

# Efficient, high yielding cattle

BY RUTH SCHWAGER

IMPROVING feed conversion and efficiency is the goal for many producers, but it's even more important in drought conditions, and Speckle Park producers are reporting excellent feed conversion, despite limited feed sources available.

Purchasing a vertical mixer and wetting down hay with water has helped Dennis Power, Mount Mill, Coolah, lessen waste, but he was surprised with the results from his Speckle Park breeders.

"We fed a couple of hundred purebred cows from the middle of last year on hay, and these cows have been outstanding," Mr Power said.

"At 600 kilograms they should be eating three per cent of their bodyweight to maintain condition and these were eating 1.4pc, about 8kg to 10kg a day.

"We're starting to call them the Dorpers of the cattle industry because they can survive on a lot less. This drought has been awful but we've learnt a lot about the Speckles' foraging ability



## SPECKLE PARK FEED CONVERSION

- Breeders maintained weight on 8kg to 10kg of hay per day
- First-cross heifers averaged 58.67pc lean meat yield
- Heifers averaged 63.33 on the MSA Index and had an average MSA marbling score of 446.85

**GROWING DATA COLLECTION:** Speckle Park cattle are proving themselves in the paddock, the feedlot, and over the hook.

and their ability to maintain weight in pretty horrific conditions. We've also been feeding a lot of Angus cows but the conversion rate is nowhere near as good as the Speckles. Since then we've

built an opportunity feedlot that we plant o get registered and then we'll have a lot more data."

The data around Speckle Park cattle is increasing, with Mr Power's young cattle also

having exceptional kill data, despite never seeing green grass.

Mr Power, who also manages leading stud Minnamurra, early weaned 1100 head of Angus and Speckle

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**Speckle Park breeder Dennis Power**

Park/Angus first-cross calves at five to six months of age, weighing 150kg to 180kg.

They were fed pellets and hay at Conargo Feedlot, through to weights of 300kg to 350kg, before being finished by lotfeeders in Queensland.

Those cattle have since been processed and the data is clear - Speckle Parks are dressing heavier and meeting processing weights earlier. The 121 first-cross heifers averaged 58.67pc lean meat yield. They averaged 63.33 on the Meat Standards Australia Index and had an average MSA marbling score of 446.85.

"When you get heifers that are yielding more than 60pc, that's a profitable animal," Mr Power said.

"Very few animals will dress that high. We usually

average 55pc to 56pc for steers and we're pretty happy, and we've had them go up to 57pc to 58pc, but the heifers are usually about 53pc to 54pc. When you sell over the hook like we do, that's where the profit is - in efficient cattle that yield well."

Mr Power said he's waiting on data from second-cross Speckle Park/Angus cattle that will be processed at Kilcoy next month, which will allow him to compare the different crosses. He also plans to increase the amount of data being recorded on the breed through the on-farm feedlot.

"Besides being an opportunity feedlot to help us manage these dry situations, we want to be able to measure their feedlot performance, feed intake and conversion, to add to kill sheet data."