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Q&A

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Q&A with Joe Fouhy

Tell us a little bit about yourself and the Fouhy family.

Glanworth is a 850ha property, nestled at the foot of the North Island's Tararua Ranges. The property is run as a breeding/finishing unit, wintering 600 beef cattle and 5000 sheep. My grandfather was the first settler in the district in 1892, and my father established the stud in 1952. We have two daughters and one son, Shaun, who is now making most of the day-to-day management decisions, but I have always enjoyed the challenges that farming presents and hope to continue farming for a while yet.

How did you come to be on the Angus New Zealand Board?

I was asked to stand for the Board twelve or thirteen years ago, however, at the time I felt I was too busy and therefore declined. Three years ago I felt it was my turn to give something back; something I think is very important in all aspects of community life. I never expected to become President, however I feel very fortunate to have some input into what happens with Angus going forward, and would like to continue the good work achieved by previous Angus Board members.

What do you perceive to be the biggest hurdle facing the breeders of registered Angus cattle?

Registered breeders are currently producing the product that the market requires for the end consumer. However, with the adoption of new technology and the speed at which it's changing, to ensure the consumer gets the best end-product, we need to continue to produce cattle that are functional and practical from a farming point of view, while balancing that with the science behind the genetics.

How can Angus New Zealand contribute to the expectations of commercial producers?

We need to ensure we are producing cattle that suit the commercial producer's requirements as well as meeting the needs of the end consumer. It is our responsibility to ensure that Angus cattle perform better and are more adaptable than other breeds, thereby securing the future of everyone involved at every stage of the production process.

What does the Angus breed have to offer that sets it apart from other cattle breeds in NZ?

Angus in New Zealand is able to capitalise on the well-recognised AngusPure brand. The brand creates a link between breeders and commercial producers which is of great benefit. In terms of the beef industry, Angus has also been at the forefront of the adoption of new technology and has access to a worldwide genetic pool.

What do you hope to achieve during your time as president?

I would like to see the continued advancement of the Angus breed, along with further boosting of the profile and market reach of the AngusPure brand. Alongside that, I'd like to see an increased number of commercial producers linked to Angus New Zealand. Heightened sponsorship would also be of great benefit. I feel that, as individual breeders, we greatly underestimate the power of the Angus brand in New Zealand.

What is the biggest challenge facing Angus New Zealand at present, and can you foresee any significant challenges in the future?

The reduction in beef cattle numbers would be the major challenge, which comes back to land use changes and the profitability of cattle compared to other livestock enterprises. There are many good beef operators who are using new and existing best practice technologies, and who are making good profits from their cattle enterprises. We should all constantly be looking for ways to make our own cattle businesses more competitive.

Should registered Angus breeders be focusing on their customers, or should more thought be going towards end consumers?

I think the two are directly interlinked because our customers demand from breeders what their end-consumers demand. We have to look after both, but it goes back to the science/ practicality pendulum and making sure there's a balance.

How can we make the Angus breed stronger?

Most importantly, breeders need to support the breed through active involvement. They can't just sit back and let someone else do the work; everyone has to be part of it. Members need to support the National Sale, Future Beef, Generation Angus and actively get involved in their local Wards. That's how we'll make the breed stronger.

What advice would you give to the younger farmers/breeders coming through the industry?

Take the opportunities that come your way and get fully involved. It doesn't matter how young you are, you've got to get involved with Angus. The rewards will be tangible, and will likely last a lifetime.

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FARMING FOR THE FUTURE

Black the only colour

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NEW ZEALAND

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75 South Street
PO Box 503, Feilding 4740
Phone: 06 323 4484
Fax: 06 323 3878
Email: manager@angusnz.com

Angus NZ General Manager:

Alan Cook

Magazine Committee:

Clarence Timperley, Guy Sargent, Sarah Ivey,
Anna Mackenzie, Tim Brittain

Editor:

Anna Mackenzie

Graphic Designer:

Adele Gray, Pivot Design

Art Director:

Sarah Ivey

On the cover:

Braemar Station, Mackenzie Basin,
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Beef Cattle

INDUSTRY BOOMING

BY PROFESSOR STEVE MORRIS, INSTITUTE VETERINARY,
ANIMAL AND BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES, MASSEY UNIVERSITY



New Zealand's primary industries are a crucial part of the New Zealand economy. Beef meat exports in the year ending 30 September 2014 earned \$2,275,000 million dollars, with an estimated further \$800,000 million in by-products, making the beef cattle industry a three billion dollar industry.

For the first time that I can remember, the beef price currently exceeds the lamb price, and it looks like that will continue over the winter months. Five dollars a kilogram for beef was what we all wanted a few years ago, and now it has become a reality. The other significant and often unheralded role of beef cattle is as an important management component of our mixed livestock systems. This latter point has become even more important in New Zealand as beef cattle are pushed back into the hill country by the rapid increase in dairying and dairy support on the better land classes.

The world has a large appetite for meat. The global consumption of meat in 1962 was 70 million tonnes and in 2013 it was 300 million tonnes. Beef was top of the table in the 1960s, accounting for 40% of meat consumption, while today it has given way to poultry and pig meat and now accounts for 22% of world meat consumption. The annual world beef production is 67 million tonnes (carcass weight equivalent) of which only 8 million tonnes (12%) are traded internationally.

New Zealand produces only about 1% of world beef, however our exports account for around 6% of the traded volume. Beef, however, is our least diversified export, with 50% going to North America. Although most of this beef is destined for the processing or ingredient industry, it does become the determinant of price for all beef in New Zealand.

Exporters are increasingly trying to market prime beef into Asia, and China has been a good market in recent times. However there are fluctuations in that trade, with China restricting itself to buying only certain cuts, and Indonesia and other Asian countries resisting matching the high US prices.

The one advantage of beef primal cuts over chicken and pork is that beef is seen as a premium product and, as incomes increase and the middle classes grow in countries like China and Indonesia, demand for high quality beef in those markets will increase. We need to be in a position to supply.

Today the beef cattle industry in New Zealand is based on 3.6 million cattle of which 996,000 are beef breeding cows. Each year around 830,000 calves are bred from these beef bred cows, and a further 450,000 calves enter the beef industry from the dairy industry. Ahead of a looming worldwide beef shortage caused by downsizing of the US and Australian cattle industry, a huge number (in excess of two million calves in 2014) from the dairy industry are processed each year. New Zealand is a world leader in dairy beef bull farming, yet as the dairy herd has grown steadily over the last few years, the number of its bull calves retained for rearing and cross-over into the beef industry has fallen.

Failure to utilise this waste product of the dairy industry is a huge lost opportunity for the NZ beef industry. We have not filled our US quota for processing beef for a number of years. The markets for dairy beef bred weaners are also drying up because the number of lowland farms, which traditionally finished these beef cattle, have converted to dairying or dairy support.

We must continue to improve the productivity of traditional



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YEARLINGS AND TWO YEAR OLDS FOR SALE



sourced beef bred calves that enter the beef chain. First, the decline in beef cow numbers needs to be halted. The increase in beef price in the last six months certainly assists confidence in farming beef cattle, but productivity increases are another way to ensure we have a high quality supply of calves coming through each year.

Reproductive rates in our commercial beef herds continue to languish in the low 80s and need to be improved. It still amazes me that many beef heifers are still not bred until they are 27 months of age. In-calf rates of 95% at pregnancy diagnosis should be the norm, and losses during pregnancy and lactation of no more than 5% should be tolerated, to give an overall calving percentage of 90% (calves weaned over cows mated).

A target weaning weight at 200 days of age should be 250kg and calves should grow at a minimum of 1kg a day over the entire lactation period while suckling their dams.

While there has been emphasis on selection for increased liveweight (be it 200, 400 or 600 day LW), this has led to larger beef cows, which has increased feed costs of maintaining these cows in hill country areas. This becomes a problem in droughts and harsh winters as these larger cows have increased maintenance requirements. Many have used the rule that a good beef cow should rear 50% of her liveweight at calf weaning. Therefore the

250kg targeted calf at weaning should come for a beef cow that is no heavier than 500kg.

Besides liveweight we need to consider condition score, as at weaning we need these cows to be at a condition score of 6-7 (on a 1-10 scale) so that they have some fat reserves to get through the winter period.

Beyond weaning we need these calves to continue to grow rapidly to the target slaughter weight at 20 months of age, before their second winter so as to avoid the high costs of wintering a second time. Angus breeders have rightly made considerable investment in producing quality animals (eg, EBVs for increased marbling), but the easiest way to ensure a high quality product is to ensure animals are slaughtered at a young age, and have grown as fast as possible to that point.

Of course prudent Angus breeders will try to do both, improving both quality of product and growth of their animals, while ensuring high reproductive performance. This is a complicated task, but one on which most Angus breeders seem to be rising to the challenge. As long as that continues, the Angus breed will continue to dominate beef cattle breed in New Zealand, and Angus breeders will hopefully lead the challenge to stop the decline in our national beef cow breeding herd. ■

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BLACK THE ONLY COLOUR POTAKA STATION

BY SARAH IVEY

John McOviney was just 33 when he paid around \$1m for Potaka Station and its stock. He'd always dreamt of owning a farm and he started with the aim of making Potaka into a model operation, pushing it into the top 1-2%.

As Managing Director of Steelfort, an engineering company in Palmerston North, John is the first to admit that the farm is hardly under-resourced. Looking around the Rangitikei hill-country property, it's easy to see what 'throwing a bit of money at it' can really do.

The farm sits at the end of Reu Reu Road, bordered on the east by the Rangitikei River. In 2011 John bought Arata, on Potaka's northern boundary, and the two properties are now run as one, giving a total of 1200ha of river flats, hill-country, and altogether more grass than his 357 fat Angus cows could ever get through.

Potaka's cattle are run alongside 5200 ewes (40/60 ratio) on the 12,500 stock unit property. John has dabbled in Herefords and Charolais in the past, but has a great love for Black Angus and now runs a straight black herd.



On Potaka, John's right hand man is Brent Gowler, who came on as farm manager fifteen years ago. Brent and wife Dianne live on-farm and the couple's three daughters have now all left home. Brent runs a team of three full-time staff – two shepherds and a fencer, who has been a recent addition. They've spent \$115,000 on fencing in the past twelve months, as when Arata was purchased the fences weren't sheep-proof. They plan to spend another \$200-\$300,000 in the next few years as rough fences are a real gripe.

In the past Potaka has put a lot of effort into both breeding and finishing cattle for the commercial market, however they have found that just as finished 2-year-olds were ready for sale, they needed the cattle-power to clean up the hills post-lambing. Tackling both ends of the cattle market proved difficult, so their focus has changed. Potaka are now aiming to increase their breeding herd to 400 cows, with all steers sold as yearlings at Feilding.

"We want to gain a reputation for producing top quality, traditional Angus cattle," says John.

The other half of the equation is the heifers. Sixty-five were kept as replacements last year, while fifty were taken to John's home at Longburn to 'keep the grass down there.' Those fifty will be sold before winter. John has considered leasing a couple of yearling bulls to put over them prior to sale.

Replacements are picked predominantly on type. They have to be quiet and John is adamant they must have a typical Angus head. "We're getting to the stage now where we'll get really good selection. We're probably just a couple of years away from having the ability to be quite picky."

The heifers and main breeding herd are put to the bull on December 20 with the aim of calving at the beginning of October, due to later growth. The cows are run in mobs of 50-60 with two bulls. Bulls stay out for 42 days (2 cycles) and then they all come in.

All prospective bulls are picked on type first and then culled on their EBVs. Potaka look for birthweight EBVs of 4.7-5 and high 200 and 400 day weight EBVs. Springvale, Atahua and Landcorp are among the studs their eleven herd-sires have come from. One of the

standouts, John says, is a 6-year-old from Fossil Creek, purchased at the National Sale three years ago.

Cows scanned in at 96% last year, something both John and Brent attribute to good cow maintenance and bull selection.

For calving, the cows are moved down onto accretion land by the river. Though it's prone to flooding, the fertile ground and abundant trees provide a sheltered haven for calving. "I try not to let them get too heavy when they've got their calves on, but they've got it all in front of them from here," says Brent.

Calves are tagged and recorded daily as they're born. Potaka currently use Zee Tags, but are looking into using AngusPure Source and Trace tags, which would identify the cattle as coming from registered Angus cattle and further increase the sale potential of their yearlings.

Once on the ground, cow and calf are moved through sections of heavy grass pasture up towards the hill-country. The cattle remain on the hills over the summer months, where they're solely grass-fed. Spring and late autumn are the peak growing seasons and silage is made from any surplus, to be fed as a supplement over winter. Kale is also grown to keep the cattle going over winter.

There is currently no irrigation on Potaka but it is being looked into, and will hopefully come to fruition in the future. The annual rainfall of 1200mm, along with an annual drop of 350kg/ha of superphosphate, creates ample growth to feed current stock levels. John will absolutely not have stock going hungry.

On reflection, John believes Potaka's success can be partially attributed to his experience at Steelfort. He puts people in place to do a job and usually ends up with a square peg in a square hole. Brent is one of these success stories. "Brent is a very well-rounded farm manager," says John.

The pair are working within the frame work of a shared vision, which has seen Potaka grow into the current \$13-14m operation.

John is a man who wants everything done yesterday. "I'm getting bloody close to seventy and I don't want to be walking around with my walking stick saying, 'well I finally got there,'" he says.

As far as succession is concerned, John's not too sure. He has four daughters but their interest in Potaka "doesn't stretch much further than opening weekend of the duck shooting season." He is certain of one thing though: "It won't be sold in my lifetime."

As to the most important question: 'Why Angus?', John's answer is simple. "Is there any other colour?" ■



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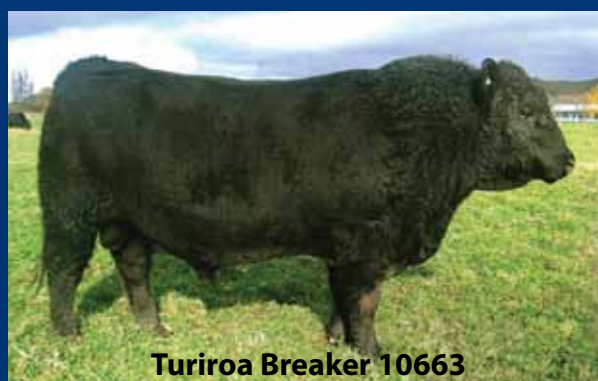
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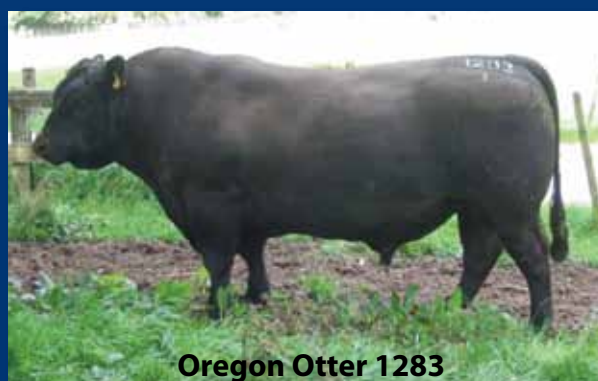
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Facing the **HIGH COUNTRY CHALLENGES**

BY SARAH IVEY

"THE CATTLE GRAZE FEED THAT NOTHING ELSE CAN GRAZE AND THEY'RE A NICE, TIDY INCOME EARNER. IF YOU LOOK AT WHAT THEY'RE EATING AND WHERE THEY'RE GRAZING, NO OTHER ANIMAL CAN DO WELL ON THAT TYPE OF FEED."



Nestled in the heart of the Mackenzie Basin, bordered to the west by Lake Pukaki and to the north by the Southern Alps and Aoraki Mount Cook, lies Braemar Station, owned by Hamish and Julia Mackenzie. Nothing looks more at home in this golden tussock country than the herd of sleek black Angus cows with calves at foot.

Hamish and Julia moved to Braemar in 2000, taking over from Hamish's parents, Duncan and Carol, who bought the property in 1969. Back then the station was just over 23,000ha leasehold/3,000ha freehold, and 500 Hereford cattle were run on the river flats. In 1977 the raising of Lake Pukaki for power production saw the loss of 400ha, including the lucerne paddocks and a significant amount of infrastructure, at a serious cost to production: cow numbers dropped to around 150.

In 1996 Braemar moved away from Herefords to straight Black Angus. The breeding herd now sits at 330 cows, which are run alongside 4700 Perendale ewes and 700 red deer, with both hinds and breeding stags.

Last year 320 cows went to the bull, giving a crop of 289 calves. All bull calves are steered and then sold, with non-replacement heifers going in the Mackenzie section at Temuka Saleyards in mid-April. "This year I sold everything bar sixty replacements and about thirty smaller animals (mainly heifers) that we'll take through and fatten, as they weren't worth a lot at the sale," says Hamish.

Braemar does well at Temuka – their calves are highly sought after. Cattle are sold to farmers all over but a lot go to the Ashburton area and to Five Star Beef buyers. "David Giddings bought the top two lines of heifers last year to put onto a lease block."

Most of the bulls at Braemar come from Giddings' Meadowslea Angus Stud in Fairlie, along with a couple of Stern Angus bulls. As far as bull selection goes, Hamish relies equally on EBVs and eye appraisal. "I get the sale catalogue and go through it marking the

bulls with the traits I like. Then when I get to the sale I have a look at all the bulls I've marked down and pick between them on type," says Hamish.

Braemar runs twelve bulls, give or take, a couple of which are low birthweight yearling bulls for the heifers. For his main herd sires, Hamish looks for a solid, moderate carcass size, an average animal that's a good do-er and will live off its own back. "High fats is the most important to me, they've got to be positive fats," says Hamish.

Longevity of the animal is also something Hamish looks at. He thinks his selection process is pretty basic yet very effective.

The cattle are spread over the whole farm and mated in mobs of 70-80 for two cycles, which keeps the calving compact and avoids any 'loose ends'.

Dry cows are culled if they're empty at scanning and again if they're wet/dry. Cows are also culled severely on temperament, however Hamish adds that, in his opinion, a lot of bad behaviour stems from animals being handled incorrectly. "Cowboy handling results in Wild West behaviour."

Over winter Braemar can see some terribly cold, harsh climatic conditions, often coping heavy snowfall that can linger on the ground for weeks. Calves are fed hay and break-fed on kale, while the 2 and 3yr olds are fed hay and kept in the closer home paddocks over winter. The mixed aged cows "are expected to do their job once they've finished growing."

The MA cows are pushed out the back of the farm to an area that rises up to just over 900m asl. This country is predominantly natives and snow tussock. "One of the reasons we have Angus is because of their suitability to this type of country and their foraging ability," says Hamish.

The peak growing season is November and December, and because they can often see no rain over February and March,



autumn growth is never guaranteed. The annual rainfall is 890mm, but it mostly falls in the colder months so silage paddocks are locked up in spring to ensure nothing goes hungry. Julia admits “the cows do it pretty hard in a dry year, because nothing else can.”

Lambs are fattened on-farm. Says Julia, “In an ideal world, if you did everything to fit the feed curve, we’d be a store producer of everything because we grow a heap in the spring and not much else. But because the market demands that we finish lambs, and we can get such good money for weaner calves, we might as well take the money and run.”

Hamish adds, “Down-country farmers can buy our weaners, take them home, and they’ll grow like mushrooms for them – which would certainly be a lot harder at Braemar, given the short growing season.”

A lot of people use cattle as a tool, Hamish says, and he sees them as a very profitable one.

“The cattle do a good job for us,” Julia adds. “They’re not our



star performers but they graze feed that nothing else can graze and they’re a nice, tidy income earner. If you look at what they’re eating and where they’re grazing, no other animal can do well on that type of feed.”

The Angus cattle are an integral part of the operation at Braemar, with another piece of the jigsaw being Braemar Station Accommodation. Surrounded by such natural beauty, Julia and Hamish felt they’d be mad not to capitalise and renovated a number of old buildings to provide stunning ‘getaway’ accommodation. This side of the business is run by Julia, with the help of a part-time worker. The big draw-card is the view, and it’s booked solid throughout the summer months by both international and domestic guests.

The farm employs two full-time shepherds, while son Angus and daughter Kate enjoy helping out wherever possible during the school holidays.

Hamish and Julia are making their mark in both the farming and tourism sectors at Braemar, their mix of activities standing the test of time.

Three years ago the farm went through the Tenure Review process. This meant they were able to gain freehold ownership of a further 1150ha, bringing the total to 4150ha freehold. Their stock units were not affected due to the nature of the land and they no longer graze the harder back-country, which was taken over by the Department of Conservation. “DoC are looking after it really well, they have a good wilding pine control plan in place,” says Hamish. He adds that the back-country was ‘pretty sour and unforgiving’ and believes the stock are much better off on the top-dressed tussock country.

The couple hope that one of the children will one day take on the challenge. Meanwhile their energy and optimism have seen them make a success of all the challenges the Mackenzie Country has to offer. Perhaps it’s all in their name. ■



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WORKING THE NUMBERS

BY SARAH IVEY

George Ritchie used to get a kick out of trading foreign currency whilst sitting in front of six computer screens in Hong Kong. The 37-year-old banker-turned-farmer now gets his thrills from trading stock of the four-legged kind. His currency of choice? Black Angus.

George moved home to New Zealand after ten years of working in banking. Wellington was his first stop, and it was there that he met wife Caroline. The couple lived in Wellington for four years and were quite content until, "I decided I was sick of banking and Caroline was sick of me complaining about banking," says George.

Their solid rural backgrounds led them towards the idea of going farming. While they looked around for a farm worth leasing, George spent six months working at Kakahu Angus alongside his cousin Tom and uncle Gerald Hargreaves.

Whilst there, George became convinced he wanted to farm cattle. When Caroline's family farm came up for lease, the couple saw it as a fortuitous opportunity, and the pair took on the 370ha rolling hill country property at Martinborough and 900ha steeper hill country property at Bideford.

The combination provides the perfect synergy for George to run both breeding and finishing operations, combining his passion for cattle and genetics with his knack for numbers and trading.

Combined, the two properties winter 13,500 stock units, though George admits he's often overstocked. Around 5500 Romney x Coopworth ewes are run at the Bideford property, alongside 230 breeding cows, mostly Angus. When he took on the properties there was an existing herd of a hundred-odd cows 'that were a bit of a

mixture'. George needed to boost cow numbers quickly, so brought in a mob of one hundred mixed-age cows from Kakahu.

Angus was chosen as the right fit for the operation. "We didn't want a really big animal. We had some Charolais trade cattle last year and they grew big but took too long to get there. The Angus finish quicker and they're nice and easy to handle."

George believes Herefords may also work, but: "We wanted to go black because it's the black cattle that get the premium."

That premium is 10-15 cents per kilo and the cattle are sold predominantly through Land Meats, Silver Fern Farms and Riverlands.

With such a big operation, George needs a right-hand man and, as far as he's concerned, nobody fits the bill better than George Callaghan. A local who grew up in the valley, Callaghan and his family own a block of land next door and live on-farm at Bideford, running the breeding side of the operation.

The Ritchies lives on the finishing block at Martinborough where George runs operations. The two farms are run separately, though the men discuss strategy and do all bull purchasing together. Bulls are bought from Kakahu Angus, chosen mostly on statistics. "We've been sold hook, line and sinker with Gerald's EBVs," says George.

To ensure the breeding operation works well, they aim for a good-looking beast with good ease of calving and milk figures. However, for finishing, it's all about the carcass. "We look for 600 day growth rate as the number one and AngusPure Index as number two," Callaghan says.

They run seven Kakahu bulls on farm, all with great marbling scores. "They're all in the top 2% on the API and SRI Indexes," says George. "Consumers are demanding higher quality meat, and in

future it looks as though we're going to get paid more for a better animal. If you're ahead of the game on carcass specifications, you're going to succeed."

The Silver Fern Farms Reserve Programme gives a premium when the carcass meets the specific criteria. "The key element is speed of growth. They want a big animal that's young. If you can get marbling and good meat colour, then you're winning."

All calves bred at Bideford are kept for finishing in Martinborough. There were forty heifers put to the bull last year, as well as the 230 mixed-age cows. The calving return was 86%. "This is quite hard country for calving," says Callaghan.

The bulls are out for 42 days, keeping calving tight, with a middle date of November 15th. Dry cows are culled and all progeny except replacement heifers are moved down to the finishing block at weaning.

George aims to have all the cattle gone within fifteen months. He finished 170 of his own calves last year and hopes to do more in future as cow numbers build. "When I get them down to Martinborough they fill out quickly – that's the Kakahu genetics coming through."

The yearlings went to the works in May, heifers averaging well over 450kg LW while steers were over 520kg LW.

Kale and fodder beet are break-fed over winter on the finishing block, as well as hay and silage supplement. Centre pivot irrigation sits over 48ha of land on the finishing block, ensuring plentiful feed throughout the year.

Last year there was enough capacity to buy in 310 R2s after cheap grazing elsewhere moved the mixed-age cows off-farm over the winter. The R2s were held at Bideford until the cows where



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“WE WANTED TO GO BLACK
BECAUSE IT’S THE BLACK CATTLE
THAT GET THE PREMIUM.”

due back, which coincided with the ground on the finishing block drying out enough for them to be moved down there.

The trade cattle are moved between the two properties as feed dictates and George is constantly looking for the best class of stock to fit the system. “It’s currently weaners, but if we get a really good autumn with plenty of spare feed, we will buy in R2s again.”

The trading block policy allows George to drop 20% of the stock ‘tomorrow’. “We might sometimes make a small loss, but generally it’s better to sell something at a small loss than buy in stock when it’s really expensive,” he says. He admits that he sometimes surprises Callaghan when 50-80 cattle turn up in a truck because he got a good deal somewhere.

Both men are constantly looking at ways to do things differently. “The trading discussions are quite cool because George has no preconceived ideas about the whole job,” says Callaghan.

You could say that Callaghan ticks all the boxes with farm experience and stockmanship while George ticks those for figures and strategy.

“The best thing about George is that he assesses and makes a call straight away; that’s the banker in him,” Callaghan says.

Last year was a fantastic summer; the paddocks at Bideford white

with clover. Usually there’s a long growing season, which is the result of a 1650mm annual rainfall and the 220m-580m altitude.

“Essentially we’re trading stock eleven months of the year and have a totally cashflow-driven business,” says George.

The two farms balance out year-on-year, the financial balance swinging between them as stock is shifted.

“I think a lot of people get scared of the beef market. It’s not like lamb, which is just a three month trade. Most beef finishing is a fifteen-month to two-year trade, and people don’t like thinking that far ahead. It’s too much crystal ball gazing.”

The plan now is to look at buying another property that will fit into the current system. The herd will soon be straight Angus, which both men see as advantageous.

“AngusPure is really getting some big crowd attention.”

Coming into farming, George was nervous about being a new kid on the block, and is commonly asked whether he is there to stay. The answer is unequivocal. “I love it. At the end of the day I come home over the hills and look out across an incredible view of the Wairarapa. If things haven’t gone well, it all seems to feel all right again when I see that view. It certainly beats six computer screens hands down.” ■

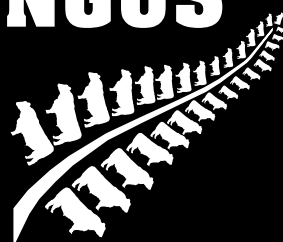
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Pushing AngusPure out in front of more consumers is crucial for the continued expansion of the AngusPure brand. A new agreement with Foodstuffs South Island Limited has ensured AngusPure will be the only breed-specific branded beef on their supermarket shelves for the next five years at least.

Foodstuffs South Island Butchery Operations Manager Steve Alexander is really happy with the agreement that's now in place. Consumer feedback dictated the need for a premium quality beef product on their shelves. "We've had AngusPure on-shelf for a number of years, not so much as a top-end product, but more as one for the discerning customer's choice in a couple of the key cuts," says Alexander.

Foodstuffs now has exclusivity with the brand, which gives the business the ability to offer a wider range of cuts to its customers across all four banners including New World, PAK'nSAVE, Four Square and Raeward Fresh. "We really needed to get an agreement in place to ensure our customers are getting what we believe is one of the best brands of top-end beef."

Across the four banners New World is the largest, with forty stores in the South Island versus PAK'nSAVE's ten stores. From a volume perspective, store sales are impacted by population size and demographics.

"All the meat going into both chains is of equal quality," Alexander says. "New World would be the biggest retailer of AngusPure simply because the brand has more stores."

Guy Sargent, a partner in AngusPure, believes it advantageous that both PAK'nSAVE and New World banners fall under Foodstuffs. "Demographics will ultimately dictate where beef will sell. There are a number of locations in New Zealand, for example Taupo, that have a PAK'nSAVE but no New World. We need to maintain a presence in these locations, and the spread across the banners allows that."

Sargent notes that New Zealand is a relatively small market, in which positioning is extremely important. "Our perception is that Foodstuffs has positioned itself at the top of the tree, making it most definitely our preferred partner."

AngusPure has been hot on the supermarket shelves for a long time. "Our shelves are like real estate. We're pushed for space, so when we make a decision about the products we're putting on-shelf, we've got to get it right," says Alexander.

The partnership arrangement has seen AngusPure product labelled with co-branded labels in all PAK'nSAVE and New World



Foodstuffs stores. "The big red 'A' is quite distinct and the brand gets a lot of cut-through," Alexander says.

The global financial crisis saw sales across Foodstuffs stores changing; for example, baking ingredients took off as people became more frugal. "From a top-end point of view, it was actually quite staggering that sales of the four main beef cuts – fillet, ribeye, rump and porterhouse – showed no decline at all," Alexander notes.

The new partnership with AngusPure has meant Foodstuffs can expand the range and offer more versatile cuts.

From an AngusPure perspective, Sargent says, "It's about utilising as much of the carcass as possible, not just the one or two top cuts that restaurants are interested in."

With retail you can really 'pump up the brand'.

"It's all about consumer confidence in the brand. If people have that, they are happy to pay a bit more. With AngusPure consumers know they can trust it to be a safe, socially responsible product, and they know it's going to be of the highest quality."

Putting AngusPure product in front of consumers on mass can

only be good for the farming sector. "It's about securing a higher return for farmers right across the carcass," Sargent says. "Those who buy registered Angus bulls will ultimately get rewarded."

Sales of AngusPure have continued to rise year-on-year. In 2013, 61,000 cartons of AngusPure were sold through New World and PAK'nSAVE stores in the South Island. In 2014 this increased to 75,000 cartons. "Which is indicative of the recognition AngusPure is receiving as a quality beef product from our customers," says Alexander.

A distribution centre in Hornby, Christchurch houses all the AngusPure, and is available to all FSSI stores on a daily basis with a next-day turnaround. "The store will select what they want on a Monday and it'll turn up in-store by the Tuesday."

Eighty percent of beef and lamb in New Zealand is sold through supermarkets. From a desktop point of view, Alexander suggests that, "The number of consumers who have made the switch from a generic 100% New Zealand beef ribeye to an AngusPure beef ribeye is increasing. There is a difference in price but it's only a couple of

dollars per kilo, and is mostly dictated by schedule. New Zealand is not a big country but once we get AngusPure on the plates, more people will make that switch."

In-store promotion has so far been limited to co-branding of product, but 2015 promises to be a big year for in-store sampling at both New World and PAK'nSAVE. FSSI's programme includes dedicated people cooking and sampling on a weekly basis across stores, and AngusPure will be a part of this programme now that there is distribution to almost all FSSI stores.

Sargent believes that the future is about working in partnerships. "It's not sustainable to try and hold a market on your own. AngusPure is out there pushing New World and other Foodstuffs South Island stores through our membership, and likewise, they're pushing our product to their customers."

For AngusPure, this was a logical step flowing on from its relationship with Foodstuffs North Island. The partnership is a win all round, ultimately through getting more AngusPure onto more Kiwi's plates. ■



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PREMIUM BEEF WHETHER YOU'RE EATING OUT OR STAYING IN

BY SASKIA VAN RIJK

A step apart from the herd, AngusPure provides a premium product across New Zealand with the help of a team of loyal retailers.

Nick Connor, butchery manager at New World Thorndon in Wellington, could not agree more.

New World Thorndon boasts a butchery team of fifteen people, including butchers, packers, merchandisers and apprentices. For Nick, who has been at the store for more than three years, this is a big step up. "It's a fairly big team compared to what I'm used to," says Nick, who hailed from a much smaller enterprise, "but it's a great crowd."

New World, a Foodstuffs brand, is a proud supporter of AngusPure. "It's a point of difference," says Nick, "It's a little more expensive but people are prepared to pay for quality."

With AngusPure, retailers can also be confident of a consistent product. "We never have any issues, we always get a lot of feedback on how our display looks and how the meat is, how it tastes and the tenderness," says Nick. "It makes business sense to go with AngusPure."

Store manager, Ashley Drake, sees AngusPure as a great way to have a full offer in New World supermarkets. "Foodstuffs always loves to support New Zealand businesses and added value products, as well as providing a massive range for our customers."

From the source to the supplier to the retailer, AngusPure is treated with respect. New World Thorndon relies on Chef's Choice, a Wanganui based wholesale meat supplier, for their AngusPure.

"Our working relationship with them is really good," says Nick. "Ninety-nine percent of the time there are no issues. If there are any, they are resolved quickly." This helps provide a readily available, consistent product for all their retail customers, which is necessary for such a popular product.

According to Nick, retail gourmet sales sit at roughly \$7000-\$8000 per week, the majority of which is AngusPure. In store they stock AngusPure product in both the serve-over and the main retail case, with the bulk sold through the serve-over. "We deal with the top end stuff for Angus – fillet, sirloin, scotch fillet, rump, OP ribs – and it works well."

The strength of the AngusPure brand is that people recognize and value the quality. "In the serve-over we cut it thicker and people still don't tend to have a problem with the price point. They know it's quality so it sells really well."



The quality image of the AngusPure brand is reinforced through the product's availability in a range of top-class establishments, such as restaurants like Clooney and Botswana Butchery in Auckland and Restaurant One80 in Wellington. When customers

enjoy AngusPure while dining out, they register it as a restaurant quality product – but one that is also available through retail so that they can replicate that quality dining experience at home.

Ashley agrees: “It’s great when people see it in a restaurant and then want to cook it at home and have a great experience. Hence coming to a store like ours, where the range is available and they are able to talk to our in-store master butchers. We’ve got real butchers on site, which other stores or opposition don’t have. We’ve got people who can talk to customers and find a solution for what they’re looking for. So when a customer says ‘I went to a great restaurant, I want to do it at home, I’ve got people coming round, how can you help me?’ they can.”

Chef Chetan Pangam at Restaurant One80° uses AngusPure beef for his signature dish, a beautiful New Zealand inspired dish that incorporates many quality local products. The dish, AngusPure beef fillet wrapped in horopito mushroom duxelle and served with Ohakune carrot puree, braised greens and black truffle potato gratin, has been Pangam’s signature for well over five years.

“I’ve used AngusPure for a long time, purely to do with flavour and branding. I’ve been to one of the farms and seen the process and how everything is done,” says Pangam.

Like New World, Restaurant One80° uses Chef’s Choice as their go-to AngusPure supplier.

“I wouldn’t be using AngusPure if it wasn’t a consistent product.”

It is the most expensive dish on the menu but it is easily a best seller, Pangam says, selling between 400-500 portions a month.

Ultimately, the strength of the AngusPure Brand means retailers, chefs and foodies alike are happy to pay a premium for the consistent quality, taste and tenderness of AngusPure beef. ■

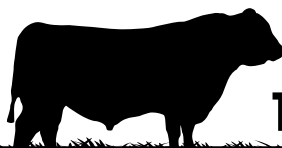


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ANGUSPURE COOKBOOK ON THE WORLD STAGE

A Cut Above, cooking with AngusPure – the cookbook produced by AngusPure, six of New Zealand's leading Angus stud breeders, and photographer/chef Gerhard Egger and his wife Henri – in January won a title at the Gourmand World Cookbook awards, and will now represent New Zealand in the competition for the 'World's Best Meat Cookbook', to be held in Yantai, China in June.

The largest competition of its kind in the world, this is a huge event for food culture and an even bigger event for cookbooks. The Gourmand World Cookbook Awards this year saw over 200 countries participating. Just being a part of this award process creates huge exposure worldwide, not only for the AngusPure brand but also for Angus New Zealand. This is media exposure with a consumer reach that money cannot buy.

From the beginning the idea was to produce a cookbook that identified with a shift in consumer attitudes towards the food we consume. *A Cut Above, cooking with AngusPure* is a photographic and written journey introducing the reader to a rich collection of beef recipes, from the classical to the more unusual.

Gerhard Egger is a European-trained chef who became first a dry-stock farmer and later a professional photographer specialising in food photography. His experience of farming and food are well

illustrated through both his recipes and photographs. With over 70 beef recipes, he covers the full range and versatility of the product, even including a section of recipes for the less popular cuts such as tripe, bull testicles and bone marrow.

By involving Angus breeders, the Eggers have been able to connect the consumer with the product and the story behind it. Six Angus studs – Waitangi, Storth Oaks, Turihaua, Te Whanga, Kakahu and Fossil Creek – helped sponsor the book, and represent New Zealand farming from Northland to Otago. Through their stories the consumer can get a sense of the dedication that lies behind the production of high quality beef.

Each stud has a different story to tell but all work towards the same goal: improving the NZ Angus breed. Interspersed between the different recipe sections of the book, readers are introduced to the history of each stud, the family and the property. Historical photographs have been included where available.

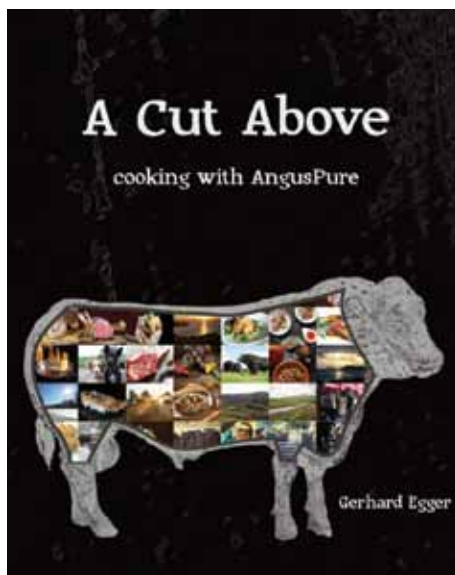
Wairoa Station is home to Waitangi Angus and owners John and Joss Bayly. Lying in the heart of the Bay of Islands, Wairoa Station is steeped in both history and natural beauty. Although the Bayly family has farmed here since the 1930s, Waitangi Angus is a relatively new operation in stud terms and is the combination of

Kai Iwi stud, owned by John's father and Rarewa Stud, originally owned by the Lovell family from Whangarei.

Storth Oaks Angus Stud in the Northern King Country near Otorohanga is home to Tim and Kelly Brittain. Started just over twelve years ago with six bulls, Gerhard was able to visit and photograph their annual bull sale where over 65 bulls were auctioned. Tim has a reputation as a barbeque fiend and contributed his favourite recipe, BBQ Brisket, low and slow American style.

Turihaua Angus Stud in Gisborne is Australasia's oldest Angus stud and the station stretches out over 2000ha of beautiful coastal hill country. Started in the early 1900s by James Williams, the Williams family has a long legacy and commitment to the East Coast. Hamish and Angela Williams are the third generation to farm here and are in the process of handing over to their two sons Toby and Paul.

Te Whanga Angus Stud in the Wairarapa is another stud with history; purchased by Pat Borthwick in 1936, the family originally came to New Zealand to manage the British family business, Thomas Borthwick & Sons. Robyn Borthwick is the current stud manager at Te Whanga, 1600ha of impeccably farmed rolling limestone country, while son Paddy is diversifying the family operation with his love of wines and the Paddy Borthwick wine label.



Kakahu Angus Stud is situated in the rolling hills of Canterbury between Geraldine and Fairlie. Gerald and Sue are the third generation of Hargreaves to farm here and are handing over the mantle of guardianship to their son Thomas and his wife Anna. Kakahu Angus was founded in 1954 by Gerald's father K.H Hargreaves, and is one of New Zealand's larger Angus studs with 550 stud cows.

Fossil Creek Angus Stud is the pride and joy of Neil and Rose Sanderson. Neil is a veterinarian specialising in animal reproduction, and their story includes their South American joint venture business, exporting and implanting embryos. Fossil Creek's top bull, Hero

H6, fetched the season record at their 2014 farm sale.

A Cut Above, cooking with AngusPure is far more than just a cookbook. It has been well received with some great media coverage, not only for Gerhard and Henri, but also for the AngusPure brand.

Lauraine Jacobs, food columnist for the NZ Listener, wrote to Gerhard and Henri, "Your book is lovely and I have enjoyed the stories of New Zealand Angus farmers, it is a great book."

Final results for the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards will be announced in June. Win or lose, this cookbook has earned its place on bookshelves the world over.

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Bull Sale

22nd May

2015

In conjunction with
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Inspection and enquiries always welcome

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Chris Pont 03 465 8171

www.waimaraangus.co.nz

Waimara 079

FILLET STEAK WITH GORGONZOLA

4 x 200 g fillet steaks
salt
pepper
4 tbsp walnut oil
1 cup clear beef stock
½ cup fresh cream
¼ cup whipped cream
¼ cup dry sparkling wine
80g gorgonzola

Season the steak with salt and pepper and panfry in the walnut oil for 5-6 minutes on each side, or to your liking. Place to one side and rest for 5 minutes.

Pour the stock and fresh cream into the pan and bring to the boil, reduce by half. Add the sparkling wine and bring back to the boil, remove from the heat and crumble in the cheese. Add the whipped cream and stir to combine, ensuring the cheese does not completely melt.

Serve the steak topped with the gorgonzola sauce, garnish with toasted walnuts.

¼ cup coarsely chopped walnuts, toasted.



Serves 4

The sauce served with these steaks is light and creamy, the pieces of crumbled cheese and toasted walnuts adding a lovely texture.

SHIAN ANGUS



Sire bull Shian 58

Bull Sale
Thursday 28th
May 2015 at 3pm
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BVD, Lepto & 10 in 1 Vaccinated
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Sale bulls sired by:
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Atahua 618 Shian 58

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Hannah McCaskie and Deborah Banks are taking Aberdeen on Broadway from strength to strength.

Top regional award showcases **ANGUSPURE RESTAURANT**

'Aberdeen on Broadway' hit the news last November when the restaurant, which carries the renowned AngusPure 'A' above its front door, won 'Restaurant of the Year' in the Manawatu Hospitality Awards 2014-15.

Jointly owned by AngusPure's Guy Sargent and his partner Deborah Banks, and 23-year-old Hannah McCaskie, the restaurant also took second place prizes in 'Chef of the Year', 'Maitre d' of the Year' and 'Waiter of the Year'.

"It meant a lot to all of us to win the Restaurant of the Year award against such hot opposition. We have always been a finalist in the Best Restaurant section, but never taken top honors. All the staff have worked really hard and they deserve the recognition for their efforts," Deborah says.

The accolades reflect the restaurant's journey from being primarily a steakhouse to offering a more expanded menu that

appeals to all ages and both sexes. However Aberdeen's AngusPure steaks still maintain pride of place with the owners.

Founded in 2007 by Guy and two partners, Deborah came on the scene six months later to help out while she was between business projects. Back then the restaurant was doing sixty-odd meals on a busy night, mostly walk-ins, which made planning staffing and kitchen requirements a challenge.

The restaurant interior was white, with bulls heads adorning the walls. "It wasn't a good fit for Palmerston North," says Deborah. An interior make-over was the beginning of a big turnaround in numbers coming through the door, the new image matched by a change in name, with 'Aberdeen Steakhouse and Bar' becoming 'Aberdeen on Broadway'.

Hannah joined the team four years ago after a period as an apprentice chef at Cafe Cuba in Palmerston North. "She walked



through the door and asked for a job," Deborah recalls. "I instantly saw potential; she was just so vibrant and passionate."

"Deb told me that if she couldn't get me a job in the kitchen, she'd do her best to get me out front," says Hannah.

By mid 2013 Hannah had purchased a share of the business and is now an equal partner with Guy and Deborah.

The last nine months have seen a big advertising push in local newspapers, on billboards and in social media. The exterior of the building has also been completely overhauled, a move Deborah describes as 'absolutely necessary'.

The awards came at a good time for the team at Aberdeen. "We've got the best front of house and kitchen teams we've ever had," says Deborah.

This shone through on the night of the awards, when the whole team was there to celebrate.

Fully booked through the high season of November and December, the restaurant has continued to thrive through the normally quieter summer months. A busy night is now 150 diners, and bookings are essential.

In the early days the majority of plates put through the kitchen were AngusPure, but this has now pulled back to about fifty percent, with the menu expanding to cater for a wide range of customer tastes.

Deborah is a converted AngusPure supporter but good commercial sense has to prevail. "We would never use any other brand of beef because AngusPure is, without doubt, the best.

The meat quality is outstanding – customers come here for the AngusPure, and we know that. But by expanding the menu and including a wider range of items, we can also appeal to a wider range of punters. Our chefs are the best in town and they enjoy the challenge a wider menu offers. The award reflects their talent and effort."

Currently busy learning every aspect of the business, Hannah is extremely positive about the restaurant's future, and believes there's a key element. "We work really well as a team," she says.

Deborah currently manages the daytime 'office' side of the business while Hannah is maitre d' in the evenings.

"Because Hannah is a fully qualified chef but also knows the bar and front of house, she can work in any aspect of the business and step in if there's a shortfall," says Deborah.

"When I started out in the business, I treated it as if it was my own. Hannah has that same attitude, and that's why she is where she is now."

The challenge now is to continue to grow while maintaining award-winning standards. The trio has tossed ideas around for complementary businesses, such as a cafe which would help to pull in the lunch crowd and would also improve staff utilisation.

The awards don't come around again until 2016-17, but Aberdeen will approach them with a title to defend. With such a formidable team in place, the battle will be one worth watching. In the meantime, the restaurant's win is a great commendation for your next night out in Palmerston North. ■

Hill Country **born, bred and finished.**



2015 Bull Sale Monday 22nd June 4pm

New Sale Venue at Rimunui Station, 410 Goodwin Road, Gisborne

Manager - **Kevin Hooper**

06 867 8061

027 276 8331

Colin Williams

06 862 7822

Penny Hoogerbrug

06 867 4232 - 027 655 7104

email: petepen@gisborne.net.nz

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that’s the end of it.
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Keith, Beef farmer, Wairarapa

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THE BEEF MARKET AND OPPORTUNITIES from changing land use

BY ANDY MACFARLANE, REGISTERED FARM CONSULTANT



The current season has given farmers a timely reminder of the potential volatility in commodity prices. Like a number of hard commodities, many agricultural commodities are on a steep part of the 'supply/demand curve', which means that small movements in the supply/demand balance can have a higher than expected impact on prices.

Global agricultural commodities do not have the large volume numbers (stores) they did twenty years ago, so inventories can be more easily impacted by sudden buffer changes in demand. Global milk supplies can be turned on and off relatively quickly by extending contracting lactation length and feed offered to cows, leading to significant volatility in supply. Conversely, the beef supply cycle is much longer, reacting more to movements in numbers of breeding stock. Short-term volatility in beef supply can be accentuated by climate related culls or retentions in breeding stock numbers, which tend to vary supply of manufacturing beef more than prime beef.

The only other short-term volatility in supply comes from changes in cattle weights off feedlots in competitor supply markets such as Australia.

Hence market swings for prime beef are likely to be longer and deeper than for many other commodities.

The current low breeding cow numbers in key growing countries such as Australia, USA and Argentina, plus internal demand in South America, mean that the current upswing in beef prices is unlikely to be a one season wonder.

We can, and need to, create more beef originating from the dairy cow herd. Supplies of traditionally bred prime beef cannot build quickly enough to supply demand. Dairy breeds crossed with Angus and Hereford, and specialist breeds like Wagyu, can deliver a very good prime beef product, and specific cuts from bull beef and cull cows can be used to supply market demand for lower priced prime product.

The growing dairy sector represents an opportunity to increase the supply of dairy beef.

With time, and as the cost and reliability of single sex semen improves, I can see an opportunity to mate top cows to female-only beef semen, and lower production value cows to male-only semen with high growth rate and high meat quality characteristics.

The key to optimising market returns from prime beef of traditional beef breed origin is to firstly have beef with verifiable high meat quality characteristics. That means high marbling scores, high eye muscle area, good fat and meat colour, all of which combine to create a rewarding visual, taste and tender eating experience.

That sounds obvious, but the New Zealand meat industry, both producers and processors, has historically paid lip service to the need for high meat quality genetics, prior to ANZCO developing Five Star Beef. Subsequently, other initiatives such as AngusPure have pushed hard for better quality to be produced and rewarded. Despite such good initiatives, many beef industry participants remain in denial that there is a need to focus on meat quality!

New Zealand also has a two key global points of difference in the commodity beef trade, of which we are a relatively small but specialist supplier.

The first is as a supplier of high CL (chemical lean) manufacturing beef to balance low CL offcuts in grinding beef. The USA has been our key market, but Asia is increasing its demand at a high rate.

The second is our grass fed origin. While the world generally is used to – and therefore prefers – beef of grain fed origin, an increasing niche exists for naturally raised grass fed beef, with its increased flavour, brand story, and potentially differentiated health characteristics.

The second challenge in optimising market returns is cut optimisation between markets. Few markets can deliver an optimised price on a 'full set' (all carcass cuts). Skilled marketers therefore have to have both market spread and scale as the cuts are sold globally.

Typically, the best returns are for chilled beef programmes that require reliable, consistent delivery all year.

Five Star Beef has this perfected to an art form, but delivery off pasture, particularly in the South Island, can be challenging for farmers, and requires smart, integrated farm systems to deliver to expectations.

Inside the farm gate, the national footprint of dairy has increased, and is unlikely to retreat unless dairy prices persist at their current low levels, which is unlikely. Some of the additional footprint is from cows wintered off, and some from heifers grazed off farm.

I have observed a number of farmers, when changing their farm systems, moving to 100% dairy support to chase regular cash-flow and lower capital. Many such systems, while good in theory, do not match pasture demand to pasture growth particularly well. As a result pasture can be under-utilised in spring, and demand too high and inflexible in late summer when there are two heifer age groups on hand.

I am a fan of using multiple classes of livestock, integrated into systems that deliver not just a good profit per kg dry matter, but utilise more dry matter per hectare in order to optimise per hectare income. To that end, deer/cattle systems, sheep/cattle systems and

arable/cattle/sheep systems all work well. The manner in which the various stock classes are integrated is often more important than the absolute profit per kgDM.

In the interests of fitting the feed curve on semi-reliable rainfall land, a class of stock that can reach slaughter on feedlot weight around December/January is required. High growth rate, early finishing steers and bulls, 2yr old prime cattle and bulls, and high growth rate deer all accomplish that objective.

Where large numbers of dairy heifers are being farmed, a balancing class of livestock not only adds profit in their own right, but adds profit via growth rate to the companion stock class (heifers) increases feed utilisation, and increases flexibility and demand in variable climates.

In a similar manner, beef cows add far more value to integrated sheep/beef/deer breeding systems than just income from their own progeny. As we know, they eat a feed class that would otherwise be wasted, and add valuable feed quality to the intake of their companion animals.

I favour running beef cows as a key component of sheep and deer breeding systems for that reason.

Gross margin analysis (see table) can therefore be misleading as it does not account for the integrative aspect. When listing some comparisons below, the important factor is that there are more variations within systems, depending on performance, than between systems.

A key to achieving high live weight gain in finishing cattle is combining feed production, feed quality (grazing management and pasture selection), and utilisation. The most profitable beef farmers apply the same principles as top dairy farmers to achieve that goal

(including using the electric fence extensively!).

The ability to renew pastures on hill country using Glyphosate and alternative species such as plantation, chicory and brassicas as break crops, has lifted the crossbar on performance potential.

Applying dairy farm principles to irrigated land does generate a very competitive return on capital for beef finishing, and one very similar to, or better than dairy support.

We have a great opportunity ahead of us! ■

Summary of gross margins

Breeding systems	c/kgDM
Breeding cow selling calves at \$520 net	9.4
Breeding hinds selling fawns @ \$190 net	13.0
Breeding ewes, 120%, selling lambs @ \$64/head	9.5

Finishing Systems

Breeding systems	c/kgDM
Prime steer @ \$526 margin (to 440kgLW)	24.5
Young bull @ \$1,000 margin, 100kg to 18 months	25.7
Young bull @ \$430 margin to spring store sale	21.8
18 month bull to 2.5 years @ \$546 margin	19.9
Dairy heifers @ \$12.50/week	25.7
@ \$10/week	21.5
Cow wintering @ \$27/head/week	29.7
Venison finishing @ \$165 margin	25.6

PIKOBURN ANGUS

Sale Wednesday 27th May 2015 - 11am

15 Bulls

Sires of Sale Bulls

- KAHARAU CLARION 844
- TUWHARETOA REGENT D145
- MT MABLE VIKING 693

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waiterenui
ANGUS
NEW ZEALAND



100 YEARS OF BALANCED BREEDING AT WAITERENUI ANGUS

BY ANNA MACKENZIE



Celebrating 100 YEARS

As Will and Viv MacFarlane's Waiterenui Angus marks the passage of a hundred years of continuous breeding it is very much business as usual – but well considered business.

"Our history gives us an overwhelming sense of responsibility to our clients," says Will. "We're responsible for their financial outcomes. Breeding is not about how much money we can make, it's about how much money we can ensure our clients have the potential to make."

Maximising that potential comes from providing the right genetics to meet the demands of both the environment and the market. "Herd size allows us critical mass," says Will. "It allows for selection differentials: the bigger the base, the more you can evaluate and select."

"Our genetics are backed by 100 years of selection for this environment," Viv adds.

And that environment is demanding. Waiterenui sits in the heart of Hawke's Bay's summer-dry hill country. Droughts are all too common, winter the only season that can be relied upon, and the cattle do it hard. But that's no disadvantage, the MacFarlanes believe.

"A harder environment tends to favour a more efficient animal," Will says. "Cattle must have three things: environmental suitability, objective merit and type. Environment is the most significant, because environment dictates everything."

Will believes there is a big difference between stud breeding and seedstock breeding. The old-fashioned approach, and that of Will's antecedents, is the former.

"Stud breeding identifies the top end and 'makes butter out of cream'. By contrast, we don't focus on the elite. We are trying to shift the bell curve, trying to ensure our clients get the best out of every calf born."

There's never an end to the process of selecting for genetic improvement. "There are always new traits being identified and selected for. That will continue as we further identify the

characteristics of our population through genomics and data recording. But we mustn't let that tsunami of data distract from observation. Type is important because people make their buying decisions based on the look of an animal. I'm all for data, but it will never be more than 50% of a breeding equation."

Balance is a theme to which Will keeps returning, in conversation, in breeding and in life.

He believes that, while Breedplan has allowed great strides forward, it is now almost obsolete except in two critical traits – marbling and days to calving. "The breed average for most traits is now highly suitable for the New Zealand environment. For example, we know that anything above 100 for Mature Cow Weight compromises cow efficiency. The breed averages sit at 83 – and we've achieved that, as breeders, through using EBVs in our breeding decisions."

Despite the obvious gains made, there is still a fraternity of people seriously challenged by Breedplan. "There is an overwhelming weight of evidence in support of the accuracy of BLUP technology, and zero evidence against it."

But as with everything, it's about balance. Moving forward, there will be new challenges and new tools for identifying and overcoming them.

One of those challenges lies in the need for further improvement in carcass attributes – "but not at the expense of environmental suitability. And it's early days with those traits. Breedplan is a fifty year programme; it can't be done overnight. It will take as much observation as objective input to achieve similar progress in those areas. Objective and subjective input has to be in balance."

Waiterenui encompasses 830ha of strong limestone hill country with 'beautiful water quality'. The property carries 360 breeding cows and a base of 1500 Romney ewes, all mated to terminal sires. Additionally the MacFarlanes trade hoggets through the winter – the only reliable season for grass growth, 'albeit at a low rate'.

"We aim for production efficiency. It is our key determinant."

Waiterenui hosts an annual on-farm sale of 2yr bulls in June and another of yearlings in September. The couple are not fans of fattening bulls for sales. "There is no purpose to fat bulls. You want bulls that will work."

"After 25 years of Breedplan, feeding as a marketing tool should be obsolete, but it still exists. We now have the tools to do better by our clients – but still there are people who want to move backwards."

The stud was founded by Will's grandfather, Willy MacFarlane, who arrived in New Zealand from the Scottish Hebrides to work



“A HARDER ENVIRONMENT TENDS TO FAVOUR A MORE EFFICIENT ANIMAL.”

for his cousin, Sir Donald MacLean. Angus was clearly in the blood, Willy's brothers John and James founding Ben Lomond and Glen Aros Angus studs. The Waiterenui stud was founded on females from the Gladbrook herd in Middlemarch, one of the country's earliest Angus studs.

Under the care of Will's father, John, Waiterenui focused on the 'chiller cattle' – small, compact Scottish types – in vogue at the time.

“Dad was steeped in pedigrees and the stud breeding ethos, with all the nuances they used as breeding tools – the escutcheon as an indicator of butter fat; hide as a determinant of meat quality. He breathed that stuff. And they weren't wrong; they had developed that understanding through observation and experience.”

But then there is balance. Will's own interest lies in epigenetics, with future direction being in RNA rather than DNA. “It's the dynamics of life, the triggering of genes – developmental plasticity around the point of conception and beyond. In future we'll be aiming to trigger endpoint advantages, such as marbling.”

Key influences on Will's thinking have been Dr Jan Bonsma, professor of animal science at Pretoria University, South Africa, who was a gifted observer of cattle, able to read cattle for functional efficiency through observation, and, more recently, Professor Sir Peter Gluckman, National Science Advisor, whose work on metabolic diseases underpins Will's confidence that the future direction for breeders lies in epigenetics.

“Epigenetics is the big picture,” he says. “If you imagine epigenetics as a room, current genomics is a box within that room, while Breedplan is a coin within that box. It's a good starting point, but we are now at the point of stretching outwards.”

In celebrating the stud's centenary the MacFarlanes have noted both the birthdate, 8th August 1914, and the registration – in March 1915, of the first Waiterenui-born animal. That cow, Countess, was to become the foundation of a very strong maternal line.

Throughout the year they have held a monthly draw of clients, with the winners presented with a bottle of malt whisky – “My father was a real whisky man,” Will recalls. In March 2015 the family hosted an industry-wide lunch on the property at the conclusion of the 2015 Hawke's Bay Herd Tour. Inevitably there was whisky in abundance together with AngusPure beef and home-grown Berkshire pork. The event was a family affair, with Will's sister Mary responsible for catering through her business, Kingfisher Kitchen.

During the celebratory lunch, attended by 200 stud breeders, commercial farmers and industry personalities, the New Zealand Angus Association presented the MacFarlanes with a trophy marking their 100 years of continuous breeding. Waiterenui is one of very few studs eligible to receive this honour.

The stud looks set to continue in the family into another



generation, with Will and Viv's daughter Kate currently working on different properties to extend her knowledge of the industry.

“Kate inherited my father's eye for stock and my grandfather's gift with dogs,” Will says. Recently cajoled at the last minute into entering the Okawa Dog Trials, Kate surprised everyone by taking away a slew of prizes.

Meanwhile, son Archie, having completed a Masters in Ecology, is currently managing an Animal Health Board contract with Canterbury University, investigating the impact on native bird life of 1080 drops.

“We are the current caretakers of the stud,” Will says, “but I'll be content to pass it on. We've progressed through a production and utilisation ethos to one of holistic resource management,” – a viewpoint strongly reflected in the next generation's attitudes. “Whatever I take on in future, it will be with the lessons I've learnt during our years of farming.”

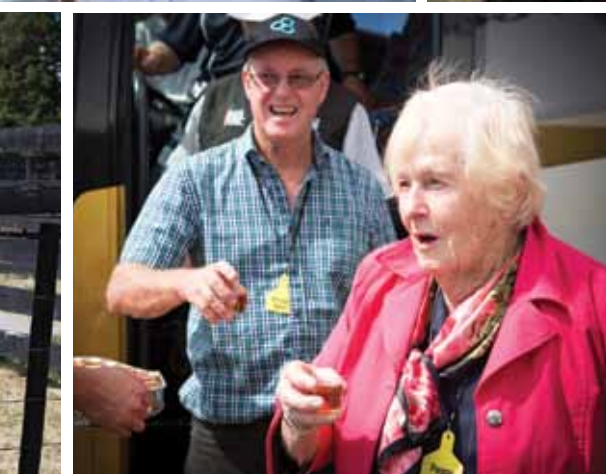
As for the future of the industry, Will is extremely positive. “As long as we play to our strengths – don't get into bed with the US, don't sell only to the poorest – farming in New Zealand has a bright future, and Angus will continue to be a key part of that future.”

“Cattle have improved enormously over the last 100 years, there's no question. You just have to look at old photographs. That improvement has been possible because we have a far wider range of tools at our disposal and we are breeding for different things. The old approach was centred solely on observational skills. Those skills are still important, but we can now apply objective observation. It is critical that we take a balanced approach, and take advantage of every tool we now have at our disposal.”

As a finishing word, Will quotes the book the family had produced to mark the occasion of the stud's centenary: “Livestock agriculture is an artform whose foundation is science.” ■







Celebrating
100
YEARS

PHOTOS BY SARAH IVEY





*"Evolution through
commercial discipline"*

2015 AI TEAM

All breedplan figures quoted are based on
the January 2015 analysis



Matauri Reality 839

14647008839

Photo at R4

- Highest selling NZ bred AI bull in Australasia 2013/2014
- THE calving ease and temperament bull of the decade
- Growth spread 1.4 out to 93
- Gestation Length -10.3 days [trait leader]
- Positive fats plus massive scrotal and indexes



Matauri Outlier F031

14647010F031

Photo at R4

- Highest selling AI bull in NZ 2014
- Mainstream sire with growth spread 5.5 out to 122
- Trait leader for 200/400/600 day weight and scrotal at +3.5
- A standout bull for phenotype, feet and temperament
- 1400kg at 4 yo



Matauri Resolution F030

14647010F030

Photo at R4

- Trait leader for Gestation Length at -8.4 days
- Trait leader for scrotal at +3.3
- Top 10% for both indexes
- Great moving bull with quiet disposition
- Standout constitution. At R5 yo we can't keep the weight off him
- High fats at +2.2 and +2.6
- 1300kg at 4 yo



Matauri Cattle King G237

14647011G237

Photo at 36 months

- New AI sire for 2015
- A big framed mainstream sire out of Outlier's Dam and with an outcross pedigree
- His first crop of calves born 2014 are outstanding with frame, softness and fleshing
- Cattle King also has wonderful disposition and perfect feet
- He will grow out into a very big impressive sire



Matauri Navigator J481 ET

14647013J481

Photo at 18 months

- New Outcross AI sire for 2015
- Growth spread 4.1 out to 109
- Massive indexes at \$163 and \$183 [top 1%]
- Top 1% for scrotal / IMF close to top 10%
- Very good calving ease data
- Low gestation at -6.6 days
- Positive fats combined with massive 400 day weight of +93 [top 5%]
- An outcross pedigree that will add style and growth to most programs



- Cow herd is farmed commercially on hill country
- Bulls are not overfed which significantly reduces breakdowns
- All cattle are guaranteed for three years
- Matauri is NZ's number one Angus stud for AI semen sales 2013/2014
- Main sale on the property Tuesday 7th July 2015
- Yearlings by private treaty anytime August onwards.



CONTACT DETAILS:

Colin Maxwell
341B Matauri Bay Road
RD1, Kaeo
Northland

P: 09 4050357

M: 021 341 501

E: colin@matauriangus.com

W: www.matauriangus.com



Matauri Outlander J487 ET

14647013J487

Photo at 18 months

Also new for our 2015 catalogue. An Outlier son with moderate BW and great calving ease data

- Huge milk
- Very positive fats
- Indexes close to the top 10 percentile
- Outlander is an appealing package with great style, beautiful neck extension and a very smooth shoulder



Measuring the value of EBVs at **WHANGARA FARMS**

BY SARAH CHARTERIS

Overlooking the ocean on the North Island's East Coast is a farming operation that is using science to break new ground in genetics.

Whangara Farms lies 30km north of Gisborne and is a partnership between two Maori incorporations (Pakarae and Whangara B5), established in 2006. The 7000ha operation runs 60,000 stock units – including 32,500 ewes and 6000 cattle – and is leading the way for Maori land-based businesses.

But it is its involvement in a nationwide project looking at improving profitability through beef genetics that is currently putting the operation in the commercial farming spotlight.

Whangara Farms is one of five large commercial properties throughout New Zealand taking part in the Beef + Lamb New Zealand (B+LNZ) Genetics Beef Progeny Test Project. The project is a partnership between bull breeders, meat processors and sheep and beef farmers, and is exploring how a selection of bulls of different genetic makeup perform under comparable commercial conditions.

It is a first for the country, and Whangara Farms general manager Richard Scholefield says he is extremely excited to be involved. "The philosophy here at Whangara Farms is to farm sustainably and profitably, and be here for future generations," he says. "Utilising proven science is a big part of this. We are lucky to be in a commercial situation where we are able to explore breaking new ground in terms of beef genetics. I think it's great what B+LNZ Genetics are doing. The New Zealand beef industry has lagged behind the world in regards to genetics, and it's time we caught up."

At the core of the project lie EBVs, and whether utilising them results in more animals in specification through the BeefEQ grading system (run by Silver Fern Farms), as well as better female productivity. It also looks at whether artificial insemination is more effective than traditional methods at producing progeny of high specification.

EBVs are calculated based on a number of factors including

the animal's fertility, EMAs, IMFs, rib fat, rump fat and resulting carcass weight. While in the past a breeding bull may have been graded on visual structure, with the project it is EBVs that come first, with structure still of importance.

Cows involved in the B+LNZ Genetics Beef Progeny Evaluation are inseminated with semen sourced from throughout New Zealand, Australia and the US, from bulls with a range of EBVs. They include moderate New Zealand bulls through to bulls that have the highest carcass EBVs in the world. The goal is to assess their progeny through to slaughter and back into the herd to determine their performance.

Whangara Farms is currently sitting at 28% for their progeny into the SFF BeefEQ, but the goal is 75%. That's why Richard believes it was undoubtedly the right step to take up the opportunity with B+LNZ Genetics.

"There is also this whole issue for commercial farmers around AI and whether it stacks up," he says. "When you look at what people are paying for a good bull, you can pay the same to AI a lot of cows. So it's worth exploring whether it's commercially viable to utilise AI, along with more focus on EBVs, as a standard farming practice, and whether the progeny are better than traditional genetics."

Four hundred cows were inseminated and had DNA samples taken at Whangara Farms in December and are due for pregnancy testing at the start of March. Richard is hoping for the standard 50-60% hit rate with AI.

"Something we will also be doing with these cows is noting the fetal age at scanning, rather than catching it at birth, and this also gives us the birthdate, + or – five days. We will be taking DNA samples from all the calves to determine parentage and to monitor bull performance to see which sires are throwing progeny that are hitting specification at slaughter, and as heifer replacements.

"We will have these heifers coming back into the herd, and their longevity in terms of fertility will also be looked at. We are

condition scoring and weighing the cows throughout the project, and this isn't something really done with beef cows, so we will be monitoring the benefits."

For the last four years, replacement heifers have been scanned for back fat and EMA, with selection for the A and B herds based on these measurements. "According to the scanner, Bill Austin, we are the only commercial operation in New Zealand doing this, though stud breeders commonly scan bulls for EBV carcass measurements," Richard notes.

Alongside the test cows, Whangara Farms continues to run a traditional breeding system.

"That is where some real comparisons can be made right before our eyes – they are in the same environment with the same feed and same conditions."

Although it's early days, Whangara Farms is set to do another round of AI this December as part of the project.

Richard's 'gut feeling' is that over time the project will be able to achieve its goals and, most importantly, prove the enormous potential of beef EBVs and genetics.

"A lot has been done for the sheep industry in New Zealand, but our beef industry is so far behind the world, and I truly believe we have the potential to make huge gains and catch up to the likes of Australia and the States," he says.

"I visited an Australian stud last year where they were splitting embryos and in the process taking DNA. This was sent away and within 48 hours they had the potential EBVs of that embryo. They could then decide whether to implant that embryo or not. This just blew my mind. It just showed that the options and potential for science and genetics as a breeding tool are huge and very real."

As Richard discusses the future possibilities of sexed-semen as well as equal emphasis on sires' and cows' contribution to an embryo, he acknowledges he could be seen as 'crystal ball gazing' for a commercial operation. But the developments he has been a part of at Whangara Farms are testament to how fast things are moving.

"When I first started eight years ago we had 50 bulls representing seven different breeds and now we have just two breeds, Angus and Simmental," he says.

"Lambing percentage was 100%. It's now nearly 140%. Heifer mating was unheard of and we now mate 300 and achieve over 90% in-calf. Not only have we come a long way in that short period of time, so has technology and science. Sexed-semen has been standard practice in dairying for years, so why can't we be looking at it with beef farming?"

Richard says the project is not about proving which breeding practices are wrong, but rather about showing farmers that there are tools and information available to make bigger productivity gains at very little extra cost.

"I want to show that EBVs are a tool that farmers should be using when selecting a bull, and that AI is an effective practice for our operation and all commercial farmers," he says.

"We are one of only a few farms in our area really utilising EBVs and there are even breeders who simply don't believe in them. There are also only a few commercial farmers in the country using AI."

"Yes, it is extra work. For example, we have to give the cows more care and attention to ensure they are in the right condition for AI and to calve successfully. The results of this project will show us and other farmers whether it has all been worth it."

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FARMERS INVEST IN

Assessment of Beef Genetics

BY DR JASON ARCHER, ABACUSBIO CONSULTANT

New Zealand sheep and beef farmers are making a significant investment around assessing the performance of beef genetics in commercial farming environments.

Last year, Beef + Lamb New Zealand (B+LNZ) Genetics was formed. It is a new organisation and a logical amalgamation of the sheep and beef sector's levy-funded genetics work. Levy funds and contributions from commercial entities are being matched by the New Zealand Government.

Of course, B+LNZ Genetics does not produce genetics itself. Instead, it delivers tools and information to help New Zealand breeders and farmers identify and use the best genetics available for their businesses.

From a commercial sheep and beef farmer's perspective, investment in the assessment of sheep genetics performance has been steady and effective. The additional funding at this time means we can now begin to generate similar information for New Zealand beef genetics.

B+LNZ Genetics Beef Progeny Test

When it comes to assessing bull performance, the answer is simple. To be relevant to commercial farmers, bull performance must be assessed in a commercial context and with minimal disruption to normal management. B+LNZ Genetics has moved quickly to get a commercial Beef Progeny Test project off the ground.

The test is a partnership between bull breeders, meat processors and sheep and beef farmers (via B+LNZ Genetics). To date, Whangara Farms and Focus Genetics have also contributed to the partnership, as well as the vital input of other commercial herds involved.

The Beef Progeny Test will determine how a selection of bulls of different types perform under comparable commercial conditions. This first for New Zealand is all the more valuable because of the number of cows and bulls involved.

Right now, about 2200 commercial cows and heifers are in calf to 50 AI bulls and 50 follow-up bulls. The animals are running on five large commercial properties: Whangara Farms near Gisborne, Landcorp's Rangitaiki Station, Taratahi's Tautane Station in the Hawke's Bay, the Black family's Mendip Hills Station in North

Canterbury and Lonestar's Caberfeidh Farm in the Hakataramea Valley.

The project involves Angus, Hereford, Stabiliser, Simmental and Charolais bulls. The five cow herds are made up of four Angus herds and one Hereford herd.

The test's goals are threefold.

One: putting dollars against the cost/benefit of investing in quality genetics. This way, commercial farmers can cut straight to the bottom line – and so can breeders, when communicating with farmers.

Two: demonstrating the value of genetic technologies to New Zealand farming. Again, by quantifying the economic value that can be added through using tools like EBVs, refined genetic selection indices and new genomic tools (such as SNP testing) in bull selection. These tools can speed up genetic progress by years.

And three: contributing valuable data to the sector, so new tools and measurements can be developed that will serve New Zealand beef farmers into the future. Possibilities include a breeding value for the body condition score of cows, new scanning measurements on heifers to better predict cow fertility, or a simple SNP test to aid selection of commercial heifer replacements.

Independently and as a whole, these three goals all directly and positively impact on breeders.

Implications for the Angus breed

This is not a token project to simply demonstrate what we already know. It is a scientifically-robust research experiment that will address several key issues in beef cattle breeding – particularly as it applies to New Zealand farming systems, where the beef cow plays a different role to that in most other countries.

While the project has a strong focus on New Zealand issues, it has incorporated genetic links to Australian and American progeny test data to strengthen connections to international breeds and genetics. It will also provide an excellent platform to help promote the value that genetics can bring to commercial beef production.

The emphasis of the project is more about investigating how particular types of cattle perform in different commercial situations – rather than evaluating individual bulls – and it is expected that breeders may ponder the implications for their cattle type.



“B+LNZ GENETICS DELIVERS TOOLS AND INFORMATION TO HELP NEW ZEALAND BREEDERS AND FARMERS IDENTIFY AND USE THE BEST GENETICS AVAILABLE FOR THEIR BUSINESSES.”

Angus breeders in New Zealand have a track record of being proactive and coordinated in their approach to marketing – both to commercial farmers buying bulls and to exporters and consumers buying product. Commercial reality is not a new concept to any of the breeds involved in the project. The Beef Progeny Test provides another opportunity to add to your brand and finetune the genetics underpinning that brand.

Of particular interest will be the data analyses around carcass performance, with comparisons being made against both domestic bulls of other breeds, and also international Angus bulls.

Closer to home is the on-going discussion around what the ultimate Angus animal delivers for commercial farmers. Is it an efficient maternal cow that performs on hill country? Or is it an animal that produces a high-value carcass to market specification?

Or – and this is where I would put my money, if I were a betting man – is it an animal that is both efficient on hill country AND produces a high-value carcass?

Those bulls will be out there, and that’s exciting for New Zealand farmers, breeders and meat exporters.

But let’s not get ahead of ourselves. My point is that all of us working within the New Zealand’s beef genetics space have questions we’ve always wondered, pre-conceived ideas we’ve defended and beliefs that fundamentally underpin our outlook. The Beef Progeny Test will shed new light. Some of that light will validate our thinking. Some of that light may challenge it.

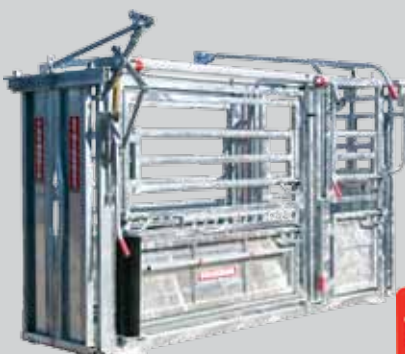
It’s an exciting investment and one that will significantly strengthen and support the work undertaken by those already committed to and invested in New Zealand beef genetics. ■

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WHERE'S YOUR BULL BREEDER LEADING YOU?

BY BOB THOMSON, AGFIRST NORTHLAND

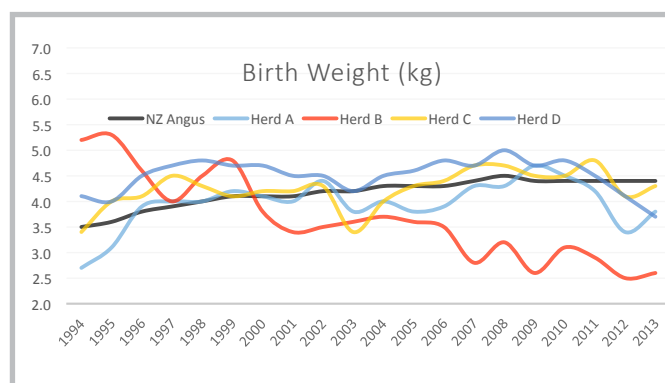
As a commercial farmer buying bulls you're literally being 'led by the nose' in genetic trend terms.

If you're someone who is still not convinced that EBVs work, then take a look at the genetic trend lines from four 'fair dinkum' NZ Angus bull breeding herds which are compared against the NZ Angus Breed Average genetic trend lines. Each of these herds sells a significant number of bulls, and you may be a farmer that buys bulls from one of these herds. In the series of graphs that follow you will clearly see there are big differences in the genetic merit between herds.

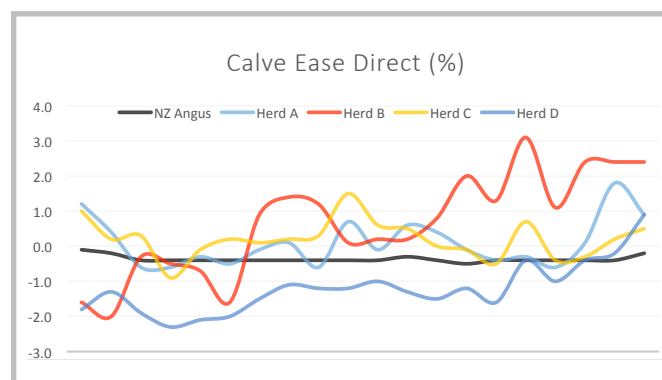
Do you really know where your bull breeder is leading you?

Take a basic requirement like easy calving. We're encouraged to look at Calving Ease Direct EBVs to achieve easy calving, but it's also helpful to check out Birthweight EBVs. In the next two graphs we see the genetic trends of the four herds we're looking at relative to the NZ Angus Breed Average. Which bull breeding herd would you choose?

The genetic trend lines we see in the graphs below span from 1994 to 2013, nineteen years, and account for perhaps 2½ cattle generations.

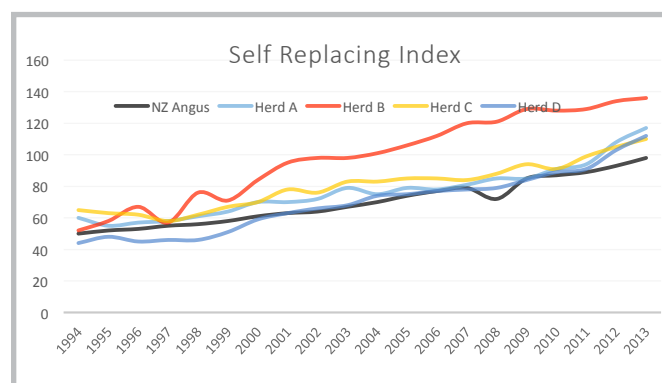


I like Herd B and what the bull breeder has done to reduce birthweight. But what do the Calving Ease Direct genetic trends look like?



These EBVs represent the differences in the percentage of unassisted births from the sires' daughters, so the bigger the number the better the bull (unlike birthweight). I like Herd B, what do you reckon?

And then finally, at least from a maternal perspective, we should be looking at the Self Replacing Index or maybe the AngusPure Index, or maybe another Index which wraps up your requirements in a number representing the relative economic value of the herd.

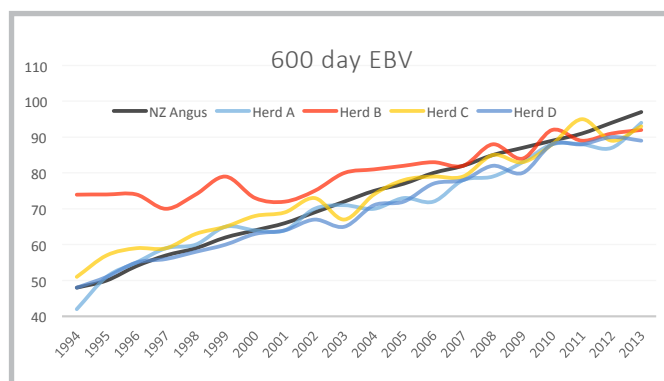


The Self Replacing Index shows Herd B to be making the most positive genetic and economic progress for the traits that I want in my herd. I'd go for Herd B because I'd like that progress to be

“EBVS REALLY DO WORK – JUST LOOK AT THE TRENDS”

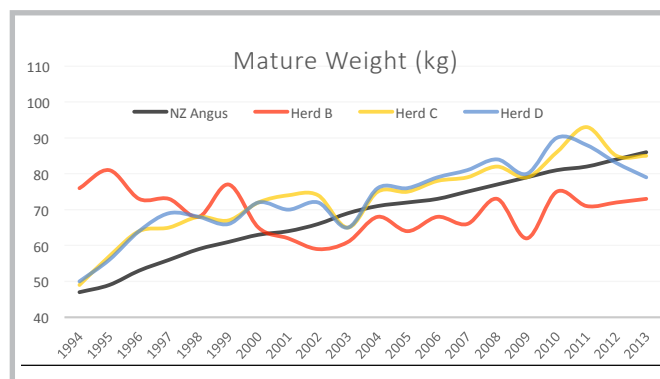
represented in my herd. I would be happy where that bull breeder is leading me.

I can hear you saying, “Yeah, that’s all very fine and dandy but what about growth rate – you’ll be sacrificing that, eh?” Okay let’s have a look at 600 day EBV.



Interesting that Herd B is now in the middle of the pack. I’m okay with that.

But there’s another question to ask: “What’s the Mature Weight (cow) EBV for the herds?”



Studying this reveals that Herd B is a winner there as well. Now this sparks another whole discussion point, but for now let’s just accept that there’s power in genetic selection and some bull breeders are making wise selection decisions and achieving great genetic gains as a result.

EBVs really do work – the numbers show that!

We don’t want big cows that eat more and cost more to farm.

In conclusion it’s strongly suggested that you should spend more time selecting the bull breeder than selecting the bull. ■

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Enhancing sire selection and management with **GENOMIC TECHNOLOGIES**

BY JASON OSTERSTOCK, DVM, PHD. ZOETIS, KALAMAZOO, USA

Few investments made by commercial beef producers are as important as sire selection. In a typical herd that retains replacements, almost 90% of the genes in the current calf crop are derived from the bulls purchased over the last ten years.

Although maternal genes also contribute to productivity, it is clear how influential the bull battery is in shaping the herd's performance for a very long time. To that end, it is critical that selection decisions are carefully planned and executed.

To understand how genomic predictions impact selection decisions, we need to first see how it fits with all the other data at our disposal. Common sources of information that can be used to estimate genetic potential include:

- **Visual Appraisal** - Simply looking at cattle is an important element in assessing their genetic potential. While certainly subjective, it can provide valuable insight into a bull's potential in the herd, particularly for traits that can't be objectively evaluated, such as structural soundness and how it moves. However, visual appraisal is obviously limited to what we can see and therefore can't provide the detail we need for economically relevant traits. It is also difficult, if not impossible, to translate how physical attributes in young cattle will relate to performance as an adult, or to assess maternal traits in a bull.
- **Pedigree Data** - Knowledge of the genetic potential of parents can help estimate genetic potential. On average, the

performance of progeny will be the average of the genetic potential of the parents. There are, however, exceptions where offspring receive more or less than their fair share of favourable genes. In theory, there are more than five quintillion possible genomic combinations from a single mating of a bull and cow.

- **Performance Data** - Measuring actual performance like height, weight, feed intake, or scrotal circumference provides valuable insight into future performance. However, as with visual appraisal, it may not be available when the selection decisions need to be made. There may also be considerable costs associated with collecting this data (e.g., feed intake) and some traits can't be directly measured in animals that will be retained as breeding stock (e.g., tenderness or carcass weight).
- **Progeny Data** - Performance data collected from offspring is the best way to comprehensively assess an individual's value as a breeding animal. The challenge is that by the time any progeny data is collected, it is effectively too late to make the selection decision.

For purebred producers who register their cattle with a Breed Association, information from available pedigree, performance, and progeny data is combined in genetic evaluations for the respective breeds to derive EBVs for a variety of traits. The resulting EBVs estimate the contribution of the animal's genes to performance in offspring.

“A KEY, BUT OFTEN OVERLOOKED, COMPONENT OF EBV IS THE ACCURACY OF THE PREDICTION.”

A key, but often overlooked, component of EBV is the accuracy of the prediction. Accuracy, which varies from 0 to 1, provides an indication of how much of the various sources of data may have contributed to the EBV. Animals that possess only pedigree data would have low accuracy, whereas those with pedigree information, performance data, and data from multiple progeny will have higher accuracy. The higher the accuracy, the more confident we can be that the resulting prediction reflects that animal's true genetic potential.

Genetic tests can also serve as a source of information and, when combined with available pedigree, performance, and progeny data, contribute to genomically enhanced EBV (GE-EBV). The additional genomic data will yield more accurate predictions of genetic potential than the other sources of information alone. This becomes particularly important when trying to make selection decisions early in life before performance or progeny data is available.

To help understand how this becomes relevant to the commercial producer, consider the following example. A commercial producer is interested in purchasing a new herd sire with the intent of using the bull to breed replacement heifers. The producer markets all the calves shortly after weaning and typically keeps his own replacements. Selection priorities would include calving ease, weaning weight, and maternal traits.

In situations like this, it is not uncommon to make selection mistakes. An example almost all of us can relate to is identifying a

bull that we perceive to be a heifer bull, only to find out he's actually genetically predisposed to higher birth weights.

How do these selection mistakes happen? It's typically a byproduct of basing the bull purchase decision on low accuracy EBV for birthweight (BW) and calving ease direct (CED) in young bulls that only have pedigree data and perhaps their own birth record.

The use of genomic data would help manage the risk associated with this purchase decision. In our example, we would typically expect the increase in accuracy for BW and CED in yearling Angus bulls with just pedigree EBV to increase from 0.20 to approximately 0.45. To help put this into perspective, the addition of genomic data is equivalent to having records on upwards of ten progeny. Would you be able to tell if the bull you bought was suitable for heifers after one calf crop? Probably. The GE-EBV is like having that one year's worth of experience already in hand.

Genomic predictions do not replace other sources of information regarding animal performance and genetic potential, but instead serve as a complement to the pedigree, performance, and progeny data commercial cattlemen routinely collect. The key to optimally leveraging these technologies lies in defining selection objectives and strategies, assembling other sources of data, and identifying the genetic tests that provide valuable enhancements to help producers make more informed, and ultimately more effective, selection decisions. ■

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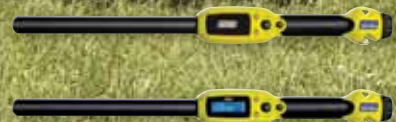
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EBVs **LIFT** performance **TWIN OAKS ANGUS**

BY SARAH IVEY




Twin Oaks
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At Twin Oaks Angus in Albury everyone has to chip in. It's a family and farming philosophy that demonstrably works.

Roger and Susan Hayward moved to Bankside, in Albury, nearly nine years ago after doing their time as share milkers in Southland. When they took on the 615ha rolling country property, previously owned by Susan's parents, Bill and Judy Austin, they were eager to enlarge Twin Oaks Angus stud, established by Roger in 1992 in the Waikato. The fifteen existing stud cows were trucked down a few years before a unit load from Grand Glen in Te Kuiti.

Partly due to the addition of 100 Goldwyn cows, the Twin Oaks herd has now increased to 300 straight Angus breeding cows, which has been made possible by leasing Monavale, a 400ha easy hill country block up the road from Bankside.

Alongside the Angus, Roger and Susan run 1800 Texel x Perendale ewes, however they'd love to get rid of the sheep altogether and have solely cattle. "Young fellas can't see past sheep, but when they lamb they take up too much room and if you're not careful, you can end up giving them the run of the place," says Roger.

Dairy grazing used to be a large part of the Haywards' operation. Having previously grazed up to 500 of each age group, this is slowly being cut back and now sits at just 250 of each age group.

A farm advisor was hired to do gross margins and optimise the return from dry matter grown. "When we first did that, the dairy heifers were a better option than finishing steers, but that was taking them right through to April. Now that we're getting rid of the steers in December/January, steers outweigh dairy heifers by a long shot," says Susan.

The Angus steers – 100 this last year – were sold in December to Five Star Beef at an average of 440kg LW. The plan is to finish 500 steers next season, moving right away from dairy grazing altogether. "If you can work on a margin of \$500 and you can get the animals gone in 6-8 months, you're going to out-perform dairy heifers because a dairy heifer's dry matter usage is greatest in the last 3 months. If the steers are gone in 8 months, that's 3-4 months of freed up feed that you could put lambs on," says Roger.

The Twin Oaks operation focuses on dry matter optimisation. "We work on what income we'll make per kilo of dry matter," says Roger. "To that end we aim to breed an animal that will finish in 500 days, which means you need an animal that will continue to grow when you feed it above the maintenance level. It's a characteristic that's embedded in the genetics of the animal."

Roger and Susan believe that phenotype is paramount in selection, and struggle to understand how people can select for

scrotal and milk production, yet ignore the EBVs for birth weight, 200 and 400 day weights and carcass.

"In this type of country we need fat, but we need to put growth with it," says Roger.

"Originally we weren't believers in EBVs," he says, but after putting a lot of time into learning about it with Susan's father and Gerald Hargreaves of Kakahu Angus, they've put their new understanding into practice and can now see the results in their own Twin Oaks cattle. "Our cattle aren't as slabby as they used to be; they're more moderate and compact."

They are also seeing higher weaning weights in shorter times (they wean in January).

Roger and Susan have surrounded themselves with people who can see what the industry wants. "We've concentrated really hard on our marbling and we try to use the highest marbling bulls available in New Zealand – in fact we own some of them."

"Marbling is not the be-all, end-all, but it's a huge part of it," says Susan, adding that the big push on marbling was inspired by trips to the Corrigan's NSW Angus stud, Rennylea, which runs one of the highest marbling herds in Australia.

Twin Oaks cattle are all artificially inseminated, which enables Roger and Susan to utilise worldwide genetics. After the cows are AI'd, they run with the on-farm bulls for two cycles.

The cows run in mobs of 150 over the winter, but are calved in mobs of 70-80. Once calving begins, calves are tagged and weighed daily, however Zoetis is still used to ensure exact parentage of the calves. They have found that some cows have swapped calves. "It's a huge cost but it's very rewarding as it's 100% guaranteed with no margin of error," says Roger.

Roger is positive about AngusPure programmes. "We've really got to get into this AngusPure, and we've got to get our clients into it."

In 2014, Twin Oaks achieved a 100% calving. A hundred heifers were mated out of the 150 born the previous year, selected on their performance over the winter. The surplus 50 heifers were fattened and sold.

"Everything is mated as a heifer and calved as a 2yr old. If they don't get in calf, they're killed, and if they have issues calving, they're killed. Then if they don't get in calf as a 2yr old, they're killed. There are no second chances."

"We're now starting to see the benefits," Susan adds. "The first loss is the biggest."

Being a stud, all bull calves are kept and split into two mobs, a



sale mob and a cull mob. The on-farm sale will be held on June 12th this year, and although the Haywards have previously opted for a helmsman auction, this year will be a live auction.

Roger and Susan run the stud, but they're aided on-farm by a stock manager who is in charge of the day to day shifting of stock, animal husbandry, etc, on the home block. Staff receive carcass weight bonuses for lambs killed, with a pre-Christmas incentive built in. Incentives are also there for the cattle, to ensure the sheep aren't always put on the best feed, and Roger keeps a very close eye on things.

Baleage is made as the season allows, but with no irrigation and an annual rainfall of just 27 inches, Roger and Susan grow 40ha of Kale to feed to the cattle and lambs in early autumn. Fodder beet is also grown for the steers.

The Hayward's three children have all been at school since last year, which allows Susan to be more hands-on. She has just come off the Generation Angus Board where she played an integral part in getting it up and running.

"We do like to have a bit of fun with the stock and go showing," she says. Thomas, 11, and Olivia, 8, are right into shows, including Future Beef and Generation Angus. Five year old Jessica was not so keen on the 'Hook' part of Hoof and Hook at Future Beef, so she's decided she'll take her pet lamb to the Fairlie A&P Show instead.

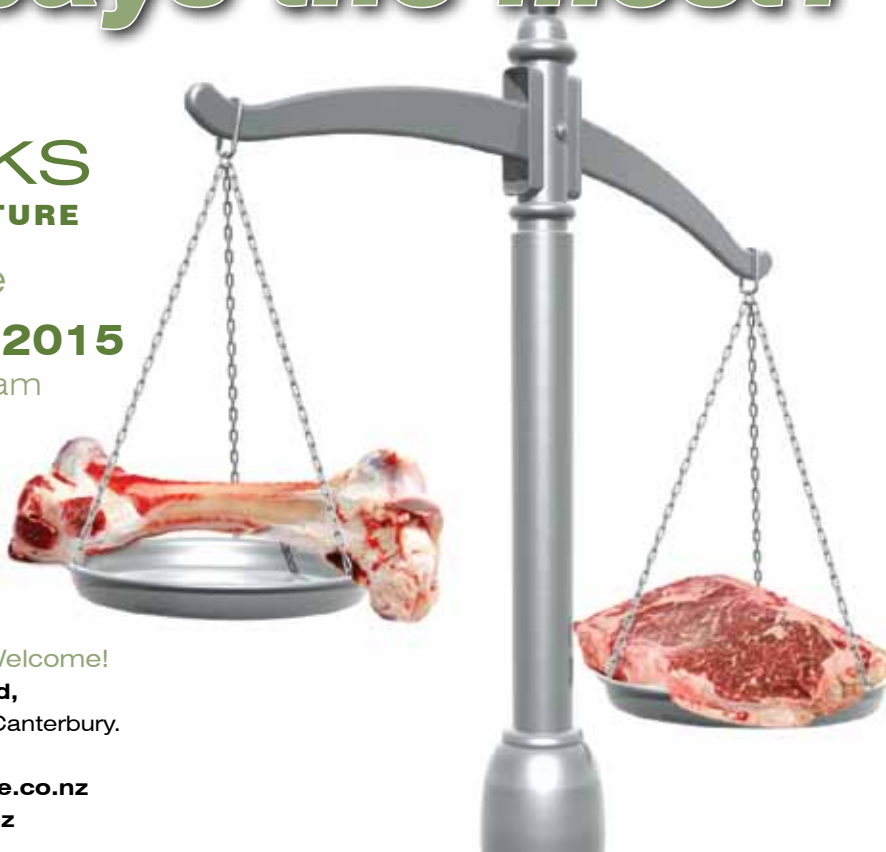
"It's especially good when the kids take their heifers to a show and can later visit them in the paddock with calves at foot," says Susan.

With the whole family involved in operations at Twin Oaks, from selecting bulls right through to feeding calves and cleaning out Dad's truck, the future for this focused farming operation looks assured. ■

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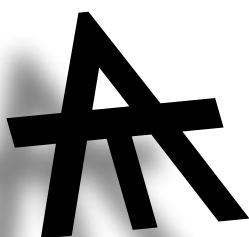
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ERICA VAN REENEN OF B+LNZ CONSIDERS THE IMPLICATIONS.



September marks the start of calving on the property where I live, so my spring weekends are spent tagging and weighing calves alongside my partner. Calves are born onto saved pasture, which is break-fed daily. That means electric fences. Apparently, I have a 'cavalier attitude' to electric fences. In my defence, there's usually a multitude of other things to concentrate on. It's usually wet, so there's mud, and a cow with her newborn calf is not something you want to turn your back on. Then there's the requirement to be in the right place, at the right time, with the right equipment. To be honest, the exact placement of that length of skinny tape is low down my priority list.

How does this relate to the importance of environmental management in a beef farming system? My point is it can be a bit like the electric fence. For some people, it's very important. For others, it's something they should pay a little more attention to.

In response to mounting pressure from the public, the dairy industry launched the Clean Streams Accord (2003) and subsequently the Sustainable Dairying: Water Accord (2013). The accords are voluntary agreements between local government, central government and the dairy industry. They outline a set of national good management benchmarks aimed at lifting environmental performance on dairy farms. So, while there has so far been a lot of focus on the dairy sector, the sheep and beef sector is not exempt.

Agriculture's contribution to deteriorating water quality is primarily from three sources: nitrogen and phosphorus, which can lead to algal blooms; sediment, which decreases clarity and

can reduce oxygen in waterways; and faecal bacteria, which can cause issues for invertebrates, stock and humans using the water.

These contaminants have different sources. Nitrogen in the soil comes from fixation by legumes, fertiliser, dung and urine deposits. It becomes an issue when excess nitrogen is lost below the root zone and then, depending on soil type, a percentage of it – on average, about half – moves into ground water and/or surface water bodies.

Most nitrogen lost this way comes from urine patches, with cattle being the largest culprits, followed by deer, then sheep. Some practical steps to deal with nitrogen include ensuring nitrogen fertiliser is applied when the soil temperature is adequate to get a response and when it's not too wet. It's also worth making sure other nutrients are not limited, so undertaking a nutrient budget is a good idea, to understand where nutrients are coming into and leaving the system. Young, male growing stock have lower nitrogen loss than mature, female stock, so stocking types and policies are worth considering if you are in an area faced with nitrogen limits.

Phosphorus and sediment are both lost to overland flow, as phosphorus binds to sediment. High-risk situations for phosphorus loss are areas where there is erosion and high P levels. Often we think of erosion as being slips and slumps on hill country, but erosion can also occur on flat land with wind over bare soil. Erosion protection is an excellent way to prevent sediment getting to waterways, and this also reduces phosphorus risk. There are many different types of erosion protection, but tree planting is highly effective and has the benefit of also providing shade and shelter. Where there is still risk of sediment reaching waterways, from a

"WHILE THERE HAS SO FAR BEEN A LOT OF FOCUS ON THE DAIRY SECTOR, THE SHEEP AND BEEF SECTOR IS NOT EXEMPT."



winter crop, for example, a buffer strip next to the water body is a good idea. Sediment traps can also be put in, and don't have to be substantial to be effective.

Faecal bacteria reaches waterways when animals have direct access to the water. Unfortunately, cattle are more likely to defecate when they are in water. Faecal bacteria can also get to waterways via runoff from yards and tracks. The best prevention is to keep stock from having direct access to water where possible. This might mean fencing waterways with a stock-proof fence or simply a hot-wire when cattle are in the paddock. Buffer strips will also capture bacteria. Providing alternative sources of water for stock (eg, reticulated trough systems) will also help take the pressure off waterways and usually results in production gains too.

In 2011, the National government launched the National Policy Statement for Freshwater, which required regional councils to set limits and objectives around water quality and water quantity. Regional councils have until 2025 to complete the process, with different councils at different stages. While various approaches are being taken by each region, most will see beef and sheep farmers facing some restrictions on nutrient losses and a requirement to factor in environmental good practice on farm.

All of this may seem quite daunting, but fortunately there are a lot of things you can do to manage these challenges – and many of these are also good for your bottom line. Realistically, you will be surprised how many of these things are on your to-do list or you have already implemented.

Environment planning tool

The B+L NZ Land and Environment Plan (LEP) is a great tool to help you assess your land and environmental resources and make a plan to manage them. You can do this in a workshop with ten

to fifteen other farmers at a location near you. In the workshop, you will work through the main contaminants and assess the risk of these for your farm, before developing a plan that fits within your system. The LEP starts at level 1, which takes half a day to complete and is focused on the whole farm. Level 2 breaks the farm into land management units and includes the completion of a nutrient budget. A slightly different version of the LEP exists in Canterbury and Hawke's Bay to meet the requirements of those regional councils. Contact your local B+L NZ extension manager to find out more about these workshops.

New Zealand has access to several international markets, as a result of its high standards for food safety, animal welfare and its clean, green image. Many consumers buy our meat because they associate it with these attributes, and there are businesses which attract a premium for product that meets environmental standards.

This is a challenge on a nationwide scale, but not impossible. Understanding where your product goes once it leaves the farm gate, who your customer is, what they want and how you can deliver that, are all important if we are to stay ahead of the game and ensure New Zealand's beef industry continues to thrive, while also being good stewards of the land.

Managing environmental challenges is a bit like shifting the electric fence. There's no need to fear it. If you know what needs to be done and how to manage it, life is a lot less stressful. ■

MORE INFO:

Beef + Lamb New Zealand Land and Environment Plan:
www.beeflambnz.com/lep

National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management:
<http://www.mfe.govt.nz/fresh-water/freshwater-management-nps>

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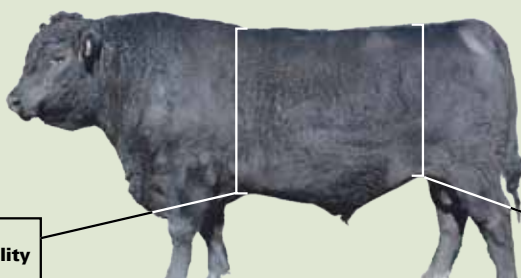
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FINISHING STEERS ON FODDER BEET

BY PHIL TITHER, AGFIRST

Some of our clients have made significant gains to the speed at which they finish cattle by utilising fodder beet. Fodder beet is an expensive crop to grow and requires precise management. The purpose of this article is to explore the economics of growing high yielding specialist finishing crops for beef cattle.

We have aimed to address this question by utilising a Farmax model for Totaranui station at Pahiatua. Totaranui station is an 815ha effective property owned by the Jackson family, and is the home of long established Angus and Romney studs. Daimien Reynolds is the operations manager for this and two other farms owned by the business. They have been growing fodder beet for over six years and have monitored their results using Farmax, updated on a monthly basis. In order to look at this question for commercial farms, we have stripped out the stud enterprises from our long-term Farmax model and have replaced these with typical commercial cattle and sheep.

This simulation model aims to represent the farm in an average year and uses medium-term product prices. For all of the models presented we have used a year average prime beef gross schedule of \$4.80 per kilogram.

The results

We expect fodder beet to increase our farm gross income by just over \$7000 for each hectare of beet, and to increase our gross margin by almost \$4000 per hectare.

The assumed costs are \$2500 per hectare for growing the crop and approximately \$500 per hectare for the interest on the capital invested in the additional livestock carried.

The base model has 3500 commercial ewes, 350 calving cattle, including R2yr heifers, and the finishing of all stock bred on the

farm. Without fodder beet, the 160 steers are carried through two winters with an average liveweight gain of 0.59kg per head per day, resulting in an average kill date of mid December at carcass weight of 325kg. The steers are worth just over \$1540 per head and generate a gross margin of 10.9 cents per kilogram of dry matter eaten. On average the steers are on farm for 625 days from weaning to kill and eat just over 5400kg of dry matter each in total, or an average of 8.7kg of dry matter per head per day.

FARMAX YOUR ADVANTAGE		Gross Margin for Finishing steers Totaranui (Jul 12 - Jun 13)					
		No.	kg/hd	\$/kg	\$/hd	\$ Total	c/kg DM
Revenue	Store Sales					0	
	Works Sales	157	324.7	4.74	1,540.14	241,802	
	less Purchases					0	
	Total					241,802	28.0
	Internal Sales					0	
Expenses	less Internal Purchases	161	250.0	2.95	736.71	118,611	
	Change in Capital Value					0	
	Total Revenue					123,192	14.3
Expenses	Animal Health	271			7.59	2,056	
	Total					2,056	
	Interest on Capital					26,775	
Expenses	Total Variable Expenses					28,831	3.3
	Gross Margin					94,360	10.9

Fodder beet option

We assume that we grow 10ha of fodder beet with a gross yield of 25,000kg of dry matter per hectare and 90% utilisation. We supplement approximately 18% of the diet with high quality Red Clover baleage and assume we lift the performance of the R1yr steers by 0.5kg per head per day, increasing them from 0.4kg per

day up to 0.9 for the 120 days from mid May to mid September. Then, over the summer-autumn period, steady growth rates on traditional pastures result in being able to kill 40% of the mob before the second winter.

We assume the remaining 60% go on fodder beet for the second winter and are killed in August/September at the completion of the crop.

Overall we are planning to carry 253 high growth rate cattle on this 10ha block.

The faster growing cattle have an average daily gain of 0.76kg per day over the total period, from weaning to their average kill date of 9 July. The finishing period is reduced by 160 days or 25%.

These fodder beet cattle are slightly lighter at 316kg carcass and are worth, on our assumed schedule, around \$1500 per head. In this analysis we have not allowed any additional premium for meat quality, but we understand that the meat companies are interested in the potential to improve marbling and this could add additional benefit to growing fodder beet.

The daily feed requirement of these faster growing cattle increases to 9.2kg DM per head but, because they reach their kill weight significantly faster, the overall feed demand per head is reduced to 4,274kg DM in total from weaning through to kill. The result is that we have a similar total gross margin but consume less feed, so our gross margin per kg DM eaten increases by 31% to 14.3 cents for the finishing enterprise.


If we just isolate the period where the cattle are on fodder beet, the gross margin is around \$0.27 per kg DM eaten. The gross margin below is for the R2yr cattle, which are assumed to have an average

FARMAX YOUR ADVANTAGE		Gross Margin for Finishing steers on FB Tataranui (Jul 12 - Jun 13)					
		No.	kg/hd	\$/kg	\$/hd	\$ Total	c/kg DM
Revenue	Stock	Store Sales				0	
		Works Sales	158	316.2	4.75	1,501.44	237,227
		less Purchases				0	
		Total				237,227	35.2
	Internal Sales					0	
	less Internal Purchases		161	250.0	2.95	736.71	118,611
	Change in Capital Value					0	
Total Revenue						118,617	17.6
Expenses	Stock	Animal Health	202		7.73	1,562	
		Total				1,562	
	Interest on Capital					20,648	
	Total Variable Expenses					22,210	3.3
Gross Margin						96,407	14.3

FARMAX YOUR ADVANTAGE		Gross Margin for Finishing 2 year Steers Tataranui (Jul 12 - Jun 13)						
		No.	kg/hd	\$/kg	\$/hd	\$ Total	c/kg DM	
Revenue	Stock	Store Sales				0		
		Works Sales	92	321.1	5.01	1,610.17	148,136	
		less Purchases				0		
		Total				148,136	132.2	
	Internal Sales					0		
	less Internal Purchases		93	524.9	2.35	1,231.68	114,546	
	Change in Capital Value					0		
Total Revenue						33,590	30.0	
Expenses	Stock	Animal Health	27		7.42	201		
		Total				201		
	Interest on Capital					3,356		
	Total Variable Expenses					3,557	3.2	
Gross Margin						30,033	26.8	

TOTARANUI ANGUS

FERTILITY, PHENOTYPE AND CARCASS



Contact Daimien Reynolds ☐ P 06 376 8400
www.totaranuistud.co.nz

growth rate of 0.78kg per day. If we value the weaners on and off they produce a similar gross margin.

This is a reasonably similar gross margin to that achieved by wintering dairy cows.

The introduction of high yielding fodder beet allows us to:

- increase our total dry matter production for the farm
- increase the efficiency of feed conversion
- Increase winter feed supplies to improve the match of feed supply to demand

The result is that we have freed up a significant area of pasture that was previously running a total of 320 R1 and R2yr steers.

There are many options available for utilising this pasture. We could allocate this winter feed to increase the numbers carried and/or performance of our other livestock enterprises.

The extra livestock potential is equivalent to around 700 stock units, and we have in our model assumed that we purchase 250 additional weaner steers to utilise this pasture.

Their extra \$75,000 gross income is what drives the financial gain from the fodder beet scenario.

FARMAX Gross Margin for Purchased Weaners on pasture <small>Totaranui (Jul 12 - Jun 13)</small>						
		No.	kg/hd	\$/kg	\$/hd	\$ Total c/kg DM
Revenue	Store Sales	246	344.5	2.58	890.14	218,973
	Works Sales					0
	less Purchases	252	190.0	3.01	571.91	144,122
	Total					74,852 19.1
	Change in Capital Value					0
	Total Revenue					74,852 19.1
Expenses	Stock					
	Animal Health	176		7.70	1,352	
	Total				1,352	
	Interest on Capital				11,563	
	Total Variable Expenses				12,715 3.2	
Gross Margin					62,137	15.8

The Farmax model takes account of the opportunity cost of the land removed from grazing for twelve months, along with the Red Clover supplement that is grown to assist with achieving animal performance targets.

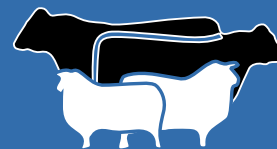
The Totaranui business has achieved or exceeded the modelled performance levels, with their stud weaner bulls often doing over 1.3kg liveweight gain per head per day through the winter.

At this stage we have not taken account of other potential benefits of introducing a forage cropping programme. For example, it will help us increase the rate of pasture renewal, and there may be an opportunity to increase the spring-through-autumn pasture growth rates through use of other forages such as plantain and, on appropriate soil types, Lucerne.

There are potential downsides also, including effect on soil compaction and nutrient leaching. Careful paddock selection and ensuring a buffer between the crop and waterways is therefore recommended.

The benefit of not having to second winter our finishing cattle has long been recognised, and many of our cattle have the genetic potential to achieve significantly higher liveweight gains. High-quality /high yielding crops such as fodder beet offer the opportunity to practically achieve this. ■

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BY SARAH IVEY

“OVER TIME WE NOTICED
THAT THE ANGUS CATTLE
WINTERED BETTER THAN
THE OTHER BREEDS
AND WERE VERY GOOD
MOTHERS.”



One of the ‘big moments’ at Marks Station, run by John Cowan and his daughter Catherine in the remote Haast Valley, comes when it’s time to move the mob of Angus cows and calves across the fast-flowing torrent of the Haast River.

Cows drop in first, sheltering their calves on the downstream side. Their bodies sink underwater, all sign of them vanishing but for the mob of black noses above the surface. The swift current carries the cattle downstream a fair way, and the odd calf has a close call, then they are clambering onto the far shore. The sight is nothing out of the ordinary at Marks Station, and displays just another of the challenges that goes with farming a 4240ha property in South Westland.

John purchased the 740ha home block in 1978, with the attached 3500ha Haast Valley lease. At the time he was living in the area and working in the crayfish industry. The property was extensively run with little development, and carried Hereford cattle.

Everything takes a bit longer on the Coast, but over the past ten years the cattle have had a big sort out and cow numbers now sit at just under 500. The cow herd is predominantly Angus x Hereford.

The stock are managed by George Ivey and fiancée Catherine, who both moved back to Haast four years ago after studying at Lincoln University. The pair, both in their mid-twenties, are passionate about cattle and keen to grow the business.

One of the biggest challenges they face in Haast, apart from isolation, is the weather. Six metres – 236 inches – of rain falls in the valley every year, with 4m at the house. That poses unique challenges: while most farmers spend their summers praying for rain and invest in irrigation, in Haast they pray for sunshine and invest in development to ensure good drainage.

Land development is where John comes in. In 1987 John met Catherine’s mother Kay, who was involved in the oyster industry. John and Kay injected their money from the fishing industry into the development of the home block, and that cash helped to transform the less productive bush land into rolling paddocks of lush green grass. Consequently more cattle can be fed on the home block and the value of the land has increased. Tragically, Kay passed away in 2003 but John has continued the land development and works tirelessly during daylight hours on farm-owned machinery. “You won’t get the water to drain through the soil because it’s too tight. The best way to get it off is to shape the land and have the water run off down the new, artificial water course,” says George.

The results speak for themselves. John is assisted by full time staff member Vern Harvey, and local man Alan Cron also works on the property over the summer months.

The only stock run on the property are cattle and as development continues, cow numbers will continue to rise. The mixed-age cows are run in the river valley during winter, while the bulls,

replacements and calves are all fed supplements on the home block. A relatively new venture is the 11ha of kale.

“Until this year Cowans were the only ones in the Haast area with their cattle on crops being break-fed in the winter time – traditionally the driest time of the year. Kale is especially good in a wet winter, as you’d simply turn all your grass paddocks to mud,” says George.

As well as kale, about 70ha of grass baleage and 11ha of oat baleage is grown. “There is huge spring and summer growth, so the easiest way to control it is to roll it up into supplement,” says Catherine.

The 1000-odd bales are all done with their own machinery because “you need the gear and people ready to go when it’s fine, because there are so many days that you can’t get things done with the rain,” says George.

Last year 480 cows went to the bull. The Cowans buy their Angus bulls from Stern Angus, partly because of the depth and genetics of the Stern bulls, but also because “Stern usually have a hundred to pick from and the service we get from James Fraser at Stern is outstanding,” says Catherine.

George and stock agent Craig Knight do the bull buying, and look mainly at growth rates. “We have pretty big cows that will tolerate a reasonable birthweight, but we ultimately want to grow a big calf. We have enough feed through the summer to make them grow. We basically want to produce the biggest calf in the shortest time we can.”

On sale day, they pay particular attention to feet. “A bull’s got to walk. Feet are number one for me because if it won’t walk, it’s no good.”

Figures are then used as a tool to select from amongst the bulls they like. Farming the bulls right next to the beach is also very beneficial to their feet.

Over time and as the breeds within the Marks Station herd changed, the Cowans noted that the Angus wintered better and were very good mothers. “Another factor was that at the sales, black calves often sold better than anything else, and they still do,” says Catherine.

Although the herd is predominantly Angus x Hereford, there are some straight Angus and some straight Hereford (to ensure they get the first cross for their replacements). Four Hereford bulls are run to ensure the herd doesn’t get too black. “The white faces make farming in the valley much easier as the Angus tend to be well camouflaged against the bush,” says Catherine.

They’ve found the first cross tends to have a good kind temperament, something they cull on severely. “Anything that gets a bit stropy is gone,” says George.

“We don’t want to work with stropy cattle in the yards or



on breaks, and we wouldn't expect anyone else to either," adds Catherine. "Haast has had quite a bad reputation for wild cattle because they're fresh out of the river valleys. But that's changing. Break-feeding behind a single wire over the winter helps settle the cattle."

Late 2014 saw a 95% calving at calf marking. All bull calves are steered and 65 heifer replacements were put to the bull last year. Eighty calves were sold at Cromwell in April 2014 while the rest were wintered through, with a unit load going to Mt Bengier two thirds of the way through the winter. The remainder were sold at the Turnbull saleyards in Haast in November, averaging \$1022 per head for an average 380kg LW over both heifers and steers.

Where they sell the cattle usually depends on timing and demand, with Five Star Beef and local trade also in the mix. "You could easily finish on the home block, but once you get 600kg

steers roaring around in the rain, you just end up with a hell of a mess," says George.

Their dabbling with Five Star Beef proved successful, with their cattle performing in the top 10% on figures, however the long trucking haul to the feedlot meant large weight losses in transit. "We were losing up to 40kg just getting there," says Catherine. They now often sell to farmers in Canterbury, who then on-sell to the feedlot from a closer location.

The plan is to continue to grow both the cow numbers and the number of cattle wintered through. "We like to sell calves that are weight-challenged, so we may end up buying in more calves as we gain the ability to winter more through."

Dairy grazing is also an option, but it would definitely only be heifers.

"Traditionally the West Coast was well known for cattle, particularly Hereford. But that's all changed since dairy moved in." Dairy hasn't yet made its way as far down the Coast as Haast, which George and Catherine put down to isolation and long-standing farm ownership. "Farms around here don't change hands that often," says George.

Over the years, Cowans have made an effort to boost cow numbers. Now that the cow numbers are up, George and Catherine are able to be very picky with their selection of replacements. This ensures the quality of their cows is in line with the bulls.

The young farmers have high expectations of themselves and their stock, with John at times providing welcome advice. The trio share a good working relationship, with each taking ownership of different areas of the overall operation.

Haast is one of those places people talk about but often never visit; the land of milk and honey, some say. More accurately, the land of great cattle and hard working people. But when you do get round to visiting, don't forget your raincoat. ■





ANGUS ON-FARM SALE CALENDAR 2015

information that you can rely on www.angusnz.com

NORTH ISLAND

MAY

Sat/Sun 9th-10th	Beef Expo	Future Beef NZ Competition	Feilding
Mon/Tue 11th-12th	Beef Expo	National Angus Sale	Feilding
Fri 15th		Focus Genetics	Hawkes Bay
Thu 21st	J & H Hammond	Ruaview Angus Bull Sale	Ohakune
Wed 27th	T & K Brittain	Storth Oaks Angus Bull Sale	Otorohanga
Wed 27th	A & C Donaldson	Puke-Nui Angus Bull Sale	Taumarunui
Thu 28th	ID & KI Borck	Springdale Angus Bull Sale	Taumarunui
Thu 28th	B & S Sherson	Shian Angus Bull Sale	Taumarunui
Fri 29th	N & J Kjestrup	Kayjay Angus Bull Sale	Masterton
Fri 29th	R & N Purdie	Tarangower Angus Bull Sale	Mahoenui

JUNE

Tue 2nd	K & G Higgins	Oregon Angus Bull Sale	Masterton
Tue 2nd	S & G Hain	Hains Angus Bull Sale	Gisborne
Tue 2nd	M & F Crawford,	Hillcroft Angus Bull Sale	Ohinewai
Tue 2nd	C Lander	Wairere Angus Bull Sale	Hawera
Wed 3rd	R Rowe	Merchiston Angus Bull Sale	Rata
Wed 3rd	A & Thomson, R & J McLachlan	Dandaloo & Tapiri Angus Bull Sale	Masterton
Thu 4th	P & E Sherriff	Pine Park Angus Bull Sale	Marton
Thu 4th	L & L Johnstone	Ranui Angus Bull Sale	Kai-iwi
Fri 5th	R & R Borthwick	Te Whanga Angus Bull Sale	Masterton
Fri 5th	D Reynolds & T Jackson	Totaranui Angus Bull Sale	Pahiatua
Fri 5th	B Bevege	Iona Angus Bull Sale	Te Kuiti
Mon 8th	A & C Dalziel	Atahua Angus Bull Sale	Kimbolton
Mon 8th	K & M Friel	Mt Mable Angus Bull Sale	Norsewood
Tue 9th		Cashbac Angus Bull Sale	Dannevirke
Tue 9th	J & I Pharazyn	Motere Angus Bull Sale	Omakere
Wed 10th	C Pattison	Waiwhero Angus Bull Sale	Waipukurau
Wed 10th	M Duncan	Elgin Angus Bull Sale	Elsthorpe
Fri 12th	W & V MacFarlane	Waiterenui Angus Bull Sale	Raukawa
Thu 18th	A & P Sharpe	Waitawheta Angus Bull Sale	Paeroa
Fri 19th		Taranaki Beef Breeders Sale	Stratford
Mon 22nd	M & N Story,	Ratanui Angus Bull Sale	Matawhero
Mon 22nd	P Hoogerbrug & C Williams/C Dowding	Kaharau Angus Bull Sale	Gisborne
Tue 23rd	P Lane	Whangara Angus Bull Sale	Whangara
Tue 23rd	H & A Williams & Family	Turihaua Angus Bull Sale	Gisborne
Wed 24th		Gisborne Angus Bull Sale	Matawhero
Wed 24th	C & S Dowding	Rangatira Angus Bull Sale	Gisborne
Wed 24th	R & A Powdrell,	Turiroa Angus Bull Sale	Wairoa
Wed 24th		Gisborne Combined Angus Bull Sale	Gisborne
Tue 30th	B Bendall	Seven Hills Angus Bull Sale	Mangatainoka

JULY

Mon 6th	J & J Bayly	Waitangi Angus Bull Sale	Waitangi
Tue 7th	C Maxwell	Matauri Angus Bull Sale	Matauri Bay
Thu 9th	J Scott & Sons	Mangapapa Angus Bull Sale	Oparau
Mon 27th	RJ Quinn & Sons	Argyle Angus Bull Sale	Kaikohe

SEPTEMBER

Wed 2nd	C & K Biddles	Te Atarangi Angus Yearling Bull Sale	Te Kopuru
Fri 4th	J Allen	Mahuta Angus Yearling Bull Sale	Drury
Thu 10th	PJ Morrese	Paddyvale Angus Yearling Bull Sale	Dargaville
Mon 14th	M & F Crawford	Hillcroft Angus Yearling Bull Sale	Ohinewai
Tue 15th	J & J Bayly	Waitangi Angus Yearling Bull Sale	Waitangi
Tue 15th	L & L Johnstone	Ranui Angus Yearling Bull & Heifer Sale	Kai-iwi
Thurs 17th	R & J Blackwell	Mangaotea Angus Bull Sale	Taranaki
Fri 18th	N & J Kjestrup	Kayjay Angus Spring Yearling Bull & Heifer Sale	Masterton
Mon 21st	R & R Borthwick	Te Whanga Angus Yearling Bull Sale	Masterton
Tue 22nd	M & S Stokman	Sitz Stokman Angus Yearling Bull Sale	Taupo
Tue 22nd	D Reynolds & T Jackson	Totaranui Angus Yearling Bull Sale	Masterton
Wed 23rd	H & A Williams & Family	Turihaua Angus Yearling Sale	Gisborne
Wed 23rd	A & P Sharpe	Waitawheta Angus Yearling Bull Sale	Paeroa
Thu 24th	J & I Pharazyn	Motere Angus Yearling Sale	Omakere
Fri 25th	W & V MacFarlane	Waiterenui Angus Yearling Bull Sale	Raukawa

OCTOBER

Tue 6th	C Maxwell	Matauri Angus Yearling Bull Sale	Matauri Bay
Wed 7th		Focus Genetics Angus Yearling Bull Sale	Napier

SOUTH ISLAND

MAY

Fri 8th		Kakahu / Blue Cliffs Heifer Sale	Geraldine
Fri 15th	Duncan Family	Penvose 2yr Angus Bull Sale	Wedderburn
Fri 15th	Focus Angus	Duncraigen Angus Bull Sale	Manapouri
Mon 18th	G Crutchley	Puketoi Angus Bull Sale	Patearoa
Tue 19th	J & T Cochrane	Delmont Angus Bull Sale	Clinton
Fri 22nd	D & G Stringer	Kowai Angus Bull Sale	Wendon Valley
Fri 22nd	T & M Law	Waimara 2yr Angus Bull Sale	Palmerston
Sat 23rd	D Scott	Bannock Burn Angus Bull Sale	Bruce Bay
Tue 26th	R & M Kane	Blue Mountain Angus Bull Sale	Tapanui
Wed 27th	A & I Devery	Pikoburn Angus Bull Sale	Tuatapere
Fri 29th	A Campbell	Earnsleugh Angus Bull Sale	Alexandra

JUNE

Tue 2nd	L Carruthers	Nethertown Angus Bull Sale	Middlemarch
Thu 4th	C & A Jeffries	Riverlands Angus Bull Sale	Cheviot
Thu 4th	P Boyd	Haldon Station 2yr Angus Sale	McKenzie
Fri 5th	B Johns	Kaiwara Angus Bull Sale	Culverden
Mon 8th	C & R Martin	Martin Farming Angus Bull Sale	Wakefield
Tue 9th	A & A Laing	Sudeley Angus Bull Sale	Irwell
Thu 11th	N & R Sanderson	Fossil Creek Angus Bull Sale	Oamaru
Fri 12th	R & S Hayward	Twin Oaks Angus Bull Sale	Albury
Fri 12th	B G Alexander	Goldwyn Angus Bull Sale	Hunter
Fri 12th	Jono Reed	Grampians Angus Bull Sale	Culverden
Mon 15th		Blenheim Angus Bull Sale	Blenheim
Mon 15th	O & P Hickman	Taimate Angus Bull Sale	Ward
Mon 15th	R & D Orr	Red Oak Angus Bull Sale	Weka Pass
Mon 15th	G Hargreaves	Kakahu Angus Bull Sale	Geraldine
Tue 16th	J & R Murray	Woodbank Angus Bull Sale	Clarence Bridge
Wed 17th	T Wilding	Te Mania Angus Bull Sale	Conway Flat
Thu 18th	J Fraser	Stern Angus Bull Sale	Pleasant Point
Fri 19th	D Giddings	Meadowslea Angus Bull Sale	Fairlie

OCTOBER

Fri 2nd	T & K Peters	Peters Farms Ltd Angus Bull Sale	Millers Flat
Mon 5th	P & H Heddell	Glen R Angus Bull Sale	Darfield
Tue 6th	J & R Murray	Woodbank Angus Yearling Bull Sale	Clarence Bridge
Wed 7th	T Wilding	Te Mania Angus Yearling Bull Sale	Conway Flat
Wed 7th	R & M Kane	Blue Mountain Angus Yearling Bull Sale	Tapanui
Thu 8th	G Hargreaves	Kakahu Angus Yearling Bull Sale	Geraldine
Thu 8th	R Orr	Red Oak Angus Yearling Bull Sale	Weka Pass
Fri 9th	D Giddings	Meadowslea 2yr & Yearling Angus Bull Sale	Fairlie
Wed 14th	J Fraser	Stern Angus Yearling Bull Sale	Pleasant Point

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2014 ANGUS BREEDER SALE RESULTS

		BULLS SOLD	AV PRICE	TOP PRICE			BULLS SOLD	AV PRICE	TOP PRICE
Ward 1: Northland					Ward 7: Wanganui-Manawatu-Rangitikei				
Matauri	C Maxwell	50	\$5,646	\$16,000	Atahua	Dalziell Family	41	\$7,639	\$45,000
Waitangi	J Bayly	60	\$5,135	\$9,000	Merchiston (A4)	Rowe Bros	46	\$5,602	\$11,500
					Pine Park	P & E Sheriff	33	\$5,021	\$9,000
Ward 2: Bay of Plenty-Waikato					Ranui	L & L Johnstone	32	\$5,037	\$9,800
Hillcroft	M Crawford	22	\$3,700	\$5,100					
Waitawheta	A & P Sharpe	22	\$3,564	\$5,000	Ward 8: Nelson-Marlborough				
					Brackenfield	A J Peter	7	\$5,714	
Ward 3: Taranaki-King Country					Martin Farming	R & C Martin	21	\$5,866	\$24,000
Iona	B Bevege	7	\$4,400	\$7,500	Waterfall	C Waddy	4	\$3,425	
Mangapapa	MJB Scott	38	\$5,945	\$11,000	Ben Macey	Ben Macey	6	\$4,583	
Shian	B & J Sherson	42	\$6,225	\$11,500	Taimate	O J Hickman	40	\$6,580	\$15,000
Springdale	ID Borck	41	\$6,131	\$14,000	Woodbank	J Murray	58	\$6,327	
Storth Oaks	T Brittain	50	\$4,900	\$8,500					
Tarangower	Purdie Family	28	\$4,507	\$7,000	Ward 9: Canterbury-Westland				
Te Kupe	R & M Martin	7	\$4,357	\$5,000	Goldwyn	BG & BE Alexander	27	\$8,625	\$48,000
Wairere	C & J Lander	24	\$5,845	\$14,000	Kakahu	GA Hargreaves	108	\$7,320	\$13,000
Puke-Nui	A & C Donaldson	25	\$5,025	\$10,000	Meadowslea	D Giddings	52	\$5,055	\$13,000
					Red Oak	R Orr	35	\$5,200	\$9,500
Ward 4: Gisborne					Stern	J & H Fraser	92	\$7,693	\$16,000
Cricklewood	JH & JM Bayly	7	\$12,142	\$30,000	Te Mania	T & K Wilding	116	\$6,505	\$30,000
Alpine	S & J Herries	14	\$9,500	\$16,000	Twin Oaks	R&S Haywards	28	\$5,339	\$10,000
Kaharau	C Williams	85	\$8,100	\$25,000	Grampians	Jono Reed	26	\$5,538	\$8,000
Kenhardt	G & S Crawshaw	21	\$7,524	\$9,000					
Ratanui	M & N Story	41	\$8,050	\$15,000	Ward 10: Otago-Southland				
Tangihau	D McHardy	14	\$15,571	\$45,000	Delmont	John Cochrane	21	\$5,250	\$9,000
Turihaua	H Williams	73	\$8,065	\$12,000	Fossil Creek	N Sanderson	41	\$7,200	\$55,000
Turiroa	WT Powdrell & Co	44	\$8,350	\$30,000	Penvose	GL Duncan	21	\$4,060	\$6,800
Whangara	Lane Bros	43	\$5,400	\$9,500	Pikoburn	AL & PI Devery	18	\$6,000	\$10,000
					Puketoi	G & N Crutchley	18	\$4,200	\$7,500
Ward 5: Hawke's Bay					Waimara	T & S Law	13	\$4,800	\$7,000
Dandaleith	W Philip	15	\$4,584	\$6,800					
Elgin	M & B Duncan	26	\$5,880	\$13,500					
Mt Mabel	K & M Friel	47	\$7,112	\$15,000					
Waiterenui	WA MacFarlane	40	\$5,612	\$8,500					
Waiwhero	C Pattison	18	\$4,066	\$6,500					
Moanaroa	D Ramsden	6	\$5,666	\$7,200					
Motere	J Pharazyn	42	\$6,911	\$11,000					
Ward 6: Wairarapa									
Dandaloo	D Thomson	25	\$5,800	\$11,500					
KayJay	N. & J. Kjestrup	29	\$6,255	\$12,000					
Seven Hills	B Bendall	21	\$4,900	\$9,600					
Glanworth	Fouhy		\$6,055						
Oregon	K Higgins	22	\$4,876	\$8,000					
Tapiri	NS & RS McLachlan	10	\$5,800	\$9,200					
Te Whanga	R & R Borthwick	16	\$4,593	\$7,000					
Totaranui	J & MA Jackson	26	\$4,820	\$9,500					
Pinebank	W Falloon	31	\$5,135	\$7,000					

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ROB WYLIE HONOURER

Rob Wylie, past General Manager of Angus New Zealand, admits to continuing to drop in to New World's meat section 'just to keep tabs on things' – "The number of people buying AngusPure is fascinating." – which perhaps sums up the man's passion for the Angus breed and everything it encompasses.

Rob started his farming career in 1967 working as a young shepherd in the Wairarapa Hill Country and later Southland. Following his studies at Lincoln University Rob spent a couple of years working in North Canterbury before marrying Helen and subsequently moving to a property in the Wairarapa. That was in 1972. Twelve months later he bought a 'very run down' property in Eketahuna that he spent the next 26 years developing, building it into a more profitable unit.

He and Helen later moved to Feilding to allow Helen the opportunity to further her teaching career. It was around this time that Rob joined Angus New Zealand.

"This was about thirteen or fourteen years ago," Rob recalls. At

the time it was "just a job that I applied for," but that quickly changed as Rob's passion for the breed grew.

The official title of the role was Angus Breed Officer, which Rob describes as very much a 'Mr Fix-it' position. It quickly became obvious that the role required more attention than his part-time status allowed, and it wasn't long before the job grew into the position of General Manager.

From the driver's seat Rob focused his efforts on sponsorship and on promoting the Association. He encouraged the Board to develop the Youth Movement, as it was then known, however it wasn't until Tim Brittain became President that Generation Angus really gained traction. Rob also had heavy involvement in the World Angus Forum 2013, however health issues prevented him from seeing this project through to the final event.

When asked to nominate a standout achievement from his time with Angus New Zealand, Rob points to relationships. "The Breeders are the crucial link in the Association, the big fish and the small ones

alike.” And Rob has great respect for them all: “It didn’t matter how big you were, all breeders were treated the same.”

This attitude was part of Rob’s charm. He also recalls with great fondness the hospitality and kindness that the breeders have shown him over the years.

High on his list of achievements is his work with AngusPure. Rob saw developing the marketing arm of the Association’s work as a fundamental part of promoting the Angus breed, and is confident that he assisted the Breed to move forward.

“The popularity of Angus cattle continues to grow due to the popularity and success of AngusPure”, he says.

The Bull Evaluation Unit was another exciting project in which Rob was heavily involved. He also enjoyed his involvement in the National Show and Sale, the Breed of Origin competitions, the Cattleman magazine and his attendance at various World Forums.

All of these contributed to Rob’s role changing from being the man who ‘ticked over the paper and opened the mail’ to being fully involved in all aspects of the breed.

On departing from Angus New Zealand, Rob felt that the place was “in pretty good heart. Angus is now the Number One breed in the country,” he says.

He still spends time driving around the countryside, and thoroughly enjoys seeing the increasing numbers of black cattle. “I loved my job, I loved the people, I just loved it”.

Rob Wylie is a man who devoted almost a decade and a half of his life to furthering the Angus breed, and who remains confident that the breed will continue to expand as long as AngusPure is developed to its full potential, both domestically and in the export market.

“There is huge opportunity for Angus in New Zealand. AngusPure has only just scratched the surface.” ■

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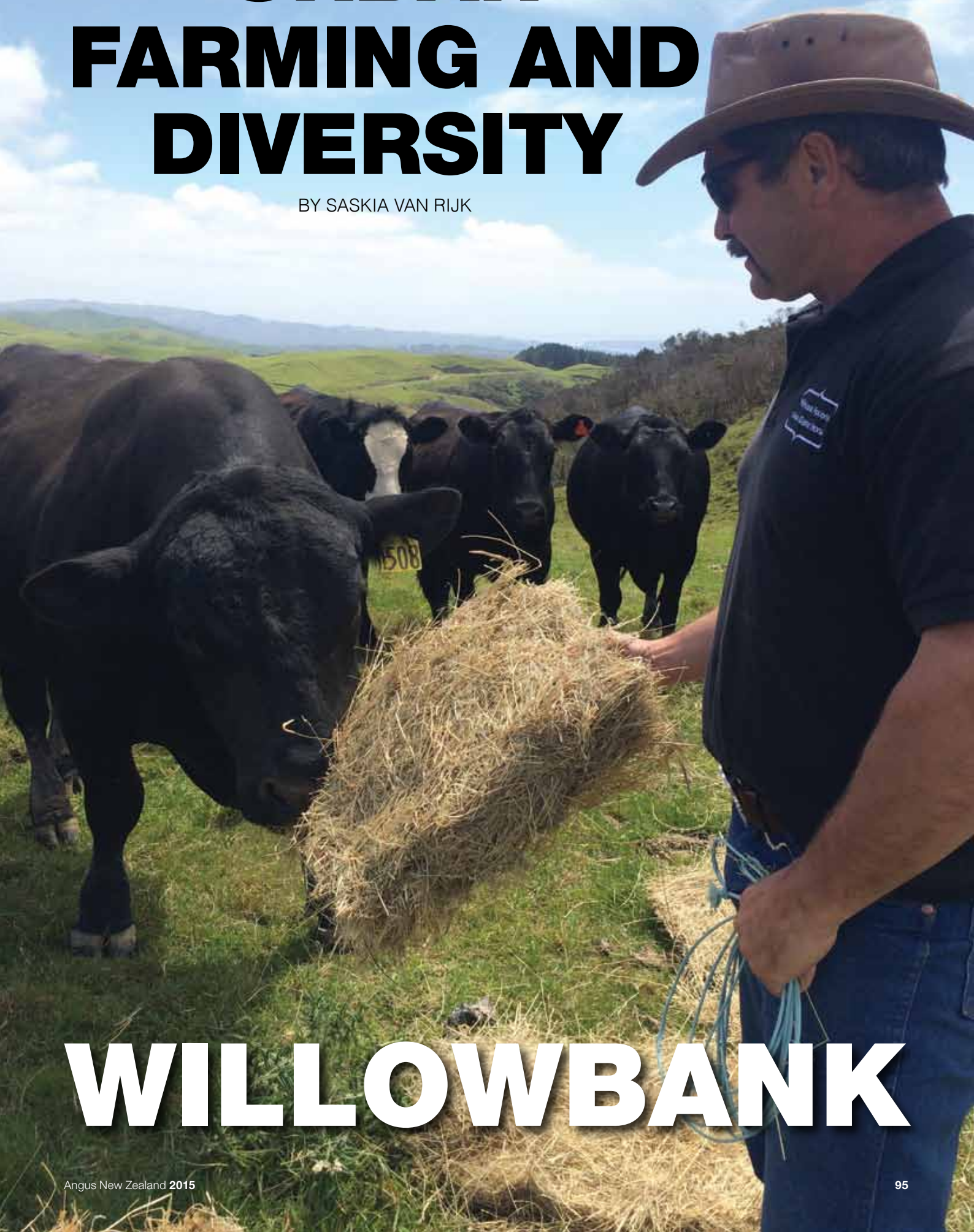
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URBAN FARMING AND DIVERSITY

BY SASKIA VAN RIJK



WILLOWBANK



When Dr. Charles Steiner and his wife Gina bought Willowbank Farm twenty years ago it was little more than a 60-acre private golf course. Over the years Charles has slowly acquired the surrounding land and the farm, situated in Judgeford, Porirua, currently sits at over 650ha.

Now retired, the couple spend six months of the year here and the rest on their farm just out of Salt Lake City, USA. In their absence, farm manager Paul Nation runs an eclectic but tight ship. "Charles is very proud of how he turned a golf course into a farm, rather than the other way around," he says.

Paul, with the help of wife Sally, has been managing Willowbank for over five years. Growing up in Hawke's Bay, Paul always wanted to work in farming, starting his first farm job at just fifteen. "My grandparents and great grandparents had farms at Huntly and Whanganui, so it's obviously in the genes."

Prior to his move to Willowbank he had been managing farms in Puketitiri for over thirteen years. Sally is a more recent import to the farming lifestyle, making the move from working as a financial accountant. With a few helping hands, the pair manage a menagerie of alpaca stud, horse stud, sheep and Angus cattle. "It's not just sheep and cattle, you can get involved with the horses and we shear the alpacas ourselves. Because it's so diverse I think it's very attractive. And it's so close to town."

On a clear day Willowbank boasts 360-degree views of the region, stretching as far as Wellington Harbour, the Marlborough Sounds and the Kaikoura Ranges. Situated just 35km from Wellington's city centre, the farm is an unusual urban location. Surrounded by lifestyle blocks, Paul admits that one of the biggest challenges for farming within an urban community is the hundreds of neighbours. "Instead of having five neighbours, you've got 105. They're all lifestyle blocks around us. You've got to think really hard about where you put the bull out because everyone around has got one cow each or one bull each."

Being farm manager of Willowbank also means that Paul is the first port of call for any of the neighbour's animal dilemmas. "They ring me up and I go fix or do something they don't know anything about, anything from shearing five sheep to fixing the bearing on a goat."

Another challenge that the Nations come up against in farming so close to town is the local limitations: "You can't just whip down to your rural trading store and pick up 60 litres of drench because they only sell it by the litre to cater to the lifestyle blocks."

Forward planning and flexibility is a must when it comes to urban farming. Unpopular with the neighbours, top dressing planes



SIRE OF 2015 SALE BULLS

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- S Chisum 6175
- Matauri Complete F010
- SAV Brilliance 7044

H817 GOLDWYN NAPOLEON

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SALE DATE:

**Friday 12th June
2015 – 3pm**

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Bruce & Barbara Alexander Hunter No.1 R.D., Timaru, Phone 03 689 5575, goldwynangus@scorch.co.nz

were replaced by helicopters – but with change comes opportunity: using helicopters has given the Nations the option to combine thistle spray with fertiliser and kill two birds with one stone. Several years ago Paul approached the pilot with the suggestion that they also include gorse spray. The method had never been trialed but was so successful that last year they sprayed the whole farm with a single application of fertiliser, thistle and gorse spray.

With 22 purebred horses, Paul and Sally have been working to develop a stud service, and in 2013 sold 13 horses. Specialising in Missouri Foxtrotters, the horses have become a viable part of the farming unit, with Charles and Sally working together to train them using a hands-on natural horsemanship style based on Clinton Anderson's approach. Everything is done in-house, including scanning and artificial insemination, and with over 50km of riding tracks on the property, the horses are taken out regularly. Handled from the day they are born, the Willowbank Foxtrotters are incredibly approachable. "You could walk out there right now and foals would run up to you," says Paul.

Horses and alpacas aside, Willowbank runs 3000su. From the outset, Paul's main focus has been cattle.

"When we first came here we inherited a licorice allsorts herd," he says. "Hereford bull, Devon bull, Shorthorn... I've always loved Angus so we changed the entire farming policy to straight, pure Angus."

They culled half the Herefords that year and the rest the following year. The dramatic change has meant that reaching their goals for the cattle has been achieved a lot quicker than anticipated.

"Going Angus was a big call," says Paul. "Charles and Gina had concerns because they ride the horses on the farm all the time

and they didn't want wild cattle." Favouring the quiet nature and longevity of bulls from Alpine Angus, Paul has been buying from the stud since 2000, and assuring Charles and Gina that the Angus they have are far from wild. "A lot of it is genetics; these bulls are just so quiet. It's also the way you handle them, of course. We handle them nicely and it just shows."

Focusing on the ongoing progression of the Angus cattle, Paul purchased fifteen Waiterenui heifers to ensure his replacements have strong maternal values and better genetics right through.

Selling all their weaners at the local farm gate, Paul and Sally have made an impression with at least one local customer: "Up until now he's been buying all our steers – they average between 225-250kg. This year he said that because he likes how quiet out cattle are and how well they've grown he wants to buy all our heifers as well."

Four years on and Paul is happy to say he has the cows exactly where he wants them. "We scanned 98% this year over our heifers and cows, and we carved 100% because we had two sets of twins."

Looking to the future, Paul would like to fatten his own steers and eventually hopes to establish a strong brand identity for Willowbank Angus.

"I've concentrated on the cattle, I've got them exactly where I want them to be right now, the horses are going in the right direction, I'm currently in the process of changing my sheep policy and when I get them where I want them, then we'll deal with the alpacas."

Paul notes that more often than not the best-laid plans for the day can go out the window. "It's an exciting place to work because of all the different things we have going on here. That's what makes it interesting."

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Breeding for dairy: **MANGAOTEA**

BY SARAH IVEY



Robin Blackwell's enthusiasm for Angus began when he purchased six Angus heifers at a dispersal sale in Te Kuiti back in 2006. Back then he had no idea they would be the foundation of what has become a well respected Angus stud.

Robin and his wife Jacqueline run Mangaotea Farm at Inglewood, Taranaki. The 591ha property of mostly easy hill-country winters 11,000 stock units, which includes 300 winter grazing cows, and sits smack in the middle of dairy country. For this reason Robin and Jacqui target primarily dairy farmers when breeding their bulls – but without confining themselves to one breed: Mangaotea run five separate studs in their multi-faceted operation – Hereford, Murray Grey, Southdown and, of course, Angus.

Robin's father purchased the property in 1963, Robin taking over in 1980. The family had never run breeding cows. "I calved my first cow at 47," says Robin.

The shift into breeding bulls was a bold change for the born-and-bred local lad. "We've found we do get a premium for our own breeding. Dairy farmers are a very wary bunch and it's beneficial to be able to show the traceability," says Jacqui.

Mangaotea now carries 142 breeding cows, 70 of them straight black Angus. The Angus are run as two mobs, with 40 cows in one mob and the 30 heifers run separately. Both mobs are single-sire mated, with the bulls going out for 2½ cycles. In 2014 the Angus cows scanned at 95–98%. "Single-sire mating is always a bit nerve-racking," says Jacqui.

One of the first sires they used was a Waigroup bull, which they purchased because they'd been told they absolutely couldn't go wrong with Waigroup for ease of calving, one of the crucial elements in breeding for the dairy market. They've recently shifted to using a range of bulls, to ensure they can achieve continued strong growth.



Dairy is the main market for cattle in Taranaki. For yearlings, the Blackwells look for moderate to low birthweight EBVs of 3.5 or below. In 2014 Mangaotea sold eighteen Angus bulls as yearlings at an average of \$1800 per head. Heavier birthweight calves are kept and sold as 2yr olds, in 2014 averaging \$2700 with a top price of \$3800.

As well as looking for ease of calving and low birthweight, Mangaotea cull severely on temperament. "One strike and you're out," says Robin.

With dairy, even more than in other environments, it's crucial that the bulls have a good, easy temperament. "We've loaned bulls to people with problem herds and they've been back to buy one at our next sale," Jacqui adds.

Although they've been focusing on the dairy market, Mangaotea bulls are also a good option for sheep and beef farmers. They are now gaining more momentum in this market and sell approximately twenty percent of their bulls to non-dairy farmers, with all of their buyers still falling within the Taranaki boundary.

For those not wanting to purchase a bull outright, the Blackwells offer a leasing option. About 100 bulls – 40 of them Angus – are leased as yearlings annually for a flat per head rate of \$450 freight-paid. The couple are very particular about the situation the bulls are going into though, as they need to come back in top condition prior to being sold as 2yr olds.

The cattle are grass-fed, with the addition of hay and silage supplement over winter. About 140ha is made into hay or silage, which works in well with around 280 bulls going off-farm in the spring. The Blackwells also sell 800 round bales of hay annually.

Despite an annual rainfall of 1900mm, drought can be an issue in summer, and has caused major issues over the past two years. A nitrogen boost of 140kg/ha of DAP fertiliser helps keep the growth going right through till the middle of June, with a further boost applied in autumn.

Since deciding to tackle the breeding market in 2006, Robin and Jacqui have strived to develop and push their stud to the top of their game. "There are six on-farm sales on our circuit and we're always looking for a point of difference," says Jacqui.

One major development has been the cattle sale complex and yards. "That has taken us from Hicksville to where we are now. We've had a total transformation," says Robin.

The couple feel confident they've really lifted their game – along with everyone else in the industry. Despite having a competitive attitude, the Blackwells have developed a strong national network of like-minded people, providing variation from their home community where they are surrounded by dairy farmers. "The highlight of our year is most definitely the ward tour," says Jacqui.

Robin and Jacqui also have a healthy rivalry at home, with Jacqui being pro-Hereford and Robin pro-Angus. Jacqui adds, "Rob did beat me hands down, on both top price and average price at our last sale."

In time, the Blackwells hope their three adult children will take part in the business, the diversity of the operation ensuring plenty of opportunity for them to come on board, especially with the brand now well established within the industry. ■



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FOOTPRINT ON ANGUS

LIN JOHNSTONE

Lin Johnstone has spent most of his life with Angus cattle. Ranui Angus stud was established in 1950, right back when only two or three studs had on-farm sales, when farmers were gentlemen, and when “there was an annual pilgrimage to Dannevirke, because that was where you bought your bulls.”

Lin’s father, Lindsay Johnstone Snr, gained an interest in the National Sale after a visit in 1966. He came home and told Lin that he was certain his bulls were better than a lot of others at the sale. Consequently, in 1967, he offered a bull – and broke the national record for an un-led bull. He admits, however, that the currency had just changed to decimal and he suspects the buying public hadn’t quite adjusted to the lesser value of the dollar when they paid the \$3400 premium for the bull.

Since then the Johnstones haven’t missed a year, and have continued to support the sale since it shifted to Feilding. Ranui has entered more bulls over the years than any other stud. “It would be within kicking distance of 220,” says Lin.

In 1967, the Johnstones were farming in Te Puke. Lindsay Johnstone Snr had Ranui, a 200ha property in the heart of what is now kiwifruit country, while Lin had a 280ha block 20 miles down the road, gifted to him by his father when he was just 18 years old.

As the pressure came on from the kiwifruit industry, the Johnstones reviewed their options. In 1981 they decided to sell Ranui, trading the 200ha Bay of Plenty property for 505ha at Kai Iwi, Wanganui. The shift almost doubled their carrying capacity. Lin put a manager on his Te Puke block and took over running the Ranui stud at its new home, rapidly building an identity and establishing a private on-farm sale.

Ranui winters 450 black Angus alongside just over 2000 Romney ewes. Lin chuckles over mention of stock units: “I have no idea, that’s too technical.” But nothing goes hungry at Ranui.

Lin relies on gut instinct with his cattle, with modern science coming second to soundness, eye appeal and temperament.

Lin ran 150 breeding cows and 35 replacement heifers last year.

Surplus heifers are sold at the yearling sale – in 2014 Ranui sold 50 heifers in five lots, averaging \$3/kg LW. “The heifers have always sold well,” he says.

When it came time for Lin’s son, Lindsay Johnstone Jnr (yes, there are three of them), to buy a property of his own, Lin sold his Te Puke block and put the money towards 638ha of hill country up the road from Ranui, renamed Ranui.W. The two farms are run independently but combine forces for bull buying, grazing and, of course, the combined on-farm sale at Ranui.

“The dairy pressure has pushed beef onto harder country, and it’s good to show your cattle are capable of running on harder ground,” says Lin.

Lindsay Jnr agrees, adding that the diversity brings a wider range of potential buyers to their sale.

The Ranui and Ranui.W combined 2yr old sale is held in early June. Last year the studs sold 35 2yr old bulls at an average of \$4350 per head. The remaining bulls are evaluated for low birthweight and calving ease, factors important to the yearling market. Twenty-five bulls were selected for the yearling sale last year, selling at an average of \$1200 per head, and the remainder steered and put on the hill country at Ranui.W to clean that up.

Lin’s involvement with Angus has stretched beyond breeding top quality cattle. Over the years he has sat for three separate periods on the Angus New Zealand Council. The first was in 1976 when he was in Te Puke. “John Palmer was president and he was no mug. You didn’t mess with John, he was a very good president.”

Lin stepped down with the move to Kai Iwi, though he retained a heavy involvement in the World Forum, hosted in New Zealand. A few years later he was approached by Richard Rowe of Merchiston

Angus, and served on Council for another eight years. A short two year period from 2008-2010 took Lin’s years to a grand total of almost fifteen – of which he notes that he has “served under more presidents than anyone else.”

During those years Lin got the New Zealand Angus Youth Charitable Trust up and running. The idea came about on a trip to America with Tim Russell, Colin Williams and Guy Sargent. The men were all impressed by the support the American breeders were giving the youngsters coming through. On the plane coming home, Guy came up with an idea. “Sargent piped up in his usual authoritative manner, saying, ‘why don’t you two ‘beeps’ put up two pregnant recipients, offer them at Expo and start a youth fund,’” recalls Lin. He and Colin agreed to the idea and those four pregnant recipients realised \$13,500. “That’s where the fund kicked off.”

With breeder support the fund quickly grew to \$42,000, allowing initiatives such as Trans-Tasman exchanges and the Summitcrest Scholarship, which gave young people the opportunity to see how Angus operations were being run across the world. These opportunities, along with others, have been partly funded by the youth fund, which has now grown to over \$200,000.

Lin would like to see the fund grow to over \$1m and have some of the money put towards an agenda that is specific to Angus. “Perhaps some sort of PhD,” he says.

Lin is not short of grand ideas for Angus, and sees a very positive future for the breed. On a personal level, he expects that in the next few years Lindsay Jnr and his family will take over at Ranui.

“I’ve got to get out of it and let him have a fair go.”

Even so it’s clear that Lin’s footprint on Angus in New Zealand will long remain.

RANUI ANGUS

SALE DATE:

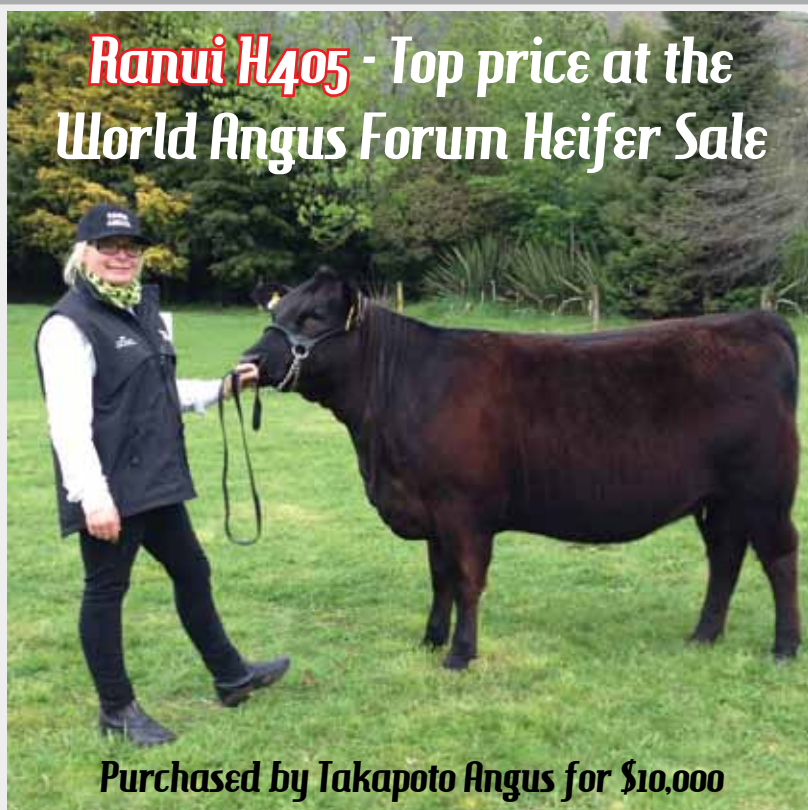
**Bull Auction Thursday
4th June at 3.00pm**

Lin Johnstone, Ranui, Wanganui.

Phone: 06 342 9833 (home).

Lindsay Johnstone, Ranui W, Wanganui.

Phone: 06 342 9795 (home).



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World Angus Forum Heifer Sale**

Purchased by Takapoto Angus for \$10,000

Dir	Dtrs	Gest	BW	200	400	600	MCW	Milk	SS
+4.9	+3.1	-3.8	+3.3	+43	+79	+99	+90	+10	+3.5
DtC	CW	EMA	Rib	Rump	RBV	IMF	Indexes	SR	AP
-3.9	+60	+4.5	-0.8	-1.4	+1.4	+0.7		+\$154	+\$169

SALE DATE:
2yr Bulls, 8th June, 2015 - 11.00am
2015 Sale Bulls by:

Kaharau 610, Atahua 700-11, Turihaua D378, Atahua 732-11

Manawatu/Wanganui
BULL WALK
Tues 19th May



Kaharau 610



Atahua 700-11

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CW	EMA	Rib	Rump	RBV	IMF	Self Replacing (\$)		AngusPure (\$)	
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CW	EMA	Rib	Rump	RBV	IMF	Self Replacing (\$)		AngusPure (\$)	
+54	+9.2	-1.4	-1.9	+2.9	+0.3	+\$154		+\$160	

SALE BULLS BY

Kesslers Frontman R001

Stern Anzac 465

Stokman Dash G89

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Top Photo:

On Farm Panorama

PROVIDING SOLUTIONS:

Merging Genetic and Management Strategies

BY DR TOM FIELD, DIRECTOR, ENGLER AGRIBUSINESS
ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM, UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA



Historically, seedstock production was shrouded in what might be described as a near mystical aura where the leading producers were viewed as having the “eye of the master” and, for the most part, the focus of the industry was centered on the show ring and visual appraisal as the critical tools to identify superior stock.

The advent of performance testing and the application of scientific principles to cattle breeding resulted in the publication of national sire summaries and the age of unrestricted access to information. This transition most certainly transformed the seedstock sector and empowered its commercial customers to make more informed selection decisions. Yet, even with the widespread availability of genetic information coupled with technologies such as AI and ET to rapidly infuse superior genetics across the industry, commercial breeders have been willing to leave the work of identifying, testing and multiplying seedstock to the seedstock sector.

People attracted to seedstock production are drawn to the challenge of creating genetic progress while possessing the disciplined curiosity necessary to pursue the painstakingly slow process of continuous improvement in bovines. They also have an intense interest in knowing as much as possible about individual animals. The successful seedstock producer is fascinated by detail, driven to amass and utilise information, and is often perplexed by those who do not share their passion for genetics, pedigrees, and discussions centred on the attributes of great sires and dams.

The commercial clients of the seedstock sector are driven by a decidedly different set of influences, and perhaps even skillsets. The commercial client, while aware of individual animal differences, manages and markets groups not individuals. Furthermore, the commercial sector is focused on animal phenotypes that are influenced by both genetics and management. In contrast the seedstock provider is aware of phenotype, but their long-term focus is on genotype, specifically the additive portion known as breeding value. These divergent areas of focus and interest create a potential gap between the supplier and user of seedstock.

The cow-calf enterprise is characterised by complexity. As such, the successful manager must effectively sort through the many layers of the onion to create a functional business model that is workable, flexible, and economically feasible. In every phase of production a number of systems are at work, with both macro and micro levels coming to bear on productivity. For example, the forage resource alone is comprised of a number of interconnected systems beginning with the diverse microbial organisms in the soil, extending to the hydrology, the diversity of the plant community, and all of the interactions and associated responses due to weather, insects, and large ungulates. Beyond the forage resource are all the

complexities of the physiology of individual cattle, complexity of the beef herd with animals in various stages of age and maturity, and all the uncertainty that arise from markets and financial systems.

The cow-calf manager is confronted daily by making decisions in the midst of this multi-layered complexity. Profitability depends on the ability of managers to sort through the chaos to create cow herds that produce market-acceptable progeny, replacements with the capacity to be productive within the constraints of the farm's resources and to execute co-ordinated tactics and strategies that are operationally appropriate.

One of the critical control points in the overall system is related to the selection of specific genotypes for inclusion as breeding stock, as well as the mating system employed to leverage the comparative strengths and weaknesses of the selected parents. However, while genetics play an important role in the success of the enterprise and allow producers the opportunity to shift the performance potential of a selected population for a variety of traits, without effective management in a host of other arenas (e.g., reproduction, nutrition, disease control) sustainable profit is not possible.

As a case in point, the benchmark study ‘Priorities First’, funded by the American Angus Association, identified the highest priority management focal points for successful cow-calf enterprise managers, as well as their most trusted advisors and consultants.

Results indicated that the top seven priorities were as follows:

1. Herd nutrition
2. Pasture management
3. Herd health
4. Financial management
5. Marketing
6. Production management
7. Genetics

Furthermore the study indicated that commercial cattle producers placed utilisation of individual animal information, identification systems, and utilisation of technical advisors well behind these leading areas of focus.

It is logical to assume that seedstock breeders would have placed genetics at the top of their list of priorities. While the differences between the two sectors don't imply that the interests of each are in conflict, it does point to the need for the seedstock breeder to be thoughtful in understanding their customers and thus to structure communication and marketing efforts accordingly.

A panel at the 2014 Beef Improvement Federation Conference held in Lincoln, Nebraska explored the process of merging genetics

and management to attain profitability. Panel members included JD Radakovich, who manages the Hoodoo Ranch in northern Wyoming; Lorna Marshall who is the senior beef account manager for Genex and a partner in Marshall Cattle Company – a seedstock enterprise in eastern Colorado; and Donnell Brown, partner in RA Brown Ranches – a seedstock enterprise located in the caprock overlooking the high plains of Texas. The panelists, recognised as superior managers and considered leaders in the US beef industry, challenged the seedstock sector to undergo a transformational shift in perspective and focus.

Three themes emerged as critical components of the discussion:

1. Management changes are easier to quantify than are the impacts of genetic decisions.
2. Large commercial farm managers expect their seedstock suppliers to handle the logistics of genetic improvement and provide low-risk, no surprise bulls.
3. Commercial cattle producers aren't particularly interested in sexy technologies; they want a simple, disciplined approach to integrate improved genetics into the complexity of their management systems.

Lorna Marshall, who interacts with large cow-calf customers, was adamant in her presentation that seedstock producers must understand that their customers require simplicity, risk management and the avoidance of mistakes arising from their herd bull choices.

JD Radakovich stated that the first obligation of a land-based enterprise manager is to maintain or improve the choices of future generations, and thus must be focused on the larger system, with genetics being only one component of decision making. He also pointed to the need for commercial cow-calf producers to design management systems that have the flexibility to respond to shifts in weather and markets.

Donnell Brown concluded that, "It is our duty to help customers get what they need to more efficiently, effectively and profitably produce beef using their available resources."

The panel urged conference attendees to consider the following questions as the industry endeavours to merge management and genetic strategies into a cohesive system:

- What will my resources allow me to do in the way of generating meaningful (profitable) genetic change? The panelists focused on feed, financial and labour resources.
- Have we clarified the difference between want and need?
- Does selection occur from an informed perspective or is it based on perception?
- Is selection pressure focused on the traits that matter most?
- How soon can the scientific community develop enterprise specific selection indices and decision support tools that positively impact the bottom line?

Ultimately, the panelists concluded that commercial cattle producers require genetic solutions that can be integrated without disrupting management systems.

Creating solutions is dependent on the capacity of the seedstock sector to recognise and understand the limiting factors that determine the extent of their customers' management and genetic choices.

With herd nutrition and pasture system management at the forefront of a commercial cow-calf manager's priorities, mating systems must be adapted to the grazing strategy. Furthermore, selection must be based on recognition of the multiple traits that affect profit (both inputs and outputs). Finally, the level of performance that can be sustained by any particular ecosystem must be understood, or managers face considerable risk from forcing into the system cattle that are not aligned with the constraints.

It is the responsibility of the seedstock sector to identify, characterise and propagate genetics that enhance the profitability of their customers. This process cannot be conducted without critical conversations between the breeder and his/her customers, the exchange of relevant information, and an investment of time and energy to make the structural and philosophical shift from being a purveyor of bulls to a provider of solutions. ■



Ruaview
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CHOOSING HIGHER-VALUE PRODUCTION

Genomic tools are helping users of Angus genetics produce cattle that gain more and grade higher more consistently.

"Cow-calf producers who want top dollar for their calf crop would do well to incorporate both rapid growth and high-quality grading potential into each calf crop," says Tom Brink, CEO of Top Dollar Angus. "Rapid growth and strong marbling genetics make cattle worth more to everyone who owns them."

Unfortunately, identifying gain and grade with the eyeball is sketchy at best.

"You can't really see gain and grade. The phenotypic indicators we often associate with it are deceptive," explains Kent Andersen, Ph.D., Zoetis Associate Director of Global Technical Services, Animal Genetics.

Commercial users of Angus bulls took a herculean step forward in selecting bulls more precisely for these and other traits with the advent of Genome-Enhanced Expected Progeny Differences (GE-EPDS). These are made possible by HD 50K from Zoetis, a genetic test that evaluates DNA at more than 50,000 locations on an Angus animal's chromosome.

HD 50K from Zoetis and GE EPDs make it possible for commercial producers to select yearling, virgin bulls that have an EPD accuracy equivalent to performance data from a first calf crop. Specifically, HD 50K from Zoetis increases the EPD accuracy for young, non-parent bulls by about three-fold – from about 0.05 – 0.1 to 0.3. Depending on the trait, that's the equivalent of having performance data from 7 to 21 progeny already contributing to the bull's genetic evaluation. In the case of breeding females, that's the equivalent of her lifetime production of natural calves.

Using this same technology, Zoetis developed another tool – GeneMax Focus™ – which enables commercial producers to assess the gain and grading ability of individual calves sired by these bulls. "GeneMax Focus is designed to be used with all of the other selection tools available to us, including commonsense," Andersen says.

GeneMax focus identifies gain and grade potential

GeneMax Focus is a DNA test that quantifies marbling and post-weaning growth potential in high-percentage (> 75%) commercial Angus cattle. It was developed through a collaborative partnership between Zoetis, Angus Genetics Inc (AGI) and Certified Angus Beef® (CAB).

After submitting an animal's DNA sample (blood or hair), users receive a GeneMAX score (GMX™). The score is between 1 and 100 with higher values representing more potential for economic return from combined gain and grade values. In addition, separate values from 1 to 5 are calculated for the component traits of marbling and gain – again, the higher the value, the greater the genetic merit.


"In both field trials and in practical application, the score derived from using GeneMax Focus has proven a reliable indicator of marbling score and postweaning gain in high-percentage, commercial Angus cattle," Andersen says. "Using this test together

with EPDs can accelerate breeding programmes to produce calves with higher levels of gain and grade, building more net dollars into a commercial Angus programme."

According to Brink, gain and grade are the two most significant contributors to cattle value once they leave the farm. When he was President and CEO of J & F Oklahoma Holdings, Inc – one of the largest cattle feeding organisations in the world – he assembled data to illustrate this point. There were 36,266 head in what was designated the high-growth, high-grade (HGG) group, and 26,729 head in a group designated low-gain, low-growth (LGG). Both groups were placed on feed at about the same time, weighing 360kg. They were fed, managed and marketed the same.

HGG cattle weighed 612kg or heavier at harvest, compared to 590kg or lighter for the LGG cattle. The HGG cattle graded 65% Prime and Choice versus 45% and less for the LGG cattle.

"The HGG cattle did exactly what they were genetically programmed to do, posting excellent results in the process. Cattle with higher levels of gain also have higher levels of feed intake and heavier out weights," says Brink. "The LGG cattle also expressed lower-performance genetics via slower growth, lower quality grades, and a poor financial outcome."



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All told, the HGG cattle generated an average of \$80 per head more profit than the LGG cattle.

Multi-use tool

GeneMax Focus provides the commercial user of Angus genetics with objective measures to help select and manage feeder cattle:

- Marketing feeder cattle. GeneMax offers buyers quantitative verification of the genetics cattle possess for gain and grade. Providing buyers with EPDs of the Angus sires used provides further documentation of your herd's genetic merit for these traits.
- Retaining ownership. A high average GMX Score helps you identify candidates to retain and feed through the feedlot and then market on a quality-based grid.
- Benchmarking. GeneMax scores offer you a baseline for the genetic potential of gain and grade in your herd by helping direct future mating decisions.

GeneMax Focus also provides quantifiable gain and grade selection criteria for replacement heifer prospects.

"Replacement heifer candidates can be tested with GeneMax Focus and those results can be incorporated with other heifer selection criteria to determine which females should be retained in the herd," Andersen says. "GMX results can also be used to make more effective mating decisions. For instance, sires with more genetic merit for gain and grade can be used on heifers that have lower levels of gain and grade based on GMX results."

A separate tool, GeneMax Advantage™, adds even more precision to selecting replacement heifers by providing economic indices based on heifers' likely future production.

Other GeneMax benefits

When producers use bulls tested with HD 50K from Zoetis and then test calves of that sire with GeneMax Focus, parentage can be assigned – though GMX Sire Match™. In multi-sire pastures this means you can identify which bulls are covering the most cows, and which sires are delivering the highest levels of gain and grade. Knowing the sires can also help guide you to which heifers are the best candidates to become good cows.

"Knowing which specific bulls sired each calf also allows you to minimise in-breeding and to manage around known genetic conditions," Andersen says.

Combined, GE-EPDs and information derived with GeneMax Focus provide commercial producers the opportunity to more accurately identify and propagate gain and grade within their herds.

"Bulls selected based on GE-EPDs are expected to produce a calf crop with the right genetics for profit. Next, the steers from those sires can be tested with GeneMax Focus to more precisely identify gain and grade potential in order to make purchasing, management and marketing decisions. Similarly, potential replacement heifers sired by these bulls can be tested with GeneMax Focus to help select replacements with more gain and grade potential, maximising future production." ■

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BY ROBYN HOW, TARARUA BREEDING CENTRE

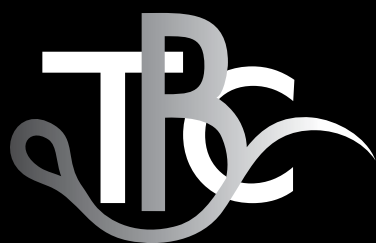
The first calf to be born by AI using sexed semen was in 1999 in the USA. The technology was developed by Colorado State University with funding from the United States Department of Agriculture.

In 2004, again in the USA, the technology became commercially available, and has since expanded to have semen sexing machines in most bovine semen producing countries around the world. In 2009 the first of these machines arrived in New Zealand, allowing for the production of New Zealand sexed semen.

The company offering this technology in New Zealand is an American company, Sexing Technologies, based in Hamilton. Sexing Technologies has been providing the New Zealand dairy industry with both frozen and, more recently, fresh sexed female semen. The

semen sexing technology has not yet been fully utilised by the beef industry, but is available for those who wish to produce calves with a known sex. The technology can be used to produce either female or male sexed semen.

The sexing process is remarkable, and is able to be achieved because the X (female) chromosome has 3.8% more DNA than that of the male, meaning that it is 3.8% larger than the Y (male) chromosome, which allows the X (female) to absorb more staining dye. Because of the weight difference, female semen, when treated with a dye, shines brighter than male. A laser in the sorting machine is thus able to determine the gender of the sperm based on this brightness. The machine then sorts the X and Y into two different streams, while any sperm that is of undetermined sex, together



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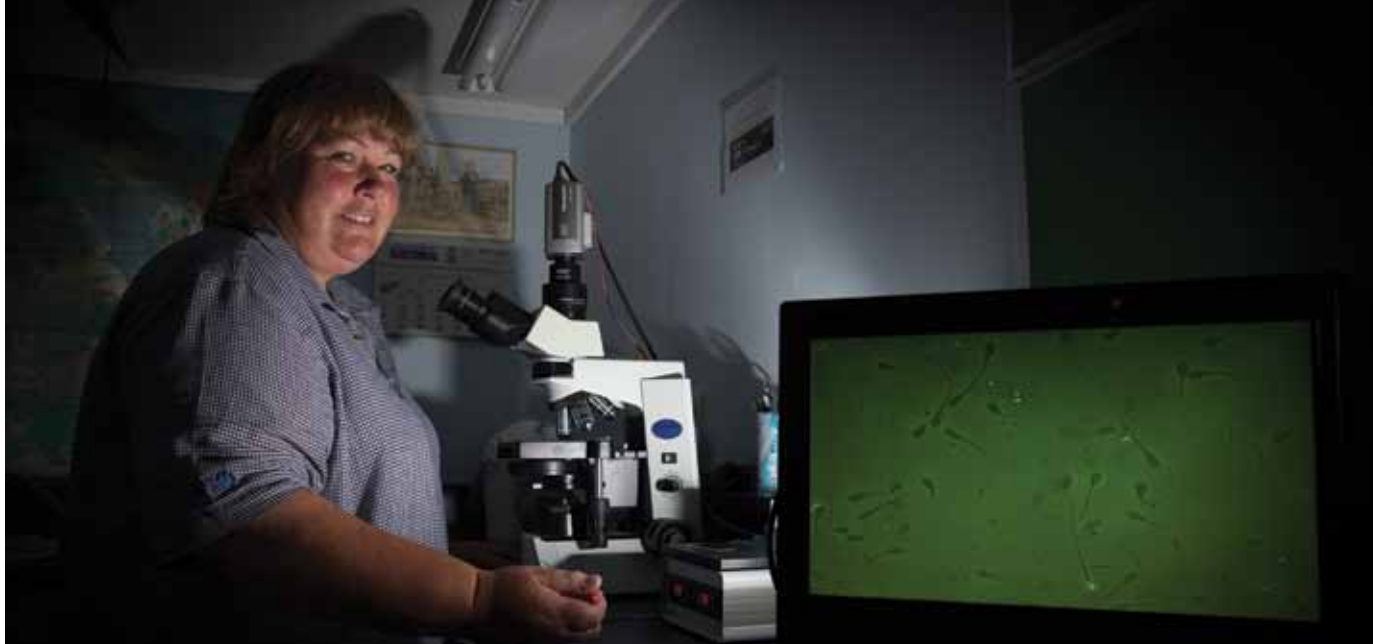
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with any that is not glowing (which means it is dead), passes straight through as waste. Thus the ejaculate from the bull is split three ways, which means that it will produce fewer straws than conventional semen.

Sexed straws have routinely been 93% gender accurate, but the company guarantees that they are above 87% gender specific. Because of this percentage there may still be the occasional calf born of the unwanted sex.

One advantage of the sorting process is that damaged or dead sperm are sorted off as waste. This is why the low dosage of sexed semen is still viable and will result in reasonable pregnancy rates. Sexed semen is usually frozen with 2 million live sperm per straw.

There has been a lot of research into the use of fresh sexed semen. Working in the dairy industry, LIC has found that using 1 million sperm per straw for fresh sexed semen saw an increase of 15-25% fertility over frozen sexed semen at 2 million sperm per straw.

Unfortunately not all bulls' semen can be sorted, as there is some variation in the ability of the semen to be sexed. Therefore some bulls are better candidates than others, and this can only be identified after the first sexing process. Unfortunately this still has to be paid for whether you get successfully sexed semen at the other end or not!

Benefits of sexed semen

The main benefit of this technology within the beef industry will be the use fresh sexed semen. With all the work that has been done on improving the in-calf rate following oestrus synchronisation programmes, and the added benefit when heat detected, it is now cost-effective to use fresh sexed semen. Bulls can either have their semen collected on farm or at a bull centre. The semen is then either driven or flown to the semen sexing lab in Hamilton, where it is processed. The semen will be available to the breeder the following day so that the cows or heifers can be inseminated with fresh sexed female or fresh sexed male semen that offers 93% accuracy of producing calves of a predicted gender.

Cost of using sexed semen

The cost of processing is dependent on factors such as the number of doses of sexed semen to be produced, the length of the contract with ST technologies and whether concurrent sorting into both male and female semen is required. Each of these will affect

the price, so only an estimate can be given of USD\$40-50 per straw for frozen semen.

There is also a requirement that a minimum of 150 straws are produced in one sexing session.

Price for fresh semen will be on a case by case basis, so actual requirements will need to be given to secure an exact price. This price covers only the Sexing Technologies costs for the sexing and sorting of the semen. Other costs involved are the actual collection of semen from the bull, the freight to the sexing lab in Hamilton and the delivery of the sexed semen to the farm. Flying the semen to Hamilton for sexing has shown good results, and means the bulls do not need to be located near Hamilton for semen collection. ■



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Latest Research Into **HERITABLE GENETIC IMPROVEMENT**

BY PROF. DORIAN GARRICK, PROFESSOR OF ANIMAL SCIENCE, IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY, USA

Farmers readily identify animals with extreme performance, both those that are outstanding and those that are underperforming, and have done so long before the availability of eartags or sophisticated recording systems.

Selection of those animals with the most outstanding performance to use as parents is known as mass selection. It can result in genetic improvement, provided the trait is not unduly influenced by non-genetic factors, but progress will be limited by heritability, the strength of the association between phenotype and genotype.

Animal breeders have long recognised that selection could be more effective when the impact of non-genetic factors, such as the age of the dam and the date of birth, could be taken into account, and when family information was appropriately taken into account. The resulting predictions of productive performance in the next generation are now known as estimated breeding values (EBV). Annual progress from selection using EBV is limited by the accuracy of the EBV and the age of the animals when they can be reliably chosen as parents.

The genomic revolution is now beginning to change all this. With the advent of so-called next-generation sequencing, we

can characterize the genome of any bull for about US\$2000 by aligning its sequence to the Hereford-based reference genome, and comparing this aligned information between sires. Today we know most of the variants that distinguish one cattle breed from another, and the variants that differ between sires of the same breed. I have recently sequenced the 70 Angus sires used in the University herd, and that comprises all the sires and maternal grandsires of the current cow herd and its recent calf crops. The herd has over ten million variants that are segregating, but only a fraction of those variants are in the better-understood expressed component of the genome, known as the exome. Most cattle genotyping to date has not used sequence but instead used non exomic markers chosen to span the genome, such as those on 50K chips that are available for many livestock species.

One of today's major scientific challenges in all manner of species is determining which of these millions of genomic variants are associated with differences in performance. Identifying associated variants allows for genomic predictions of EBV, which promises improved accuracy in young animals without individual or progeny information. The beef breed associations that represent most of the performance recorded cattle in the US and Canada are now

offering genomic predictions of performance that combine genomic, pedigree and performance information. The accuracy of such EBVs vary by trait and by breed, but are typically better than pedigree-based predictions, at least when ancestors of the genotyped animals were part of the genome-wide association studies used to identify informative variants.

The holy grail of association studies is finding, among those associated variants, the ones that actually cause the differences in performance. That knowledge is beginning to revolutionise human medicine, and is similarly impacting plant and animal improvement. Finding the causal variants for most productive traits will require sequence information on tens of thousands of performance-recorded animals. Currently the most cost-effective manner of doing this is to genotype populations with marker panels such as 50K chips, and to impute the sequence.

Imputation is a computational approach for determining variants carried by an individual, and can be undertaken using family or population information. In most countries, over the last five years 50K genotyping was first undertaken on widely-used progeny-tested sires, and then extended to male and female relatives, sometimes using cheaper marker panels such as the current bovine 20-30K chips. The Irish have been the most ambitious with this, having already genotyped 100,000 suckler cows and having plans to do another 300,000 cattle next year.

Genes with major effects on one or more traits are much easier to identify in terms of associated markers or causal variants than those with small effects.

One such gene affecting body weight and stature was discovered

in a New Zealand experiment crossing Holstein-Friesian and Jersey cattle. Jersey cattle are homozygous for the PLAG1 allele associated with small size, whereas Holstein-Friesians mostly carry the alternate variant. Surprisingly, we found this same variant is associated with body size in Simmental, Brangus, Gelbvieh and Nellore cattle. Australian research further showed that, in their climatic conditions, these variants have major influence on age at puberty and post-partum anoestrus intervals. Sadly, the modern Angus and Hereford breeds appear to be fixed for the larger size, later maturing variant. If the Australian results on reproduction are confirmed in a temperate environment, it would argue that a maternal line of Angus or Hereford with the alternate allele might be markedly more profitable – with smaller mature size and higher reproductive performance than modern Angus and Hereford, such cows could be mated to terminal lines of Angus or Hereford cattle from current bloodlines.


This knowledge can easily be exploited in Simmental or Gelbvieh cattle as both variants are still segregating. One of the current problems using this knowledge to improve Angus or Hereford cattle is that the alternate allele must first be introgressed into current bloodlines by outcrossing. We have some evidence that this variant is still segregating in Uruguayan Herefords, and one could speculate it may have been present in smaller early-maturing Angus cattle, perhaps even Lowline animals. But it takes at least three to four generations of backcrossing and selection to introgress variants not currently present in a breed and to minimize all the other attributes of the outcross.

One opportunity for faster introduction of alternate variants

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is by a technique known as gene editing. Gene editing provides a controlled method of altering just one or more base pairs, and does not require the introduction of foreign DNA.

My colleagues have already used this method to create pigs that carry variants responsible for human disease in order to study and develop therapies. In a cattle application, we could gene edit this PLAG1 variant into a tissue culture derived from a widely recognized animal such as the Pathfinder bull ISU Imaging Q 9111. A copy of the bull could be produced from the edited tissue culture in the same manner that produced Dolly the sheep, generating a new version of the bull that only differed at this one variant. A progeny test comparison of the two bulls would then demonstrate the effects of the variant. The time lag required for conventional introgression would be avoided. The same gene editing technique can be used to produce copies of prominent bulls with known genetic defects repaired. Every week I receive emails from companies offering to design and supply me with gene edit templates for editing variants of research interest. We have applied for research funding to do some of this work.

The smaller-sized PLAG1 variant also offers promise for improving heat tolerance in cattle. Smaller animals have larger surface area relative to their body weight and this facilitates heat loss in stressful climates. Considerable research is now being undertaken to identify genes associated with improved production in heat-stressed environments.

Interestingly, a recent breakthrough in this area has just been published in the prestigious journal Nature Communications, based on research undertaken in New Zealand by Drs Mathew Littlejohn and Steve Davis from LIC. Their discovery was based on the identification of a dominant mutation that resulted in about half of the daughters of a young bull being hairy, heat stressed and with defects in lactation. Interestingly, the heat stress was not caused by them being hairy, as clipping the hair had no effect on body temperature or respiration rate.

The variant responsible for this particular hairy phenotype turned out to be in the Prolactin gene (PRL), which produces a hormone that enables female mammals to produce milk. The variant could be traced back to a de novo or new mutation that occurred in the bull's sire, but not its parents. Every bull, ram and human carries de novo mutations, but few are dominant and most go undetected.

What makes the LIC work particularly intriguing is that there had been previous published evidence that Senepol cattle, a breed developed in the Caribbean, carry a dominant variant that causes slick hair coats, and is associated with heat resistance. An association study had mapped the variant to a region that included a gene that produces PRLR, the receptor for the prolactin hormone. The LIC scientists were able to demonstrate that the prolactin-signaling pathway is responsible for hairy and slick phenotypes and that pathway influences heat stress. Senepol cattle have already been used to introgress heat resistance into both dairy and beef cattle breeds, but this discovery opens up new avenues for animal production in heat-stressed environments.

Many more discoveries of causal variants in cattle are likely to occur over the next twelve months. A challenge for the global and the New Zealand beef industries will be determining ways to use such information to improve productivity and reduce environmental impact. ■

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ANGUS BULL UNIT RESURRECTED

This year sees the resurrection of the Angus Bull Unit, last operating in 2012, and originally established with the aim of assisting breeders to enter the National Sale without having to farm a single bull on his own specifically for the event.

This year the unit is being run on the property of David Wright and Jeanette Park in Milson Line, Feilding.

"We were very lucky to find this property. It's a little show place and David loves the bulls. He takes enormous pride in managing them, and will have them looking a picture for the National, I'm sure," says Acting General Manager, Guy Sargent.

"Angus breeders should be very proud of the support given by most of the leading studs in the country. After the lack of support last year, which saw only nine bulls in the Angus section of the National, it was D-Day for the breed. The relentless effort of Angus councillor Patrick Lane to convince breeders that they needed to support the National Show and Sale paid off, and 35 bulls have arrived at David Wright's in two intakes. The first intake of 24 bulls in November was for unused yearlings, with a second intake of 11 bulls in late January for used yearlings."

The supporting studs are: Atahua, Kakahu, Kaharau, Stern, Brookwood, Waitangi, Whangara, Turiroa, Te Whanga, Te Mania, Twin Oaks, Wairere, Te Atarangi, Cricklewood, Rangatira, Alpine, Turihaua, Dandaleith, Waiterenui, Pinebank, Glanworth, Totaranui, Dandaloo, Blue Duck, Floridale, Kenhardt, Martin Farming, Tapiri and Barton Fields.

"History tells us that one or two bulls will drop out before the National due to the high standards set by the inspectors, but we'll



also pick up a handful sent directly by individual breeders. Overall, we should see entry numbers reminiscent of the old days," Sargent says.

"It's important that the breed has an annual focal point where breeders can meet to share in good old-fashioned camaraderie, and the logical place is our National Show and Sale. In a perfect world all the best bulls would be sold at the National, but we all know that will never happen."

The unit has been supported by Tru-Test, Ag Brands, Flexifeeders, Zoetis and Merial Ancare. AngusNZ councillor Cedric Lander has overseen all operations at the unit since the bulls arrived.

"The bulls are a credit to the vendors who selected them, and David has done a wonderful job in managing them through a very dry summer in the Manawatu," he says. "I only hope that breeders support the auction on Tuesday 12 May, allowing the bulls to make their true value."



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Importance of marbling

FOR EATING QUALITY



BY KATJA ROSENVOLD, PROJECT MANAGER, ANZCO FOODS LTD

When most consumers are asked to rate a piece of meat that they have just eaten, they are very likely to say that it tasted either “very nice,” “okay” or “average”.

‘Taste’ will cover their overall impression of the meat, rather than a conscious evaluation of the individual attributes, tenderness, juiciness and flavour which define eating quality. In addition, the – unconscious – evaluation of the individual attributes will be influenced by the other attributes. For example, a trained sensory panel can assess whether a piece of meat is dry or juicy and if the same piece of meat is tough or tender. However, if serving the same piece of meat to consumers, they might not differentiate between juiciness and tenderness. Additionally, consumers may perceive a dry product as tougher than a juicy product, even if the two products are similar in shear force, a mechanical measurement of meat tenderness.

The three eating quality attributes defining meat eating quality can be defined as follows:

- Tenderness is how easily meat breaks down during chewing or mastication. Toughness would be the opposite of tenderness, or how resistant the meat is to breakdown during chewing.
- Juiciness is the amount of perceived juices in the meat during chewing.
- Flavour is a combination of smell, flavour component released during chewing, and the basic tastes of salt, sour, sweet and bitter. Flavour also consists of aftertastes perceived after swallowing the product.

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“SELECTION OF ANIMALS WITH MARBLING GENETICS IS ONE WAY TO ENSURE THAT THE END CONSUMER HAS A GREAT EATING EXPERIENCE.”

Several factors, both on-farm and beyond the farm gate, influence the eating quality of beef. One of the on-farm factors is marbling. Marbling is the intramuscular fat which appears as fine flecks within the muscle. In general, as the amount of marbling increases, the eating quality also increases, but the relationship is not linear. With low levels of fat, the meat is likely to be tougher, drier and less flavoursome. However, if the amount of marbling is increased from low to intermediate levels, the eating quality of beef improves substantially. As marbling increases beyond the intermediate, so will the eating quality, but the improvement will not be as dramatic as at the lower levels. At high levels of marbling, where the fat is plainly visible, the eating quality will be highest. While some markets, such as the Japanese and Korean markets, are willing to pay a premium for highly marbled beef, it can be perceived by health-conscious consumers as too high in fat and therefore unacceptable. Diet/health conscious consumers may be willing to sacrifice eating quality for leaner meat, or they simply might not know that they are making this sacrifice.

Although the relationship between marbling and tenderness varies between studies, marbling tends to have a positive effect on tenderness. Several mechanisms on how marbling contributes to tenderness have been proposed. First, with higher amounts of fat, a larger proportion of the meat is soft and the meat is therefore more tender. Second, the lipids in the adipose cells making up the marbling are released during chewing and provide lubrication. With higher lubrication, muscle fibres can yield more easily, or provide less resistance, during chewing. If there is less resistance, the meat will be perceived as more tender. Thirdly, it is proposed that the fat protects against or slows down severe toughening during cooking by working as an insulator. Slowing down the heat transfer during cooking in turn reduces the extent of protein denaturation and also reduces moisture loss and therefore the meat is more tender. Finally, it is believed that as marbling increases, the connective tissue in the muscle is weakened and therefore does not play a large role in meat toughness. Research shows that the mechanisms are likely to be interdependent.

As marbling increases, juiciness also increases. During initial chewing of more marbled meat, fat is released, which is perceived by consumers to be juice. Additionally, when fat is released early in the chewing process, the salivary glands are stimulated. With increased salivation, the meat is perceived as juicier. Finally, marbled meat will have a longer sustained perception of juiciness.

Marbling contributes positively to meat flavour as fat has characteristic flavour and is one of the major components of meat flavour. Although fat is not the predominant flavour, it does provide a balance with lean meat flavour. In very lean meat, the predominant flavours associated with the lean are described as bloody, metallic and brothy flavours. As the level of marbling increases, the cooked fat flavour increases, and this aromatic can assist in decreasing or masking flavour attributes associated with lean, thus providing a balance of meat flavours.

In addition to the direct impact of marbling on eating quality detailed above, the following points should also be noted. Rapid growth, as associated with intake of a high energy diet – grass or grain – during finishing generally improves meat tenderness. This is partly associated with increased marbling, but also with accelerated ageing after slaughter. The enzymes involved in ageing are activated during rapid growth because of higher levels of protein turnover and are equally active in breaking down the muscle structure after slaughter.

In contrast to, for instance, meat tenderness, juiciness of meat and how to influence juiciness in the cooked product is poorly understood. In addition to marbling, final cooking temperature, i.e., the temperature of the meat after cooking, or degree of doneness, is the only other factor known to consistently influence juiciness, where a higher degree of doneness will result in meat that is less juicy. Marbling in meat provides some insurance against toughening and drying out when meat is cooked to a higher degree of doneness.

Finally, because of both direct and indirect importance of marbling to eating quality of beef, it is clear that selection of animals with marbling genetics is one way to ensure that the end consumer has a great eating experience. ■

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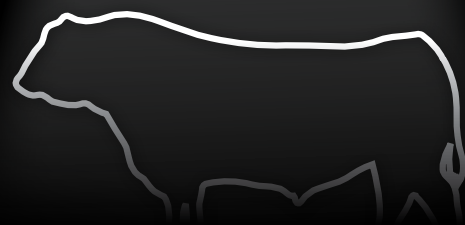


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'LOW AND SLOW' AMERICAN BARBECUE

BY TIM BRITTAIN

One of the fastest growing trends in the food scene is American 'Low and Slow' barbecue, today being enjoyed in backyards, restaurants, pop ups and food trucks, as well as at competitive events. For the uninitiated – and that is most of us Kiwis – American Barbecue is broadly about cooking meats, and predominantly lesser value cuts of meat, for long periods at low temperatures over wood or charcoal.

This differs from what we know as barbecue, which is

predominantly high heat grilling over gas. No one ever complained about a beautiful juicy thick AngusPure steak grilled at 315°C to produce a lovely brown caramelised crust and a pink medium rare interior, but equally nice is a reverse seared OP rib that has been taken up to 49°C internal temperature in a 121°C pit before being finished for 1 minute each side on a direct grill at 315°C. But I am getting ahead of myself!

In New Zealand, grilling is our traditional form of barbecue,

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but we are just starting to see an emerging trend to low and slow. Australia is around 18 months ahead. In Melbourne in January 2013 I attended the first 'Low and Slow' barbecue competition at St Kilda. Around five teams entered the competition, with a smallish crowd of enthusiasts. Fast-forward to January 2015, and the Melbourne Barbecue Festival saw 35 teams entered, severely limited by problems of space, and huge crowds cueing for hours to try beef brisket, pulled pork, bbq'd chicken, lamb or pork ribs.

More than a dozen American-style bbq restaurants have sprung up and an Australasian Barbecue Association has been formed. Master-classes run by a parade of Champion American Pit-masters aim to extend the locals' knowledge and to educate butchers and meat purveyors about the cuts of meat traditionally used in American-style barbecue. For those of you booking a ticket to Melbourne to try some of these addictive delights, look out for Fancy Hanks BBQ Joint near the Victoria Market, Bluebonnet BBQ and Le Bon Ton in Collingwood, Big Boy BBQ and Meat Mother in Richmond and its sister store, Meat Maiden in the CBD, to name a few.

This year's Melbourne Festival was the first to be certified by the Kansas City Barbecue Society (KCBS) – the largest BBQ society in the world, with 20,000 members (of which I'm proud to be one!). Every year the Society sanctions around 460 competitions around the world, with the January 2015 event in Melbourne being their first in the Southern Hemisphere. Their world outreach team of six senior members had the previous weekend overseen a competition in Italy, where pit-masters competed in -30° temperatures!


Barbecue competitions in the USA are big business, with some offering prizes in excess of \$100,000. Teams compete all over the country for smaller prize pools and bragging rights. Wins in these

events puts a team in contention for invitations to some of the big contests, such as Memphis in May, the Royal and the Jack Daniels Invitational. Winners from past competitions in Australia have qualified to compete at the Royal and the Jack.

At all competitions sanctioned and judged by the KCBS (and by the way I qualified as a KCBS-CBJ, or Certified Barbecue Judge, in Melbourne), contestants are required to 'turn in' four compulsory categories: chicken, pork ribs, pulled pork and beef brisket, in that order, 30 minutes apart, generally from 12 noon on a Saturday. Teams will have arrived on Friday afternoon for a meat inspection before they start adding brines or rubs. Pits will be monitored throughout the night to ensure temperatures are maintained in fine, wet, windy or snowy conditions.

There are a myriad of rules and regulations, but turns-ins are essentially a minimum of six servings or tastes in each box, one for each of the judges who will taste the entry (with a different panel for each category). Boxes are double-blind numbered so that every entry is anonymous. Judges score the entries from 2 (inedible) to 9 (excellent) for Appearance – 0.5600 weighting, Taste – 2.2972 weighting and Tenderness/Texture – 1.1428 weighting. Disqualifications might occur for things like foreign bodies or garnishes that are not approved; basically to remove the possibility that a team might distinguish their entry and therefore have an unfair advantage in the judging. Remember this is serious business and big prizes are at stake!

And not only in the USA. At a competition held earlier this year at Port Macquarie, and sanctioned by the Australasian Barbecue Alliance (ASA), \$10,000 was up for grabs. In its second year, entries for this event more than trebled for the 2015 competition, and an



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Australasian evolution saw the addition of new categories including lamb – either ribs or pulled shoulder. Both respond fantastically when treated to low and slow.

New Zealand events are beginning to get off the ground. Last year at Beef Expo a small competition attracted some interest and certainly some of the fine aromas drew favourable comment. In the catering industry a few early adopters are offering this type of food for functions – Stu's Smoking BBQ, who we used at the Rotorua Angus World Forum Monday event, and Bare Knuckle Wood Smoked Real American BBQ in Auckland, to name a few. Restaurants who have got into it include Uncle Mike's in Petone and Heavenly Hog in Newmarket.

For the home enthusiast, barbecue stores are noticing a big move to charcoal and wood cookers, and sales of Kamado cookers like the Big Green Egg have taken off. The movement has started!

The interest in low and slow is certainly beneficial for secondary cut meat sales. The ethos of low and slow is around cooking tough cuts of meat for long periods so they ended up melting in your mouth. Most pit-masters will be looking to cook at the magical 225°F/ 107°C. Taste profiles will be personalised with the addition of rubs and sometimes mops or spays of, for example, apple juice or apple cider vinegar, with smoke through the addition of wood chunks of hickory or fruitwoods such as apple, cherry or pecan. In New Zealand we could also use native timbers such as manuka or pohutukawa to enhance flavour.

While secondary cuts are the key, not just any secondary cut will be chased by competitors, who require well marbled pork shoulders or beef briskets. Often in the USA, and now Australia, competitors are looking for Wagyu or Prime-graded or MSA graded beef brisket.

The brisket is probably the hardest cut to master but, if you get it right, friends and family will be asking for repeats. A good thing to develop is a solid love affair with your butcher. You need to ensure he cuts pork butts (American shoulder cut of pork) and briskets well, and doesn't supply you with pork ribs without any meat. With briskets, you want the whole brisket including the point and flat. Americans call this a full packer cut brisket.

Look out for master-classes to get you going. Low and slow is great fun and people in the barbecue fraternity are generally happy to give you a helping hand – even if it ultimately means you might compete against them and win!

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ACROSS THE DITCH

BY ALLEN GREGORY

The Trans Tasman Exchange offers a full-on programme including visits to studs, industry partners, the Australian Angus Youth Roundup and Stock and Beef Land week.

As part of my trip I got to see a very wide array of stud programmes, visiting eighteen studs along with industry partners.

Before Christmas I travelled from Dubbo south to Canberra, visiting five studs: Kidman Angus, Gilgandra; T&R Genetics, Wellington; Pine Creek, Cowra; Glengowan, Bathurst and Kennys Creek, Boorowa. This presented me with a wide range of stud programmes offering a mix of figures, showing and raw data focus. What stood out was that each of these farmers was aiming to breed cattle suited to the environment they were in. The scale of many of these programmes was also impressive. Kennys Creek also offered a focus on branded meat product, and runs a cross-breed Brahman program on Cape York.

The second part of my trip had me based around Wagga post Christmas and pre Roundup. Here I spent time with Jarrod Slattery of Landmark Wagga and attended the weekly cattle sale at the Wagga saleyards. This was the first yarding for the year so numbers were back but prices were forward of where they had been before Christmas.

Following this sale, the rain arrived for many parts of Southern and Central NSW and Queensland, which injected some momentum into the Australian cattle market with prices rising rapidly over a two to three week period.

Next I caught up with Jasmine Nixon, a past Trans Tasman Exchange recipient who now works for Teys Australia. Through Jas I gained great insights into the processing and grading situation in Australia. In addition to a personal tour around their Wagga plant, I travelled up to their Jindalee Feedlot at Temora. Here they are licensed for 17,000 head of cattle, all short fed for 100 days. I found this hugely beneficial as it allowed me to see a key part of the supply chain that has a huge affect on the Australian beef industry.

After this I met Corey Ireland of Irelands Angus. This was one of the programmes that most impressed me, through a

balanced mix of phenotype. The key to Corey's programme is 'power by pedigree', with a very strong cowherd based on strong maternal cow families. Cattle were structurally correct and they had some very good performance data coming back from their commercial clients from cattle finished on grass.

The Angus Youth Roundup at Wodanga was next on the itinerary. It was awesome to see the kids getting stuck in and enjoying working with the cattle and each other. For me the highlight of the event was seeing two lads bid up to \$900 for a mystery prize that turned out to be a budgie in a cage! Some of the awesome items up for grabs resulted in over \$25,000 being made from the Youth auction.

After Roundup I travelled down to Western Victoria, visiting the Branson Family at Banquet and having quick day visits with Te Mania and Coolana Angus. The contrast between these programmes was interesting, Banquet having a very strong focus on weight and muscle, while Te Mania focuses on high indexing bulls for the heavy grain feed market. Figures also feature predominantly at Coolana, where they were using a number of sires from the United States.

The following week was the start of the Stock and Land Beef week, which allowed me to see a number of studs in quick succession. Day 1 was Brunslea and Rockwood, two smaller studs near Wagga, both selling their bulls via private treaty. The next day was based around Holbrook with visits to the Dunoon, Table Top, Glenruben and Rennylea studs. The focus on carcass at Dunoon was very apparent in the bulls on display. Table Top and Glenruben are smaller studs also selling via Private Treaty. Rennylea runs a very interesting programme and I also spent the following day with Bryan Corrigan looking around the cow herd. They place



considerable emphasis on mature cow size and their herd average is now below their 400-day weight.

Following this period in the southern tablelands, I travelled up to Armidale and caught up with the team at Angus Australia. Here I spent half a day with Christian Duff, who runs the Sire Benchmarking programme, pregnancy testing cows in one of the co-operator herds. Next I visited Greg and Sally Chappel of Dulverton Angus, who focus on ratios within the contemporary group for the bulls. I also had the chance to meet up with Lock Rogers at Wattletop, where he showed me around their sale bulls, before spending a few very enjoyable days with Stu and Erica Halliday of Ben Nevis Angus, whose approach to figures was extremely interesting.

Raff Angus at Miles was my next stop. During my stay they had

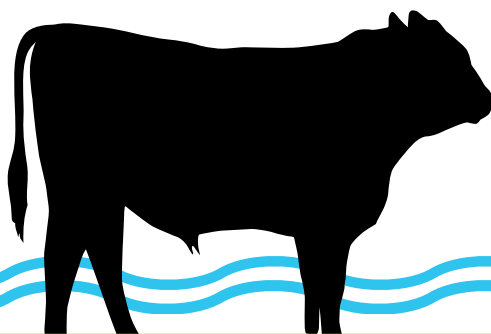
their stud female sale, giving me the opportunity to see many of their genetic lines as we prepared the cattle for sale. Like Irelands and Ben Nevis, they have a very strong focus on pedigrees and the cow families their studs are based on. Raff Angus was my last stop before I flew home.

Overall, I feel very privileged to have been given this opportunity, and to have made some great friends in the Australian Angus Industry. I would like to thank Generation Angus, Angus New Zealand, Angus Australia and Angus Youth Australia, and everyone who enabled me to go on the Trans Tasman Exchange, with special thanks to those who welcomed me into their homes.

The Exchange was an amazing and educational experience, and one to which any young person in the Angus industry, from either a stud or commercial background, should aspire. ■



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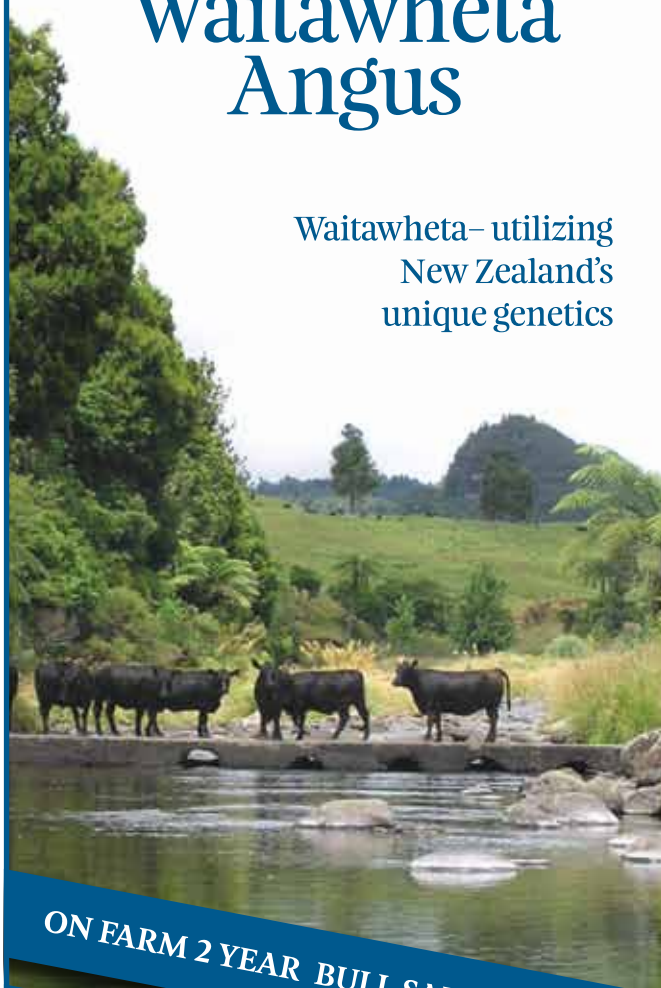
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