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EDITORIAL

Welcome to our first newsletter for 2013. I would like to wish you a prosperous new year and may you succeed in meeting all your goals for 2013. There are many exciting opportunities available for all those who have the vision to see them and take advantage of what they have to offer. I believe this applies to the beef industry as much as to any other area in agriculture.

On behalf of Classic Livestock Management Services, I would like to thank all those producers and breeders who have shown interest in our system in whatever way. We have had a steady increase in interest over the last year and in the people who are starting to use our system. We are heartened and encouraged by your continued interest in what we are aiming to achieve for the beef industry. As I have said previously, we are continually working on ways of improving our evaluation process and will continue to do that in the future. We also welcome contact from anyone who would like to discuss our system. Our emphasis is always on sharing information with each other here and now, in the present, so that we can use it freely to benefit everyone. We will also continue to raise awareness of the importance of producing food in the most natural way possible so that it has minimal negative impact on the human digestive system and ultimately, human health.

I would encourage you to share your successes with your fellow producers so that the whole industry can lift to a higher level of production and achievement.

The areas that I am going to discuss in this edition are not so much about the confirmation traits and pointers to look for that tell you something about what is happening inside the animal or its ability to produce a quality product. I would like to focus more on what and how we manage and feed our stock and their adaptability to their environment.

WHAT'S (BEEN) HAPPENING

* After the decisions we made at our last annual meeting, we have been busy restructuring the company. We are incorporating a new company that will be made up of the current company holding a minimum 20% shareholding plus any new investors that we can attract. At the moment we are working on some very interesting electronic technology that we believe will assist us in delivering repeatability to the grading system. In particular, we believe that we can make very positive use of ultrasound in our system. One of the reasons we are delaying the launch of the new company slightly is so that we can ensure we can attract the capital necessary to fund such innovations. As I stated in the last newsletter, to add flexibility to the shareholding acquisition element of the investment, we will accept in kind contributions. We realise the difficulty in today's economic climate in coming up with ready cash for such investments so have set out a range of related activities that potential shareholders could undertake that will have a monetary value that can be credited towards their contribution of share acquisition.

* As I mentioned in the last newsletter, we are planning to do some more trials around the relationship between high quality meat and high quality a2 milk in the foreseeable future. However, the other redevelopments we are doing has delayed this somewhat. Now we are hoping to use the ultrasound as part of any new trials when we get it into operation. Again, we would like to encourage any producers that are interested in working with us to please let me know.

* As I stated in the last newsletter, 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 still have a client with 21 Red Poll x Droughtmaster heifers for sale for \$600.00 each. They are all graded as 3.5 and 3, are at weaning stage and average weight around 300+ 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.

* Over the next few weeks I will be visiting Victoria and Tasmania. The people we are working with to develop the ultra sound system are located in Melbourne and I am hoping that we are close to finalising this work by then. I will also be visiting Central Qld. and possibly Nth. Qld, weather permitting, in January to grade some herds. I will be going to the Northern Territory in early April to assist with the grading of this season's Coodardie bulls and select those for their annual sale. The sale this year will be held on Friday the 17th. of May at the Mataranka Showground. I am sure anyone who would like to travel over for the sale will be most welcome and subjected to the traditional Coodardie hospitality. I also plan at least one trip to Northern NSW in the next 3 months.

* We are also adapting the linear measuring system to the CLMS grade scoring system. This means that in the near future when we linear measure your animals, as well as giving the actual linear measurements to compare and consider, we will also give a 1 – 5 score that is equivalent to the linear measurements. So cattle that have the ideal linear measurement will grade as a 1 while those that are several inches outside the ideal will be a grade 5. We hope this will simplify the system a little and allow you to see at a glance how your herd is shaping up. It will also allow us to compare the linear measurements with the other trait measurements for each animal. This score will be part of the information we provide for you after evaluation.

NATURALLY AT HOME

I often hear cattlemen and women talking about what region to buy cattle from that will do well in their country. They relate stories of having bought cattle from up in the “high country” knowing that they will do better than, say, cattle from closer to the coast in their particular area. Other producers report nearly opposite experiences. There could be several reasons why those cattle adapt better or worse to some environments than others. One of the more obvious ones is the level of soil and feed nutrition in the new area.

I would like to offer another less obvious and possibly a little more controversial reason. I believe that every breed has within its DNA, a link to its geographic and environmental place of origin. When particular animals are reared in a place closer to their original environment, then they have a greater capacity to produce at an optimum than those that are not. Generally speaking, I believe it takes cattle at least one and more likely several generations to totally adapt to a new environment. The closer that environment is to their original environment, the quicker they will adapt.

If I was buying a cattle property now and was contemplating which breed to run, I would get as much environmental, climatic, geographic and soil condition information as possible about my new property, then search the world for the closest match to my conditions and find what breed of cattle originated in that area closest to my conditions. That would be the breed I would invest in.

Another related issue and one that is rarely given much publicity is that cattle are not a native species in Australia, or North America either, for that matter. Whilst most of our *Bos Taurus* cattle in the temperate climates graze on introduced pasture species from their countries of origin, mainly in Europe, this is not the case in the tropical areas where cattle are much more likely to graze on native, open range pastures. These pasture species in Australia were not grown to support cattle and their type of rumen. They grew to be

grazed by species such as kangaroos, which have a different digestive system to cattle and therefore need plants with a different biological makeup. Therefore it stands to reason that cattle in these areas are not going to utilise this feed as efficiently as they would if there were more tropical grass species the same as the ones these breeds originally grazed on in their country of origin. I realise that some of these species have been introduced and it would be interesting to compare the results on an open range situation.

This is just one of the many variables that make cattle production both interesting and challenging.

Following on from this perspective, there have been millions of dollars spent by governments and private breeders to develop the perfect breed of cattle. So far their success has been minimal at best. No one has developed a breed that stands out head and shoulders above all the rest and the more popular breeds we hear of today do so more because of the publicity machine behind them than anything particularly special about them from a confirmation or productivity perspective. I can say that with a small degree of confidence, at least, given the number of different breeds I have evaluated in recent years.

That is not to say that there are some excellent cattle being bred. There definitely are and they are the cattle I believe we should be selecting to build our herd's on. As far as I have seen, nature has already developed the perfect animal. It is up to us to find its best environment and match the two. I guess it is part of human nature for us to need to pull everything apart to find out how it works and then improve on it. Sometimes that may work. However, we need to treat nature with the respect she deserves and work with the tools she has already given us rather than take a risk (often at great cost) to develop something that might suit us any better, because rarely does it succeed and often when it does we don't know what other consequences (side-affects) it may have on our health.

At the risk of being repetitive, I believe that the industry is spending far too much money trying to develop cross and composite breeds for only one sector of the market and in doing so is not showing nature that respect she deserves and we are now wondering why we are having fertility problems in our herds and other issues with calving, nutrition, inconsistency with confirmation and quality and less resistance to animal dis-eases.

I would really like to know how the cost of carrying out cross breeding programs and research can be justified given that the cattle breeds that have been developed are no better overall, in most cases, than the original breeds, especially if those older breeds are being raised in their natural environmental conditions as discussed above.

I am not talking about a first cross between two breeds here where the aim is to take advantage of hybrid vigour and those animals are for terminal meat production only and not breeding. The best way to ensure that the best possible product is bred even in this type of situation is to use high quality animals. There is a higher risk of inconsistency in all aspects of the animal when two different breeds are crossed regardless of the quality of the animals being used when compared with breeding within one breed or better still within one family within that breed.

I am not saying though, that if, as a private breeder, you have identified a niche market in particular area for a particular type of animal that is not currently available and believe that you can breed an animal to meet that market, then you shouldn't accept the challenge, bearing in mind the above in regard to eventually aiming at decreasing the size of the gene pool of your new breed to improve consistency. Breeding is a fascinating business and we need to continue to be innovative in our programs within the boundaries that nature has given us.

Having the competitive drive to produce the best cattle or best breed is part of human nature and provides the motivation for us to stay in

the industry and make a living. However, it is important to maintain a balance in our approach to being competitive. Farmers, by their nature are independent and often to their overall detriment and this will become more evident as markets take on a more global approach. This means that we will need to work more together as an industry in the big picture to succeed. We can still maintain a healthy competition between breeds etc. but more importantly, identify who our competition is in a global sense and combine our resources to compete against them in the global food market. That is where our competition is ultimately going to be.

If every breeder focused on developing an elite herd of cows based on a well-founded and researched evaluation system as the core or foundation to build their herd on that were balanced and consistent in quality and confirmation then the beef industry will become the food leaders instead of also rans. I am certainly not suggesting that the CLMS system be that system. However, we have done a lot of work in developing the system and I am sure could add a lot of structure to a future system that would supersede current systems such as EBV's. What we need is a system that all breeders and not just stud breeders or specialised breeders and producers can easily adapt to their enterprise. It also needs to be a system that stays with the animal from birth to processing and does away with some of the current identifying criteria such as fat depth rather than fat quality as an identifying criteria.

In conclusion, I believe that we need to continue to learn from what nature has presented to us and use nature to work for us rather than spending a lot of money trying to better her. The best way for us to manage our cattle is to use our 5 senses to understand and learn what they need from us to enable them to best utilise their natural environment. I know the vast majority of producers get this and I hope you don't mind me reinforcing it with you.

BREED OF THE QUARTER

GIR (GYR)

The Gir is one of the principal Zebu breeds, though it is not as popular in Australia as it is in other countries with a tropical climate and particularly not as popular as their country of origin, India. Even now, though, in India their numbers are becoming very small and it is only through the efforts of individual breeders especially in their state of origin, Gujarat, in Southern India, that they have a reasonable chance of survival. The Gir are a medium to medium large animal and are distinctive in appearance with a domed forehead, long ears and horns. They are generally a mottled colour similar to a roan in shorthorns or red to orange colour, although they can be any colour other than black. Even on cattle that may almost appear white, if they are scarred either by injury or branding the regrowth hair will always be red. They are one of the original Zebu milking breeds and have been used for milk production in India, although now being superseded by the milking buffalo, and in Brazil and other South American countries, in particular. They are capable of producing 3500 – 4000 + litres of milk per lactation with a butterfat percentage of 4 – 4.5 %. They have been used in a number of crossbreeding programs with Bos Tauris breeds such as Fresians. One of the more notable programs that they were used in Australia for was the improvement of the Sahiwal breed and are crossed with the Fresian to produce Girolando cattle.

They are a very sociable breed and have a very strong herd protection instinct. They spend a lot of time in physical contact, rubbing and licking each other. The bulls protect the herd and the whole herd protects the calves. The area where they originated in India was notorious for being one of the main abodes for Asiatic lions, hence the need for their instinctive protective feature.

The Gir have a strong resistance to tropical diseases and parasites.

They have a very good temperament, are placid, intelligent and easy cattle to work with.

They have a very fleshy body and do not have a weakness behind the shoulders as many of the Bos indicus cattle appear to have. The Gir have a well-shaped hind quarter, being reasonably long, deep and full. The rump is sloping and this has a large contribution to the non-existent calving problems in the cows.

GRASS TALKS - HOW MUCH DO WE LISTEN?

I hope you will bear with me for a little longer as I just wanted to discuss something which again many of you are probably aware of, and I think it is also something that is sometimes ignored or brushed over in the hurley burley of everything else that is happening in our businesses. I am referring to the way our grass actually grows. I strongly believe that we need to understand the growing patterns of the particular grasses that we are growing so that we can manage our stock movements across our pastures in the most efficient and effective way. I realise that for many of you who have been involved with holistic management programs this will be somewhat repetitive. However, again if it does nothing else, then I hope it acts as reinforcement for what you already know and practice.

I also acknowledge that there are many influencing factors when it comes to putting into practice an effective grazing management program for your particular enterprise. One thing that I find hard to accept is that this type of practice, given flexibility to suit conditions doesn't work. The only reason it won't work is if you don't use it.

A holistic farm management system, as the name implies, is all about working towards achieving the best possible balance of all aspects of your particular enterprise(s). I realise that whilst focusing on just one aspect of the whole system is not the best scenario, I am doing so with the assumption that you are working towards balance in all other aspects of your enterprise(s). I also believe that in a cattle

production operation, it is a key factor to, firstly, understand, and then manage what you understand.

I am referring to the way each grass plant grows. We are all aware that plant growth varies throughout the year due to environmental factors and in some cases, man's intervention. We need to bear that in mind when we assess the growing cycle of our grass plants.

In my experience, in all temperate climate grasses that I have seen, when the fourth leaf begins to emerge, the bottom leaf starts to die. I have seen a similar pattern in some, but not all tropical grasses. However, I would suggest that they do have a similar pattern if time was taken to observe it. Seasonal conditions will determine how large the individual leaves are on the plants at any one time and therefore how much Dry Matter equivalent there is available to stock at that particular time.

It pretty well stands to reason then, that to get the optimum value from each grass plant, the ideal time to graze them is when the bottom leaf shows the first physical signs of dying. This is in the ideal world, but because it is in an ideal world this is not an excuse not to work on getting the very best out of what nature has given you. There is no reason why we can't, through observation, be able to manage our herds so that they are going onto a pasture at that particular time. Now I realise that there are many variables to deal with here and in some country it will not be possible to fence and control stock to the extent that is necessary to do this at the ideal time. For those producers that can, the ideal is to conserve surplus grass to stocks needs during the peak growing season to feed back during feed shortages. This can and is being achieved regularly in more intensive situations. In broader range areas where not all the property can be fenced, one way of being flexible and still using this holistic approach would be to fence parts of the property that could be fenced and use your elite herd to graze them. Alternatively, all your stock could graze these areas in the growing season while the

rest of the property is rested until feed runs short in the controlled grazing area and then stock are moved to the less well fenced areas. There are many ways to be creative and flexible and still get a lot out of this system.

When you begin this type of grazing program, it will probably be necessary to stock heavily and therefore have some initial trampling and a longer rest period between grazing. However, as you streamline the system to fully utilise your plant's nutrition for your stock, you will be able to get to the stage where the rotation will be determined by that fourth leaf criteria and the rest period by the stocking rate and the amount of feed available at any given time. Ideally, in the growing season in most climates, stock will need to be moved within three days. This is to prevent them from re-grazing the fresh regrowth on the more attractive grazing species and thus ultimately weakening their root system as happens now with set stocking systems.

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 NEW MANUAL. WE WELCOME PRODUCER INPUT AND INTEREST AND WANT TO INVOLVE YOU IN WHAT WE ARE DOING.

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