

BEEF FARM MANAGEMENT

The most valuable beef carcass is that unmarked by rough handling, well proportioned as to fat and muscle and heavier in the hindquarters than at the shoulder. To produce this carcass type the animal must have good feed and be quickly grown. The average Australian beef steer is not of high quality, being too heavy in the shoulder, too old when slaughtered and is likely to have a small quantity of badly coloured fat.

Better nutrition improves carcass quality. In the southern regions this is achieved by pasture improvement and fattening on grain such as grain sorghum. This is the way prime beef is produced in the USA. The quality of Australian beef has been improved with the introduction of a number of European breeds such as the *Salers* and *Maine Anjou*.

Breeds should be selected which are suitable for the climate. Beef production factors are the best factors to consider. It is better to use a few breeding factors rather than unnecessary factors such as length of horns. Heat resistance and weight gains are most important for cattle in the hot regions of Australia.

It is also important to ascertain whether or not the sires can pass the desirable characteristics to their progeny. Therefore, Sires should be progeny tested. On smaller southern properties, the weighing of cattle will produce major improvements in beef production as it will show quite clearly those bulls which are producing the fastest growing calves.

Better handling of stock will increase production by reducing loss of weight through overexcitement and will also reduce overeating. It is important to educate stock from the weaner stage, getting them accustomed to moving quietly through the yards, helped by good dogs. Cattle are best fed as they come out of the crush.

The old style roping and branding is not used today but instead, branding cradles are used. This reduces cattle damage through excitement when they have to be mustered and put through the yards for branding and other operations. Bruising and marking of carcasses is caused by cattle horning one another and by rough handling.

Therefore, it is better to dehorn or use poll bulls. The use of trucks to take cattle to market has reduced the loss of condition during droving particularly in the northern parts of Australia

CROSSBREEDING

Crossbreeding is on the increase due to the benefits from hybrid vigour as well as the combination of desirable traits. These aspects have been promoted by the agricultural consultants but often at the expense of providing simple easy to use crossbreeding systems. Northern breeders tend to be the main proponents of crossbreeding however, many of these herds have introduced tick resistant, climatically adaptable cattle that have not been as fertile as desired. In Southern Australia, there has been a rapid and significant increase in the use of European breeds in crossbreeding programs.

However, there is now a realization that whereas these animals have boosted beef per animal they should be considered more in the light as terminal breeds.

PURE BREEDING

The majority of Australia's cattle population are purebreds. NSW, Victoria and Tasmania are strong purebred states. The strongest purebred (including horned and polled) is the *Hereford* of the purebred market. The *Hereford* is followed by *Holstein*, *Brahman*, *Simmental*, *Angus*, *Murray Grey* and *Shorthorn* breeds.

GENETIC IMPROVEMENT

BREEDPLAN is a national all breeds performance program used extensively across a wide cross section of the industry. It is a world class tool for the comprehensive recording and measuring of genetic trends within herds.

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