

WINTER/SPRING NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2022



THE SUBINDEX 'STAR' SYSTEM...

Many of you really like our 'Star' system in the middle of our catalogue – which we got Abacus Bio to develop a few years ago, to add relevant weighting when analysing bulls instead of generic industry indexes. Some industry indexes have some really bizarre weighting on certain EBVs within them – which risks buyers sourcing the wrong bull for their herd if they do not delve deeper into EBVs. (See below)

We are currently working with the experts at Abacus Bio in Dunedin to revise the SubIndex platform. It is crucial that we do this as the original Maternal Index had too much downward weighting on negative Rib fats, which if you read the article relating to recent research in another section in this newsletter, you will understand the reasoning. It is crucial that any index is transparent, relevant and accurate, or it can be a dangerous decision-support tool.

An interesting side issue to point out is the continued issue that we have with the Angus NZ Indexes in their current form. We remain concerned that many bull buyers simply focus on comparing the generic industry indexes when skipping through bull catalogues, not actual EBVs. A simple yet dangerous way to compare bulls – as you will see below. Angus NZ have had many years and much criticism from members relating to these indexes but has failed to address this critical deficiency and continue to mislead commercial breeders, hence why it is important that people understand each EBV itself before putting any weighting on an overall Index.

Bull (B) EBVs



Bull (B) above has been given a GOOD Angus NZ Self-replacing Index (which is supposed to be Maternal Trait focused!), one that makes him supposed above average on maternal traits, even though...

- * He is in the Bottom 1% for Calving Ease Direct, Calving Ease Daughters, Birth Weight
- * He is in the Bottom 7% for Days to Calving'

You would never look at buying this bull once you look at his actual EBVs for Birth Weight, Calving Ease, or Milk!

So ask yourself (and Angus NZ) what 'weighting' do traits you don't even get paid for such as Retail Beef Yield have in the self-replacing index compared with actual maternal traits that could be the difference between having a live calf or not?!

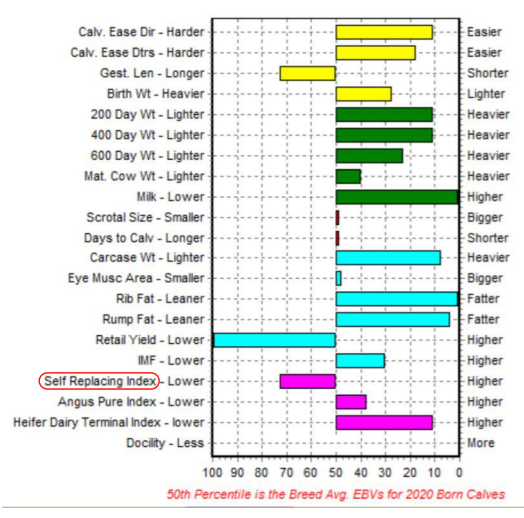
We wish you all a productive Spring with kind weather conditions and optimal grass growth. We hope that should you get the chance, that you will come and view the Fossil Creek breeding herd and young stock and check that we are really practicing what we preach.

Kind regards, Blair & Jane and Neil & Rose



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Bull (A) EBVs



Bull (A) has been given a very POOR (below 'breed average') Angus NZ Self-replacing Index score.

Seems strange, given that he is:

- * In the top 20% for Calving Ease Direct, Calving Ease Daughters, Top 30% for Birth Weight
- * In the top 50% for Days to Calving

JUNE 2022 SALE

A huge thank you to all of those that attended our R2 Bull Sale (including those that watched it live online, you are a lot cheaper to run in beer and meat than those who stayed on until 2am!).



We had over 200 people at our sale, a great atmosphere and a celebration of everything that is good about rural New Zealand. As usual, we thoroughly enjoyed discussing the finer aspects of beef breeding pre-sale and the political discussions post-sale. Thank you to our bidders, underbidders and helpers at our sale, it was great to see our new sale venue run so smoothly (apart from the entry door issue and Jane's political speech going on for far too long, she is at risk of losing her pre-sale speaking rights!). Doug Brand and his export-quality meat gave another outstanding 'Branded BBQ' showcase with slow cooked brisket and lamb shoulder and reverse-seared ribeye and lamb racks. We really appreciated Doug travelling down from Canterbury to keep the troops fed. We were blown away by the distance that people travelled to get to our open days and our auction- including one snow-bound Central Otago station who travelled in a tractor for an hour in the snow before they could even make it to the road. Dedication.

While we did sell 3 bulls to other Studs around the country, we prefer this to be a low-key purchase – we never purposely market to other studs, push for headlines by selling or buying \$100,000 bulls - modest, salt of the earth farming operations are our bread and butter - we get so much out of helping you achieve your long term genetic goals by understanding the type of bull that will fit your individual breeding programme, not just a one-off purchase. We were really proud of the line up of Fossil Creek bulls that we had to offer and felt that these bulls were a genuine reflection of our programme - in both phenotype and genotype. We are also really proud of our client base – you do your homework pre-sale to ensure that you buy the right genetics for your herd, not just selecting at random on a generic industry index.

Some studs have a philosophy of catering to everyone's needs and this sometimes shows through in a line of bulls where it isn't entirely clear what the stud's focus is. We continue to aim for a very even, structurally sound, true-to-type line of bulls that will shift anywhere in the country. We believe that we got very close to that this year and we will continue to push ourselves and our genetics to present the very best genetics each and every year. We are also very proud of the fact that no one turns up at our sale with a pocket full of 'credits' from bull breakdowns that they have to spend by bidding against you at the sale. We believe that this practice is unjust and unfair for genuine bidders and we won't engage in it.



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Our Fossil Creek 'Rock Solid' guarantee for 3 years means a cash refund on a per year-pro rata basis, for any bull that becomes structurally unsound within this time period. This also means that this does not tie you into coming back to our sale if you don't think our bulls are up to it! We have challenged the insurance companies to look at a way of rewarding people that buy bulls from sales that have low 'breakdown' rates (as the insurance companies do of course track this) to give a discounted premium when insuring bulls from that particular stud. The time, monitoring, money and effort that we put into ensuring that our bulls are structurally sound, semen tested, BVD tested, vaccinated and independently assessed, should follow through to a reward for our clients for choosing a stud that expects and delivers a low breakdown rate in bulls. We were disappointed to see some of our clients miss out on bulls this year and are pleased that we will have the opportunity to lift the bull numbers at our auction next year while still maintaining a high level of quality, due to 180 bull calves being born in our 2021 cohort.



Jack, Blair and Ben having a laugh the day before the Bull Sale, with Jane's new masks.

NEW HERDSIRES

We have travelled some fairly long distances this year and rifled through a myriad of bull catalogues to find a new herdsire to complement our 2021 purchased herdsires, our A.I programme and the outstanding Fossil Creek R018 Bull that we have kept this year.



Fossil Creek R018

We were fortunate to purchase 'Te Mania R300' for \$54,000 in conjunction with Stokman Angus (Waikete Valley, Rotorua) and Ardrossan Angus (NSW, Australia) in late June. We feel that he will be an ideal fit with our multi-trait, balanced EBV programme going forward.



Fossil Creek mixed age cows on the hill block 10th August 2022

BEEF COW FERTILITY... RESEARCH & RESULTS TO CONSIDER.

Recently, Beef and Lamb Genetics NZ hosted a webinar with Dr Wayne Pitchford, Adelaide University and Jason Archer from BLGNZ. They combined the findings of nearly 10 years of research into Beef cow fertility in both NZ and Australia involving thousands of commercial cows in many herds and environments.

Key Findings:

- Fertility and pregnancy outcomes or success in mature cows is NOT related to Rib and Rump fat EBVS.
- Very low fat EBVs in heifers combined with feed stress before and after mating may reduce pregnancy rates in yearling heifers but this does not carry through to older females.
- There is a strong relationship between Body Condition Score ('BCS') and pregnancy rate.
- However there is NO genetic correlation between Rib/Rump fats and Body Condition score. Angus Australia are developing a research EBV for BCS
- Currently the most valid EBV that relates to cow fertility is the Days to Calving EBV. This is really badly named and confuses many people as it actually relates more to Days to Conception following calving.
- Each ONE day of the EBV relates to ONE percent better pregnancy rate in a cow.
- When mating yearling heifers, we continue to recommend a short 42-day strict natural mating regime and cull any empties.
- Rib and Rump fat EBVs were always developed to give indications of subcutaneous fat propensity in respect of carcass composition and possible discounts for over-fat carcasses. They have been somewhat hijacked and embellished by some breeders to use as a bull marketing tool related to female fertility. This is misleading.

FOSSIL CREEK IN THE FIELD

The hill block is covered in snow at the time of writing this, we don't expect any pasture growth until October on the hill block but are delighted with the crop of 350, 2021 born bull and heifer calves. They are all wintered up on our hill block in their two big mobs – this is a good challenge with social pressure, feed pressure, snow and arctic winds in the mix. There are some stunning sons from our herdsires 'Fossil Creek Prophet', 'Te Mania Powerman', 'Earnsleugh PisaRange', 'HD Spotlight', 'Fossil Creek Navigator', 'Rockley Rocky', and our A.I sires 'Musgrave Blackloch', 'Taimate Lazarus' and 'KG Justified' lining up for next year's R2 Bull sale in June 2023.

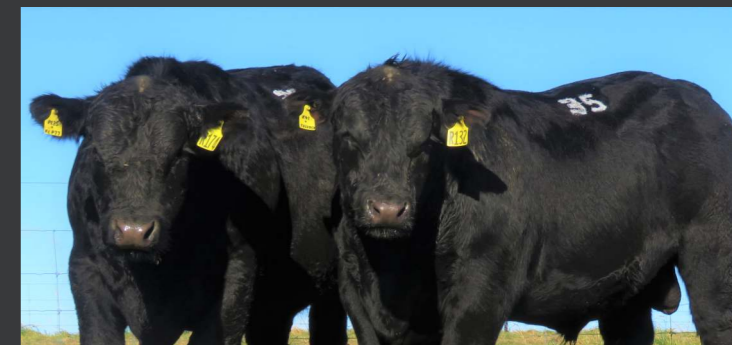
Its hard to believe that calving is just around the corner – with the R2 Heifers due in late August and the R3 Heifers and mixed age cows in early September.

Neil and Rose have settled into living at Weston, on the outskirts of Oamaru – with a young family having purchased their 'Craigvar' farm, this is a great outcome. They have been enjoying travelling around Australia visiting farms, friends, and family - including their second wee granddaughter Maya Rose, born a week after this year's bull sale.

Back at the hill block, Ben Paton and Jack Price have managed to smile and tolerate their working conditions for another year (!) and we have local lad Will Plunket on work experience one day a week from Waitaki Boys' High School. Along with Charlotte, Henry and George we have a pretty young team that get a variety of tasks thrown at them - from mustering to semen testing, lamb crutching to bull branding, there is certainly never a dull moment around here. Blair continues on his mid-life crisis crusade of playing hockey and Jane is going crazier than usual over the flawed methane myth, and particularly so over the fact that the beef, sheep and deer industry will be offsetting intensive dairying, in more ways than one. She is working on a 'no bullshit' solution!

YEARLING BULLS FOR YEARLING HEIFER MATINGS.

We do always have a small number of Yearling bulls for sale – we do this via private sale so that we can carefully match these young bulls with the client herd's requirements and overall breeding objectives. We also are aware that unlike coastal stud operations with plenty of green grass, these boys are literally on the hillblock in the snow/dust/mud until late September and to hold an auction would be a tricky task.



Our entire bull calf drop in 2021 was 180 bull calves. From these, close to 80% of these are breed average or above for Direct Calving Ease and Daughter Calving Ease EBVs. In other words the Fossil Creek herd is an extremely good calving ease herd yet we haven't sacrificed growth, carcass weight or fertility to reach this point, a feature of which we are extremely proud. It is a very tricky balancing act, but one that has come to fruition by not tipping the balance by focusing too much on a single trait, which can make for good headlines - but bad for the long term outcome in your client's breeding herds. The Angus NZ Heifer Calving index has our yearling bull crop showing over 82% above NZ breed average, however it is essential regardless of whether it is a Yearling or an R2 bull that you are buying – look at the individual EBVs, not just an overall index.

GENOMICS - WHAT DO THESE MEAN FOR BULL BUYERS?

All of our 2021 born calves have been genotyped and had their EBV accuracy strengthened by the addition of genomic data. This '50K' testing comes at a considerable cost (as we test all calves born) but not only are all our young cattle given more accurate EBVs - they can be verified to both parents, which backs up our single-sire mating system and tagging at birth programme. This is not only a valuable double-check for our system, but potentially speeds up genetic gain (as it is vastly more accurate than generically assuming that progeny inherit 50% of genes from their Dam and 50% of genes from their Sire, which is seldom the case in practice, but all that genetic systems could assume before we had the ability to utilise genomics).