

Circle 8 answers production woes

By BRETT
TINDAL

OUT of control costs in an increasingly challenging environment have left beef producers looking for a more productive genetic alternative.

Seedstock producers, Jeremy and Carmen Seaton-Cooper, Cooper Beef Cattle and the Circle 8 brand, Tarcutta, along with their children, Annabelle, Lily and Thomas, have identified the need to bring crossbreeding back under the microscope, primarily to profit from hybrid vigour.

Circle 8 has taken Black Simmental for its combination of fertility, growth and superior carcass, and the market premium seeking Angus, and genetically "fused" them through extensive and ongoing embryo transfer (ET) programs to create their own Angus hybrid.

Mr Cooper said the Circle 8 Angus hybrid was "light years" ahead of any other crossbred bull currently in the marketplace due to the high level of discipline in creating the product.

"Unlike the complexity of traditional crossbreeding systems, the Angus hybrid brings to the table optimum levels of hybrid vigour and European content in retained heifers with the simplicity of a single bull joining such as that used in purebred programs," he said.

"All sale bulls are created by ET from Circle 8's best donors and they have estimated breeding values generated by the Angus Society of Australia and all have been DNA parent verified at birth to guarantee the integrity of these pedigrees."

The Angus hybrid is a new and exciting prospect for Australian cattlemen looking to keep a solid colour, but put more meat, size and doing ability into their calves.

Although a relatively new breed in Australia, cattle producers have taken to them like a duck to water.

One of the first breeders enticed to the new breed, Bruce Richardson, "Eurella", Rylstone, had the opportunity to watch the first Black Simmental and



hybrid calves grow up from scratch and was excited about the prospect of what they could deliver.

Mr Richardson said it was easy to see the big difference between the Black Simmentals and the Angus hybrids.

"The hybrids are another tool for us to make more money, with cattle reaching higher feedlot weights at younger ages," he said.

Mr Richardson bought Black Simmentals to put across his Angus, black baldy, and black Shorthorn-cross cows, and sold the calves straight off their mums.

"I have recently bought the Angus hybrids and I am expecting more from these calves than the Simmentals from what I have seen in the bulls.

"Lately the feedlots have bumped weights up for the short-fed job to 350 to 450 kilogram entry weights, so hopefully with these calves on lucerne pastures, summer crop and winter cereals, I will get them to optimum weights earlier."

Mr Richardson, who also has a pure-breeding operation, said pure breeding would never become obsolete, but crossbreeding offered more returns for effort.

Auction guru and former stock agent, Peter Pickles, Pickles Auctions, Newcastle, runs 500 cows on his Nowendoc property, "The Two Mile", and has introduced Angus hybrid bulls into a three-way trial with Angus and Angus/Charolais bulls to breed calves for the feedlots.

Mr Pickles said he was looking for more hybrid vigour in his calves to get them over the 400kg weights for feedlots at a younger age of 15 to 18 months.

"I have two different blocks of country, with one a bit harder on cattle, so I am looking to breed bigger calves with a bit more doability, without compromising the calves' quality," he said.

"The hybrids will still allow me to retain the black colour in my cattle, while injecting some extra growth and performance into the calves at younger ages.

"I am hoping the hybrids will turn off more weight at younger ages than the Angus and Angus/Charolais calves, but with the bulls about to go in, it will be 12 months before I see results."

Ray White Rural agent Andrew Starr, Guyra, is very keen on the Black Simmentals and Angus hybrids, saying they presented a

great option on grain to convert more to growth and saleable meat yield in the current environment.

Mr Starr has bought both breeds for various clients, and said the moderate birthweights and high marbling for a European breed was outstanding, offering more length and growth than a British breed.

"Hybrids have a huge place in Angus herds, as they maintain marbling, while increasing frame, carcass and muscle in a maternal Euro package, with good milk to maintain a self replacing herd."

Also impressed with the Circle 8 cattle was Mudgee breeder, Tim Loneragan, "Taranah", who runs Simmental and Santa Gertrudis cows, finishing 200 calves a year.

"I am producing black calves, with an aim to get them to EU or feedlot weights to capitalise on the returns in these markets," he said.

He has a history of using composites, but had trouble maintaining a solid black colour, which is why he found the Circle 8 cattle attractive.

"I didn't want to miss the opportunity to get one and now they have been introduced into my herd, they will have all weights recorded and analysed for performance," he said.

Hybrid high at Holbrook

HOLBROOK cattle producer, Lynton Harrison, "Bonniebrook", breeds black baldy cows and puts black Simmental bulls across them to retain heifers, keep solid black or red colour and improve growth and yield through hybrid vigour.

"I use black Simmental bulls instead of a terminal so I can retain heifers, with both the steer and heifer portion yielding higher at market weights," said Mr Harrison (pictured).

"I like to breed cattle that are black, due to industry perception, polled and with low birthweights."

He recently had 30 calves drop from Circle 8/Co-op Black Simmental bulls that averaged 29 kilograms birthweight.

Their older brothers weighed 315kg to 388kg at seven-and-a-half months.

Mr Harrison said these new generation Simmentals had much more to offer than traditional Simmentals, with higher marbling, better structure, solid colour, temperament and carcass characteristics.

He said now he had used a full-blood Simmental he would go back to using half-blood bulls to keep the herd half to a quarter Simmental.

Mr Harrison backgrounds his steers to be turned off to the feedlots at 450kg, with the start of his steers to go in October.

"I put a bit extra into my cattle feeding them a high protein ration and run them on oats, to get the best out of them in the shortest possible time, which seems to be working thanks to the Simmental influence."

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