

RED DEVON

Newsletter February 2021

With 2020 been and gone New Zealand entered into 2021 in a blissful state of ignorance. Nothing could stop an incredibly stressed population who had endured lockdowns, uncertainties and financial turmoil from enjoying a “typical” kiwi summer. While Covid-19 ravaged overseas economies, and much of the developed world experiencing prolonged lockdowns, New Zealanders took to the roads to experience a country many had not had the time to appreciate. As I write this the rain is teeming down and the paddocks are already turning green from what was a pretty dry last six weeks.

Greenhorns – Our Journey with Red Devons

The term “greenhorn” is very suitable here. When it was first used in America in the early 15th century, it referred to a young ox or bull — since these animals were 'green' or inexperienced and their horns hadn't matured, they were called 'greenhorns'. Why is it applicable here? Well before March 2018 my wife and I had never bred cattle.

Our young family lives on a 60 acre block in the Bay of Plenty. It is essentially half flat, half Barry Crump country (steep to overhanging). We are summer safe, and have finished Wagyu cattle before achieving very high marbling grades, but we wanted an animal that was prepared to work; not afraid of the dirty stuff.

We had earlier trialled some Red Devon steers from Monte Pahu stud to see how they would fare on our property. At time of slaughter they nearly tipped the homekill operators hiab over, easily yielded over 60%, and after a week hanging were as good as Wagyu. What impressed us most however was the foraging ability; there wasn't a spot on the property that they weren't prepared to graze. Our minds were made up, no more trials needed.

We managed to grab a nucleus herd from four different breeders, and while the early calving years did produce some challenges, we were well supported by society members. As it stands, we now have an amazing herd with our own desired traits starting to show through. The docile nature of the animals is such that we do not worry about the children being in contact with them. We also have a constant demand for beef and cannot keep up with the Bay of Plenty lifestyler market who want no-fuss, one-winter animals.

Traits

Without preaching to the converted, this is what we have found with Red Devons:

Weight Gain – rarely do you find an animal where it is harder to keep the weight off than put it on. Fattening and finishing is ridiculously easy, but keeping the weight off cows is the opposite. Cows can very easily go “lush” and require constant break-feeding to ensure optimal weights. Ours have been known to lift deer gates off their gudgeons to sneak extra rations. We are at the point now

where we are comfortable increasing our stocking numbers knowing that we can match them through drought conditions with our grass production.

Efficiency – this is what we call eco-beef. Animals that finish in one winter, with a fantastic carcass yield, who will eat practically anything (including California thistles). There is nowhere these animals will not graze, a true 4WD. In this day and age of carbon footprints and measuring externalities of production the Red Devon truly stands apart from other breeds. In our opinion there is no better animal suited to the New Zealand environment.

Mothering – outstanding milk production and contented calves. Calves seek to forage from a few days old and thrive on spring pasture.



(Calves have even been trained to poke their tongues out when the camera is near)

Temperament – the repair bills around the block have practically disappeared, there is a strong sense of discipline amongst the herd with matriarch and patriarch animals keeping the younger stock in-check. There is no need for dogs (which is just as well as we own a terrier) and our herd come to the call

Going Forward

We are very happy and have absolutely no regrets about the choice of breed. It is still perplexing as to why the breed is not as popular in New Zealand as it is overseas given its attributes. For this reason I accepted Dirk's invitation to join the Council as we are not the type to sit still. As mentioned previously, we now have a solid list of lifestyle buyers who want animals who have experienced the advantages of the breed. Key to addressing the breeds popularity is a comprehensive marketing plan, this workstream is currently underway and will be put to the wider Council in coming months.

Stud Visit

A reminder of the upcoming Field Day at Ahuroa Stud, 955 Ahuroa Road, Warkworth on Sunday 28 February. Please RSVP by Friday 19th February 2021 to INFO@REDDEVON.CO.NZ

See you there,

Brendon Barnes, Suhail Stud

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Members List

([click](#)  [here](#))

Important Dates to Remember

30 th April	Membership Subscriptions Invoiced
30 th June	ADL's sent out
30 th July	ADL's must be Returned (no Cow Credits for ADL's returned after the 15 th August)
10 th August	Calf Entries sent out
30 th September	Annual animal pre-list dam fees invoiced
15th May 2021	AGM in Whitianga
31 st December	Balance Date; end of financial year
31 st January	Calf entry sheets cut off
2 nd of every month	Group Run Cut off for the performance recording reports

www.reddevoncattle.co.nz

