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EDITORIAL

Welcome to our spring (or autumn in the northern hemisphere) newsletter. Whilst spring is usually a time of new life with the next crop of calves, lambs, foals etc. coming into the world, it is difficult to get over excited given the worsening drought conditions we are currently experiencing.

We have travelled extensively over the last two months and apart from the southern most parts of the country, many of the main stock and crop production areas in Australia are diabolically dry. Even here where I live, just south of Maryborough in Queensland and less than 20 kms. as the crow flies from the coast, we have had only about 150 mm (6 inches) of rain since the beginning of the year at a time when we can easily have 750+mm (30 inches) and add unseasonably windy conditions, it is the driest it has been for well over 20 years.

It is circumstances like these that we all need to be even more aware in terms of how the situation is affecting our family, friends and neighbours. For many, when things become more difficult in our lives, we tend to withdraw and in so doing, become controlled by our negative thoughts – the “mischievous mad monkey” running around in our heads. This can lead to ever increasing loneliness and isolation, two things that are contrary to who we are as people. We are social beings and sometimes even when we don’t feel like picking up the phone and talking to someone, we often feel better after we have done it – just a few minutes of distraction, if nothing else. Usually, one of the first things that make these times more difficult is the lack of income so it is important that we use our creativity to find social experiences that are not costly and there have been a number of such events publicised recently where communities have rallied to hold events that don’t drain financial resources further, so get together as families or communities and add some of these social activities to your calendars despite the situation, because it is often the best medicine you can take for your own mental health.

WHAT'S (BEEN) HAPPENING

*We will be travelling to Northern Victoria for our company annual meeting on the 5th. October and having a phone link up with other directors. We also plan to grade cattle in Central NSW on the way. We will also be travelling north to Charters Towers in November to grade more cattle there.

*We recently spent some time with a sheep (Merino) breeder near Harden in central NSW where we compared some of the traits that we select cattle for with similar traits in sheep. Many are very similar and seeing the comparison's again first hand was very rewarding e.g. We were feeling the bone shape on the inside of the jaw on the sheep and further back compared to cattle where we feel on the outside and near the front. We also linear measured a couple of sheep and the correlations were similar though these sheep had nearly 2 inches of wool so probably the best time to grade sheep for most traits would be straight off shears.

* We are still very keen to hold more field days in localised areas over the next few months, so 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. We are still keen to hold a one-day workshop at the Charters Towers saleyards, possibly in November.

*We were fortunate enough to be invited to evaluate some Speckle Park cattle recently at the JAD Speckle Park stud at "Greenvale near Yeovil in Central NSW. These were the first Speckle Park cattle herd we have done any evaluation on though we have seen them at Beef Wee and other field days. The main reason that I am mentioning this here is that we graded nearly 30 heifers, which, incidentally, were very well grown for their age, and every one graded 2.5 or better for milk quantity. Whilst I realise this is only a small sample, I have never had a

run of that many females grade that highly for milk quantity before. They also graded above average for all traits and including milk quality and this could be seen in some young calves that were in a nearby paddock. If these qualities can be maintained as the breed develops genetically, then it seems they will be a positive addition to our breed register.

*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.

*The Coodardie (Northern Territory) bull sale was held on Wed. August 14th. 2019.

The sale reflected the current market conditions in the Northern Territory and whilst more than 35 of the 55 bulls offered were sold, there was good competition from 10 registered buyers, which is at least as many as have been present in the past and more than usual. There has also been interest post sale in the remaining bulls and the O'Brien family are hopeful of clearing their full offering in the near future.

*We remain happy to promote the sales of other breeders and would like to put them in the newsletter, so please let me know the details.

HIND QUARTER/BUTT PROFILE.

The maternal shape of the rump will determine the value of the hindquarter both from a breeding and meat production perspective. The butt provides the best area on the animal to see the quality of the muscle and, in particular, its smoothness or otherwise. Loin strength is also an important factor in the overall balance of the hind quarter. The rump width and length are critical measurements in determining the overall balance of the hind quarter as well as factors such as fertility and calving ease. The key to the hindquarter is the degree of maternal shape of the rump.

- The rump height is closely correlated to weight gain ability. Tall long-legged animals tend to be out of balance and will gain weight over a longer period of time, reach puberty later and be slower to finish.

- In cows, the rump width should be 42% of the hip height or more, with more being better in a beef cow.

- The rump width should be at least 5 cm. more than the rump length. The wider the rump, the higher the fertility and femininity. A cow with a wide rump will shorten the neck length of her sons. A narrow rump means less meat.

- Rump length percentage is that percentage that the rump makes up of the body length or 2/3 of the top line.

- In females it should not exceed 40% with the ideal being 36% - 39%. A female with a low rump percentage of say 36% will have a higher fertility than one of, say, 42%.

Defects such as high pins cause poor drainage from the cervix, while rounded rumps, high thurls pushed back and a seamy muscle pattern down the butt will lead to calving difficulties as well as a reduction in meat yield and poor fat distribution over the hind-quarter.

- Rump width in a male should be a minimum of 44% of the rump height with 48% being ideal. If the rump is less than 44%, there is an absence of red meat. Wide rumps are an indicator of early maturity and ease of fleshing. A wider rump increases the size of the rib eye and loin eye. A bull with less than 44% rump width to height ratio has an absence of red meat and usually is a higher maintenance animal.

- The wider the rump the more feminine the animal, with greater reproductive efficiency and earlier maturity. A rump less than 40% rump

width to height ratio in cows will cause late maturity, slow calving and inconsistent conception.

- The wider rump will shorten the neck length in her sons and produce more red meat.

- A good hind quarter will have low angular hips, a long maternal rump with a concave shape that has a dip through the plates and a small dip behind the hooks or hipbone.

- Ideally, animals will have low, wide pins with a 45 degree angle between a line from the pins to the thurl and the thurl to the hip bone with a low thurl pushed well forward and a smooth, seamless muscle pattern.

- The head of the tail will also show a slight rise, but a high tail head is undesirable.

- The hips should be wide, but not prominent and slightly higher than the pins, but lower than the backbone.

- A desirable butt profile should feature long, smooth muscles that display an ability to produce an even fat cover over the hindquarter.

- An even external fat cover will translate into even fat distribution throughout the muscle.

Seaminess, or a clear visual distinction between the muscles indicates an uneven fat distribution. The muscles are usually much rounder and lack the elongation that assists with fat distribution. The shape and set of the loin area is related to the rear quarter and butt. When the loin area is not well set and straight or slightly rounded, then the hips and pins will not be balanced. There will also be a loss of meat yield in the loin area that will carry through to the hind quarter cuts.

A strong loin is indicated by a good straight backline with the hooks or hips situated evenly below the spine with a gentle slope from the spine to the hips. A curved or arched spine is undesirable.

BREED OF THE QUARTER SIMMENTAL

The origin of the Simmental breed of cattle can be dated back to the Middle Ages. It is most likely that like many other breeds, they were the result of crossing other breeds and in their case, it was most likely a cross between large German cattle and a smaller indigenous Swiss breed. They were named after the Simme Valley, which is in the Berner Oberland, in the canton of Berne in Switzerland where they were first bred. Technically, then, they are most likely a cross of several breeds.

They are also known as the Swiss Fleckvieh and are among some of the older and most widely distributed of all breeds of cattle in the world. They have also thought to have led to the creation of several other European breeds, including the Pie Rouge, Abondance and Montbeliarde (France), the Pezzata Rossa d'Oropa (Italy), and the Fleckvieh (Germany and Austria).

The Simmental has historically been used for dairy and beef as well as draught work in earlier times and this may still be the case in some remoter parts of Africa where they were first exported to outside of Europe. They were exported to Namibia in 1893 and South Africa in 1905. These two countries are also the only ones that don't allow black and solid brown coloured Simmental in their herd-books.

World Simmental Federation statistics put the number of Simmental cattle worldwide at over 40 million head, making them second only to Zebu in worldwide numbers.

They are particularly renowned for the rapid growth of their young, if given sufficient feed. Simmentals provide more combined weaning gain (growth) and milk yield than any other breed.

They are naturally horned, though polled cattle are now more common.



As a point of interest, the above cow could well be the result of having a father with teats on his scrotum, given the shape of her udder with the smaller front quarters.

Originally, they were a dark red or brown to yellow spread over the body in any pattern with at least some white on the forehead and the lower-leg area. The white face is genetically distinct from the white head of the Hereford. The majority have pigment around the eyes, helping to reduce eye problems which occur from bright sunlight. Importation of semen into Australia commenced in April 1972 with both German and Swiss strains. Since then stock and semen has been imported into Australia from New Zealand and North America to give Australia one of the largest Simmental gene pools in the world.

The Australian Simmental today has traditional, red, black and sim angus recorded in their register.

Characteristics:

- Rapid Weight Gain
- High Carcase Yield
- High Fertility and Calving Ease
- Longevity
- Geographic diversity
- Well-muscled, long and deep-bodied with strong bone.
- Good temperament
- High milk production.
- Short intervals between calving
- Excellent mothering ability
- Good grazing ability
- Early maturity
- Feed conversion and efficiency



Simmental carcasses are usually significantly heavier and leaner than other European breeds, with little waste.

TO BE OR NOT

Sometimes I wonder if what we are doing in recording the information we have put together over the years is really that much value when we are continually asked to prove the data that we have compiled and told that it is not objective enough and therefore doesn't have any credence or place in today's world.

As I've said many times, we would like to be able to have facts and figures to prove that all the information we have collected and correlated over the years has a solid scientific base. We do know that to the best of our ability, knowledge and experience, what we have recorded is as accurate as we can possibly make it from our own research, research of cattle industry leaders and judges from around the world and knowledge that has been passed down over many generations.

Our biggest challenges in being able to objectify more of our information is both a lack of funding and finding people qualified enough and interested enough to be involved in such research. It is often frustrating for us to see and read research that has been carried out for, or within the industry, that has relevance only to a small part of the industry or is politically motivated often from within the upper echelons of the industry.

Despite this, we believe that we are doing the best we can, given our resources to prove what we can of our data. Apart from a small amount of research we have done, we have also adopted linear measuring to our system and we believe that this is one

of the most quantifiable tools available to the industry today. It is interesting to note that to our knowledge none of the detractors of this method of measuring the most important parts of an animal have been able to prove that it is not accurate and certainly something that should at least, be added to, if not replace, some of the current EBV's used to measure predicted performance.

Our focus has always been on the actual live animal in front of us and we believe that if we get the selection right on a regular basis, the offspring of these animals will replicate their dominant and desirable traits on an ongoing and improving basis if the gene pool is kept as small as possible.

Again, I reiterate that the advice of many of the industry gurus that encourage cross breeding must be questioned when we look at the inconsistencies in our herds today.

The main factor that we believe justifies what we are advocating is that whilst exact measurements may be very difficult to obtain with most animals, we have plenty of experience to show that repeatability of our processes is very much in evidence. We have witnessed the evidence too often that if an animal has a certain trait, it will perform in a certain way or if it has, for example with a bull, a teat on his scrotum, then most, if not all his male offspring will have the same feature and his daughters will often end up with teat imperfections or a tapered udder (as above).

As I said previously, we would dearly like to have objective, scientific evidence to show that all we are advocating is provable. As much as we respect the need to be able to quantify everything, as some scientists believe we must, I cannot see how this can realistically be achieved, Maybe I'm missing something quite obvious and if I am then please let me know what it is.

I believe we live in a holistic world that is at the whim of Mother Nature and whilst we have developed many aids and tools to assist us in understanding and working with or protecting ourselves against nature's variations, there are plenty of examples of something new occurring that we are not

prepared for. Science in itself is an exact study of certain objects, events or occurrences. It studies usually focus on one subject in detail at a time and this is where its quandary commences because there are few things in our world that are not influenced one way or another by the things around it. When one changes, it changes things around it. What can you think of that you can do in isolation without affecting absolutely nothing else? Not that easy to come up with anything is it? Just by considering something as mundane, but necessary, as breathing, we affect something in the air around us and in our bodies.

Developing our system over the years has been very exciting and stimulating when we see improvements in client's herds and whatever it is we are doing is proof that something is working. We have also had to be very patient because it has been a long, ongoing process to put the whole system together and we are still adding details to it. It has also been challenging and frustrating, because of the time it has taken and also because of the number of breeders who are not prepared to even partly consider that we may have some of the answers to their own breeding dilemmas that we are always happy to share.

We would like to thank all those producers who have "bitten the bullet" and put their trust in us and our system, particularly when we are not well known and certainly not accepted by the majority of the industry.

MAKE BELIEVE MEAT?

I just wanted to add something on a current topic that has recently started to get publicity through the media and become available in the market and that is what I call "make believe" or fake meat. It is certainly another issue that the beef industry will need to consider in their future marketing campaigns. Currently, there are other challenges in maintaining a market share from local competition for other meat products available to consumers, to the American/China trade war on a global

basis. It has to be said that industry has been challenged by competition from other meat products, especially, chicken and the very visible promotional campaigns that they are running.

Now we have another product on the shelf that is being marketed as synthetic meat with all the nutritional advantages of beef. As you will be aware from previous pieces I have written, I don't believe it is possible to fully replicate a natural product from animals. A prime example is the synthetic milk that dairy farmers feed their heifer calves from when they are less than a week old and the skeletal malformations of these animals is obvious and highlights the result of the lack of butterfat from mother's milk that can't be synthetically copied exactly. The problem with many synthetic products is that the outcomes of their use possibly won't become evident for several generations.

The beef industry is also challenged by the trend of a large part of the media to jump on the non-meat-eating band wagon that has become increasingly more active in recent times. They will see the development of synthetic meat as another reason to phase out beef from the menu.

I believe that beef is a product that can hold its own in the market. Those with the responsibility for marketing beef hold the key as much as anyone in today's advertising dominated world. Let's hope they are up for the challenge.

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.

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