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EDITORIAL

Our evaluation system is based on identifying animals that will perform at a maximum in a pasture fed scenario. Grass is the original basic feed for cattle and what they are designed to perform at their best on in terms of meat quality for human consumption. One of the challenges with a purely grass feeding operation is to have grass available all the year round so that our cattle will survive. It is an even bigger challenge to be able to produce animals in a suitable condition to process 12 months of the year. In most climates this is very difficult, if not impossible. To supply a market from the one area for 12 months of the year is what we need to consider when we are looking to produce a purely grass fed meat product. To do so you need to understand your environment and then work out how you are going to manage it to achieve your goals. It is not impossible to succeed. It does need planning and it needs a market that will justify the additional cost to produce meat at a time of year that is either too wet and cold or too dry to produce enough good quality grass so that animals can maintain a good body condition. The recent development of the Pasture fed Cattle Assurance Scheme in Australia may well be the catalyst to firstly, fully recognise quality grass fed cattle and secondly, provide the extra returns producers need to produce processing grade cattle for 12 months of the year in a far greater number of environments than is currently the case. These returns need to be able to justify a change in carrying capacity or a change in grazing management practices or the development of a fodder conservation program using surplus, good quality grass or ideally, all three. There is more information on our approach to grass feeding in our book and on our website that I plan to revisit in future newsletters.

WHAT'S (BEEN) HAPPENING

* As I have mentioned in previous newsletters, we are restructuring our company to assist with future development and expansion. As part of the restructuring we have formed a new company, still called Classic Livestock Management Services and renamed our old company CLMS Holdings, who will hold a 20% share of the new CLMS company. It was also mentioned in the last newsletter that a minimum of 15% shareholding in the new company would be open for any of our clients or beef producers interested in being involved in these new developments. We have recently registered a new company called Classic Livestock Investments Pty. Ltd. that will hold this 15% shareholding in the new company. Shares in this company will also be considerably less than the value of the shares in the parent company, Classic Livestock Management Services. This, we hope, will encourage more people to be involved.

As I have stated previously, there will be the opportunity for shares in this company to be obtained through an in kind contribution rather than straight out cash contributions. We are currently in the process of registering the first two new shareholders in this company. There has also been interest from 3 – 4 more client/producers to be involved. The two parties that are becoming the first two shareholders have assisted us in holding field days and referring new clients. Other events and activities that we will provide a shareholding for in kind include events such as those mentioned above, as well as displays and demonstrations at major machinery field days and local shows, community events and providing stock and facilities for us to do further trial work to verify our system and evolve more traits for identifying high performing animals.

* As I have also mentioned in our last newsletter, an Information Memorandum is now available for anyone interested in what we are planning and who might be interested in investing in what we believe will ultimately be a very profitable opportunity. One of the challenges for us is to get things underway as soon as possible, given the speed that technology is being developed in today's day and age. The new company has some quite innovative plans to add electronic technology to our evaluation system that is going to cost quite a large sum of money to develop so we will still need to raise this cash to finance the development. We have adopted a conservative approach in regard to the likely cash flows in the memorandum, but they still highlight a huge potential for what we have planned. I have left this item in this quarter's newsletter to keep encouraging anyone interested in the future of the cattle industry and the broader livestock industries to give me a call because we are committed to finding a way to getting as many people involved and ultimately rewarded for their faith in the CLMS system.

* In regard to the use of ultra-sound images of the jaw and/or rib bone to translate into a score complimentary to our current hand method of evaluating, progress has been slower than we had hoped, but we are moving forward. We had some hold-ups while we had a patent attorney look at the possibility of having the software patented, but now that we have a positive response from him, we are now finalising an agreement with the developer of the software. This should be resolved in the next week or so and then it is a case of the final purchases of both the ultra-sound machine and the software being finalised.

* Over the last three months, we have held 3 more field day presentations. The first two were on the North Coast of New South Wales, one on a private property where we had about 12 people in attendance and the other at the Bellingen High School. This one was attended by over 20 very attentive Agricultural students plus 3 – 4 outside producers. The third day was held at Mulloon Farm, situated about 20 kms. East of Bungendore on the Braidwood road. This was very well attended by 20 people plus the Mullon Farm owners and their manager. This group was also very attentive and showed a lot of interest in what we are doing. The responses from those who attended the days are most encouraging. It demonstrated that there are many people who are finding it difficult to work with many of the industry imposed directions for the beef industry. We hope the flexibility of our system and the focus on the breeder/producer as being the catalyst for the success of their own businesses will provide them with confidence to keep us in mind when they consider their future breed planning. I would like to thank those producers who were instrumental in organising these days as without local support with word of mouth etc. it is much more difficult and expensive for us to organise. We are very keen to hold more of these days so if you would like one in your area, please let us know and we will get it under way.

* We were fortunate to have Albert Hancock assist us on the North Coast days, but unfortunately Albert succumbed to a brief illness so was unable to join us at Bungendore. Thank you, Albert, for your support and readiness to share your vast knowledge with us all. As I explained in the last newsletter, Albert has agreed to work with us to expand the system and can be contacted to evaluate herds on 0267334666.

We were also fortunate to have the company of Clair and Mike O'Brien from the Coodardie Brahman Stud, Mataranka, N.T. at all the days. It was good to have them there to share their experience with those present and to support us as we shared the system with those present. Thank you, Clair and Mike.

* During the next three months I have trips planned to Central Qld. during April to do some evaluations for breeders and will also be going to the Northern Territory in May to evaluate bulls and young cattle in the Coodardie herd. If you are in these areas and would like to catch up, I am happy to arrange a call to suit. I will also be going to Melbourne as soon as we have the ultra-sound agreement finalised. I am hopeful that will also be within the next three months. I will also need to spend time there to learn how to operate the machine.

* There are a number of our clients who are keen to explore the possibilities in regard to marketing their meat. We have always believed that for the CLMS system to reward producers fully for their support to us in using the system that we need to assist in this regard. Currently, the challenge is to be able to have enough producers in one area who can guarantee a 12 month supply to their customers. I believe that we are getting close to being able to do this in at least a couple of areas. I feel that we will struggle if we tackle the current meat marketing system front on. My first approach would be to explore the possibility of on-line marketing. This is a growing market for many products and there are already meat producers using this method successfully. As a company, we will do whatever we can to initiate a marketing system with any interested producers. All we would like is for the meat graded using our system to be identified with a small identifying symbol on the packaging that will tell buyers what they are getting.

We consider our support to any of our clients to establish their own market will otherwise be part of our service.

#We are keen to get some marketing of graded cattle going so we are happy to advertise for any of our clients here in the newsletter.#

#We have a client with 21 Red Poll x Droughtmaster heifers for sale for \$650.00 each. They are all graded as 3.5 and 3, are now around 27 months old and average weight around 400+ kg.#

#We also have a client looking for some graded Brahman females so if anyone has any for sale we would be happy to put you in touch with our buyer.#

#Another client has 20 CLMS graded Angus heifers for sale. These are an even line of consistent young females that would be ideal to use to build a herd on.

BREED OF THE QUARTER

YAK

I thought we might add something slightly different and less well known in regard to different breeds in this newsletter. The Yak is closely related to our more generally accepted Bos genus. The reason that I wanted to highlight them was because they appear to have maintained a fairly close genetic pool and produce good quality meat, but more so their milk is of a very high quality. Whilst they have been crossed with bos taurus and bos indicus cattle, these have not been popular especially as the males from this cross are infertile. Maybe there is a message there about nature protecting a species from outcrossing! Anyway, I hope you enjoy this information.

Yaks originated on the Tibetan plateau where locals have domesticated them for centuries as a source of meat, milk and fiber.

Domestic yaks quickly spread throughout adjacent territories from Mongolia to Nepal and beyond, though they're most closely associated with the people of Tibet. For thousands of years, nomadic herders in the high mountainous region of Central Asia depended on yaks for draft power, meat, milk, hair, and pelts. Dried yak dung was also used for fuel. The export of yaks to parts of Europe and North America began in 1783. Two bulls were shipped from Tibet to England with more following during the mid-nineteenth century. These were sent primarily to zoos and to research facilities in attempts to breed hardy hybrid livestock ideal for cold climate grazing. Yaks were shipped to Canada, first in 1909 and again in 1921, where they were crossed with domestic cattle and with bison. Yaks belong to the genus *Bos*, and are therefore related to cattle (*Bos primigenius taurus*, *Bos primigenius indicus*). Mitochondrial DNA analyses to determine the evolutionary history of yaks have been somewhat ambiguous. They may have diverged from cattle at any point between one and five million years ago, and there is some suggestion that they may be more closely related to bison than to the other members of its designated genus.

Wild yaks are among the largest bovids and are second only to the gur in shoulder height. They are also the largest native animal in their range. Wild yak adults stand about 1.6 to 2.2 m (5.2 to 7.2 ft) tall at the shoulder and weigh 305–1,000 kg (672–2,205 lb). The head and body length is 2.5 to 3.3 m (8.2 to 11 ft), not counting the tail of 60 to 100 cm (24 to 39 in). The females are about one-third the weight and are about 30% smaller in their linear dimensions when compared to bull wild yaks. Domesticated yaks are much smaller, males weighing 350 to 580 kg (770 to 1,280 lb) and females 225 to 255 kg (496 to 562 lb).

Yaks are heavily built animals with a bulky frame, sturdy legs, and rounded cloven hooves. Wild yaks are generally dark, blackish to brown, in coloration. However, domestic yaks can be quite variable in color, often having patches of rusty brown and cream. They have small ears and a wide forehead, with smooth horns that are generally dark in colour. In males, the horns sweep out from the sides of the head, and then curve forward.

Both sexes have long shaggy hair with a dense woolly undercoat over the chest, flanks, and thighs to insulate them from the cold. Especially in males, this may form a long "skirt" that can reach the ground. The tail is long and horse like rather than tufted like the tails of cattle or bison.

Domestic cattle, bison, and yaks are all members of genus *Bos* and they have the same number of chromosomes (60) so the three species are inter-fertile. Crosses between yaks and domestic cattle (*Bos primigenius taurus*) have been recorded in Chinese literature for at least 2,000 years. Successful crosses have also been recorded between yak and American bison, gaur, and banteng, generally with similar results to those produced with domestic cattle. First generation yak crossbred males are sterile but most females are fertile and can be crossed back to yaks, bison, or cattle. Cattle-yak hybrids are called yakows in North America. Due to hybrid vigour, yak-cattle crosses usually grow larger and stronger than either parent.

Compared with domestic cattle, the rumen of yaks is unusually large, relative to the omasum. This likely allows them to consume greater quantities of low-quality food at a time, and to ferment it longer so as to extract more nutrients. Yaks consume the equivalent of 1% of their body weight daily while cattle require 3% to maintain condition.

Yaks are browsers and grazers; they thrive on brush and marginal pasture; stocking rate is roughly three yaks to one domestic beef cow. They're slow maturing (yaks reach full growth at six or seven years of age) but are very long-lived, with a life expectancy of 25 years. Cows are attentive mothers. Due to their comparatively low birth weight (25-35 pounds), yak calves rarely need to be pulled. The International Yak Association, which now stretches to such countries as Canada, Sweden, Norway and Switzerland and was founded in 1992, allows for grading up to purebred status (animals of 15/16 yak background are considered purebred yaks). Any fencing and handling cattle yards that holds domestic cattle will work for yaks.

The Yak meat is juicy, flavourful, and healthy. The flavour can be compared to a sweet beef flavour with no gaminess and no greasy after taste. While being 95% fat-free, its delicate, delicious flavour comes from its unique distribution of fatty acid percentages. Yaks are extremely low in palmitic acid that is bad for our health (30% less than beef as a percentage of fats and 120% less than beef as a percentage of meat.) Yak meat is also much lower in calories, saturated fats, cholesterol, and triglycerides. Simultaneously, Yak meat is much higher in stearic and oleic acids that are good for us (35% higher than beef as a percentage of fats.) Yak meat is also higher in protein and solids (less water) than beef.

Yak's milk is often processed to a cheese called *chhurpi* in Tibetan and Nepali languages, and *byaslag* in Mongolia. Butter made of yak's milk is an ingredient of the butter tea that Tibetans consume in large quantities, and is also used in lamps and made into butter sculptures used in religious festivities.

REAR LEG AND JOINTS

I try to have something about the traits we look for from our evaluation system in each newsletter. Sometimes, however, I get carried away and don't have as much space left as I would like. This has happened in this newsletter, but there is room to discuss the most important features of one the more important, yet, shorter to explain traits we consider. I am referring to the hind leg and associated joints.

This part of the animal is critical for their overall balance and confirmation and can be affected when other parts of the animal are not well conformed. For example, the set of the point of the shoulder affects the rear leg set. If the set is back, then the leg will be straight. If it is too far forward, then the sickle shape of the rear leg will be over exaggerated. The set of the hooks, thurl and pins also affects the rear leg set. When the angle from the thurl to the pins and thurl to the hooks is 90 degrees, then it encourages a sound rear leg shape. Usually, if the rear leg set is too straight, there is less muscle development in the area from the pins down to the hock. The rear leg needs to have a nice even, rounded sickle shape. When the rear leg has an exaggerated sickle shape or is posty or very straight, this puts undue stress on leg muscles and tendons, leading to aggravation and breakdown of the joints. A good rear leg set is very important in bulls because they need strong muscle development and clean joints to be able to physically serve a full contingent of cows. However, females with a good rear leg set seem to be able to reproduce this trait very consistently in their progeny with any sire. It is one of the traits that females appear to be more dominant in as far as passing it through to their progeny.

The leg needs to be clean and well defined around the joints with flat bone and well defined tendons and cleanly moulded hocks. There should be an absence of varicose veins showing around small, neat knee joints. Clean, well defined joints are less likely to develop bone structural damage and arthritis in later life. Fatty deposits around the joints are to be avoided. The rear leg should be as close to perpendicular as possible from the hock to the pastern from a side view. From the rear the legs should be well set, wide apart, flat, narrow bone and feet that sit squarely on the ground. The leg muscle from the pins to the hock should be even, well rounded and without prominent intramuscular seam fat deposits.

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

Thank you for your continued interest in our newsletters, our website and our book. Please feel free to order one of our books and become familiar with the CLMS system and the directions we are taking in the overall scheme of animal and food production for human consumption

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

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