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EDITORIAL

The last few weeks have been quite busy for us with the first two days of the next 5 day course at Armidale being held on the 26th. and 27th. February, followed by a one day field day near Armidale on the 18th. March plus the preparation for the 5 day Clermont course. After several months of very dry conditions in our own region, it has finally rained and we have had a couple of reasonable 50 mm (2 inch) falls plus a cyclone that gave us another 4 inches in the last 2 weeks. We were lucky to miss the worst of the cyclone, but our thoughts are with the many producers and breeders who have experienced some major losses. Unfortunately, we have had to postpone the 5 day course we had planned for Clermont because of the heavy rain there that has prevented people from getting cattle into the yards for the course and because of the wet, muddy state of the yards themselves after some 6 inches of rain in Clermont. There have been some very wet conditions in other areas such as Northern New South Wales.

I feel we are currently in a position to grow the system somewhat more quickly than we have previously and the response we are getting from producers who are keen to learn more about the system is encouraging. I am always interested in suggestions as to where we might be able to hold either one day field days or our 5 day courses. We feel we are getting a reasonably informative learning program in place now and would like to continue to share more now with others who are interested. It is also encouraging to get positive feedback from these events and no one has ever told us that they haven't learnt something at them and many have been quite surprised at how much more information they have been able to add to their information toolbox.

I would also like any of you who could suggest future topics to discuss in newsletters to let me know what you are interested in. I do appreciate the suggestions that I have already had from some of you and that has been of great assistance in getting this newsletter out there.

I also would like to apologise because this newsletter will be a few days later than usual due to the preparation for the now postponed Clermont Course in the first week of April.

WHAT'S (BEEN) HAPPENING

* After consulting with previous course attendees in Armidale, as well as some others interested in attending one of our cattle evaluation training courses, we decided to experiment by splitting the planned Armidale course into 2 parts. We held the first 2 days on the 26th. and 27th. of February. The remaining 3 days will be held from the 28th. – 30th. April inclusively. We have nine people attending the Armidale course and whilst we would have preferred a couple more, the dynamics of this group is very positive and very motivated towards learning and practicing.

* From our perspective as a company, splitting the course does mean quite a bit more work in terms of logistics, but if we get attendance of motivated people it makes the extra planning worthwhile. We can see that in certain circumstances, splitting the course into smaller modules does benefit some people, particularly if they live close to the venue and/or are sole operators of their business and don't have others to keep their business operating while they attend a 5 day course.

* We are very fortunate to again be able to use the facilities and cattle at Naomi and Jason Simmons property, "The Gums" just out of Armidale. The facilities there are most adequate for the size of the groups we have had there for this and last year's course. Thanks also go to Albert Hancock and Campbell Wolfenden, Guyra, for supplying a variety of other cattle for the course.

* I would like to sincerely thank Naomi and Jason for the use of their facilities and for the way they have welcomed us onto their property. Despite the extremely busy life they lead, which includes their saddle making/leather work business, they have put themselves out to ensure that the courses run smoothly.

* We held a one day field day at Kelly and Rob Lamoureux's property, "Kingsford" just out of Armidale on Saturday the 18th. March. Unfortunately, the weather was quite wet for 2 – 3 days around that time and several people apologised for not being able to attend because of flooding etc. Fortunately, the facilities at Kelly and Rob's place were first rate and we were able to conduct the whole day under cover including the yard work where the crush had a very good roof over it. I would like to thank Kelly and Rob for making their property and cattle available for

the day and for their hospitality. Kelly and Rob. attended the Armidale course last year and have started introducing a couple of the ideas they picked up there into their herd, which is of a very high quality and the result of their astute selection processes over a number of years. They have also been very successful in the Paddock to Plate competition in the past and we were able to view some very impressive steers that are being entered in this year's competition.

* The recent rain in Northern New South Wales has been most welcome and will provide an opportunity for some Autumn growth if the weather stays mild and this hasn't been the case in at least part of this country for 2 – 3 years now. Whilst it has delayed some of our evaluation work in the region, the extra growth will more than make up for that.

* As I mentioned above, the second course this year that we planned in Clermont from the 3rd. to the 7th. April has been postponed because of the weather conditions and difficulty in handling cattle in wet, muddy conditions. Because of the way the course is conducted, attendees are continually working amongst cattle in the yards and if the conditions aren't good then the whole learning experience suffers. I would like to apologise to those who were intending to attend for any inconvenience this decision may have caused. We current plan is to reschedule the course for the first week in August. Again the challenge will be to find a time that would suit most people and when the facilities at the Clermont Showground and sale yards are available. We will advise as soon as a date has been finalised.

* I also want to reinforce the note I made in the last newsletter in regard to the considerations we are giving to running a 2 day conference later this year for all who are interested in our system. The event would likely feature at least 2 key note speakers on closely related industry matters as well as time spent working with cattle and updating attendees on our latest developments. We are also considering asking commercial businesses who provide services compatible with our production system to advertise their products with stands at the venue and possibly demonstrate their products.

* I will also be travelling to through NSW, to South Australia and to Central Qld. over the next three months.

* As I said above, 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.

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

* There will be further information about the upcoming courses distributed as we decide when and where to hold them. We are very keen to hold field days or 5 day courses in any region where the interest is high. We would like to be as flexible as possible in our future planning and would welcome and appreciate any input that you can provide for us. The gift of your time to do this is most appreciated.

BREED OF THE QUARTER BAZADAISE

The Bazadaise is a French breed of beef cattle. It takes its name from the town of Bazas in the region of the Gironde, in the Nouvelle-Aquitaine region of south-western France, and originates in the low-lying areas to the south of the River Garonne near that town. The Bazadaise is a traditional draught breed of the Pyrennees and the Gironde, in the Nouvelle-Aquitaine region of south-western France. It is thought to result from inter-breeding of local cattle of Aquitaine with others of Spanish origin.

The Bazadaise is a Bos Taurus and its meat is quite heavily marbled and well respected for its tenderness and flavour. It is well known for its hardiness and resilience, endurance to cold and heat, and a seemingly natural resistance to ticks and flies.

There is a little variation in the exact time that a herd book for the breed was established. However, it appears that it was either 1895 or 96. The German Army recognised the quality of the

Bazadaise meat and made a point of processing many for their own use and this, along with the mechanisation of agriculture after the Second World War and the decline for the need of draught animals saw their numbers fall to less than 700 cows in 1970.

The French Government quarantined the breed at that time and exports were forbidden. It was not until numbers had increased in 1989 that the restrictions were partially lifted and exports to overseas countries began.

We have been fortunate enough to have evaluated several small Bazadaise herds in recent years and have been impressed by their general consistency. I think this is a great example of a breed with a small gene pool that has contributed significantly to their consistency. I hope that the Bazadaise breeders recognise the advantages that they have in working with a small gene pool to produce consistency. The breed has been quite successful in recent years in some of the major carcase competitions in Australia and I believe they can credit a small gene pool of consistent product for these results. I have seen other breeds introduced into this country over the years that have had a small gene pool base originally and had success in carcase competitions, but then as their popularity grows and they are crossed with other breeds and the gene pool widened, so their success in these competitions has reduced.

Some of the Bazadaise linear measurements are not quite as close to other Bos Taurus breeds, but this is mainly due to the fact that they are slightly longer than most breeds.

The Bazadaise has been exported to Australia, Chile, Spain and the United Kingdom. Exported stock has been both raised pure-bred, and used for cross-breeding.

The Bazadaise cattle range in colour from dark to light grey with the eyes, muzzle and mucous membranes being pale and clear. They have tough horns and the hoofs are small and dark. Bazadaise have exceptional length with excellent conformation, good muscular development with a broad back and a well-rounded rump. A fine bone structure produces exceptional yields as a pure or crossbred.

In 1989 breeding stock, semen, and embryos were first imported to England, Australia, Belgium, Spain and Holland and has continued successfully ever since.



BITS AND PIECES

There have been a couple of things that I have touched on in recent newsletters that I would like to remind you of and reinforce.

1) I have written a number of times about the importance of the scrotum on a bull in relation to how this impacts on his daughter's udders. It surprises me, and maybe we are barking up the wrong tree with comments on the importance of these features when selecting a bull for your herd, of how many judges and breeders don't consider this to be important. However, we can only base our comments on our own experiences of selecting to improve udder shape in cows. I thought it was interesting to see a photo of a bull several weeks ago that sold for something like \$160,000 (don't quote me on the price – certainly over \$140,000). I can't remember the breed off hand, but I am sure many of you saw

the write up in our leading country papers. In most photos of bulls that appear in the press it is difficult to really see the shape etc. of the scrotum. However, in this particular case, the bull's near side hind leg was back behind him and his near side testicle was in front of the off side one. This would mean that when that bull's near side hind leg came up level with the off side one, that testicle would be even further forward thereby twisting the scrotum.

Without seeing the rear of this bull, it is almost certain that the skin coming down from above the scrotum onto the scrotum would be on the near side testicle, thus twisting it. This means that \$160,000 has been spent to produce heifers with the potential to have uneven quarters with a tendency to sag badly as they get older because of a weak suspensory ligament. I won't go into any more detail about the importance of the scrotum position and shape when selecting a bull because I don't want to repeat again what has already appeared in earlier newsletters. Again, I hope it highlights the importance of considering ultimately breeding at least some of your own bulls so that you know what you are getting and they are already acclimatised to your local conditions.

2. Another factor I wanted to reinforce was one that I mentioned in a fairly recent newsletter and we have discussed recently at our field days. That is in regard to the relationship between the animal size and their endocrine system. Research done mainly in the USA has indicated that once a cow reaches a weight of around 550 kg., the capacity of her endocrine system does not increase. We place a large amount of importance on the hormonal activity in cattle to indicate their overall health, the taste of their meat and the quality of their milk in our evaluation system. Hormones are substances that are secreted by the endocrine glands within the body. They are the "chemical factory", if you like of the animal

A mature cow of 800kg/live weight has the same size chemical factory as the 550kg cow. At a greater size (live weight), the endocrine system is not as efficient because it cannot work any better than it does for the smaller cow and requires more energy to carry out its normal daily activities such as walking. In fact, on a conversion ratio it is poorer. It would probably be fair to say that in most of our herds today, the cows are considerably

heavier than that. Why is this? It is most likely the result of the generalised perception that bigger is better as well as the strong trend over the last 40 - 50 years to focus on weight gain as the major priority for breeding beef cattle. This has to a large extent been driven by the feed industry, which has focused only on buying the type of animals that are big and therefore perceived as being fast growing and often is if the feed regime can be maintained. What we don't see or hear too much of is the cost factor involved in growing this type of animal. We need to see more work on comparing the gross margins of concentrated feeding with grass feeding.

What does this trend mean to the breeder? It has led to herds of cows that have lost many of their true feminine characteristics, not only from a physical perspective, but also from a reproductive view point.

I have added some further information about the glands that make up the endocrine system below.

3. There has also been some discussion being raised again about the distribution of drought relief and this is a current topic considering that nearly 90% of the state of Queensland has been drought declared. The traditional drought relief philosophy has been one of reaction. This has worked reasonably well in some respects, but at a considerable cost to government. It is a case of money being spent and no change to the system.

It is time that government and primary industries started being more creative in terms of being more pro-active to insure against drought. The initial capital cost would probably be more than is currently spent during one drought. However, the pay back would come because the payout would be a one off rather than a regular, repetitive cost every time there was a drought. The obvious remedy that comes to mind is for grants or low interest loans to be made so that producers could make at least part of their property arable enough to cut for fodder in good seasons. Incentives could also be provided for contractors to invest in machinery for this to be possible. Other options such as feed sprouting sheds could be also be considered.

The main drawback to this suggestion not working is not its viability, and I know this may not be a popular thing to say, but the ingrained

psychological ability of many producers to be creative and accept change. I have already done some of the economics of fodder conservation in earlier newsletters so I won't repeat them again. In many ways, I know that you, our readers, are very forward thinking and always looking for ways to do things better, more efficiently and effectively. You are the real leaders in our primary industries – the current leaders just haven't realised that yet.

ENDOCRINE GLANDS

The endocrine glands secrete hormones based on a range of parameters that are influencing the animals at any given time. They can be affected by internal conditions such as overall balance and the physical, chemical and psychic situation prevailing at the time or external conditions such as light, temperature and magnetic fields as well as the food they are eating.

Endocrine glands secrete hormones whose role it is to maintain the body's function in a well-defined way. They are not haphazard secretions with undefined roles to play. There are several endocrine glands in the body and the most important of these include:

- a) The pineal gland is shaped like a very small pine cone and weighs as little as 0.2 grams in humans. Its role is to assist in the regeneration of the body both physically and psychologically. The role of the pineal is still very much the subject of research to help in the understanding of its role. In humans, it is sometimes referred to as the "third eye" and is thought to influence a lot of the psychological side of the human body. It also assists with regeneration and sleep. As such, it is considered the most important gland in humans, but this probably is not the case in cattle.
- b) The pituitary gland is more likely to be the most important gland in cattle. It is the conductor of all the body's organic functions and cellular growth as well as its reproductive activities and controls vital functions in the body by acting on other glands by either stimulating or inhibiting them. The pituitary gland sits just below the hypothalamus in the brain, which is

made up of a cluster of nerves called the sympathetic nerves, and to which it is connected.

In fact, the hypothalamus controls the pituitary gland and the flow of water and food in and out of the body as well as its blood pressure, temperature and circulation of vital energies. It has an important role in the rebuilding of body tissue and procreation, a major factor in the selection of productive cattle.

- c) The thyroid gland has as one of its main functions in cattle to act like a thermostat in controlling the inner metabolic body heat. It is responsible for controlling the energy required by the body to adapt itself to the particular situation it is in at that time. It also distributes the trace element iodine throughout the body which provides the energy needed for organs to function.
- d) The thymus protects the body by controlling its immune system. It has the role of recognising and eliminating substances that are foreign to the body including microbes, which again takes us back to the previous section on health where we don't know what the impact of how we are managing the production of our food is having on it and subsequently our bodies. Fortunately, the thymus goes at least some way to offering us protection against things that may damage our bodies. What we need to be aware of is whether the changes to the biological and chemical structure of our food may well affect the performance of our thymus as well as other glands.
- e) The heart is not only a very powerful muscular mass that pumps blood around the body continually to sustain life, but also an endocrine gland. The gland itself is situated in the right auricle and is connected to a network of nerves in the heart. It is thus directly linked to the sympathetic nervous system and part of its role is to slow down the heart rate to save

on oxygen consumption. It also secretes a hormone whose role it is to generally relax the body and assist in the elimination of sodium or salt from the kidneys which can cause otherwise cause high blood pressure.

- f) The suprarenal glands are situated on top of the kidneys and control the release of hormones to mobilise reserves of energy and for fighting diseases. The main hormone they produce is adrenaline which accelerates the rate of blood circulation from the heart and in the respiratory rate.
- g) The solar plexus is a meeting point for glands and the interior and exterior of the body and controls, commands and coordinates their functions. In some regards it may not be regarded as a true gland although it does secrete hormones and works in conjunction with the suprarenal gland.
- h) The group of glands known as the abdominal and pelvic glands and include the liver, digestive tract, spleen, kidneys and gonads secrete hormones that support the reproductive processes in cattle.

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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