

A PASSION FOR REDS

Ron and Brenda Graham have a passion for red cattle. It has driven them to breed one of the best Red herds in Australia, the Beaulands Aussie Red stud at Pyree near Nowra, NSW.

They started 21 years ago with Illawarras. Ron became involved with the Aussie Red Breeds organisation soon after, serving as President for seven years. He is still a member of the Federal Committee and the bull selection panel.

For 15 years Ron has used top-rated protein and fat deviation bulls from Scandinavia to build Beaulands into the No. 1 Red breeds ABV herd in Australia. The average production is currently 7300 litres, with 3.4% protein and 4.0% fat. Ron aims to take this above 8000 litres while maintaining components.

The farm is only a metre above sea level, and just 64 of the 144 ha is usable for the milking herd. A further 32 ha is

being purchased as a run-off block. The Grahams are also looking at irrigating 20ha under a scheme being developed by the local council to distribute town wastewater. Although the annual rainfall is 1140mm, inconsistency has prompted the close look at irrigation.

The Grahams have cut the herd back to 110 cows, milking year round. 'With deregulation we decided to cut back the herd size, look after the cows a bit

better and enjoy life a little more', said Ron.

The Beaulands herd is a consistent supplier of young bulls for Genetics Australia progeny testing, with a number awaiting proof. They have already had success with ARBWTAH—Beaulands Warratah, the highest Aussie Red 2001 graduate. He is a son of EKES704 from a LISEBERG daughter.

'His dam was a colossal cow and his grand-dam was really good, with a lifetime average over 300kg fat', said Ron. 'His full sister is one of the herd's highest production cows, with a four lactation record of 28,154 litres, 3.7% protein, 1047 kg protein, 4.4% fat, 1240 kg fat.'

ARBWTAH is 9th on the Red Breeds APR list at 109, with positive fat and protein percentages and all 90s for workability.

Ron is optimistic about the future of Red breeds as a real breeding option in Australia. 'With deregulation, a lot of farmers are concentrating on components and the Red breeds certainly offer that. They also have an advantage in fertility and calving ease over the traditional breeds', he said.



Ron Graham with daughters of TORP882.

Reds prove their worth

Jeff and Ann Wright operate Majesta Dairies at Meningie, SA, under some harsh dairying conditions. Their 860-hectare property milks 300 cows.

Most of the property is sandy soil cropping dryland lucerne. 'With an annual rainfall of 400 mm, dryland lucerne is the only crop that flourishes', said Jeff. Every year, over 700 tonnes of silage is made on the farm and each cow is fed 1200 kg of grain in the dairy.

Starting with a Holstein and Jersey herd, the Wrights now concentrate their breeding on Aussie Red sires from Scandinavian and Australian programs.

'We have found the Red breed cross cows perform well relative to Holsteins and Jerseys. They cope better with the extra protein from the lucerne diet, maintain their components and condition on the sandy country, and have less trouble getting in calf and calving down. Their feet handle the conditions better. The calves are certainly not shy about getting in and

helping themselves, and it carries through to the milking herd', said Jeff. With an average of over 6700 litres, 3.5% protein and 4.5% fat it is hard to argue with the herd performance.

Six hundred proven and progeny test straws are used on the herd and the maiden heifers. 'We use as much progeny test semen (around 250 doses) as is available, limited only by the number of bulls being tested. The rest is made up of proven Scandinavian and Australian sires, including ARBXTRA, SKOLE 3395, ARBKING and HULAN 6097, with HALL 798 on the maiden heifers', Jeff said.

Jeff is considering using more semen from newly-proven sire ARBWTAH as a result of the performance of his daughters.

'I hadn't really taken much notice of them, as they are the sort of cows that slip through the herd without any problems. Now that I have looked at their production as a group, they are pretty impressive. All ten are a big improvement on their dams

and all have a PI over 110. I think I'll order more of him to finish up the season.' Other cows to impress are daughters of TBRUNO and BACKGARD. 'I really like them. The TBRUNOs especially have very good udders and a bit more size and stature.'

'We are very happy with our Red breeds daughters. They cope better under our conditions. There is a lot of Red semen going into high profile herds in this area. We will continue to use progeny test bulls, firstly because it has to be done and secondly, the results we are getting

have been more than satisfactory', said Jeff.



Above: One of ten ARBWTAH daughters milking in the herd. Below: Jeff with some daughters of ARBWTAH and BACKGARD.



Sheel Martin