

## Fossil Creek "AROUND THE TRAPS"

Those of you who keep an eye on our Fossil Creek Angus Facebook page will have seen that Neil and Rose have been out and about over the last couple of months while Blair and Jane hold the fort. We all really value this one on one time looking at properties, heifers, breeding cows and herdsires and chewing the fat on the beef industry.

Neil's passion and drive for researching, capturing and implementing the available data and information can be a little overpowering as he admits. But as he says, there are still so many low hanging fruit easily within our reach to be able to significantly tweak productivity and profitability in our industry.

It is pretty cool to see the pride you have in your cows and the high regard you are giving to your breeding boys. The bulls are being rightly considered as a valuable asset, keeping them trim & fit (if possible in a paddock with a hill where they have to climb to get to water is superior to a flat paddock) helps longevity of bulls and rams, as you know.

We have seen nearly 70 Fossil Creek bulls recently on these travels and not one showing any soundness or temperament issues.

**Thursday 20<sup>th</sup>, Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> & Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> May.**

**Please put our bull open days in your calendar now and look out for our Fossil Creek Angus 2021 Catalogue in your mailbox (and online) in mid May.**



M19- Ryan Ambler, Quiet tidy 5 year old Everest J20 son



N3- Mt Watkins, Grunty powerhouse



M67 - Warwick Green, Strong bull from FCA Iris family



N66- Moutere Station, son of matriarch MF 966



N44 -Mt Watkins, Strong bull from FCA Kirsti dam



N51 -Warwick Green, Young bull with great length



Meeting of heads of state - Moutere Station



M159 - Gavin King, sired by FCA H28



L88 - Mt Albert Station, sired by G4 x Juno - heaps of grunt

[www.FossilCreekAngus.co.nz](http://www.FossilCreekAngus.co.nz)

Neil and Rose Sanderson:  
neilandrose@fossilcreekangus.co.nz  
(03) 4324093 / (021) 332919

Blair and Jane Smith:  
newhavenfarms@netspeed.net.nz  
(03) 4324154 / (027) 4324154



**FOSSIL CREEK ANGUS**

ROCK SOLID ANGUS GENETICS

## AUTUMN APRIL 2021 NEWSLETTER

Wow – what a year it has been! With just over 12 months since we went into “lock down” it makes you appreciate being a farmer. An essential industry. Strong rural communities.

We are all about to tackle a tsunami of regulations head on, and it is hard not to get distracted by the noise from Wellington. The key point that we need to keep pushing with the bureaucrats is that efficient pastoral farming is the only way forward – forget re-arranging the deckchairs with methane EBVs, 15% lower stocking rates and fencing off waterways that are dry 95% of the time - the way forward is to keep being the most efficient converters of pasture into protein in the world. As a genetics supplier, it is our responsibility to ensure that we help you to make substantial genetic gains every season, in order for you to continue to increase efficiency (and profitability) each and every year.

### Longevity – the trait to trump all traits!

The most important economic trait in the beef herd is the ability for a female to calve at 2 years and subsequently every year for at least 5 more years. Getting in calf as a yearling within 2 cycles really sets the biological reproductive clock for the life of the heifer.



Data from the world's largest multibreed performance evaluation in USA, it shows that 66% of cows that fail to reach this target do so because of fertility failure. This may

relate to many different reasons such as difficult calvings and failed rebreeding, poor body condition score, ovarian failures, infection etc.

This large evaluation system has an all-purpose breeding index and their trait weightings are highest for stayability or longevity. This contributes to 25% of the whole index, such is the importance their designers place on this feature – if only we could have a longevity EBV in New Zealand!

Fossil Creek Angus has for years been trying to impress upon BreedPlan the importance of longevity especially because the Data is actually available but not used to generate a breeding value. Angus NZ has never championed the idea either. If we don't have this information available in the form of an EBV then we can't include it in an economic Index. Our biggest opportunity to make economic gain is being lost.

However we are putting our money where our mouth is and 'walking the walk'. We recently looked across the Angus NZ database in respect of the 2013 Active females and their productivity. In the Fossil Creek herd we have about 30 % of that year group still in the herd having had 6 calves. Many of the larger herds have only around 10% of cows remaining in the herd at 8 years old and many other herds have more retention but with very high percentages of females either not calving at 2 years or missing one, two or even three calves. With a calving rate of only around 85% in our National beef herd which has been stable for 40 years it is concerning that many of our Stud stock herds are failing to address these issues in their own herds while promoting rhetoric about fertility.

Be very careful to only buy bulls from Studs which calve at 2years old and maintain a tight calving pattern subsequently with no freeloaders carried over. These are like unionists - there for the glory, make a lot of noise but don't actually do any work.

**21st Annual BULL SALE**  
Thursday 17th JUNE @ 2pm

**Bull Open Days**  
Thursday 20th May  
Thursday 27th May  
Saturday 29th May  
1 - 4pm

**FOSSIL CREEK ANGUS**



Find us on Facebook  
@fossilcreekangus

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**FOSSIL CREEK ANGUS**

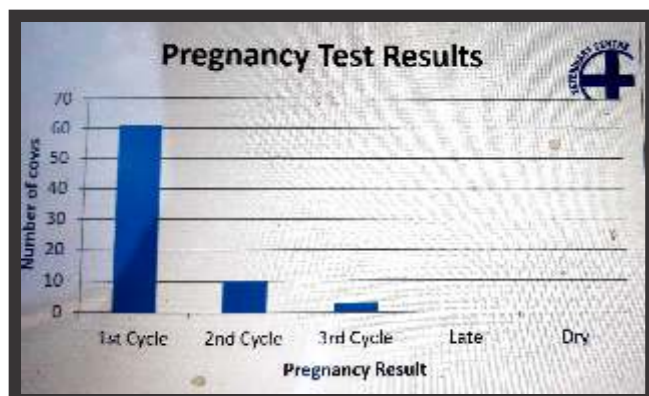
## FOSSIL CREEK – FROM THE FIELD



What a heck of a rough ride mother nature has served up the majority of the country, over the past 6 months. While we had a relatively mild Winter (with only one decent snow fall up on the hill block where the Fossil Creek stud cows are run) this was followed by a nasty 6 months of zero rain – with only 280 mms falling during 2020, before the widespread 200 mm flood at Christmas. And just like the entire East Coast, we haven't seen a lot of rain action since, with Autumn frosts now kicking in. We really feel the pain of North Canterbury, our neighbours in South Canterbury and then the South Otago region who are really hurting at present with the same Autumn dry.

We had a great calving up on the hill block again this year - while it is always a challenge leaping around tussocks to tag calves, we believe it is important that our girls are wintered and calved up in the hills in genuine commercial conditions. Despite the cows chewing on the equivalent of cardboard all Summer, we have a great crop of 330 calves.

We were delighted with the our recent 100% in-calf rate for the 80 R3 Heifers – getting back in calf again the second time with 53 days -with the vast majority in the first cycle (so excited in fact, that Jane pushed the wrong button on the laptop and we had to scan them all again a second time- thanks to Dr Dave Robertson for his speedy date scanning – fortunately coming up with the same result both times!). We remain focused on a tight calving pattern, with a 53 day window for all matings (just over 2 cycles). This hard line policy will always pay dividends throughout a cow's breeding life.



## YOUR CASH COW

Choosing the optimum Beef cow is not Rocket Science, but it becomes complicated by a lot of promotional rhetoric. As with many things in life, excesses in selection traits in your beef cows may not get the best outcomes.

A moderate framed quiet cow with strong spine and leg and foot structure should last longer in the herd, but she must be able to get in calf as a 15 month heifer in no more than 2 cycles with a bull. Then wean an above average weight calf and get back in calf again in 2.5 cycles with a bull for at least 6-8 years. Longevity is like a free lunch.

With respect of the numbers that the stud breeders are all throwing around the place, never just choose one or two traits. Balance is the safest option to improve your productivity, but it is a very long road to lift your whole herd into an acceptable balanced set of above average EBVs. Our advice is to avoid poor calving ease and growth traits in the bottom quarter of the breed. Don't get carried away with the scrotal circumference EBV unless very low. Don't worry about Days to calving but pray for a longevity EBV asap.

Certainly try and keep mature cow weight down – however, high feed efficiency in a big cow is possibly better than poor feed efficiency in a small cow.

The finishers make more money selling high weight steers before 20 months. So weaning weight, yearling weight and carcass weight EBVs are all critical. You are not paid for eye muscle area, you may get pinged for too much fat and may get a premium for marbling. Fats around breed average are a very good compromise between losses from trimming and gains in fertility, and like most things, extremes may be detrimental.

A well designed set of Selection Indexes should make the commercial breeders job really easy. BUT for breeds like Angus and Hereford which are both strong maternal and Terminal breeds, a one size fits all index like currently available doesn't work. Either the option of subindexes (like the middle section of our sale catalogue) or a separate Maternal and Terminal index should be requested by commercial breeders. This all sounds basic and easy but a sort through the NZ pedigree Angus records reveals the alarming difficulty of the task!

BETWEEN 2012 AND 2015 THERE WERE 40,000 ANGUS PEDIGREE FEMALES REGISTERED. FROM THESE IF YOU SORT THE ONES WITH BETTER THAN AVERAGE EBVS FOR CALVING EASE AND ALL GROWTH TRAITS, CARCASS WEIGHT, SCROTAL AND RIB AND RUMP FAT AND WITH MATURE COW WEIGHT LESS THAN 600 DAY WEIGHT AND MARBLING ABOVE BREED AVERAGE THERE ARE ONLY 15 FEMALES FROM 40,000 WHICH MEET THIS CRITERIA!

AND ONLY 5 OF THESE ARE STILL ACTIVE ON THE REGISTER TODAY. ie 1 X 9 YEAR OLD, 1 X 8 YEAR OLD, 2 X 6 YEAR OLDS AND 1 X 5 YEAR OLD. SO JUST LIKE A PERFECT HUSBAND, A PERFECT COW IS HARD TO GET!!!!

However, the important thing is that you look at what traits will make the most difference in your breeding herd, and then work from there. We are here to help you decipher the wood from the trees, please pick up the phone for a chat.

## STRUCTURAL SOUNDNESS FIRST AND FOREMOST

Two cornerstones of the breeding programme at Fossil Creek Angus have always been fertility and structural integrity. Mating yearling heifers and condensed mating periods have contributed to high fertility rates for the Stud and our clients. This leads to more profitability for the clients and the wider industry.

We have led the way in the breed for maintaining structural soundness in the herd and the breeding cows in particular, some would say we are too strict in this area but we would rather it that way. Strict culling on all age groups of females annually results in a consistent type within the herd, with a focus on leg and pelvic structure and locomotion. Clean, smooth shoulders and an ability to hold their head up make for easy calving ability and helps with mobility on steep hill country as well.



The Fossil Creek herd is renowned for calving ease and strong growth, and our focus is to use the appropriate genetics to lower mature cow size without sacrificing the growth and carcass weight attributes that we have locked into our programme.

We have one of the lowest breakdown rates for structural related problems in our bulls, and remember that we have a full money-back 3 year guarantee on our bulls, not some dodgy 'behind the scenes auction credit' policy.

Fossil Creek Angus is one of a small group of Angus herds in the South Island fully committed to selection for soundness and using independent structural soundness assessment to assist decision making in the bull sale selection process. Our assessor, Bill Austin has a very keen eye and years of experience which is definitely worth the investment in time to get Bill and Judy in to do this independent analysis along with a 'temperament score'. We carry out semen testing on all bulls catalogued in our sale – this is another tool in the toolbox for ensuring that your bull purchasing decision is a safe one. These are all tested on site by 2 vets and assistant Jane (not the highlight of her year) and then sent away for a full morphology report.

## FOSSIL CREEK 21st ANNUAL BULL SALE THURSDAY 17TH JUNE 2021

We are looking forward to hosting you at the 21st Annual Fossil Creek Angus R2 Bull sale at Ngapara in June. This will be a celebratory event to acknowledge our clients and Fossil Creek's commitment to the industry over the past 21 years and into the future.

We are delighted with our lineup of boys for the sale including sons of 'Fossil Creek N21 Ngatea' and 'N20 Nigel', 'Earnsclough Tussock', 'HD Spotlight', 'Storth Oaks Everest', along with A.I. sires.



Our 3 Fossil Creek Bull Open Days worked particularly well last year – giving you time to look at all the bulls in a relaxed atmosphere and allow you to do your homework well before sale day.

Our catalogue will be sent out to you in mid-May with all details of bulls and sale logistics in it. Remember that you will be able to view all bull sale details online (NZ Angus online EBVs, or click via our Fossil Creek Website) at least a week or so before the catalogue arrives in your mailbox.

