



Southern Regional Promotional Group

Lowline Newsletter

July 2014

Message from the Chair

Our **On Farm Challenge** is over for another year with a successful Presentation Lunch held at Coldstream. Congratulations to all the placegetters. Thanks to the Committee for organizing, not only the Challenge, which ran smoothly, but also the Presentation with lots of friendly chatter between breeders and great food to accompany it. With 2 Challenges now being held, breeders now have the opportunity to assess results and see where they can improve their stock, remembering that breeding decisions made now will take at least 3 years to come to fruition.

I think we all have been spoilt with a warm start to Winter, reflected in pastures being active right up to mid-June. However, with the arrival of Winter rains on the long weekend, mud seems to have appeared from nowhere and the cattle have grown Winter coats.

Weaning of our Spring drop has taken place with weaning weights up on previous years, due to the warmer weather.

Two Studs that I know of, have taken the opportunity to enter steers in the **Lardner Steer Trial**. One stud is entering cross bred and the other pure Lowline steers. Entry weight is a minimum of 220kg live weight. This year the cattle will be killed at JBS Aust, Brooklyn for **Coles** with a specification of 210-285KG HSCW in December. All carcasses being assessed using the Meat Standard Australia grading scheme. Progressive weighing results will be shown on our SRPG web site.

News from breeder, Jim Cramer, at Maryborough, is that Barham High School have visited his farm and selected 2 steers to prepare for **2014 Royal Melbourne Show Carcase Competition**. These steers weighed 320kg and 384kg live weight and will be entered in the Medium Domestic Class requiring a carcase of 180-240kg HCW with 6 – 8 mls of fat at the P8. We wish Barham High good luck with these steers and hope to hear of their feeding regime.

If you know of any other Lowline derived steers entered, please contact the Committee.

Just a reminder that our **Publicity Package** offer has closed. If you missed out this year, keep it in mind for 2015, as the brochure will be updated annually. This is an inexpensive way to promote your stud in both the electronic and printed media, all for the low price of \$85. Please support the Lowline Breed by taking advantage of this advertising package – if no one knows about your Stud they can't buy cattle from you. With hindsight over 22 years of breeding Lowline cattle, I know that every opportunity should be taken to promote your cattle through a marketing strategy.

Stud Beef are again holding a Cattle Handlers Camp during the July School holidays. SRPG, in conjunction with ALCA, through Victorian breeders Julie & Greg Knight, Wanamara and Jeanette & Peter Stebbins, Ardrossan, have donated two heifers to be won by attendees who show promise to further the Lowline breed in the cattle industry. Results of this competition are on our SRPG Web Page.

Southern Beef are hoping to run the National Beef Expo at Bendigo again in 2015. Please give some thought to supporting this event either with beef carcasses, exhibiting your cattle or just giving a few hours of your time. The Beef Industry needs all the support it can get to maintain better \$ per kilogram for the commodity.

Please regularly visit the **SRPG web page**, as we hope to make it your "one stop shop" for all that is happening in the world of Lowlines in Victoria.

Did you know?

Energy balance in cows has a direct connection to egg quality. An egg takes 10 weeks from inception to ovulation. Hence, an egg begun during a period of negative energy balance will not be highly fertile. Often the most fertile egg the cow produces was started several weeks before calving. To AI or join a cow around 40 -50 days post calving will yield high conception rates. This period of high fertility is then followed by 30 – 40 days of poor fertility. For this reason, the condition of the cow prior to calving is most important.

I am sure most of us have had a neglected calf. Below is a photo of a little Lowline calf born 4 weeks premature to a cow that did not want him. The owners named him Benny and took him to the Vet in their car to seek help with raising it. The Vet staff fell in love with him administering electrolytes and colostrum. Benny was fed 2 hourly, and the owner made jackets for him. Their dog and cat mothered it as it slept in the shed surrounded by hay with a warm light over it. Benny enjoyed all the attention, but had trouble using his back legs properly, although he could walk around a little. Sadly, Benny died quite suddenly, just over 3 weeks after his birth, but the owners were consoled knowing they did their very best for Benny.

Michael Nixon pictured below with Benny and friends.



Jeanette Stebbins
SPRG - Chair

Ballarat Grammar take home the OFC Prize for the second time

For the On Farm Challenge this year, Ballarat Grammar selected a range of animals that were either bred from our main bull, Appertarra Carlo, or who were to be considered for our Melbourne Show team in September. All animals presented well, although last year's winner, Ballarat Grammar Gwendolyn, was a little down in condition with a calf at foot. It was interesting to hear the judge's comments and then relate them back to the animals and our breeding objectives. It is very important to take on board comments such as Annette's as they bring objectivity to your own thoughts, which are often a little biased when concerning your own animals. It was a lovely surprise to see Tarrengower Glenluce perform so well during the event. The heifer has been to a few smaller, country shows and has always placed well.

Glenluce is from very different blood lines Gwendolyn. It is very encouraging for the school to think we have such a diverse range of genetics within our herd. Thanks must go to SRPG and the organising committee, the judge and the drivers. It's a terrific event, easy to take part in and is a great way to bring lowline enthusiasts together.

Matt Dickinson – Ballarat Grammar

Emma Dickinson pictured (Year 9 Student at Ballarat Grammar) with the awards at the On Farm Challenge



Full results of the On Farm Challenge are available at www.victorianlowline.com.au

Phillip Island Small Farm Expo

22 – 23 November 2014

In a first for south and central Gippsland farmer's, landowners of all types and those interested in a rural lifestyle will converge on the world renowned Phillip Island Grand Prix Circuit to attend the regions first Small Farm + Lifestyle Expo. This exciting event will showcase the latest agricultural equipment and technology that's available and the advantages a rural lifestyle can offer.

Don't miss this great opportunity to showcase your products, business, livestock or organisation over two days at this dynamic event.



- An ideal way to promote your product, organisation or business to motivated buyers
- In an effort to keep costs as low as possible we have priced our sites to suit all budgets
- To make it even more affordable we have a 10% early bird offer
- Inside and outside sites available

Full details are in the attached flyer.

Stud Beef Handlers Camp 2014

At the beginning of July I attended this years Stud Beef Cattle Handlers camp organised by "Stud Beef Victoria" at the Melbourne Showgrounds.

I had absolutely no idea of what to expect and what was expected of me, so I was a little bit anxious about what the next 5 days held in store.

I had no need to worry because the entire event was well managed and very educational.

84 people of various ages and levels of expertise were split up into groups, (mine being the "senior" group). Each group had experienced instructors to assist us and guide us through each days' events. Liesel and Kim were our leaders and both had a wealth of knowledge and experience with cattle and showing. They always had a smile and were so

helpful to those of us who had no idea what we were doing, as well as being two lovely ladies to boot!!

I opted for a ballot animal and was lucky to receive a beautiful little Lowline heifer donated by Ken & Gill Lorains of Whitby farm.

Each day was full of learning skills to help us handle and prepare our cattle for showing.

I came to understand the different sorts of gear used for grooming and showing, as well as learning how to prepare an animal for the ring. Things like washing, grooming, feeding, stall maintenance and cleaning, clipping and leading were some of the topics covered.

Everything we learned was then put into practice with judging of the prepared cattle on day 3 and then judging of ourselves and our showing technique on day 4.

A lot of the younger members of the camp take these 2 events very seriously, with some fantastic prizes on offer.

This year two lowline heifers were donated by Ardrossan Lowline Stud and Wanamara Lowline Stud to worthy recipients to encourage young people to get involved in the breed. It was wonderful to see the delight on the faces of the 2 lucky winners.

It was an amazing experience to see so many children involved in this handlers camp. They were all fantastic representatives of the future of the cattle industry and were all such great motivated and hard working kids.



Heather Corallo pictured at the Handlers Camp

The food was really great (and plenty of it) and night times were filled with different activities, such as trivia and a rockin' band so we could all have a dance and some fun.

Gary Turnham did a great job in co-ordinating and running the camp (along with some terrific helpers!!)

Everyone had a great time and our seniors group was full of lovely people, some which have become good friends.

Overall, I would have to say that the whole event was a fantastic experience. I came home exhausted but elated. I would highly recommend it to anyone wanting to learn more about cattle, and gaining confidence to be able to potentially show your own animals. I am so glad I took opportunity to go to this years' camp.

Heather Corallo

Stud Beef Handlers Camp 2014

The Chairperson, Jeanette Stebbins, would like to make special mention of the assistance of Ken & Gill Lorains, Julie & Greg Knight and Tonia & David Goodman for assisting in the billeting of the ALCA Scholarship winners and/or supplying cattle to the Camp. Thanks also to Bill Belton and Gary Turnham for helping promote SRPG and the Lowline Breed at the Camp.

Thanks also to Jacqui Feagan, Jo-Ann Jackson and Heather Corallo for helping to get the information packs and posters to the Camp.

Because of your assistance, the Lowline Breed was well represented.

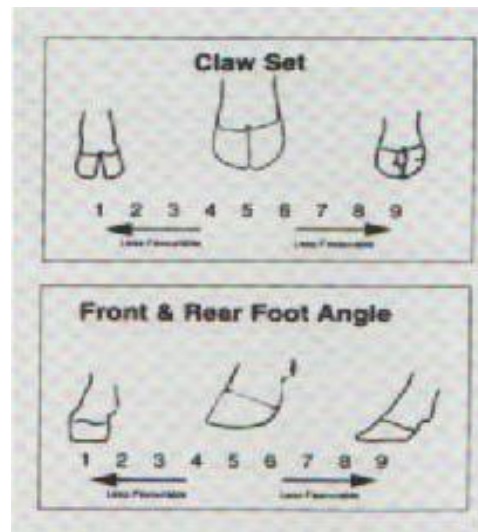
Cattle Assessment Tool

How to use the Beef Class Structural Assessment Tool

The beef class structural assessment System uses a 1 – 9 scoring system for feet and leg structure.

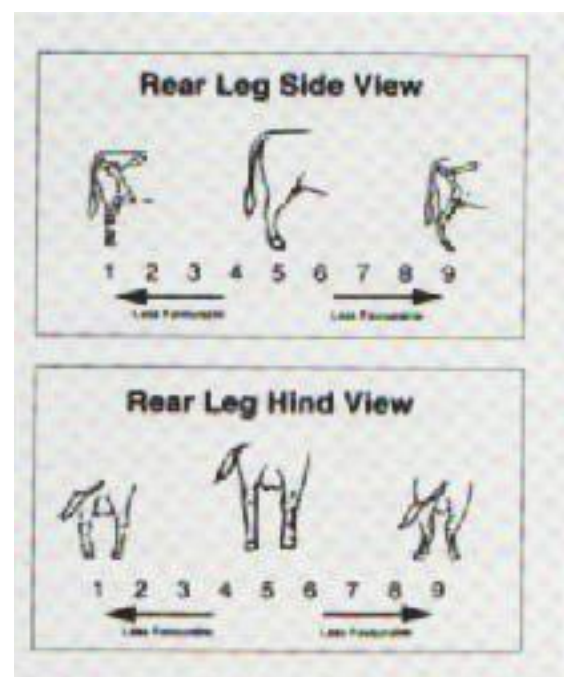
- A score of 5 is ideal. (Note: Temperament Score of 1 is preferable.
- A score of 4 or 6 shows slight variation from ideal, but his includes most animals. An animal scoring 4 or 6 would be acceptable in any breeding program.
- A score of 3 or 7 shows greater variation but would be acceptable in most commercial programs. However, seedstock producers should be vigilant and understand that this score indicates greater variation from ideal.

- A score of 2 or 8 are low scoring animals and should be looked at closely before purchasing.
- A score of 1- 9 should not be considered and should be culled.



How to use the Beef Class temperament Score

- A score of 1 is ideal.
- The score is evaluated as bulls leave the crush when being assessed for structure at approx. 18 months. This is not ideal as peer group behaviour in the yards can distort the result so assessments should be made at weaning.



Health Tips

Arrival of your new bull

Bulls can become upset and excited in the sale and delivery process. They are subjected to strange yards, different noises, loss of their mates, different people, different handling methods, trucking, unloading, new paddocks and different water and feed. This can upset animals, which are normally very quiet.

When the bull arrives home, unload him at the yards into a group of house cows, steers or herd cows. Never jump the bull from the back of a truck into a paddock. Bulls from different origins should be put into separate yards with other cattle, steers or cows for company. Provide hay and water and then leave the bull alone until the next day. All bulls should be drenched for worms every six months with a dectin drench. In addition they may need a drench for fluke if necessary and to be treated for lice. The following annual vaccinations are recommended:

- 7-in1 Vaccination annually
- Vibriosis vaccine annually
- Pestiguard vaccination annually

Give particular attention to preventing new bulls bringing Vibriosis into a herd. Vibriosis is a sexually transmitted disease that causes infertility and abortions and is most commonly introduced to a clean herd by an infected bull. Vaccinated bulls are free from Vibriosis so vaccinating bulls against the disease should be a routine practice.

Grass Tetany

Grass tetany has been the main cause of deaths of adult beef cows on farms in south-eastern Australia over the past 40 years. Seen mostly in lactating cows in winter and early spring, the disorder is associated with low levels of magnesium in the blood (hypomagnesaemia) and cerebrospinal fluid around the brain, and is characterised by nervous signs including initial excitement, bellowing, muscle spasms, tetany, convulsions and sudden death.

The cause is complex, involving animal, nutritional, climatic and management factors. The incidence of grass tetany varies between seasons and locations, affecting up to 2% of cows in an area in bad grass

tetany years, and up to 30% of cows in particular herds. Most clinically affected cows die. The magnesium status of cows depends mainly on the balance between the amount absorbed from the rumen and that lost in the milk. Any excess magnesium absorbed is excreted in the urine.

Hypomagnesaemia results when the output of magnesium exceeds the input. However it is only when hypomagnesaemia is pronounced and the level of magnesium in the cerebrospinal fluid also fails that signs of grass tetany occur.

Rapid treatment to restore blood magnesium is essential.

Injection of a magnesium solution into the jugular vein produces the best results but can be dangerous and should only be done by a veterinarian. Farmers should only treat affected cows by injection under the skin. Solutions that contain calcium as well as magnesium should be used to guard against possible hypocalcaemia.

Prevention has two aspects. The first is damage control in a crisis, when cows at risk receive hay and/or magnesium supplements and any obvious feed problems or causes of stress on cows are rectified. The second involves planning to avoid a crisis while maintaining a focus on enterprise productivity and profitability.

Sudden deaths in lactating cows in winter can be caused by bloat, mastitis, milk fever, clostridial diseases and other causes besides grass tetany. Be sure of the diagnosis. When one or more cases of grass tetany have occurred in a herd, immediate consideration should be given to providing magnesium supplements

Hay treated with Causmag is the most common supplement. The daily requirement of Causmag is 60 gm/cow/day. After supplementation commences, it takes 2-3 days before cows are protected, and protection ceases as soon as supplementation is stopped. Administration is by making a suspension of Causmag in water (600 gm in 2 litres), pouring it onto the cut edge of a small bale and feeding at a rate of one bale/10 cows/day.

Feeding grain eg oats can be used as a carrier medium for delivering Causmag to cattle. Add 600g Causmag to a slurry of 200ml water and 300g molasses poured over 3.5kg oats to supplement 10 cows /day. This mix will keep for at least 10 days.

Alternatively 600g Causmag with 1 litre water poured over 12 kg oats to 10 cows / day. This last ration must be fed the day it is mixed, as the Causmag dries and separates from the grain.

Adding magnesium salts (Epsom salts) to water troughs at a rate of 3 gm/litre can be effective if cows drink the water. It is usually an unreliable method because water intake by cows is generally low when they are grazing lush tetany-prone pastures, especially when other water sources are available.

Magnesium licks are useful but will not provide 100% protection because some cows do not use the licks. More cows accept licks if they have previously been exposed to licks. Most commercial magnesium licks and blocks contain up to 80% molasses because magnesium salts are not highly palatable. Licks and blocks should be placed near stock camps or watering points. Crusts which develop on licks should be removed, and licks should be moistened before cows are allowed access.

*The above article is taken in part for the DEPI website.
Full details can be viewed at DEPI*

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