

Minnamurra pen tops Angus brand

BY KATE LOUDON

MINNAMURRA Pastoral Company has come away with the Teys Certified Premium Black Angus champion pen award as well as placing eighth overall in the 2022 feedback trial.

With several years of involvement in the competition, Minnamurra general manager Dennis Power, Coolah, said this was the first time in a while that they had entered teams of Angus steers, whereas normally they would be Speckle Park/Angus cross.

Due to extended rainfall and the crossbred steers being on another property, it was impractical to enter them, Mr Power said.

"We will have the Speckle Park cross steers back in for the 2023 trial."

An equal score of 65.22 for MSA Index across both the Minnamurra teams placed the pens seventh and eighth position in the MSA eating quality section, with Mr Power saying "we couldn't be happier with our black cattle".

"We have always done reasonably well in the competition but obviously the crossbreds couldn't take out the Teys Angus award like we have this year," he said.

For Minnamurra the main reason for entering the trial was to be able to benchmark their cattle against the feedlot industry.

"We just take a cut of steers out of a big mob. I don't go selecting them, we just weigh them off to make sure they fit," Mr Power said.

"I want a cross-section of our cattle and I'm not out there to win prizes.

"Obviously it is great to win



Minnamurra Pastoral Company general manager Dennis Power, Coolah, pictured with young Angus heifers on farm. **Photo: Supplied**

but the trial gives me an idea of what is under the skin.

"You can have an animal with beautiful confirmation and everything is dead right about him but you don't know what is underneath and that's what we are marketing."

Mr Power said the trial is a great tool for comparison of animals - "you might get feedback on your own steers from other places, but what are they benchmarked against? And how can you tell if they are really good?"

"That's the great thing about these sort of trials."

The trial aligns with the usual target market for Minnamurra, however this year steers were sold lighter than normal.

"We try to take them to 450kg, but with the prices being so good we sold at 300-350kg," he said.

Mr Power said the competition emphasised that they were on the right track with the genetics.

"It showed us the genetic track we were following is working and it is consistent and that all the calves were

uniform and hung evenly," he said.

"We have found the crossbreds are giving us a little bit less fat in the 100-day feedlot situation but the dressing percentage is 3-5 per cent higher than the purebred Angus steers.

"There is no real major performance difference, it's just we are getting a better carcass with the Speckle cross."

When considering carcass traits, Mr Power said he tends to select more for 400-day growth, then intramuscular fat then eye muscle area.

"The rib fat cover is very important to me too, because you don't want them too lean," he said.

"We are at the stage now where we can take the female and carcass traits and combine them here, but I am still a big believer in breeding females first.

"You can go and buy bulls to breed steers any day of the week and that's fine if you're not breeding your own females."

After rebuilding from the drought, cow numbers are at

3000 with the business having its sights set on building to 5000 head.

"Rather than just keeping everything I want to take it steady and make sure we are keeping the right cows," Mr Power said.

Minnamurra has a core herd of 1000 black cows and the rest are made up of first- and second-cross Angus/Speckle Park cows. The core females will continue to breed pure Angus as replacement females.

"We have great success with the Te Mania bloodlines," Mr Power said. "We have used them for over 20 years, and we will continue to use them.

"The calves we are getting out of the Te Mania cows with the Speckle Park bulls have been outstanding.

Mr Power said you learn a lot about your own cattle in the trial and it is something everyone needs to do along the line.

"It is the perfect opportunity to benchmark your line of cattle against the other producers and with different breeds," he said.