

THE HORMONAL MAIL

THE OFFICIAL QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF
CLASSIC LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT SERVICES.

VOLUME 1. NUMBER 41.



MANAGEMENT SERVICES

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to our July newsletter. At last I am pleased to say that the third edition of our book "A Vision Tending to Reality" is now finally available for distribution either through our website or direct contact with us. The changes that have been made, whilst minor in one respect, have been made to reflect feedback from readers and to add further information about issues relevant to the beef industry that we have been researching and studying in recent years. There is also an outline of our evaluation system that reflects how we have fine-tuned it in recent years to provide a staged approach to grading that has been implemented as each herd develops in terms of its quality level.

You will also notice some changes that I am working on introducing into the newsletters. It will probably be shorter in length because some of the information will be in point form which I hope will make it a little easier to follow and not quite as "wordy". I also hope to add some pictures and/or silhouettes to assist with explanations where possible. If you have any suggestions in regard to topics you would like to have discussed in the newsletter, please let me know and I will research them and add the information. I am a bit running short on new topics at present and don't want to become too repetitive with what I write about. I know it is a challenge to find something that will interest everyone all the time and with some ideas from readers it is hoped I can keep the newsletters at least partly readable for everyone.

The recent evaluation training course we held during the first week in May near Armidale in New South Wales was quite successful given the feedback we had from those who attended. Whilst it would have been good to have had 2 – 3 more attendees, the group we had was very proactive and developed a strong network between themselves. There was a lot of experience in a range of areas all related to the cattle industry that was represented through those present and it was gratifying to see how this was shared amongst group members as well as the material that was presented as part of the course. Unfortunately, our timing clashed with a couple of other events that reduced our numbers, but I guess it is very difficult to find a time that suits everyone these days. We are planning to hold more courses in the future depending on the interest and numbers willing to participate.

WHAT'S (BEEN) HAPPENING

* As mentioned above, the 5 day evaluator training course from May the 2nd. to the 6th. that we held at "The Gums", near Armidale in New South Wales went very well from our perspective. We haven't had any requests for refunds as yet so I hope that means that all the participants were also happy with the outcomes. It was a quite intensive few days with a lot of information on a range of topics presented for those who attended with an excellent interaction between attendees and plenty of information networking. We had 7 full time participants plus about 3 others who attended for at least one day. I would like to sincerely thank Jason and Naomi Simmons for making their property and cattle handling facilities available for our use over the week. They were extremely helpful and very patient with us as we disrupted their week for them with our activities. Many thanks also to Jason for assisting with a presentation on soils along with Deryk Smith and also to Campbell Wolfenden who demonstrated the boning out of a carcass for us. Paul Cavanagh also provided a demo. of the Kiwitech electric fencing system.

The aim of these 5 day courses is two fold in terms of what those present can to achieve. Some are keen to have the time to focus on the traits that we look at and so they can identify these traits more easily in their own herds whilst others are interested in becoming CLMS Evaluators. As far as becoming an evaluator for us is concerned, broadly speaking, we need people to complete the training course and then they will work with either Albert Hancock or myself in the field evaluating with us until they become confident and competent in using the system on their own. We would then contract them to evaluate herds for us. We will support them by holding field days in their general areas to promote the system and encourage local producers to use their services.

*I just wanted to confirm again that the ultrasound machine is up and working for anyone who is interested in having their cattle bone scanned for bone shape re tenderness.

* We are still very keen to hold more field days in localised areas over the next few months so if you would like one in your area, please let myself, Albert Hancock (0267334666) or other company directors know and we will get it under way.

* During the next three months I will be heading into Central Qld. to do some evaluations for breeders

in that general area as well as visiting New South Wales to meet clients.

*I attended the judging days at the International Brahman Conference in Rockhampton in mid May and was impressed by the number of animals on show. The cattle on show highlighted the current thinking of most of the top breeders in the Brahman society and were very well presented making judging a difficult task. From my perspective, I guess it is always easier to find faults but overall there was a good showcase of the breed type on display. The females appeared to be a little more consistent than the bulls with some very well grown, maternal heifers on show.

* We held a 1 day field day at Clermont Showground in Central Qld. on June 30th. which was attended by over 20 producers. From our perspective it was a very successful day due mainly to the efforts of Rosemary Robertson in organising the day and with the assistance of her daughters. I would like to thank all those who attended for their patience and interest in our discussions.

*The Coodardie Brahman Stud is holding their 40th. Anniversary sale on Wednesday the 17th. August at Coodardie and I will be travelling up there in July to assist with the selection and evaluation of bulls for that sale as well as attending the sale itself in August. I would recommend attendance at this sale for anyone interested in improving the quality of their Brahman herds in particular. The Coodardie stud is based on Cherokee bloodlines and has been a closed herd pretty much for all the 40 years the O'Brien's have been breeding.

*We remain keen to get some marketing of graded cattle going and are happy to advertise for any of our clients here in the newsletter.

*We currently have a line of good Red Poll cross heifers available for sale. The herd have been graded using our system for several years now and feature a good percentage of score 3 cattle

*We also have breeders interested in purchasing well-muscled Red Poll and Red Brahman bulls.

BREED OF THE QUARTER BONSMARA

The Bonsmara originates from South Africa, where it was scientifically bred and strictly selected for economical production in extensive cattle grazing in sub-tropical climates from 1937 to 1963. It was the result of the scientific experiments of Professor Jan Bonsma.

Professor Bonsmara created the breed after many cross matings and back-crosses consisting of five-eighths Afrikaner (Sanga-type), three-sixteenths Hereford, and three-sixteenths Shorthorn. The Bonsmara is the only beef breed in the world created through a well-documented crossbreeding programme with the aid of objectively recorded performance data. Visual evaluations according to norms of functional efficiency were also strictly applied. The Bonsmara is red in colour with a blend of *Bos indicus* and *Bos taurus* attributes. They are horned but must be de-horned to conform with breed standards. Body conformation and traits have all been selected for to satisfy the commercial requirements of today's market.



The reason for the breeding experiments was that it was felt that British breeds did not have the required heat tolerance for the sub tropics and that the Afrikaner did not perform as well in terms of calving regularity. Professor Bonsma and his colleagues decided to test different breed combinations at the Messina and Mara Livestock Research Stations and at the same time develop a measuring system for cattle which is now what we know as linear measuring. The name Bonsmara was derived from Prof. Bonsma's surname and Mara, where the first crossbred calves were born. Through the development and implementation of the 'Bonsmara System' over many years, strict selection for economical factors such as fertility, milk production, growth and adaptability is still applied and is a contributing factor to Bonsmara becoming the most prominent and professionally administrated beef breed in South Africa. The Bonsmara is the only beef breed in the world created through a well-documented cross breeding programme with the aid of objectively recorded data. Because Bonsma wanted to measure every aspect of the cattle he worked with, his numerous observations included regular weighing, 14 different body measurements (including linear), body temperatures, pulse and respiratory rates, hair and tick counts.

The first Bonsmara bulls were made available to commercial cattle breeders in the 1950's and were soon widely spread across South Africa and the rest of the world. This led to the formation of the Bonsmara Breeders Society in 1964. The Bonsmara is mainly bred in Africa with 60,000 registered females currently being performance recorded with the commercial and seed stock herds totalling around 4 million head. Bonsmara were first introduced to Australia in 1998, after the breed was identified as being highly suited to Australia due to similarities between local and South African climatic conditions.

Both South Africa and northern Australia experience high external parasite loads, high temperatures and regular periods of low nutritional value across grazing lands. Beef producers across northern Australia are recognising the benefits of Bonsmara with their *Bos Taurus* benefits and *Bos Indicus* adaptability and survivability.



Key Characteristics:

- Highly adaptable
- Ability to thrive in a sub-tropical climate/harsh northern environment.
- Tick resistant and heat resistant
- Good temperament
- Moderate frame
- Early maturity pattern
- Excellent maternal attributes
- Early puberty
- Reduced hump height
- Fertile and easy calving
- sound feet and legs
- well pigmented eyes, udders and hooves.

ANGULARITY

I thought we might look at some of the key breeding traits that we grade on again in the next few newsletters and will start with angularity, which is an overall indicator of the longevity and fertility status of an animal. Silhouettes have also been included though not necessarily on the same page.

CHARACTERISTICS.

- A long, fine, feminine female will have a prolonged productive life as compared to a short, blocky heavily muscled female. Longevity of productive life is a trait of strong economic importance. The longer a cow is kept in the herd, the less replacement heifers that need to be kept and thus the greater output per cow.

- Long, smooth, seamless muscled cattle with an even distribution and cover of fat, long maternal rumps, thick shank and stifle muscles and sharp, clean features will result in high performance progeny that will maintain tremendous longevity.

- A general “V” shape from the neck to the hindquarters from both a top view and a side view.

- A long lean neck blending smoothly into the shoulders, a clean cut dewlap and brisket and a chine that is no more than 2 mm. above the shoulders in beef cattle and no more than 5 mm above the shoulders in dairy cattle.

- Ribs that are well apart, wide, flat and well sprung giving a pear shape to the heart girth and pointed towards the rear.

- The position of the chine bone is an important indicator of angularity, though it will often vary slightly between beef and dairy cattle. In beef cattle it needs to be no more than 2 mm. above the shoulders, but not below them, whereas in dairy cattle it may be up to 5 mm. above the shoulders.

- Angularity is one of the traits where there will be a variation in shape between beef and dairy breeds to keep in mind when evaluating. The most obvious differences will be in the heart girth to flank measurements and shoulder width

to rump width with a greater degree of angularity from front to rear in dairy cows than beef cows.

- The degree of angularity can be well indicated when the comparison is made between the heart girth and flank measurements when linear measuring. In beef cattle the flank girth should always be 2 inches (5 cm.) greater than the heart girth to get a desirable amount of angularity. More is better and in dairy cows, it can be as much as 7 – 10 inches.

- The shoulder width to rump width is not a comparison regularly made in linear measuring. However, it can be deducted from other measurements. The rump length is 2 inches less than the shoulder width and 4 inches less than the rump width, so this means that the shoulder width is about 2 inches less than the rump width. The variation will be slightly greater in dairy breeds.

Figure 1 - Shows a very long, angular animal with a long neck and well placed chine. There is a general V shape from the neck back to the hindquarter that compliments a similar shape from back to front in a standing position with a gentle taper from the front of the chest to the udder. The ribs should be well apart, wide, flat, deep and pointed towards the rear. The neck is long, lean and blending smoothly into the shoulders.

A clean-cut dewlap and brisket is desirable. The thighs should be lean, incurving to flat and wide apart from a rear view.

Fig. 2 - Shows an average animal where the neck is shorter and thicker, the chine is lower and the overall body shape is squarer. The hindquarters are less well rounded.

Fig. 3 - Highlights the short, thickset, square shape of early maturing, but short longevity animals. The neck is short and heavy and the chine is lower than the point of the shoulders.

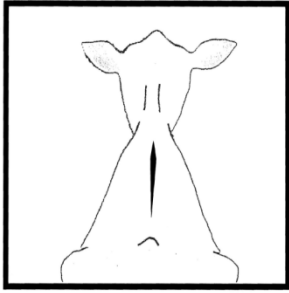


FIGURE 1

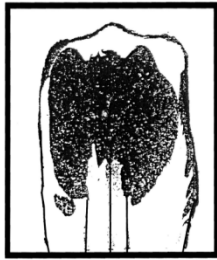


FIGURE 1
DAIRY SHAPE

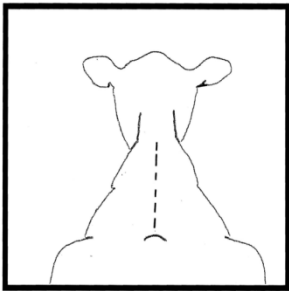


FIGURE 2

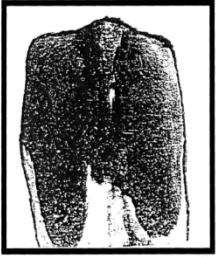


FIGURE 2

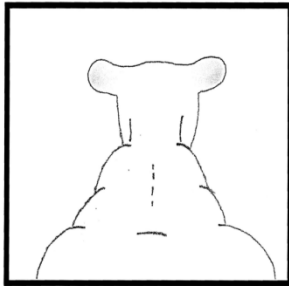


FIGURE 3

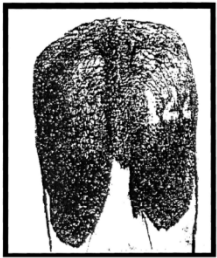


FIGURE 3
BEEF SHAPE

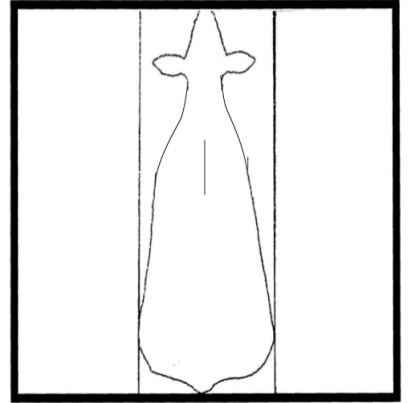


FIGURE 1

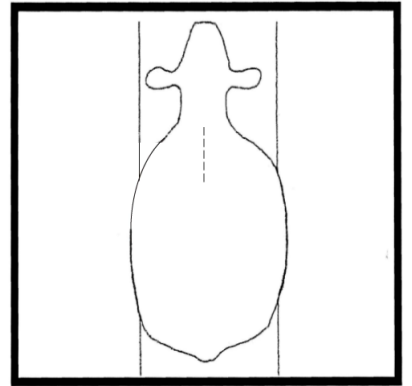


FIGURE 2

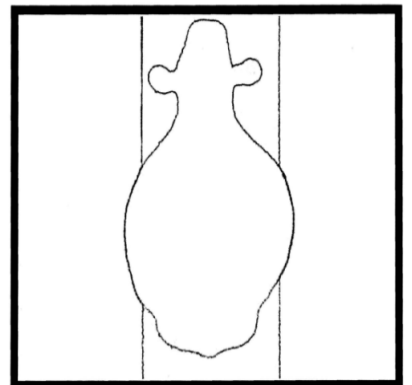


FIGURE 3

DESTINATION OR JOURNEY

Most of us have heard of the saying “life is a journey, not a destination” and in terms of a positive human motivation, that is usually very true of a successful life. However, in terms of a cattle breeding program, it may not necessarily be as true. It is important to have a goal or destination. Otherwise, you can well tend to wander aimlessly down the breeding pathway spending a lifetime looking for perfection when there is not an easily identifiable indicator and/or the goal posts are continuously moving.

Breeders who are using indicators such as weight gain and calving weight, for example, as major goal indicators are just going to try and breed bigger, faster growing animals. Initially they will usually have good figures to indicate success, but as time goes on and their cattle get bigger, it will cost more directly in feed costs and indirectly in losses when they start to have fertility and calving issues. So there is an optimal level where size, fertility, growth rates and all the other indicators we have identified in the evaluation system are at a level where the inputs to get these results are at the greatest distance or lowest cost from the return on the end product thus resulting in the greatest profit.

Again, it comes back to balance. Also it will vary with individual enterprises and that is one of the main reasons why we see our system as a guide rather than a blueprint.

- Determine what you want to achieve - how will you know when you are there – have key indicators that will let you know when you have reached that point of maximum optimisation.
- What forms will you use to measure the level of maximum optimisation in your enterprise – single traits, multiple traits, what combinations of traits, gross margins etc.
- What is the optimum level and when will inputs start to outweigh outputs.

We discussed some of the points to bear in mind as far as determining cow weights etc. to get the most efficient breeding unit in “The Hormonal Mail No. 39” so I won’t repeat those thoughts again here.

What I would like to add is that it is not always about getting more or bigger. I believe that balance is more important and that has become more evident since we have been using linear measuring as part of our evaluation system. It is not always about one part of an animal being a certain size in its own right, but more about how it compares with another part or parts of the animal.

For example, selecting bulls with shoulders 5-6 inches wider than his rump length at 18 months of age and having perfect scrotal conformation will go a long way to ensuring that you have a masculine, rugged,

reproductively sound bull who will improve factors such as breeding efficiency and calving time.

If you use the maximum standards of adjusted shoulder width to evaluate and select your bulls, you would greatly improve your breeding efficiency and calving time. With cows, a rump that is 2.5 inches wider or more than the length of her rump at 12 months of age is an indicator that she will be amongst your most reproductively sound cows.

When you add the above comparisons with the other linear measurements that we use, it is possible to breed an animal that will go a long way towards meeting the criteria for optimal productivity. It won’t necessarily be a fast or even easy process to firstly, identify, and then to achieve an animal or better still, a herd, that reaches that optimal level of productivity and profitability. What we believe our system does provide is a structured set of guidelines and measurements that give a realistic and obtainable set of objectives to use when selecting a destination for your breeding program. How you take the journey will vary from herd to herd and place to place, but our aim has been to provide flexibility within our structured system that will encourage breeders to use it as at least a starting place to develop their destination on.

We are comfortable in the knowledge that what we have developed will work anywhere and improve a whole range of production necessities and a sound pathway to optimum profitability.

Even when you have reached your destination in terms of optimum production levels, there are always ways of fine tuning to, for example, meet the vagaries of Mother Nature and changes in the environment or meet the challenges of marketing in different ways to maintain your ideal destination.

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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