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EDITORIAL

Welcome to our first newsletter for 2023. I hope you all had a relaxing and peaceful Christmas and may the New Year be one of satisfaction and achievement as well as safety. Let's hope that the challenges that many have faced during 2022 are now behind us.

Having said that, there will always be challenges. Unfortunately, there seem to be an increasing number of these challenges that are coming in the form of decisions made by bureaucrats and governments who are mainly interested in popularity rather than reality and because there are more people power in the major population areas, these are the places that get priority in regard to policies. The fact that these places generate less national income for an ailing economy is seemingly irrelevant. Agricultural businesses are becoming more and more controlled by outside influences rather than the people at the "coalface", so to speak.

Having to wait for decisions to be made or answers given about what we can or can't do that could be given in a day or two are dragged out by bureaucracy for months and longer and great business opportunities that could be up and running successfully are lost because of the "system" being so slow and inefficient. This causes stress, frustration, depression, anxiety and other negative emotional outcomes as well as financial hardship. In my role as a mental health therapist, I hear stories of bureaucratic bungling and delays regularly. Through experiences they are having with the bureaucracy, the legal system and insurance companies, at least 75% of my clients are having their mental health seriously impacted.

I recently watched a program on television that highlighted the fact that a farmer suicides every 10 days and I am sure that a large percentage of those farmers do so out of frustration because of the way the world is heading today. Because of this I would like to focus on what we can do to understand and support ourselves in this newsletter, so please bear with me.

WHAT'S (BEEN) HAPPENING

* We have made some adjustments on our website to show a list of registered evaluators and their details so that you can contact them if you wish to have your cattle evaluated using the Classic system. We will continue to provide the same evaluating service and run field days and courses whenever the demand justifies it without the imposts and costs associated with a company structure. Our book "The Vision Tender" will also still be available on the website.

* 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.

*We are hoping to hold some one day field days in NSW early next year, probably late February or early March. We are currently sourcing suitable sites for these field days in a number of areas. Ideally, we would like to run several field days concurrently as this would reduce our travel time so if you are interested in having a day near you, please let myself or Albert Hancock (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 have also been approached by a number of producers to ask if we can hold another 5 day course at Clermont in Qld. At this stage, I am waiting for a response from the Claremont Show and Saleyards operators with dates of their events so we can plan another course. At this stage, it is most likely to be in late April or early May. We currently have nearly enough people interested in attending to justify holding the course so if you are interested, please let me know.

*The other factor to consider for us is that Albert Hancock had a run in with his tractor about three months ago and the tractor won so Albert is still recovering. His medical staff believe he will make a full recovery but it will take some more time so Albert's recovery will have some influence on when we hold the next 5 day course. We hope that Albert has a speedy and successful recovery.

*Coodardie still have some Brahman bulls available for private sale and further information is available on their website – www.coodardie.com.au.

*We now have linear measuring callipers available for sale (as well as the measurements if you would like to make your own – no cost) for \$100.00 plus freight so if you are interested, please let me know.

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.

BREED OF THE QUARTER.

Pie(d)montese

The **Piedmontese** (Italian: **Piemontese** or *razza bovina Piemontese*) is a breed of domestic cattle that originated in the region of Piedmont, in north-west Italy.

The breed originated from two distinct cattle species, the Auroch (in Europe, but now extinct) and the Zebu, which blended and evolved in the harsh mountain terrain over thousands of years to become the Piemontese breed. Piemontese cattle originate from the region of Piedmont in northwest Italy, a region that is secluded and protected by the Alps. This area was originally populated with an ancient European breed of cattle known as Auroch (*Bos Primigenius*).

Descendants of the Aurochs and other domestic European cattle common to the more temperate zones belong to the species of bovine that is now known as *Bos Taurus*. Approximately 25,000 years ago, Zebu (or Brahman) cattle (*Bos Indicus*), which were common in tropical areas such as India and Africa, began to migrate from Pakistan, some of which stopped because for some reason, they preferred the valleys of the Piedmont region, taking advantage of the natural Alpine barriers. There are several breeds from Italy which also show the influence of this Zebu migration – these are the so-called Italian “white breeds” but the similarity to the Piemontese does not go further than the colour. This means that the Piemontese breed can be traced back in history to having some of the oldest bovine genes. Until the late nineteenth century, there were numerous local types of Piemontese cattle in Northern Italy, including the Canavese, the Della Langa, the Demonte, the Ordinario di Pianura and the Scelta di Pianura. They were triple-purpose cattle, though used mainly as draught animals, their meat and milk were still valued. The first herd-book was opened in 1877, when a selective breeding program was introduced to focus more on a dual purpose animal and the addition of type uniformity that is characteristic of today’s Piemontese.

Piemontese cattle carry a unique gene mutation identified as an inactive myostatin allele that causes hypertrophic muscle growth, or double muscling. Purebred Piemontese cattle are homozygous, meaning they have two identical alleles present for this unique gene. They have garnered attention from breeders of beef cattle in other parts of the world, including North and South America. A small group of select Piemontese bulls and cows were imported into Canada in the late 1970s, and into the United States in the early 1980s, and were used as the foundation breeding stock to develop a

new breed of beef cattle known as North American Piemontese cattle.

The number of Piemontese cattle has fallen in Italy from about 680,000 at the beginning of the twentieth century to 267,000 registered cattle by the end of 2011. However, they are Italy's most popular breed and their numbers are growing worldwide. Piemontese can be found in Australia, USA, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Great Britain, Holland, Mexico, Poland, and New Zealand

In Italy, the Piemontese is a dual-purpose breed with their milk, being used in the production of several traditional cheeses of the region, including "Castelmagno", "Bra", "Raschera" and many of the "Tome", which come from the valleys of the Piemonte region and are produced with Piemontese milk.



Photo courtesy of Beaver Creek Farm, www.beavercreekpiemontese.com

They are also raised for meat, as their beef is seen as a premium product. In 1886, the appearance of double-muscling in Piemontese cattle attracted the attention of breeders, who had the foresight to

recognise the enormous potential of this development. The breeding programs designed to improve the herd and eliminate detrimental aspects associated with double-muscling were put in place. The Myostatin gene was discovered over one hundred years later. It is this gene, that occurs naturally in all mammals, that restricts muscle growth. However, in the case of Piedmontese cattle, the gene naturally mutated resulting in the unrestricted muscle development known as double-muscling.

Characteristics

The Piedmontese is generally white to light grey in colour with the muzzle (including inside the mouth), around the eyes, ears, tassle of the tail, hooves and horns being black. The bulls are darker on the shoulder, upper arm, eye area and tail switch than cows. The calves are born with a red-yellow colour and change their colour after a few months.

The breed is of medium size with fine bone structure and confirmation is broad and muscular with a medium sized dewlap. The cows generally weigh around 550-600 kg, and at birth the calves weigh on average from 40 to 45 kg. Piedmontese cattle can have horns and be genetically polled.

Piedmontese cattle are docile and highly fertile with excellent mothering instincts, ample milk yield and longevity.



Photo courtesy of Beaver Creek Farm, www.beavercreekpiedmontese.com

Piedmontese cattle are calm animals with good pasture converting ability. They also have good fertility, longevity and calving ease with good maternal traits. The protein-containing meat is tender, fine-grained with low fat and bone percentage.

Piedmontese cattle are:-

Early maturing and long living

Have high fertility levels

Calving ease

High feed efficiency

Climate adaptability

High dressing percentages

High cutability

Beef with lower fat and cholesterol

The mg of cholesterol in a 100g piece of Piedmontese beef is just 48.5mg compared with other beef (73mg), pork (79mg), roast chicken (76mg) and sole (52mg).

Results from the United States Department of Agriculture's Meat

Research Centers Germplasm Evaluation Program, comparing eleven breeds, shows that although live weights of Piedmontese were significantly lighter than those of Angus or Herford sires, retail product weight was greater because of the higher dressing and retail product percentage.

The unique heritable traits of Piedmontese are passed on in the first cross, meaning that even a 50% Piedmontese will exhibit significantly more red meat with less fat and bone. Ounce-for-ounce, a serving of Certified Piedmontese beef is over 20% lower in calories than salmon but packs 10% more protein.

TEMPERAMENT

I realise that I have discussed this topic before in our newsletters. However, I thought it would be a good time to re-visit it because of the impact it has on the management practices we employ with our herds and the end product we are aiming to produce. It is also the number one selection criteria many producers use when they are culling animals from their herd and usually rightly so. It is much easier to work with a quiet herd to select for other traits that are important to your herds productivity when you can muster easily and they work through the yards and crush with a minimum of disturbance.

We have made an interesting observation when we have been evaluating a large range of animals. We have found that the animals in a herd can be classified into at least three groups, and you may like to possibly identify more.

1. Docile, quiet animals - that cause little trouble and basically follow the leader in and out of the yards.

2. Spirited animals – that are always very alert, heads up, eyes watching every move and ready to move when something changes around them.
3. Psychotic animals – that are bordering on or are uncontrollable. They are always ready to attack people or dogs and very difficult to move in any direction other than the one they choose.

Like most animals, and humans as well, cattle have a variation of personalities both individually and as a herd. To be able to recognise, through observation, the various personalities of our herd members can be very beneficial when handling the herd, especially in close quarters. Naturally, it is easier to get to know the personalities of your cattle in smaller herds though even in bigger herds there will be some animals that have personality traits that stand out and you can recognise after a while when you handle them on several occasions. It may be something like the same one or two animals always need to be at the front of the herd.

During the evaluation process, we have often noticed that animals that I would consider to have a spirited personality often grade well on our system and are usually in the first 10% - 15% of the cattle through the crush. The down side, of course, is that we get our hopes up that this is an exceptionally good herd and then as the more docile cattle come through the percentage of really high scoring animals gets less. This doesn't happen in all herds, but there it has certainly happened with a greater percentage of herds.

If you have a lot of uncontrollable type animals in your herd, make sure that you give them every opportunity to become quieter and adjust to your management practices before culling.

The first and most obvious way to quieten animals is to just spend time with them, whether it be walking or riding around them. We have always found that supplementary feeding with something like hay is also a very good way to quieten them. If you use a controlled

grazing program, that is also a very good way to also quieten them. The more regular pattern you can develop with your herd the quieter they will also become.

From a production perspective, lack of good temperament can affect feed efficiency. An animal that is nervous and excitable is easily distracted from the prime purpose of feeding and therefore growing. They can also be less likely to get into calf.

When considering a management perspective, temperamental cattle are disruptive during handling and yarding, usually more dangerous to handle and certainly more susceptible to injury and bruising, a factor that can cause considerable losses during processing.

The other obvious method of improving temperament is through the use of a selective breeding programme using breeders that have a placid temperament and at the same time retaining their spirit.

Knowing Us

As I mentioned at the end of the editorial, I would like to make some more comments on taking care of ourselves as people and increasing our self-awareness. I realise that this is not directly about cattle. It is about the people who care about cattle though and how they can ensure they are operating at the peak of their capacity to ensure that their cattle have every opportunity to be the best. I also realise that I have touched on some of these topics previously. However, the most effective way of changing how we do things is to practice them. So, if you have heard these comments previously, I hope you will consider them as “more tools for your personal skills toolbox”.

I have explained previously how our 5 senses are the foundation of our internal operating system within our conscious and unconscious minds. In particular, it is understanding that our three main senses, sight, hearing and feeling have both an external and internal part to them and that while we are familiar with making physical changes to the external parts of our sensory system e.g. turning the volume of a

radio up, painting our house a different colour or driving our car with our left hand instead of our right, we can also make changes internally. That is because our minds can't tell the difference between what is happening externally or internally. That means that we can practice different actions etc. internally by thinking about how we can do them differently, picturing ourselves making the changes and noticing how we feel when we make the changes. If we can repeat these changes that we need between 55 and 60 times, it will set up a new neural pathway in our brain that our unconscious minds can recall without needing a prompt from our conscious minds.

We are all familiar with how we learnt things like our times table at school through rote or repetition. The same principal can be applied to any new action or behaviour we would like to have in our lives. Driving a car provides a good example of this. After we have been driving for a while, when we see a red traffic light we don't have to stop and consciously think what we have to do – foot off the accelerator, change gears, foot on the brake, change gears again, slow down and stop. Because we have done it 55 plus times, our unconscious mind takes over and so our conscious minds keep thinking about what it was thinking – where you are going, where you have been, what's on tomorrow etc. The red light acts as a trigger directly to you unconscious to act. Think of all the things that you do often and the same thing applies. For example, I can nearly guarantee that you make a cup of tea or coffee in the same sequence nearly every time. You brush your teeth using the same pattern, get dressed by putting your top on first then the bottom or vice versa, but you do it the same way most of the time. Notice what happens and how you feel differently when something or someone interrupts your usual pattern. You are consciously thinking about one thing and unconsciously doing something different – self-hypnosis – if there is such a thing?

I often wonder how my life would have been different if I had been taught this stuff at school.

I also wonder about other things I have learnt by searching for information that I didn't learn at school which, when I think about it, would have been excellent basic life skills to have learnt at a younger age. I include in this area particularly, communication skills and self-awareness.

By communication skills, I mean listening skills first and foremost. Well over 80% of the clients I see in my therapy practice who are having struggles in their relationship admit that they don't listen to each other. On the other hand, I have teachers as clients that I have asked if they teach their students how to paraphrase, reflect and clarify and they say that it is part of the curriculum. However, when we discuss how it is taught, it is usually just mentioned more or less in passing and not taught as it would be beneficial to be taught in the same way that times tables are taught, for example.

These are profoundly basic skills for life success and need to be taught so that they stay with us for a lifetime. Going hand in hand with communication skills are rapport building skills and again they make a huge difference to the success or otherwise of our relationships with each other.

In regard to self-awareness and this is a huge topic, I am referring more to recognising the changes our bodies undergo when things around us change or are not working for us. Our bodies have an inbuilt protection mechanism to forewarn us of things in our environment that may be harmful to us. Whenever we have an ache, pain or discomfort that we don't usually have and don't know why we are having it, it is usually a signal that something is not quite right in our lives/environment and it is a message from our unconscious via our physical body to our conscious minds that we need to make some changes. Failure to do so will result in us becoming unwell. Comprehensive research in hospitals, where

thousands of people were interviewed about what was happening 6 – 12 months prior to their hospitalisation found that 75% of them had some major negative changes in their lives e.g. toxic workplace, relationship breakdown, business loss etc. Whenever we have something as simple as a common cold, it is important that we stop and think about what is happening in our lives at that time. If something is happening that is de-energising us or flattening our batteries, it is important that we recognise it before it affects us even more.

When our energy levels are weakened, it leaves us more vulnerable to attack by colds, viruses etc. Another good indicator is the loss of motivation to do things that we had always taken in our stride. Ask ourselves why we are having trouble doing these things and maybe we need to take some time out to re-vitalise ourselves so that our motivation returns to its usual level.

A similar thing happens when we change state, i.e. from one emotion to another. The first signal we get when we, for example, go from calm to angry is probably a tensing of some muscles, increased heart rate, tightness in the chest or stomach etc. When we recognise that this is happening, we can then choose whether we want to go ahead and get angry or do we have some better choices. It is very useful to think about the choices you have and practice them before you get into an uncomfortable situation again. Practice things like taking some deep breaths, removing yourself from the scene or counting to ten or backwards from 100 by threes – something similar that will distract you from the negative situation threatening you. When you feel the initial negative signals, do something that will distract you and yet not challenge those around you. Just do every day things like pick something up that you accidentally knocked on the floor, close a door, open a window, go to the toilet. These are all little things that you can do to give you time to think of the best way to manage the current situation.

Again, if you had been told about these things at school, how would your life have been different. I know mine would have been.

The Value of Life

I realise this newsletter is a little longer than usual and not specifically cattle related. However, I hope you will tolerate a few more thoughts on a topic I mentioned at the end of the editorial. I refer to the fact that a farmer in Australia suicides every ten days and I would assume that this figure is similar in many countries around the world. The agricultural industry cannot afford to lose good people at that rate.

I also appreciate that suicide is a subject that most of us will avoid talking about if at all possible. I have been working with people who self-harm and with family and friends of people who have suicided for well over 20 years now as well as attending a range of workshops, seminars etc. on the subject. Despite hearing many experts discuss the topic, I haven't heard any of them come up with a consistent answer as to why people do it.

In my experience, the main difference between natural death and suicide is the number of unanswered questions that are left after a suicide.

The grief that follows any death is followed by a grieving process that usually has seven stages and is experienced by everyone at different intensities and in different ways. Grief is a different experience for everyone so I believe that we can never know exactly how someone else is feeling when they experience grief and so we should never judge how it affects others i.e. never tell anyone they should be over it by now. See if you can recognise the following stages when you have experienced grief and not necessarily in this order:-

1. Shock. 2. Denial 3. Anger

4. Bargaining. 5. Depression. 6 Acceptance and hope
7. Processing grief.

We don't just experience grief when we lose someone close to us. Whenever we have change there is some loss and with loss comes grief. When the change is minor, we may only recognise the loss at an unconscious level and it doesn't really affect us e.g. when we change our clothes or when we wear out our old boots and have to break in a new pair. Other more significant losses such as a job loss or loss of a relationship will cause us to be much more aware of the grief we are feeling. Quite often when we are not quite feeling 100% and can't put our finger on the reason why, stop and think if you have had a loss (of anything) recently. If you have, then it is most likely that the feeling you can't easily identify is one of the stages of grief.

When someone suicides, shock levels for those close are always very high as they are with any sudden death. However, the difference is the that there are so many unanswered questions left with suicide. The big **WHY?????**

How do we manage not knowing the answers to the many questions surrounding someone's suicide? We can always speculate, but there are rarely any certain answers. One way we can look at a suicide is to accept that the person involved had choices, but chose to end their life. It was their choice. They felt at that time that the pain that they were enduring (and often even those closest to them are not aware of that pain) was just too overwhelming for them and they could only see one way out.

If you think of times when you have been in pain and I think that, for most of us, at least, our thought processes are usually not as rational and clear as we would like them to be regardless of whether it is mental or physical pain that we are experiencing. I think the

same applies to people who suicide. Their pain is affecting their rational and logical thinking processes. For those of us that are left, the worst thing we can do is continue to ask ourselves questions that will never be answered.

For those of you who are interested, I am going to add another link on our website with links to much more information about the topics I have discussed in this newsletter about knowing ourselves.

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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