



Fertile, Gentle, Growthy & Adapted.... Predictable, Functional Genetics....

CBV Update

Alf Jr was extremely busy this week so he asked me to write the CBV Update for this issue.

Mating groups C1 and C2 at Belah Valley have all been finalised. This involves tagging and matching over 600 calves so far in C1 and C2, all progeny from the first two mating periods of 21 days, and drafting cows and their calves individually into groups of 120 to 180 cows to appropriate 'C value' herds, primarily based on reproduction speed. Bulls are vaccinated ready for mating. The highlight has been that well over 50% of the CBV calf crop has arrived in C1 and C2 and we have most of the C3 calves on the ground. It looks like CBV will have our target of 75% tagged in C1, C2 and C3 by October 15. At 'Tondara' Stn, congratulations to Scott & Victoria Finger, their 4 children and Matt Boyd. They have over 60% of their calf crop already branded. That is a fantastic achievement, as they start mating on October 1st, and start calving in late July. Top Team effort.

We put a full day into sorting our sire groups every year. It's a day I really enjoy personally as Alf and I have time to reflect and discuss our breeding successes and directions, and to form up our annual mating blocks for this season. The oldest bull, *CBV 96-7143 Turbo*, will find a new home this year with a CBV client of 27 years standing. Turbo has

Alf Collins Sr

served us extremely well with 16 sons and grandsons working in the CBV sire group thus far and is the last of CBV's Jumbo sons. They are fleshy thrifty cattle, with virility second to none. A few of our really proven older sires are always sought after when they are finished here.

Alf Jr, Tony Carrett and I really had a great couple of days sorting the No 8 bulls into Keepers, Category 1, 2, and 3, and of course the cutters. From the Keepers we held 12 for CBV, and offer the rest to our clients as Keeper 2 category. All aspects of data are considered, and their physical standards as well. This year we rate as our best overall set of sale bulls ever.

CBV Bull Sale & Open Day was held back on Belah Valley, where 50 sires were on display and we were able to have hundreds of cows in some adjacent paddocks. For some years we conducted our Opening Sale Day wherever we were agisting our dry cattle, near Kynuna, Muttaborra, Banana, and Augathella. We appreciated the support of our clients who made the journeys, and our agistors who made every effort to assist us.

This year it was a real pleasure to welcome everyone back to our headquarters, as Alf Jr, Louise, and John and Tony had put lots of effort into setting the lots of 12 to 15 bulls into pens, with stacks of information on display, including 4 generations of

Inside this Issue:

CBV Update	Alf Collins Sr	1-2
Taking Responsibility... Ownership	Alf Collins Sr	3-5
Contact CBV		6

CBV Update... continued

reproduction data behind all bulls. Each year we try to improve, without too much fuss. The Helmsman Bid system ensured that everyone had a fair and equal time to select and to re-assess their values and quality without pressure. It does suit almost everyone, and others are welcome to select bulls at a later date from hundreds of bulls at CBV, or 'Gundaroo' Stn, Nebo, or 'Tondara' Station, 80 Km NNW of Collinsville. Our aim is to have complete and transparent data on all bulls for the most commercially relevant traits, prior to the sale at www.cbv.com.au as well as printed ready to fax or email from Belah Valley.

Recently the Australian Institute of Management recognised Alf Jr with the regional Rural/Remote Manager of the Year Award from a field of 13 nominations. As parents, we were very proud of his efforts. In early November, Alf Jr will address a major convention in Ascuncion, Paraguay, with attendees from many countries in Latin America, and North America. It is organised to promote agricultural research and extension, and to relate the practical application of science in business. This is

the second time CBV has been represented there, and we find we have so much in common with our fellow cattle-raising operations on that continent. CBV has had significant involvement with genetics and management in various areas of Latin America since 1992, and we have a long-term commitment to development of beef production there. They run some big AI programs there, and the same opportunities are available in Australia. **Contact us for bulls, or semen from some of our most proven CBV sires.**

With tough seasonal conditions over extensive areas of northern Australia, we find a heightening awareness of the true value of genuine adapted cattle, and a growing interest in the CBV management program of genetics for commercial competence. We are very committed to this philosophy of solutions via management and genetics combined.

Best regards,

Alf Collins Sr



CBV Bull Sale Day 2009...



Ownership is the cornerstone of democracy.

Twenty years ago I read Churchill's 'History of the English Speaking Peoples', and I concluded with two recurring perceptions; faith in the future, and the innate goodness in mankind. Sometimes one might wonder about this in the short-term view, yet when we read history, no matter how debilitating or oppressive the circumstances, good people ultimately overtook the negatives. Innovation and adaptation and human spirit overcame what seemed insurmountable odds, and the human race forged ahead with another page in history.



I do not believe that we can live in history, nor on the memories of victories won; although I am certain we are planning on failing if we ignore histories salient examples. Wisdom of the ages is no lightweight item.

The cattle industry has historically been conducted on land and resources generally not suited to more intensive forms of food production. This is not related to land quality, but governed more by demand, distance, accessibility, costs, methods of management, and perceptions.

Ruminants have this wonderful attribute of turning sunlight and relatively worthless grass and forages into a valuable commodity. Readers, in our case, ***it is beef***. Affordable balanced and necessary nutrition, for a 'food-security' challenged Earth is no small contribution to the future of the human race.

Recently I travelled across some areas of the East Kimberly, and Western Barkly regions, and a fair bit from Darwin in several directions, looking over cattle and country. I met with people at all levels, from the hands-on stock camps right to the owner operators, and got the privilege of swinging a bush and back-burning a break in a big body of grass. We beat the fire, and established a break, in the face of the best of breezes, and dry, dry grass. The fire-spotter in the chopper guided us until dark, while the grader driver, and all the staff were totally committed, and no one talked about 'knock-off time' or 'tucker'. My role, really, was incidental, and absolutely enjoyable. There is something very rewarding to work alongside a committed crew. Some were just passing through; retiree tourists, an itinerant builder & developer, and a historian, all glad to buck-in and help.

Dry season urgency had taken on, to get enough cattle marketed before too much weight

loss occurred, and to pick up some of the latest price rise, going onto boats. From the Kimberly, options for slaughter were 2900 km to the east or 3500 km to the south. Live export is a valuable trade, and there are various categories and price ranges to cater for all levels of turn-off. Similarly there are production systems at all degrees of the spectrum, from feral cattle harvesting to highly organised herd models.

Our Asian clients fully understand the importance of quality protein and minerals from fresh beef, and are skilled second to none in managing the fresh food chain, from shipping, feeding, and slaughter, to retailing, with no delay and in most cases no need for expensive and unwieldy refrigeration.

The logistics involved from the paddock to plate are wonderful, considering the distances involved and sheer numbers. At all levels, you can see the importance of people taking ownership and responsibility for their part in the food chain.

Within our barbed wire is the area of our responsibility; where we can exert maximum influence at minimum cost. The alternative is to blame costs or sale prices on the 'other bloke', where we have minimal influence on our input costs of materials etc, or on sale prices, and no likelihood of effecting any change. No responsibility and no effect.

Our responsibility is to govern factors that directly affect our margin, our turn-over, and our assets. I am not denying that we can share the downstream responsibilities, but am certain that unless we receive more than empty or vague promises we need to ignore the Valkyrie wails from all and sundry outside our wire. Shared responsibility and shared rewards seems reasonable. In an exploration camp, it is "pay up, or shut up".

In this real world of supply and demand, returns bounce around both sides of 'break-even'. Our purpose is to stay ahead of the tide, and to be proactive inside our wire, then see about the outside initiatives if we can realise value for effort.

On quick assessment, if our herd reproduction changes upward by 10% or 20% or even 40%, we get to keep the whole parcel. Over most herds in Northern Australia there is room for this change, with no more needed initially than recognition of deficiencies in our herds.

This is not palatable to operators if they are

convinced of their own efficiency, yet cannot show by turnoff figures or heifer replacement rates that their herds are effective on a strictly annualised basis. I recognise that there are some regions in Northern Australia that will not yield because of the extreme seasons from very wet, to very dry on relatively poor soils. Cattle grazing, in a less productive form is still the best land use, to maintain some form of financial enterprise. There are some very innovative people in the private sector. One of the best tools to turn these regions around has been officially denied to cattlemen, in the form of Gamba grass. It has no equal, in my opinion, used in rotation with companion legumes. The stupidity by politicians, academics and pseudo conservators that lied and connived to ban this plant just illustrates their incompetence to ever be able to assess or assist the private sector that paves their way. How much stupidity can the taxpayer carry?

Annualised herd records are the only way to determine herd efficiency. Wet and dry sorting of the herd delivers most of this accounting, where all dry cows are sold. These dry cows are usually fat, and mostly pregnant, but are already late. The flaw is that non-productive cows are carried for 6 months longer than necessary, thereby robbing the best end of the herd of grazing space through the dry season. I can think of many instances where the property would operate better with 30% less cattle going into the dry season, and demands of a weaner and a pregnancy by April or June are met, every year without excuses. **There is a bonus that cash flow increases, and grazing pressure decreases.** In our own case, this has meant that earning per hectare lifts, and risks decrease.

On properties where no female sales occur, this means that lots are dying. In a herd that sells 5,000 males each year, and no significantly similar volume of females, then all females are being absorbed into the herd to simply replace the dead females. To me that indicates that if 5,000 died, then probably 10,000 are near death and unable to give a proper return of reproduction and survival. Similarly if there are big sales of heifers, this illustrates that similar numbers of empty free-loader cows are in the system, to maintain herd numbers. Either way lots of dollars are being bypassed in lost production or sales not made.

Often the excuse for selling heifers is that they are too light to mate, or poor types. If they are



too light, they are either born too late in the season to be useful, or they are bred by substandard bulls. **Both problems can be solved by taking responsibility and action. No herd can be changed overnight, but attitudes can.** The first step in a journey is simply that; one step.

There are several contributing factors. Female body weight is a good example. I have seen paddocks of bulls that are very big, and they breed daughters that are similarly very big; the boss says, 'look at this, I have taken care of body weight, I have bought all my bulls with real frame and bone, EBVs above a number, and my steers are all making the boat weights'. They say, 'I have gotten into hybrid vigour and cross-breeding, and bought from leading studs'

To my way of thinking, it is not about raw weight, but **more about fitness for function.** Delayed puberty from large framed cattle is well documented, and fails the best intentions. www.cbv.com.au (CBV Newsletter #8 Ref: KJ Rowan) Hybrid vigour cannot deliver anything if combined stressors prevent expression of heterosis. Only one aspect caused me concern, and that was the hairy type cattle that were introduced for hybrid vigour, and I believe the environment is too harsh for too many months each year for them to contribute more than tokenism, or conversely the stocking rates needed for them to shine represents a waste of land area per animal unit. www.cbv.com.au (CBV Newsletter #9 Ref: Dr JE Vercoe)

A major contributing factor to production failure is the use of bulls from herds that have very limited selection pressure for the ability to reproduce on time, every year, with no excuses for failure, and with transparent herd records to back this up. Whole herd management for reproduction is by far the most direct route I know of to influence profit directly and consistently.

Certainly CBV has taken this route for 3 decades, and sires used have these influential traits stacked layer on layer, for generations. Our own clients are convincing evidence that this is responsible action to control their own destiny, and it is all within their own boundaries. Visit (www.cbv.com.au) and look for the 'CBV ALL SIREs' list to discover the depth of generations of selection and its effect on our herds. Calving interval, Days to Calving EBV, Scrotal Size EBV, and weight at puberty all illustrate our commitment to sound genetics and transparency in our herd

management at low operational cost.

A few bulls introduced here or there are of limited usefulness; a whole herd approach is necessary to have beneficial results. There are no easy fixes, yet there are relatively easy paths to effective herd results.

The one round per year approach, where all dry cows are sold is very attractive from the perspective of low labour and mustering costs. This saving alone is considerable, and is practiced by some very efficient operators. Late calving cows are still in the system, and the drag in the system is expressed as small and late progeny that never make it into the replacement female groups on time and the steer portion that cost another season to make the sales team. Depending on the preceding season, there can be 10 to 30% late or undersized calves, and then the complete miss in annualised production by the cows coming through as "dry". They eat a lot of grass that would be better utilized by the most productive cows in the herd.

These freeloaders are dry for several reasons.

1. Got pregnant on time then lost the pregnancy or their calf before weaning
2. Failed to get pregnant on time last season
3. Simply failed for physiological reasons, related to ovarian or uterine conditions
4. Delayed pregnancy due to disease and subsequent immune response delay to cycle

This year I have travelled through a broad and diverse range of properties across the top half of Australia. I am mindful of the impact of nutrition, prejudice, unwillingness to make change, fear of change, lack of incentive, and good and bad genetic inputs.

I have seen the full spectrum of thought on this subject, from flat denial, to creative accounting, heroic management and wild dreamers. No doubt there is room for all that in the cattle industry; they are all part of it. However some may not stay the distance, or stand the scrutiny of their banker forever. That is not my issue here, as I have enjoyed the company of cattlemen and women within all those categories or combinations of them. People that are closely involved in cattle and country are always a pleasure to know, and we can all relate to wins and losses we have experienced along the way. The most capable managers have usually had the most losses and then the most wins to balance the book, as they



have usually tested the barriers to a greater degree. ***'Never venture- never win' seems to apply in most things.***

I am assured by the innovative managers that a late Summer muster definitely pays, with branding, weaning, and preg-testing all happening. By putting the cows into Capability units, you can achieve lots. Early Pregnant as Block One, and Later Pregnant as Block Two, all to calve by Christmas are two blocks worth targeting. Block Three in the third quarter of the financial year are sometimes a buffer herd, and often sacrificed for cash flow and grazing room. I do not value Block Three cows or calves. Then the empty cows, divided into two groups, Saleable NOW, and Saleable SOON. Selling cattle is the best target, and a just reward. Reduced stock on hand means you have got cash, and you are free of the drag on diminishing resources as the dry season progresses.

Then you have the resources to conduct a second round towards the end of the dry, without knocking baby calves or weak cows about, as the herd is in management blocks based on timing and category of stock, with the added condition gained from more hectares per animal unit. Weaning, and branding sets the mob up for the next season. Selling out the cows that lost either their pregnancy or their calves always helps cash flow and keeps the stocking rate in tune with the available resources. The subsequent increase in cow body condition is a wonderful asset in this program. This is the asset that cannot be imagined, if you are used to all wet cows being dog-poor and hungry at the late end of the 'dry'. It has to be experienced.

I saw a lot of highly adapted herds where there is still scope for change. I met many people capable of carrying out innovative management given the right responsibility and encouragement. I saw plenty of cattle that would respond to this assertive management. This strategy is becoming more acceptable now than it was ten years ago, and I believe will become 'almost normal' in the next ten years. I do wonder why the delay?

Alf Collins Sr





predictable functional genetics...

Alf Jr & Louise Collins

"Belah Valley"
P.O. Box One
Marlborough
Qld 4705 Australia

Ph: (07) 4935 6222
Int: 61 7 4935 6222
Fax: (07) 49 35 6177
Mobile: 04 3835 6050

E-mail: alfcollinsjr@bigpond.com.au

Alf Sr & Wendy Collins

484 Eichelberger Street
North Rockhampton
Qld 4701
Australia

Ph: (07) 4926 5165
Int: 61 7 4926 5165
Fax: (07) 4928 2521
Mobile: 04 1972 6420

E-mail: alfcollins@bigpond.com.au

Scott & Victoria Finger

"Tondara"
M.S. 239
Bowen
Qld 4805 Australia

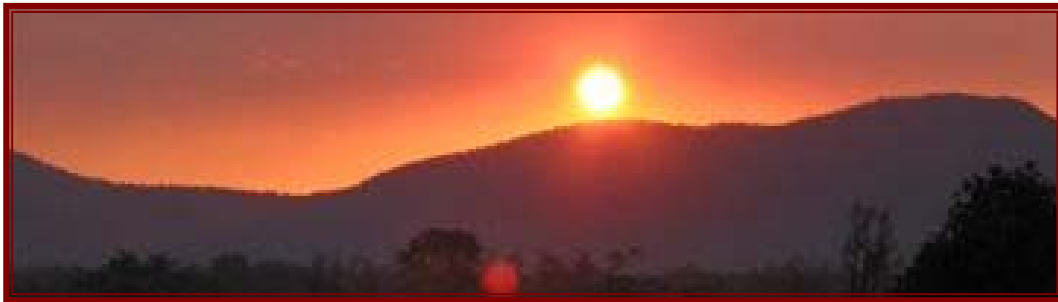
Ph: (07) 4785 3468
Int: 61 7 4785 3468
Fax: (07) 4785 3468
Mobile: 04 1903 9886

E-mail: tondara1@bigpond.com

CBV is committed to supplying quality genetics to our clients. We would appreciate your feedback and thoughts on our cattle and publications.

Visit: www.cbv.com.au

~ "Buy your bulls from someone who manages like you aim to." Alf Collins Sr ~



We would like to expand the contact list for our newsletter distribution. We would appreciate email or postal addresses of progressive and interested people.

Email: dallas.hogan@bigpond.com

Post: Dallas Hogan, CBV Newsletter, 139 Von Allmen Rd, Pink Lily, Qld 4702.

If you would like to discontinue your CBV subscription please notify me,

Thank you, Dallas...