

B+L GENETICS BULL BUYING WORKSHOP

On Monday 29th April, Beef+Lamb Genetics are holding a 'Bull Buying Workshop' facilitated by industry expert Jo Scott of Targeted Breeding. This will be a practical session on your breeding objectives, understanding EBVs and structurally assessing bulls. We are hosting it this year, at our Fossil Creek Bull selling venue at 434 Dunrobin Road, Five Forks, 1pm-4:30pm. Further details can be found at <https://beeflambnz.com/events>.

BEEF CENTRAL EFFICIENCY STUDY*

Efficiency is a critical factor in the livestock industry, where optimising resource use is essential for economic and environmental sustainability. Feed efficiency refers to the amount of feed required to produce a given amount of beef or how effectively cattle can convert grass into beef.

There are two critical and related questions regarding feed efficiency for commercial producers;

1. Should priority be given to reducing the inputs (feed intake) or increasing the outputs (production)?
2. Should the focus be on selecting for productive herds or feed efficient animals?

At an individual level, feed efficiency is expressed as residual feed intake (RFI). Research has found that RFI is moderately heritable and that there are antagonistic relationships with some fertility traits in both females and bulls. This means that targeting for low RFI (ie. more efficient animals) may negatively impact herd fertility. A large long term study in Australia with selection for high & low RFI animals found that the low RFI animals were larger, leaner & later maturing.

Given that nutrition is a limiting factor for many beef producing regions, it is animals' performance under these conditions that is most important, rather than their performance in a controlled environment where nutrition is not limiting.

Our interpretation is that commercial breeding businesses will do more to improve the feed efficiency of their herd by selecting for traits that will improve overall herd productivity (fertility & growth) than by trying to select for animals that have better individual feed efficiency.

Focusing on productivity (outputs) has a direct effect on producers bottom line & does not require complexity of adding new traits to breeding objectives.

**reference – 'Beef Central – Australia' article 2023 – 'The Business of Beef: Understanding what really drives efficiency in an Australian beef herd'*

GOING FOR GOLD

Fossil Creek Angus is proud to support Canoe Racing NZ K4 team member Olivia Brett. Olivia's team won a gold medal last year at the Canoe Sprint Racing World Champs in Germany in a time of 1:30:606 and was the first ever NZ K4 team (male or female) to do so. They are about to leave for racing in Europe and then onto France to prepare for their Paris 2024 Olympic campaign in August. Olivia did a day of calf tagging and weighing at Fossil Creek as part of her training schedule back in Spring and we look forward to her returning in time for calving this Spring, hopefully wearing another shiny new medal! We will keep you updated on her campaign on our facebook page during August.



Olivia at Fossil Creek, Spring 2023

INSURANCE

A reminder to prioritise insuring your new season bull upon purchase – consider this as an investment to protect your asset. Most bull sales have a very sharp automatic cover deal including 14 days free cover from the drop of the hammer, so please take the time to consider extending this for a 12 month period to get your bull through his first breeding season.

We look forward to catching up with you during May and June – remember if you are unable to make the Bull Walk Days or Auction Day then give us a bell, our door is always open and we welcome you to come and see the bulls, the breeding herd and our farming operation at any time. We hope to see you on either May 15th or May 29th for our Bull Walks and look forward to showcasing our 2024 cohort of bulls to you on auction day, Tuesday 11th June, kick off 12 noon.

Kind regards

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AUTUMN APRIL 2024 NEWSLETTER

With Autumn 2024 upon us, we reflect on the abysmal season that has hit the majority of the country, particularly those in dry east coast areas like our own. It has however been great to see some regions (such as Southland) have a boomer season as this builds some sense of optimism in the sector (and keeps options open such as store lambs and grazing). Many of our clients have had to wean their calves 6 weeks early this year and we congratulate them for making this decision early and also for the impressive weaning weights being achieved, despite the early weaning and drought conditions.

Hard times are often coupled with opportunity and it appears that the sector is on the cusp of getting back to a focus on getting back to the basic fundamentals of farming. "Fed Well, Bred Well". Back to the basics, doing the right things right. A quote from well-known accountant Pita Alexander back in the 1980s is just as relevant today "the most boring parts of your business are the most profitable". By boring he means fertility, feeding, animal health, condition scoring, survival, milking and maternal ability and growth of young stock. He doesn't mean chasing premiums at all costs and forgetting about fundamentals. Substantial losses being announced by a number of meat and dairy companies this month have of course been mainly underpinned by worldwide oversupply and lowered demand but this also perhaps illustrates that fancy and woke can mean fancy and broke. All else being equal, the world is looking for a safe and reliable supply of premium quality protein at a reasonable price for both the producer and the consumer. Adding costs of production that the consumer is not prepared to pay a premium for, at scale - should be navigated with caution. A focus on the basics in our sector may be unashamedly boring but it is also unashamedly essential.

An example of this is the existential drench resistance disaster about to hit the sheep industry. Many sector

24th ANNUAL ON FARM
**FOSSIL CREEK
ANGUS BULL SALE**
Tuesday 11th June 2024 at 2pm
434 Dunrobin Rd, Five Forks, North Otago

BULL WALK

Wednesday 15th May
& Wednesday 29th May

1.00 - 4.00pm

Auction Day
Tuesday 11th June
@2pm



leaders chose to 'visit the villages while Rome burned' and have spent the last 10 years and millions of dollars "investing" in low-methane sheep research, putting drench resistance issues in the corner until recently. 20 years too late. Perhaps this should have been the key tenant in their 'strategic' thinking when prioritising a focus for sector research.

We continue to have an unrelenting focus on doing the 'basics' right first at foremost at Fossil Creek – good conformation and good maternal performance– with premium traits being the icing on the cake. This icing is important, but no premium will ever beat having a live calf on the ground, a cow that milks well and gets back in calf early and easily, and a calf that grows like hell on hard hill country but moves to a finished product with speed and efficiency.



Find us on Facebook
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BULL SALE - Tuesday 11th June 2024



Our 2024 R2 Bull Auction has moved to a Tuesday from now on, with bull inspection from 12 noon and the live auction at 2pm. Our Fossil Creek sale will be live on BIDR this year for those that can't make the bull sale in person.

We also find that our two Bull Walk afternoons (Wednesday 15th May and Wednesday 29th May from 1 to 4 pm) are really popular for those that either can't make it on sale day, or would like some extra time to do their bull buying homework without the time pressure that auction day brings with it.

For those attending the sale, we will have Doug Brand, the slow cooked BBQ extraordinaire creating some red meat deliciousness on site.



We will have our catalogue in the post to you by mid-May along with our online e-catalogue and BIDR profiles online.

Headline acts this year in the 2024 Bull Auction lineup include Fossil Creek Prophet, Musgrave Avenger, Rockley 'Rocky', Millahmurrah Paratrooper, and sons of the impressive yearling bulls that we used including rockstar Fossil Creek Rome R141, a Black Loch son. Of the 170 bulls born, we will be offering the best 80 R2 bulls up for Auction and we are delighted with the way that these boys have been shaping up over the past 18 months.



**FOSSIL
CREEK
ANGUS**

FOSSIL CREEK IN THE FIELD

Scanning was done and dusted in January and February with great results for both our A.I. Programme and our natural mating. Fetal-age pregnancy scanning via Dave Robertson at Oamaru Vet Centre continues to be a cornerstone component of our breeding programme, allowing us pinpoint the exact date that the heifers and cows will calve (on a practical scale this allows us to keep all cows out the back of the hill block until the last minute before calving/ tagging at birth). This saves cows eating into hard-earned spring pasture which is scarce until late October due to our altitude. On a breeding basis, it allows us to look at trends of individual cows and bloodlines in terms of conception, calving patterns and return to oestrus periods.



We weaned our 360 calves a few weeks earlier this year due to drought conditions coupled with an early onset of wintery conditions and the priority of safe-guarding cow condition before their long Winter out in the back blocks. This also made sure the calves were more likely to get some form of green pasture ahead of the cows. Whilst Blair and Jane now own 100% of the Fossil Creek Stud, Neil and Rose still enjoy being involved in genetic direction and client interaction when they can with Neil's health progressing well after a difficult year in 2023.

Ben Paton has now worked for us for 4 years and Jonty Jennings has recently clocked up his first 8 months here.

Charlotte (17), Henry (15) and George (12) continue to be oblivious to child-labor and minimum wage legislation and seem to enjoy working on the farm every chance they get, amongst a busy school and sports schedule. They were the main mustering, weighing and tagging crew during calf weaning and as born-and-bred offspring, they seem to have an innate ability to read minds and sign language in the yards which always helps.



YOUNG GUNS

Neil and Rose hosted a 'EBVs and BBQ' evening in December for local young farmers that were keen to learn more about beef genetics which was a real success. We relish any opportunity to host students and young farmers here whenever we are doing some monitoring that may be of interest to them (such as structurally assessing bulls, IMF/EMA scanning, semen testing) so please let us know if you have a family member or young shepherd that you would like us to invite along to these tasks.



HEIFER TAG STUDY

In November, B+LNZ Genetics commenced a Beef Study trial here at Fossil Creek with our 160 Yearling Heifers and 70 Two year old Heifers, using SenzTag CowManager tags to analyse their movements and heats. While we are yet to harness the practical opportunities around this technology, it will be an interesting exercise to evaluate the feedback from the tags alongside pregnancy and date-scanning data going forward. Neil is currently analysing all the data and seeing some interesting trends, especially when coupled with other monitoring that we are doing in the heifer fertility space.



RURAL COMMUNITIES

Events throughout our communities are the life blood of rural NZ. Fossil Creek is proud to sponsor recent events including the Omarama Dog Trials, Tokarahi Dog Trials, Mackenzie District Dog Trials, Kurow Dog Trials, Winter Feed Competitions and The Waitaki Boys' Sports Hub.



E STAR – TAKING THE GUESS WORK OUT OF INDEXES

The Bull buying process can be a complex one - EBV tables can look more confusing than an ACC invoice and this isn't helped by bull marketing hype and the pressure of an auction.

For those of you that have been on the Fossil Creek journey with us for a few years, you will know that following genuine concern that generic industry indexes are not fit-for-purpose and often lead to poor bull buying decisions, Neil took the bull by the horns in an effort to come up with a far more accurate suite of indexes than what was currently being touted by the industry. The existing Angus NZ 'Self-Replacing' Index (SRI) is too focused on a 'days to calving' trait and doesn't give separate weighting to important maternal traits verses terminal traits - meaning two bulls could have the exact same SRI figure but could be chalk and cheese in their data. It is concerning how many bull buyers only compare bulls and studs on their Self-Replacing Index figure. For the past 7 years, Fossil Creek has engaged Abacus Bio to run all our sale bulls through a more comprehensive sub-index system which separated out crucial traits, then weighted appropriately into separate indexes. In early 2023, five other studs from around NZ joined us in a collaboration to invest even more time and money into expanding the original Fossil Creek sub-index system and developed what Neil coined the 'E-Star' index system. We will continue to work and expand this further to ensure that it remains fit-for-purpose, accurate and achieves even better outcome for bull buyers for our upcoming sale in 2024.

EXPLAINING 'E-STAR' The E Star Indexes:



- ✦ **MATERNAL INDEX:** This is a grouping of traits specifically related to the beef cow/calf operation, with a small component of weaning weight. Desired outcomes include improving fertility and moderating cow size.
- ✦ **TERMINAL INDEX:** An index that highlights those animals which are going to grow fast to suitable carcass weights with high yields and good eating through Intramuscular Fats.
- ✦ **EFFICIENCY INDEX:** This index can be used on its own to identify animals which are superior for efficiency, which gives the beef industry further strength when it comes to environmental sustainability conversations around efficiency including methane.
- ✦ **HEIFER DIRECT:** Designed to be a standalone selection tool for ranking bulls as suitable for mating yearling heifers.