

Speckled performers

Proof in feed trials with own crosses

BY MARK GRIGGS

FOR Minnamurra Pastoral Company to gain performance figures from Speckle Park crossbreeding, principal, David Reid says he's breeding the commercial cattle for that purpose.

"As far as we can ascertain, nobody in the world has done this exercise in the numbers we are," he said.

"We know that the cross-breeds are performers, but it takes a number of years to work out where the breed is going to sit, even though we know Speckle Parks make a great crossbred animal.

"So the only way to get accurate figures on the breed's abilities is to be able to put pens of 100 or 200 steers into feedlots where they can be followed through to processing and return us the feedback results."

Currently Minnamurra is running 800 first cross (F1) heifers and steers on "Mount Mill", Coolah, acquired 12 months ago to run in conjunction with the 3500 Angus breeding herd of mainly Te Mania blood at "Cortina", between Mudgee and Bylong.

Those youngsters in the first of a continuing crossbreeding benchmarking program will, over time, produce factual performance figures on the Speckle Park breed's ability and worthiness as producers of ultra hybrid vigour traits in crossbreeding programs



Minnamurra general manager, Dennis Power and principal, David Reid with first cross Speckle Park/Angus heifers September '16 drop and weaned two months ago. will be AI'd to Canadian Speckle Park bulls this November.



First cross Speckle Park/Angus F1 heifers September 2016 drop and weaned two months ago running on the river flats at "Mount Mill", Coolah.

on grass and in feedlots.

"By doing this ourselves, it will prove to us the true benefits of the Speckle Park breed," Mr Reid said.

"This has nothing to do with doubt, but plenty to do with profitability."

Company general manager, Dennis Power, said the hardest part of their crossbreeding program was that they didn't want to compromise their good Angus females until they knew they had enough Speckle Park

bulls to join to them.

"At the moment, what's restricting us in the commercial stage is that we are doing all Artificial Insemination (AI) work," Mr Power said.

"We have 400 commercial Angus cows out here now that are all AI'd to a specific Speckle Park bull as we haven't enough bulls available at present to naturally join with."

When it comes to carcass traits standout results have been achieved in feedlots,

carcass competitions and taste testing.

Minnamurra has produced the winning Beef Spectacular carcass award three years running.

"That's a testament to the quality of our cattle, proving to the industry that there is more to this breed than their distinctive colour," Mr Power said.

Minnamurra Speckle Park/Angus cross steers have performed extremely well in carcass and eating quality traits at Primex since 2013; Beef Spectacular 2015, 16 and 17; RNA Paddock to Plate 2016 and the 2016 Gympie Classic.

Mr Power said one client last year bought 200 F1 steers at eight months of age and put them straight into a 'no HGP and no antibiotic' feed regime for 180 days and when killed they were "absolutely gobsmacked" with the results.

"Ninety-four per cent averaged above '2' marbling

and one actually went '8' score," he said.

"They were all milk teeth when killed and dressed between 340 and 360 kilograms averaging 328kg."

He said young cattle rarely marbled.

"But these were milk teeth and 16 months old when slaughtered.

"That's incredible for young cattle."

Mr Power said a couple of feedlots trialed Minnamurra F1 steers and found the longer fed cattle, particularly with the 120 and 180 days feeders, coming out at two to three millimetres of fat less at the P8 and rib sites.

"This is where I think their yields are picking up because they are not laying down too much external fat.

"Over a long feed, that's pretty important because most British breed animals on a heavy feed regime, where they are putting on two to three kilograms a day for 100 days, are hard to

keep fat cover under 21mm."

He said the Speckle Park F1 cross steers "were coming out better than any of the other British cattle".

"That's very important and positive for the Speckle Park breed."

Mr Reid said as yet, they hadn't done enough trials to get enough accurate figures.

"But we certainly have proof that when our steers are fed, they out-perform others and results to date are verifying our confidence in the breed."

Mr Power said Queensland beef producers liked the crosses with their Bos Indicus breeds.

"They feel the Speckle Park will improve the cattle's meat qualities."

Having many successful years as an Angus breeder, Mr Reid said he turned to Speckle Park cattle not only because he enjoyed the breed and its potential.

"It was also purely a bottom line decision," he said.

"For some time we had gone through a pretty tough period where we were getting \$1.80 a kilo, but to make our operation profitable, these animals were giving about another 10pc meat yield, and that makes a difference to profitability."

He said since "getting involved" he'd been captivated with the Speckle Park animals, themselves.

"They are beautiful animals and they are giving all of these different qualities that are making the breed so attractive."

Mr Power said the joining program at "Mount Mill" had heifers joined at about 14 months in October/November for an August/September calving when they were two year-old.

"Last year in the stud and commercials we AI'd nearly 1400 cows and heifers."

**Breeding
for
Quality &
Performance**



**Minnamurra
Speckle Parks**



"Mount Mill", Coolah Creek Rd, Coolah. NSW

Dennis Power 0427 734 254 | www.minnamurra.com.au