THE HORMONAL MAIL

THE OFFICIAL QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF CLASSIC LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT SERVICES.

NUMBER 73

JULY 2024



ABN 20862399797

140 PHILIP DRIVE, TEDDINGTON, QLD. 4650. PHONE: 0741297029/0411201879.

Email:<u>gewyatt@bigpond.com</u>
Website:www.classiclivestock.com.au

EDITORIAL

Welcome to our mid-year newsletter. I often wonder how our rapidly changing world is impacting on our food producers worldwide because the changes are happening globally. There is little doubt that the world we live in today is changing faster now than ever before in history and speaking of history, many of our leaders seem to have ignored history in their decision making today. Whilst change may be faster than ever, that doesn't necessarily mean that history will not continue to repeat itself. The evidence of this is too obvious and significant to ignore. There are many examples of it over many centuries. Despite the speed of change, we still need to allow enough time to thoroughly research the possible outcomes of our actions before we put them into practice. It seems that this is becoming a diminishing practice, especially when considering the historical significance of the fact that food (including water) along with air are the two things essential for human life at any level. We are seeing decisions being made today that are reducing the ability of our food producers to continue to feed the world in a sustainable and productive way and in a way that they can also survive both financially, physically and psychologically. We are seeing decisions being made in the corridors of power by people that have never felt anything but the feel of concrete under their feet that are only focused on ways of keeping the troughs of luxury that they are feeding out of full with no long-term thought of the consequences of their decisions. The sad facts are that there is an increasing number of those decisions forcing the food producers of the world to become a struggling, suppressed group of people buried beneath a mountain of bureaucracy that is slowing sapping the life out of them. Let's hope that common sense and the advent of some "real" leaders happens sooner rather than later to restore balance to our world and an understanding of the real needs of the human race to survive. It

takes quite a lot of self-discipline at times these days to maintain a positive approach to life.

WHAT'S (BEEN) HAPPENING

* We were very satisfied with the interest in our site and system shown by people at Beef Week 2024. Both Albert Hancock from Kookabookra Red Poll stud, who shared the site with us, and myself were kept busy for most of the time talking to and/or explaining our system to previous visitors and clients as well as many new faces. One of the most encouraging aspects of the week were the number of younger breeders who spoke with us about how we select elite cattle.

It is safe to say that we at least doubled the number of visitors to our site at this year's Beef Week and had plenty of positive response from those who attended judging by the number of the new edition of our book we sold and the interest shown by those who are interested in having cattle evaluated in the future.

*We were also satisfied with the response we had at our site at the recent Ag-Grow Field Days at Emerald. Rachel Constable and Albert Hancock had an adjoining site and sold several of the Red Poll bulls they brought to the event. It was valuable having their Red Poll bulls as well as a couple of Brahman heifers and a bull from Rosie Robertson's RR Brahman stud to demonstrate the system with.

*Planning is well underway for our proposed five-day course at the Clermont Showground and saleyards for the week from August the $12^{th} - 16^{th}$. inclusive. Again, I do wish to apologise to those of you who live a long way from Clermont. However, as I have explained previously, the facilities there are so much better than any similar setup we have been able to find that what it adds to your learning experience will more than pay for the extra travel cost. We have had

to increase the cost of the course unfortunately, after having been able to keep it at the cost of the original course nearly 10 years ago up until now. We have found the cost of running the course has increased significantly since we started. We have kept the increase to a bare minimum, but we will still need a minimum of 10 people to attend to justify running it. Over the last few weeks and especially since Beef Week and the Ag-Grow Trend Field days, we have been greatly encouraged in the interest shown by producers interested in attending the course. We have had over 20 expressions of interest from those interested in attending and are now asking that those of you who would like to attend, please confirm your attendance with us by the 24th. July so that we have time to get all the course material printed, cattle and feed organised, catering etc. in plenty of time. I know that several of you have already confirmed your attendance, but I would appreciate it if you could just re-confirm again, please. We have had 20 + people on a previous course and it seemed to work okay so we are hoping to have a similar number for this course.

*Albert and I are hopeful that our health will continue to be good enough for us to hold more courses in the future. Unfortunately, reality is telling us that we are not quite as young and active as we once were so we are just taking it a year at a time at present.

*We will be holding a one-day field day at 59 Waterview Dr, Moffatdale, QLD 4605 which is just south of Murgon. Unfortunately, it will be on Sunday the 4th. August because this seemed to be the time that suited most of the locals. We hope that it will suit anyone interested in attending who lives in the South Burnett/Gympie area.

*We will be going to Coodardie Brahman stud in early July and then back to Aramac to work with some cattle there on the way home – hence the slightly earlier newsletter this quarter.

*We also plan to head to Central NSW in late August to do some more evaluation work and catch up with anyone who would like us to call.

*If you are interested in having a field day near you or would like to host one, please let myself or Albert Hancock (0417244057/0267334666) 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.

* We are continuing to put together requirements for anyone interested in becoming a registered evaluator and at this stage it will require attendance at one of our past or future long courses and supervised evaluation of a number of cattle (500 – 1000 depending on previous experience) with one of our registered evaluators. Our evaluators will be operating as private consultants mainly and work together when needed to run courses, field days etc.

*Kookabookra Red Poll Stud has bulls for sale - see end of newsletter - so if you are interested please call Rachel on 02 6733 4666 or 0432 581 493.

*The inaugural Queensland JAD Speckle Park & Angus Bull Sale will be held at Rolleston, Central QLD, on Friday, August 2 at 1 pm.

*The Seifert Belmont Reds Bull sale will be held on Monday 5th of August at "Wonga", 490 Jolimont Rd., Jandowae, or on-line on Auctions Plus. Phone 07 4668 6125.

*We launched the fourth edition of our book "The Vision Tender" at this year's Beef Week and had sold the 20 copies we took by Wednesday morning of that week. We have had steady enquiry since and this has been most encouraging. The main changes are around the format of the book and all the relative evaluation traits etc. remain the same. We have added a little more information on different thoughts on our system and omitted some of the more company orientated parts. The book can be bought on line off our website – classiclivestock.com.au

*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.

BREED OF THE QUARTER

AUROCH

I thought that rather than focus on any one particular breed of cattle in this newsletter, it may be of interest to some of you to briefly consider some of the history of cattle. In particular, to consider a species of cattle that roamed Europe, Africa and parts of Asia for thousands of years and are now extinct. I will also mention the results of some of the attempts to resurrect those early cattle that are known as Aurochs. It is not surprising that there is some variation in the historical data around the beginning of what we now know generally as "cattle". However, I have attempted to summarise it as accurately as possible.

The word Aurochs, pronounced "auroks" or "oroks" comes to English from German.

The **aurochs** or **urus**, (Bos primigenius) was a large species of cattle and were once common in Europe. It is now extinct. It was a wild

animal, though the extinct aurochs/urus is a not the same species as the *wisent* (the European bison).

According to the Paleontologisk Museum, University of Oslo, aurochs developed in India some two million years ago, came into the Middle East and then farther into Asia.

They reached Europe about 250,000 years ago. It was once thought that they were a different species from modern European cattle (*Bos taurus*). Aurochs also had several features not often seen in modern cattle, such as lyre-shaped horns set at a forward angle, a pale stripe down the spine, and a different colour according to the gender. Males were black with a pale stripe down the spine, while females and calves were reddish (these colours are still found in a few domesticated cattle breeds such as Jersey cattle). Aurochs were also known to have very aggressive behaviour, and killing one was seen as an act of courage in ancient cultures.

At one time there were three aurochs subspecies that were identified, namely *Bos primigenius namadicus* that occurred in India, the *Bos primigenius mauretanicus* from North Africa and the *Bos primigenius primigenius* from Europe and the Middle East. Only the European subspecies survived until recent times.

Cattle have been domesticated for several thousand years. Stone Age hunters left us with pictures on cave walls of the aurochs (*Bos primigenius*) which are the progenitors of the cattle of today. There is evidence of domestication of cattle as long as 8000 years ago in central and western Asia. While early cattle may have been kept for the common uses of meat, milk and draught, it may be that the earliest domestication was for religious purposes. Human intervention saw cattle decrease in size and become more like the cattle we know today until aurochs finally became extinct early in the seventeenth century when poachers probably killed the last one in Europe.

The aurochs or urus, (*Bos primigenius*) was a large species of cattle. They used to be common in Europe, but are now extinct. Originally, it was a wild animal and not domesticated.

Today, cattle fall into two classifications. They are members of the genus Bos. and can mostly be assigned either to the species taurus or indicus. There is no reproductive barrier between these two species, so they are able to freely interbreed. However, there are some physical differences and, whilst it is generally accepted that they are derived from a common progenitor species, they evolved separately for many years.

Bos indicus cattle typically have a pronounced hump on their shoulders while Bos taurus cattle are humpless. The hump is generally used for energy storage. Bos indicus cattle were common on the Indian subcontinent for many generations before beginning to migrate along the east coast of Africa and toward Southeast Asia.

Bos taurus cattle evolved in more northern areas of Asia and Europe. There were migrations of Bos taurus cattle along western Africa and then into the Americas with the explorations of the Spaniards in the late Middle Ages.

Although it is generally true that Bos indicus cattle are tropically adapted and Bos taurus cattle are adapted to temperate regions, the migration of Bos taurus cattle along western Africa has resulted in some tropically adapted Bos taurus breeds. Some early crossing of taurus and indicus cattle in Africa resulted in a subgroup referred to as 'Sanga' cattle. Generally, it has been more common for Bos Taurus cattle to move into, and be crossed with Bos Indicus cattle in more tropical climates than the other way around, although some of the breeds originating from the crossing of these two species such as Santa Gertrudis have adapted quite well to more temperate climates.

The last-known aurochs herd lived in a marshy woodland in Poland's Jaktorów Forest. The herd decreased from around 50

individuals in the mid-16th century to four individuals by 1601. The last aurochs cow died in 1627 from natural causes.

They had been hunted and forced into extinction across its entire range by the ever-increasing expansion of human civilization causing habitat loss as much of its living areas were turned into pastures for domestic cattle, horses and cropping.

However, despite it being long gone, there remains today, strands of its DNA that are still alive and distributed among a number of ancient cattle breeds that still exist across Europe.

The aurochs are dead and gone, but there has been ongoing back-breeding of its closest living relatives in Europe especially over the last 80-100 years. and a "breed" known as the Tauros is the result and maintains some of these ancient genes. These cattle have now become part of a "Rewilding Europe" program and have been introduced in areas such as the Coa Valley in Portugal and the Danube Delta.

A recent genetic study, ranking 34 primitive cattle breeds by their closeness to the extinct aurochs, provides additional scientific backing to the Tauros Programme that aims to breed a suitable replacement for this lost species. Genetically speaking, the Pajuna breed is the closest to the original aurochs

The return of the Aurochs

The first attempt to bring back the auroch was made in the 1920s by German biologists Heinz and Lutz Heck. The result was a breed called the Heck cattle, with some resemblance to the original species. More recently, as mentioned above, attempts have been made to achieve a breed that is closer to the auroch.





The Tauros Programme

One of the most advanced is a Dutch-based that is the largest initiative so far with their modern auroch named 'Tauros'. The programme's aim is to selectively breed the Tauros so they serve the niche function of natural grazing and therefore, sustaining 'a rich mosaic of open landscapes'.

Breeding of Tauros is also happening in five other countries than the Netherlands. These other countries are: Spain, Portugal, Croatia, Czech Republic, Romania and the Netherlands and in 2017 there

were over 600 animals, 400 of these are part of the European Wildlife Bank. Though a domesticated breed of cattle, the Tauros will act very much like its wild ancestors. The programme envisages having these free-roaming, self-sufficient herbivores grazing in large herds (more than 150) across various rewilding sites in Europe in the next 20 years. They have the ability to defend themselves from predation by carnivores such as wolves and bears, but some will inevitably be preyed upon by wild carnivores thereby restoring natural food chains.

Some of the breeds used in the Tauros program are shown at the end of the newsletter.

FERTILITY

I realise that I have touched on this topic several times previously either separately or as part of other traits I have discussed. However, it is the topic that we are most frequently asked about in terms of identifying cattle that will be fertile and this was certainly again the case at Beef Week 2024. It is what most breeders put as the number one value when it comes to identifying and prioritising their aims in having a beef cattle enterprise. This stands to reason when you consider that to be a profitable business, one needs to have a herd that will reproduce regularly and consistently, thus providing a commodity that can be sold and provide a living for the producer and those who rely on them doing so.

There is a never-ending amount of information available about what is needed to run a fertile beef herd. This includes information on factors such as the climate, the season, grazing options, the size of the herd, the property environment, the choice of a bull, hygiene at the time of calving, the interval between parturition and the first insemination, detection of oestrus, the time of insemination during oestrus, nutrition, selection and the culling of cows.

Fertility is also heavily reliant on the function of fleshing ability and fleshing ability is a result of a having a low maintenance animal. With bulls, there is plenty of information about factors that can affect bull fertility such as structural soundness, capability of the reproductive organs, quality of semen, level of libido and plane of nutrition. These days, there is also generally plenty of recorded data on each individual animal that can be used to assist with your selection of the type of animals that should be fertile. However, they are not always foolproof and Mother Nature occasionally throws us a curved ball e.g. the \$100,00+ bull that never sires a calf.

However, there is less information on what to actually physically look for that will tell you the probable fertility levels of an animal. What are the indicators that the actual individual animal gives us to assist in selecting those animals that are going to make our enterprise more successful?

In the next few sentences, I would like to suggest some indicators of bull and cow fertility that you can observe when you visually examine an animal and before you carry out semen testing etc. After that, you have the indicators and results to make an informed decision about your breeding choices. As breeders, I suggest that our ultimate goal is to have a fertile bull with all the masculine traits that we are looking for in our herd that has the capacity to serve 70-80 of our elite cows in the first 21 days of their breeding cycle.

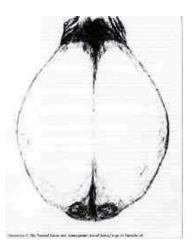
To make the main visual indicators a little clearer to follow, I will list them in dot point form, though not necessarily in order of importance.

Remember too, that there are slight variations in some of the indicators for fertility between Bos Indicus and Bos Taurus cattle. For example, Bos Indicus bulls don't have short curly hair around the head and neck that many Bos Taurus breeds do.

BULLS

- One of the most desirable features to consider is the coarseness of the hair about the head, face and neck of the bull along with coarse and wavy hair about the face. This is an indicator of the highest degree of fertility and as a bull matures and reaches his highest sperm count, the curls will become tighter on the breeds that have curls.
- Fertility is indicated by the skin thickness (especially Bos Taurus) on the head neck and shoulders. It will have crevices or folds running vertical from the top of neck downward to bottom of neck and be loose, thick and with a high amount of elasticity.
- Soft, velvety hair on the head, neck and shoulders and hair standing erect on the poll are signs of infertility. It occurs when something happens to the bull to decrease his testosterone levels and can happen as quickly as within 14 days. It is a good idea to watch for any changes in the poll hair on your bulls because this will be the first visual indication that his fertility level is dropping.
- Another indicator of a lessening in fertility is a decrease in the bull's crest size. The crest is a masculine feature that should increase in size as the bull matures.
- The tail of a fertile bull should be very coarse from the top end of the tail down. The hair needs to be coarse and thin like the head and neck hair. The switch should also be coarse and dark like the prepuce hair and continue within 3 -4 inches of the ground.
- The scrotum sack should be slightly darker in colour with a covering of very thin silky hair. Coarse hair should not be tolerated and denotes infertility. When something happens to reduce the fertility, the hair covering on the scrotum will

- began to change and can become thicker and longer. The increase in hair will increase the temperature in the scrotum.
- Both testicles need to be exactly the same size, shape, length and tone (degree of firmness) with a well-developed walnut shaped epididymis at the bottom of the testicles. If there are no epididymis, that bull will not sire calves and any variation in the shape, size and number of epididymis will affect that bull's serving capacity.
- If the pineal (facial) swirl is anywhere but in the centre of the face and a circle, a production problem is likely to occur during that bull's life. An elongated swirl is an indication of low fertility.
- A larger prepuse opening can also be a sign of infertility.
- A wide chest from birth is an indicator that testosterone production will start early.
- A bull with a big front end will produce daughters with large back ends and therefore greater ease of calving.
- A narrow front end in a bull equals low fertility in his offspring.



COWS

- The aim is to have a cow that will produce a calf every year and get in calf on her first cycle each year with the bull.
- Femininity in a cow equals fertility, that is, a clean, soft hair covering of a well-proportioned head on a long slender neck and gentle angularity from the shoulders to the rump.
- High hormonal activity is a strong indicator of fertility in both cows and bulls so look for a prominent greasy spine, soft velvety skin/hair with plenty of elasticity in the skin and the feel of oiliness in the skin.
- Her neck length should be two thirds of her overall body length. However, an overly long neck is sign of a high maintenance, less fertile cow.
- As with bulls, an elongated facial swirl is an indication of low fertility.
- Early maturing cows are generally the most fertile in the herd and this can be indicated by cows that start to shed their winter coats as soon as the days start to lengthen and get warmer.
- Femininity and fertility are totally defined beginning with the rump area of the cow A fertile cow will have a rump width that is at least two and a half inches more than her rump width with a rump that slopes from the hooks to the pins and at least a 90 degree angle at the thurl from the hooks to the thurl and the pins to the thurl.
- Without a wide, deep rump, fertility is low and the cow will suffer with slow calving through her life.
- When you look from behind a cow, only the stomach is wider than the rump.
- A narrow rump can indicate low hormone production which in turn leads to low fertility.

- The flank girth should be at least two inches greater than the heart girth. Anything less also means a lack of fertility.
- Prominent thymus, thyroid, pancreas and adrenal swirls are all indicators of a fertile cow.
- In recent years since we have been explaining the importance of understanding what hair swirls tell us about an animal's health and production potential, we have been paying attention in regard to the position of the Adrenal swirl and what it tells us about a cow's fertility. Since we have been sharing our information with the breeders we have been working with, several have started to take note of the Adrenal swirl's positions in relation to their fertility. They have done this by noting where on the backbone the swirl is positioned when they pregnancy test their cows. They have noted that the cows that get in calf on their first cycle all have their Adrenal swirls well forward i.e. on or in front of the shoulders with Bos Taurus cattle or only 3 – 4 inches back in the case of Bos Indicus cattle. Their feedback has indicated that the further back the swirl, the later in the season the cow claves as a rule.

*******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.

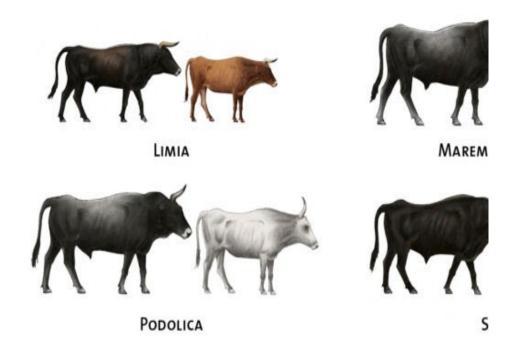
PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT US ABOUT ANY ITEMS IN THIS NEWSLETTER, ON OUR WEBSITE OR IN OUR BOOK. WE WELCOME PRODUCER INPUT AND INTEREST AND WANT TO INVOLVE YOU IN WHAT WE ARE DOING.

Disclaimer: - Information contained in this newsletter is believed to be true and accurate at the time of publication. Classic Livestock Management Services is not

liable to any person or organisation, whether in negligence or otherwise for anything published in, or omitted from this publication.

MAIN CATTLE BREEDS USED I





DESIRED



