its size or shape. As a rule when you change one of these "details", it will change the others as well i.e. how you think or feel about it.

So much or what controls our lives is what happens inside our heads in terms of thoughts and we can influence these in the same way once we become aware of the details of those thoughts. Are they loud, high pitched, moving quickly or slowly, going in a clockwise or anti-clockwise direction and so on. When we become aware of any of these details and start to change them then that is a sign that we are also getting control back over the situation. This is the case with any of our senses. It is far more effective to change any of these details which are the

process, the "how" we do things rather than the "what" the content. Try to focus on how you are thinking, feeling or looking at the pictures rather than what they are.

How can we relate this to our cattle and meat? In live assessment of our stock, the two main senses we obviously use are our sight and touch. When we look at an animal, we can see its features and faults and work out whether it has what we want in our herds. By touching them in various places, we can determine a lot about their hormonal activity and the taste of their meat as well as their tenderness by feeling their bone shape.

The two main features that we consider when eating meat are its taste and tenderness. Colour is also considered by many as being important but I will concentrate on the first two here. So the two main senses we use are taste and feeling. Whilst many of us who have been involved in the industry for many years, and many old-timers I have spoken to, consider taste to be the most important consideration in the meat eating experience, that is not necessarily the case with many and the bulk of consumers who consume the far greater quantity of meat produced. I base this, not only on what city and non-producer consumers have told me, but also on what I have explained above. If we take this into account, 40% of the population have feeling as their dominant sense so are going to be attracted to things that feel good before others. Therefore, 40% of the population will automatically judge their eating experience on how tender a piece of meat is. There will be a reasonable percentage of the remainder that will be swayed by how it looks, but certainly no more than 40%. The other nearly 20% will be divided between the two, depending on what their secondary sense is. In reality, only about 1% of people will automatically judge their eating experience by the taste sense. This highlights the importance of tenderness in the eating experience. This may all be a little theoretical for many of you. However, it is too important to ignore when we are producing a product that we want to appeal naturally or automatically to people and the more this happens the better. This is the main reason we rate tenderness as being so important. It is the first sensory perception and experience that people have with a product that will determine whether they go for more of it. Much of this happens at an unconscious level so I hope this section assist in your understanding of our thought process in terms of the importance of tenderness.

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Milk Production Indicators

A significant method of identifying the productivity of a cow was first identified by the Frenchman F. Guenon in the first half of the eighteenth century and we have modified that system to suit the CLMS grading system and added it as an integral part of our system. It is based on the identification of the escutcheon mirror or pattern which Guenon found provided a major indicator for the quality and quantity of milk produced. This pattern is identified by the positioning of the hair on a cow's coat from the front or centre of the udder to the under-side of the tail and out to, or just past, the centre of the thighs.

When Guenon developed his classification system, he used a very extensive system of evaluating that covered every possible difference in the size, shape and characteristics of the escutcheon, plus the presence of feathers of varying types, shapes, sizes and characteristics which we will discuss in our next newsletter.

Guenon's original version has been abridged to match the CLMS grading system consisting of five grades. Having summarised Guenon's method, we consider the following to be the key indicators for each grade:

1. Escutcheon shape and size
2. Type and characteristics of feathers
3. Hair colour and characteristics in the escutcheon and feathers
4. Presence of scales/flakes on the inside and lower part of the thigh in the escutcheon and in the twist of the tail.
5. Colour of these flakes on the escutcheon, tail twist and inside the ear.

With the range of classes and feathers that Guenon identified, we have generalised his system to make this into a workable grading system that will fit into our overall evaluation system without making it too cumbersome and unworkable.

That, along with ensuring that you, the producer, get maximum value from this description, is what we are aiming at.

There are a few more points to bear in mind when using this method of evaluation. We would like to

emphasise the importance of keeping these factors in mind at all times when evaluating your cattle.
Guenon identified 10 classes of cattle determined by the shape of the escutcheon.
These were:
FIRST CLASS – FLANDRINES
SECOND CLASS – LEFT HAND FLANDRINES
THIRD CLASS – SELVEDGE
FOURTH CLASS – CURVELINE
FIFTH CLASS – BICORN
SIXTH CLASS – DOUBLE SELVEDGE
SEVENTH CLASS – DEMIJOHN
EIGTH CLASS – SQUARE
NINTH CLASS – LIMOUSINE
TENTH CLASS – CARRESINE

- Within each class, he identified 6 orders depending on the size of the escutcheon and presence or other wise of feathers, yellowish skin and flaking skin and fineness of hair.
- The figures below provide an idea of what to look for when you are looking for the escutcheon. Space doesn't permit me to add all the various grades here, but these 3 silhouettes will provide a good indication of what to look for in terms of a close likeness to the shape and size of the escutcheon in the 10 classes that Guenon identified.
- The shape of the escutcheon itself from the centre of the udder to its outer extremities on either thigh remains fairly constant in all of Guenon's classes. The more significant change is in its size and its shape above a line that could be drawn horizontally across the thighs. That part of the escutcheon above the thighs is a different shape for each of Guenon's classes and it will lessen in size as the yield of the animal decreases.

- The escutcheon can be considered in 2 parts to simplify its evaluation. The lower part from the middle of the udder to a horizontal line across the thighs can be seen to roughly represent the shape of a shovel and its shape doesn't change in any class. The part above this horizontal line that reaches up towards or beside the vulva can be likened to the handle of the shovel and will change shape for each class except the 10^{th}. class "Carresine" which doesn't have a this feature.

- The critical difference between orders is governed by the presence or otherwise of feathers which always indicate a cow's ability to sustain milk throughout her pregnancy and the size of the escutcheon.

- The surface area of the escutcheon is the key factor in regard to the yield of milk and the cow's reproductive potential. The form of the escutcheon needs to be taken into account and co-ordinated with similar forms and be separated from dissimilar forms.

- In breeding, there is an advantage in pairing animals with the same pattern of escutcheon.

- The surface area of the escutcheon will vary depending on the size of the animal, but the measurements from the outside of the thighs, hocks, vulva etc. where the margins of the escutcheon should reach with the limits of its extreme points will give a more precise assessment regardless of the size of the animal.

- It is very important to know the characteristic marks that designate alternates in each class. Alternates are those cows that start to lose their milk on getting in calf regardless of any other feature. Usually they are very fertile cows and conceive at the first service by the bull. The alternate's loss of milk is an inborn peculiarity of its constitution.

- Quantity and persistence of yield can be affected by varying degrees through differences in climate, feed quality and seasonal conditions and these factors need to be considered when using the grading indicators.

- In all cases, the cows in the first grade are the highest yield and best quality with the yield of milk decreasing from the highest to the lowest.

Milk yields referred to in each grade are certainly lower than those that are now achieved in most dairies, given the advances in feed management since Guenon's time. However, the ratio will be the same throughout the grades. If the top grade cow now is producing 30 plus litres as compared to 24 – 25 in Guenon's time, then the second grade should be producing about 24 – 26 now compared to 18 – 20 in Guenon's time and so on down through the comparative grades.
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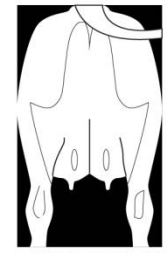
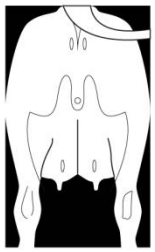


FIRST CLASS - FLANDRINES

SECOND CLASS -
LEFT HAND FLANDRINES

THIRD CLASS - SELVEDGE

FOURTH CLASS - CURVELINE



FIFTH CLASS - BICORN

I would welcome any feedback from you on any subject that is discussed in this newsletter. I have had some feedback over the time we have been publishing it and it is most appreciated and helpful. Please keep the feedback and comments coming.

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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 BOOK. WE WELCOME PRODUCER INPUT AND INTEREST AND WANT TO INVOLVE YOU IN WHAT WE ARE DOING.