

New Zealand Red Devon Cattle Breeders Assoc.

August 2009



Tinopai Stud – Cow with autumn born calf at foot.

www.reddevoncattle.co.nz

President's comments.

I must acknowledge the council members who have all been working hard on aspects of the Association. We are all aware of the responsibility we are facing implementing the vote made at the AGM to change our recording and secretariat systems. As in any major change not everything will be to everyone's liking. Our challenge is to try to accommodate the needs of all our members.

You will see an article on the increasing traffic on our web page. I was surprised at the amount of hits to our site. It brought home how our society is changing in the way they look for information and buy.

Requests have come in to provide information / articles on weaning, commercial crossbred stock, conformation training days, and polled sires. We have a number of very experienced members who have a lot of knowledge in these areas. I would encourage you to put your hand up and write an article. The strength of our Association is in the sharing of this type of information.

Thank you to those members who have given us feedback. We appreciate hearing your views and will be working on a number of the suggestions going forward. To those who have requested the newsletter as an e-mail we have done so this time. If that is your preferred method of receiving the newsletter please let us know. Colour photos yes we looking at this for next time as well.

Council has recognised we need to be in touch with members more. Expect to hear from a council member at least a couple of times during the year. They will keep you up to date with what is happening. We are keen to hear what you would like in field days. How can we have these be of value to you?
Meanwhile I hope your grass is growing, and you are having a successful year.

Regards
Karen Schumacher

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- **News**

- **ABRI / PBB**

Council have been working hard with the above companies confirming the details for the changeover. As you are all aware this was voted on at the AGM and it was passed that we move our recording system to ABRI. This will provide the basic registry service for the Association, plus for those who wish provides a performance recording system, and will have an electronic herdbook facility. The saying the devil is in the detail is quite correct and we have spent a lot of time checking and querying the contract to ensure members gain the best outcome. There is no doubt we have all been mindful of costs, and benefits to our members. As representatives of our organisation Council members have been very cautious and prudent to safeguard our society and breed. Both ABRI and PBB have worked with good will to satisfy all our queries and endeavour to have something we can all be happy with. Undoubtedly the first year will be a learning curve as we work our way through the new system.

This transition has certainly highlighted how diverse our member's requirements are. Some want only to use the registry service, others want more accountability on breed conformation, others want the breed trait analysis, and others want the electronic herdbook. While our current system continues to meet the need of having a registry system, and a limited herd comparison, council like the majority of members were aware of the ever increasing risk of an aging computer system. Kevin mentioned recently that it is almost impossible now to obtain a printer to print from our software, and with everything needing to be printed this is of concern. Council is aware that the new system has some features which not all members require and it has been a challenge to try to meet the needs of everyone.

Performance Beef Breeders (PBB) will take over maintaining our registry on behalf of ABRI, and contract to do our secretariat work. Next year will be a learning curve for them and us as we get to know our respective requirements. I am confident it will be of value to us.

We can now advise that the change over will be early next year. ABRI will be transferring the data during February/ March, and PBB will be taking over our administration at the beginning of April. This is the start of our financial year. Council is now focussing on the fee structure and will advise members as soon as this is finalised. It does appear costs will be on par with what was presented at the AGM.

- **Web page**

The Association has invested in the web page to help promote our superb breed. It not only promotes the breed but provides you, the members with somewhere to promote yourself and your cattle for sale. It is one of the ways we are providing extra value for you, and we encourage you to utilise it more.

Have a look at the web stats at the back of the newsletter. They are an indication of how technology is changing where people are going to obtain information. Total visits exceed 200 each month. To put this into perspective,

at present Robyn has indicated she may get a couple of new enquiries a month, with these tending to be by e-mail. Over the last few months our web site has had around 150 new visits per month. Of these well over 50 are looking at the stud profile page each month. There seems to be interest in the detail pages indicating that people are searching for studs, cattle available and the breeders listing. This is a great promotional tool for you at a reasonable cost. Have your stud profiled for \$50 for the year, good value and exposure. It seems more and more people are turning to the web when they want to buy cattle. In excess of 100 hits on the cattle page. You can advertise your cattle for sale for 60 days for \$10. You can send your stud profile and details of the cattle for sale to Kevin and get great promotional exposure. k.fletcher@inspire.co.nz

- Bulls / stock for sale
It's the time for bull sales. A quick summary of bulls/ stock available at the moment is at the end of this newsletter for members. If you are looking for bulls please contact the breeders below. There is increasing demand for high quality bulls, so get in now. See the comment above and think about putting your stock on the web so the wider public can see what is available..
- Field days.
Council has firmed up the programmes for a number of field days. The first few will be in the North Island. We plan to hold one next year in the South Island. The programmes will be the same, so don't panic if you can't make them all, just head to the nearest one to you. They will be in Northland, Taranaki and Fielding. Council is working with Meat & Wool NZ. Russell priest is the speaker/facilitator for the day. They will be open to the public, and will have a session on the new Breedplan system the Assoc is transferring to. We will also have information pamphlets about Breedplan available. The first is on 29th November at Arthur Beazley's Tapuwae Stud, 1205 Matauri Bay Road. Starting at 10am. There will be a dinner that evening. If you have any queries please contact Arthur, John Dunn or Kevin Fletcher. This is open to members and the public.
- Logo.
Council has been asked to have a look at the logo. Is it still relevant today, or does it need updating. Should we have something which is instantly recognisable as cattle? We look forward to feedback on this

We have a lot of experienced members out there. We are keen for you to put your hand up, especially at field days – share your practical knowledge. We are looking for articles re your experience with calf weaning for the next newsletter.

- **Local Articles**

AUTUMN CALVING ON THE AWHITU PENINSULA by Wayne Aspin

I got into autumn calving when I bought my first Devons — four autumn calved cows with calves at foot and five empty good conditioned R2year old heifers. The cows had already been mated and I mated the heifers late June to calve in April. At the time in 2002 I still had a good balance of grasses, more in favour of rye and clover than kikuyu. My farm is generally winter mild but can get strong SW winter and spring cold fronts. Dry summers are the norm but with luck we can get some handy left over rain from tropical storms that deluge Northland and Coromandel. The soil is light sandy clay loam with a light cover of Hamilton Ash. Top soil is not deep.

Those nine animals have preformed well with a high submission rate, 80% holding first round, all in calf after 2nd round. This has been the norm as I built up numbers. When I bought 13 M/A spring calvers with calves at foot two years ago, I tried to bring them back to winter calving by putting the bull out early in hope of early conception after calving. This has not worked so last year I did not mate the late spring calvers until May so as to calve in March. This year I have put my early August calvers to the bull once again in the hope of early conception and calving in June. If that is not successful, I will pull the bull out on 20 September and put off mating all the spring calvers till 20 February so as to calve 1 Dec 2010 and the following year will mate in June to calve in March 2012 and finish with a 100% March-June herd that way.

My autumn born R2 heifers are mated in June/July for autumn calving. The bull is then taken out and any not in calf are then mated with the spring R2 heifers for two rounds from 20 Feb so as to calve from 1 Dec. As 3 year olds they will all be mated in June to calve in March.

The benefits of autumn calving;

A: The cows calve in warm conditions and calves never have scours. Autumn pasture generally makes good milking pasture and the herd can be grazed through winter on a 40-60 day rotation with hay if necessary. The herd and calves get enough feed to be contented and seldom pug provided they are shifted every day.

B: The cows when dry during Jan, Feb and March can be made to clean up some of the dominant kikuyu pastures without losing weight.

C: The cows are still in good condition for mating in June/July.

D: Bulls at 16months are ready and big enough to serve Devon and other beef breeds as well as spring dairy heifers.

E: Surplus autumn heifers and steers for the local beef market if managed right with good climate conditions can reach 420-470kg live weight without going through a second winter.

The benefits of spring calving;

Dry spring calving cows' body weight can be maintained on a tighter winter feed budget which makes for a higher stocking rate.

I wean at 9-10 months and only drench after weaning if absolutely necessary. Being on marginal copper deficient country I give the breeding stock a 4ml copper injection 2 weeks before mating.

Another Devon farmer now has a 50/50 autumn/spring calving herd done by mating his heifers at 18-20 months of age and giving them and their calves the run of the back of his farm. He did have a grass staggers problem with them but has overcome this by giving them magnesium boluses. Grass staggers is not a problem on our farm.



- **Information from overseas.**

- Book – The History of Devon Cattle.
Clive Thornton has advised Robyn that he still has a limited quantity of the above book still available. They cost £14 sterling plus postage. We would need to order about 10 of them. Please let Robyn know if you are interested.

- **Mini – Tour in the UK.**

Devons at Home in 2010

The Devon Cattle Breeders Society of the UK have decided, following the wonderful tour arranged by our Australian cousins for the World Conference, to provide an interim tour of Devon Cattle to those who would wish to see Devon Cattle in their original homeland. The tour will start with a gathering in a London Hotel on Saturday 5th June where we will group up. The following morning the travelling and herd visits will start by heading North towards Huntingdon, in the East of the Country where you will have the opportunity to see some amazing animals from one of the biggest herds of Devon cattle in the UK. After visiting two herds we will settle into a hotel in the Cotswolds for three nights. The Monday and Tuesday herds in the locality will be viewed as well as some of the attractions in the area.

On Wednesday 9th June we will travel South going through Somerset and Devon to get within striking distance of The Royal Cornwall Show. We will drop in on a couple of farms on route to see some more Devon Cattle.

One of the highlights of the tour will be a visit to the Royal Cornwall Show. This is a major 3 day show, showing off the very best in Agriculture from Cattle to Machinery. We will be at the Royal Cornwall Show early to see the judging of the Devons on the

Thursday. This is a large show and we shall hope to get towards 100 Devons to the show. We will be returning to the same hotel for a second night.

The Friday will see us travelling right down to Lands End at the bottom of Cornwall where we shall see more cattle before returning to the county of Devon for the next three nights for a luxury stay in a top class hotel with a swimming pool, Golf Course and Health Club.

A wonderful weekend of visiting some of the best Devon Cattle in Devon will follow. A few hand picked herds will be on show and we will be joined by many members of the society for a long and enjoyable weekend.

Monday and Tuesday will involve herds in Somerset and Dorset along with other places of interest before returning to London later on the Tuesday for the completion of the tour.

The aim is to show variety and type. This will be borne out by the various cattle systems in operation from Commercial Beef herds to Pedigree Female sales, As well as Organic, Traditional and Conventional Farming practices. It is hoped that some facts and figures relating to digestibility of grasses will be available and publications of research material will also be available for comment.

This is not about a World conference, more of a Holiday and to see Devon Cattle for those that cannot wait until 2012 for the World congress in Brazil.

To try and make the tour enjoyable and relaxing at least two nights will be spent in each hotel. A luxury air conditioned coach will be used throughout. Virtually all meals will be included in the package, however an odd evening off would allow a visitors to do your own thing.

We appreciate this is almost a year away, but are conscious that good hotels get booked up early and we do want to be able to give a trip to be remembered for all the good reasons.

At this stage it would be helpful to have an indication of interest and then we shall then move towards prices and booking by the end of the year.

Please respond to Gavin Hunter at stationhunters@freeuk.com or Lisa Roper at Lisa@fordeabbey.co.uk with any questions or queries.

- **North America Devon Association.**

If you want to know more check out their web page.

Dear friends and fellow cattle breeders,

All of us are aware the cattle industry is entering a phase of revolution and change. The breed associations and learning establishments are not talking about these changes or trying to help the masses of producers prepare for meeting those demands. Where is sustainability? What will it take to survive? How do I producer fine quality beef, milk and fats? Why aren't there markets for grass fed beef?

The commodity feeding and marketing system did not demand anything but delivery of animals from the producers; we lost our vision and knowledge for producing fine quality food and what is required of our cows for total grass production. Some help and answers.

The North American Devon Association is hosting their annual conference in Franklin Texas this October 15, 16 & 17th. The theme of the conference is about producing quality meat, milk and fats. The conference is hosting a meat sampling program (warner Bratzler shear force) which is free to those who would like to know the texture and tenderness of the meat you are producing with your genetics (all breeds). All you need to do to participate with your beef is send a rib-eye stake to Deb Manahan (see brochure for contact) by the first of October and be there to see for yourself exactly how your genetics stack up for texture and tenderness. We/I plead with you to participate and catch the vision of helping restore quality and sustainability back into your herd and the cattle industry. The system will not help us; we must band together and do this our-self. We do have the knowledge and desire to succeed and we need the support of every producer.

October 15th I will open the conference with a full day of school; True Grass Harvesters (cows) is the class; plus bull selection, cow selection and how to genetically select for quality and volume. This school will educate you about the importance of body type and shape, genetics and production of quality meat, milk and fats with animals that can utilize your grass efficiently and reproduce regularly. Take advantage of this opportunity before the change is upon us, come learn; get acquainted with like minded producers and we (you/I) can dictate our future and not be dictated to by some other part of the industry. We who have cattle are first grass growers and second cattle producers. We sell grass (food) through our cows. What percent return do you get on your grass through your cows, 50%, 60%, or 70%. The percent utilization of grass determines you're profitability. If your utilization is below 60% your operation may be in jeopardy.

Friday the 16th the president's address is catching the vision (producing quality beef) and the producers working for the good of each-other. Fred Provenza is our key note speaker on animal eating habits and behavior management.

Cody Holmes will teach you how to restore fertility to your soil with your cows.

The Friday night banquet will feature a full blood Devon steer so the attendees can experience the quality of fine gourmet eating and dining, don't miss this banquet.

Saturday the 17th at 2pm we will host the annual Devon female sale. These females are herd builders (flush cows) in the herds they have been selected from.

Attached is the school and conference brochure. Call tomorrow and get your name in the pot; don't miss this once in a lifetime opportunity for learning and working with like-minded people and we can shape our future. We must band and work together for our own good.

Blessings to each of you.

See you in Fairfield TX on October 15th -17th.

Gearld Fry

President of NADA