



Speckled beef best in carcass trial

By JAMIE-LEE OLDFIELD

IF MINNAMURRA Pastoral Company was looking for confirmation it was headed in the right direction with a new breed of cattle, they've certainly found it.

Entering Speckle Park-cross steers into the Beef Spectacular Feedback Trial for the first time, Minnamurra general manager Dennis Power said he was looking to see how the breed measured up to others.

Pretty bloody well was the answer.

The four teams of Speckle Park/Angus steers from Minnamurra placed first, second and third in the carcass judging, third and fourth in feedlot performance, and third and eighth overall.

Any one of these accolades would have been recognition enough for the large scale commercial operation, but together they have quantified what Mr Power has thought since first setting eyes on Speckle Park genetics.

"About four years ago we were in Canada and I saw a steer win the carcass competition over there and he dressed over 70 per cent, and I thought that was just incredible – it certainly made me pay more attention to them," he said.

Minnamurra's 8000 head principally Te Mania Angus herd is run on five properties – "Cortina", Merriwa; "Glenrowan", Boggabri; "Old Boorooma", Walgett; "Oinmurra",

Dirranbandi, Queensland, and "Noorama", Cunnamulla, Queensland.

In the past 18-months, Mr Power said they had artificially inseminated (AI) more than 2000 Angus females with Canadian Speckle Park genetics.

"Speckle Park have come in to complement the Angus – there are three main reasons we decided to trial them in our operation," Mr Power said.

"Three of their greatest attributes are dressing percentage, naturally marbling a bit higher, and the eating ability of the meat – they win taste tests regularly in Canada, and they are winning them now in Australia – combining those three qualities with British breed cattle is only going to improve them."

Having entered straight Angus steers into the feedback trial last year, Mr Power selected 20 steers from the first drop of Speckle Park progeny this year to benchmark the cattle.

Mr Power said he was more surprised than anybody with the result, and it was especially pleasing to see the new breed stand up against such good competition.

"The four pens of 20 steers averaged 2.51 kilograms of weight gain per head a day, with the lead steer being 3.41kg a day – that is just unheard of," he said.

"The other interesting thing with those steers when you go through the figures was that we had the only two pens of steers that made above \$700 more profit than the trial average – and

that's what we are looking for, profit."

The steers sent to trial were yard weaned with their counterparts at 20 weeks of age onto hay, silage and some grain for 10 days, before being put out to pasture.

Progeny is generally sold off at 350 kilograms to 400kg, either to back-grounders or into feedlots, but always direct from farm.

"A lot of putting calves onto feed goes back to weaning – all the calves had been bunker fed at weaning, and once they know that, they go onto feed at any stage of their lives without any dramas," Mr Power said.

The trial steers were all out of Te Mania Angus cows, and Mr Power said a good female line also had a big impact on steer performance.

"We have got a very good Angus line to benchmark ourselves against, and we consistently turn off Angus steers at 400 to 450kg at just 12 months of age, so the Speckles have got to perform quite well to stack up against them," he said.

"There is still an awful lot to learn about this breed, and time will tell how they stack up, but at the moment everything is pointing in a very positive direction for them."

The Minnamurra steer team that placed third overall was placed first in the carcass judging with three of the five steers receiving full points for carcass weight and fat cover.

Mr Power said they had also obtained positive results from abattoirs on the performance of the

Minnamurra Pastoral Company general manager Dennis Power, whose Speckle Park/Angus steers placed third, eighth and 10th in the 2015 Feedback Trial.



Speckle Park/Angus.

"One thing we have seen with all of them, is that compared with the Angus on 100 days feed we always seem to come up with less fat cover, so we get a lot more that slot into the grids," he said.

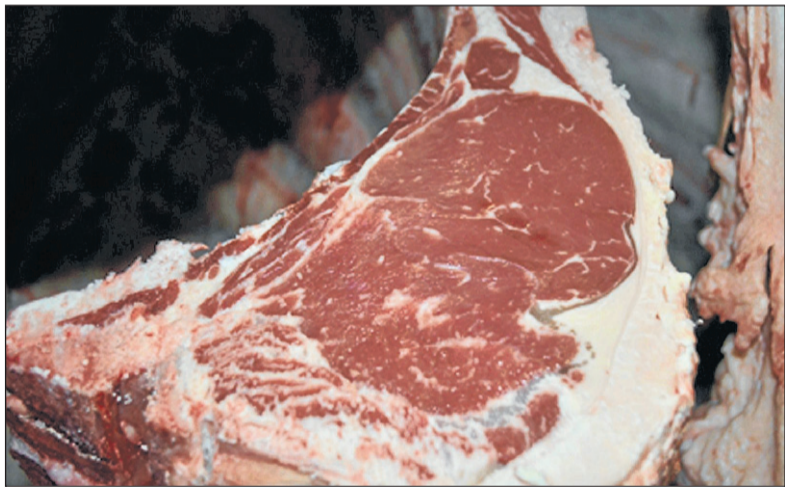
"They have the biggest saleable meat yield, and definitely better fat cover – probably only three to four millimetres less but it makes a big difference.

"All those little things add up to

being a more profitable animal in an industry at the moment where we need everything going for us to make a dollar out of cattle."

Genetically and economically AI has proven to be the best method for introducing the new breed into the Minnamurra operation, and another 1000 cows and females will be inseminated with Speckle Park genetics this year.

For the remainder of the breeding herd, Te Mania bulls have been used



Minnamurra's first placed carcasses had 69.1 to 71.1 per cent saleable meat yield.

Carcass quality second to none

THE Minnamurra steers that placed first in the carcass judging achieved 450 out of a possible 550 points, with the top steer from the pen receiving 92 points out of 110.

Entering the feedlot at between 422 and 456 kilograms, the steers had hot standard carcass weights (HSCW) between 375.5 and 404.5kg.

With 10 to 19 millimetres of P8 fat, three of the steers received full points in this area, while the saleable meat yield varied from 69.1 to 71.1 per cent.

All but one steer recorded full marks for Aus-Meat marbling with a score of 2, and the five steers ranged from a boning group 3 to boning group 6 for Meat Standards Australia (MSA).

They had eye muscle areas (EMA) ranging from 80 to 95 square centimetres.

Ranking second in the carcass judging, and 15th overall, was a team from Minnamurra that lost only 2.5 points for HSCW, which ranged from 369.5 to 384.5kg.

The steers achieved 403.5 points

from a possible 550, ranged from MSA boning group 3 to 6 and again all but one received full points for marbling.

Placing third for carcass performance and in 10th place overall, another Minnamurra team was awarded 400 out of 550.

HSCW's ranged from 378.5 to 405.5, while P8 fat measured between 14 and 25mm.

The team only lost a total of 10 points from a possible 150 in these two areas.

– JAMIE-LEE OLDFIELD

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2015 **BEEF SPECTACULAR** FEEDBACK TRIAL REPORT



In Brief

Three-Day sickness on rise: Livestock producers across NSW have enjoyed significant summer rain, but the wet weather can also bring a rise in Bovine Ephemeral Fever (BEF).

Commonly known as Three-Day Sickness it causes loss of condition, deaths and reduced fertility in bulls.

Signs of this viral disease include fevers, stiffness in the muscles, recumbency and sometimes nasal discharge, drooling saliva and weeping eyes.

Livestock Biosecurity Network's Sarah-Jane Wilson says producers are behind because of a recent shortage of the BEF vaccination and summer rain.

"The virus that causes BEF is thought to be

transmitted between cattle by flying insects such as mosquitoes and biting midges," she said.

Sick animals need shelter, food, water and to be rolled several times a day.

Dr Wilson said the best chance of saving stock was for a blood test to be taken.

After a recent shortage in BEF vaccine, supplies are being rushed to areas affected after the rain.

"For cattle older than six months of age, a vaccination for BEF is best practice and is required as soon as possible to avoid high-risk and high-value livestock being affected and causing economic losses for producers," Dr Wilson said.

for the past 15 years, and Mr Power said they provided length, depth and performance.

Having both an autumn and spring calving allows Minnamurra to utilise bulls twice a year, and offers flexibility for turning off progeny.

AuctionsPlus has become an effective tool for marketing cattle, according to Mr Power.

"Through the past few tough years, the great part about our

Angus cattle is you can always get a sale for them somewhere at any stage, and that has been a huge help through the drought – we could sell them from weaners or hold them through and feed them," he said.

"You must breed cattle these days that are versatile and can fit into so many different categories, because if you find yourself breeding for one specific market, with the seasons

we have been having, you can get yourself into a corner very quickly."

Mr Power has entered three pens of steers into the RNA paddock to plate competition.

"I think these feedback trials are the best benchmark for cattle – not entering them to try to get places, I think they are just a fantastic tool and see how you are performing against other breeds and other producers."



Speckled park cross Angus heifers at "Glenrowan", Boggabri, that are sisters to the steers in the feedback trial.

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