

New Zealand

RED DEVON

Cattle Breeders Association

Newsletter  March 2020

Welcome to the March Newsletter from your Council.

The drought has not let up since the previous newsletter with no, or no significant rain since then. Many farms are struggling for stock water on top of the lack of feed. So far the Ohuka Devons have been cleaning up the hill country without losing significant condition. The hills look like a yellow golf course.

You will all have recently received the important advisory note about NZ cattle registered overseas.

Your Council is making significant progress with the Progressive Group of breeders from Northland. They are just as passionate about the Devons as all of us and passion seems to be something that these cattle generate. In the past there have been instances where that passion has been allowed to overflow which has resulted in undesirable outcomes. Having NZ cattle registered overseas is clearly not a good state of affairs for any of us and your Council has decided to act. We are making it as easy as possible for those who commit to bringing in their entire herds without compromising our standards. The most relevant tweaks to the by-laws are that cattle coming into the Supplementary Register don't have to start at the bottom of the grading ladder if they qualify for a higher rung and the other tweak is that prior progeny of Council approved sires are acceptable at the discretion of Council. The previous rule was that only progeny born after the date of approval was acceptable, presumably to deter breeders from using sires (or importing semen) before they were approved. The discretion of Council means that such animals can still be rejected if Council has grounds to believe that a breeder is deliberately bending the rules to his/her advantage. The Te Maewa herd is for sale bar about 30 animals that Graham is keeping on his new farmlet. As there is considerable interest in these animals, which are registered in Australia, Council's decision was a balancing act between having these animals available and at the same time encouraging all NZ breeders to register their cattle in their home country. Council considered it very important that our members were fully aware of the implications before entering into any agreement with Te Maewa stud, hence the advisory notice being sent with High Importance as these cattle need to be either sold or slaughtered next month. It is important to note that we have consulted with the Australians (DCBSA) before making these decisions.

In other news Heughan has agreed to step up as Acting Vice President since I became Acting President. Brendon Barnes has been appointed as full Council member with voting rights to fill the vacancy on Council. His appointment lapses at the next AGM. I appreciate both their efforts in stepping up.

Following a request from one of our members about availability of the minutes of our meetings Council has decided to make those available on request. To obtain a copy email Lindy at PBB. Keep in mind that the minutes may not be finalised until several weeks after each meeting. Where Council needs to have confidential discussions, often involving members or confidential information, the meeting will go "in committee" without minutes being taken. This is so Council members can speak freely and at the same time protect the relevant confidentiality or name/reputation of the member under consideration.

STUD REPORT

As no stud reports were received I will fill the space with a quick update about Ohuka Polled Stud.

We are close to the end of calving with just the heifers left to calve. Autumn calving suits our system as we sell predominantly 18 months old bulls to the dairy industry in spring with a few going as yearlings for autumn calving dairy heifer mating. We wean our calves in late spring/early summer once the grass starts to bolt away. The weaners rotationally graze in front of the cows, which makes weaning easy and allows for a minimum worm burden and maximum quality feed for the young stock and a thorough clean up of rank grass by the dry cows that, being Devons, continue to do well on it. This sets us up for winter by maximising the amount of quality grass grown in autumn, a lot of which will be break-fed in winter topped up with silage. During spring with the cows in milk and 6 months old calves at foot we have plenty of hungry mouths to feed which maximises spring grass utilisation. This system will not work for everyone but our mild winters help make it work for us. We also mate our heifers as yearlings to yearling bulls and have not had any calving issues with the heifers to date, cross fingers. Our selection criteria for retaining stock are polling, ease of calving, docility, milking ability with good square udders, fertility, sound feet, weight gain, carcass conformation and as a more personal bias a deep red colour.

All calves get weighed at birth and nearly all male calves are kept as bulls. Rearing them until 18 months gives us a good handle on their growth and docility and every year a couple of the very best are held back as reserve stud bulls and made available for sale to other breeders as 2 year old bulls.

As a trial with the assistance of PBB we had 7 DNA samples sent to Australia for a homozygous poll test. Our hopes for 4 homozygous polled bulls was exceeded with 5 of the 7 testing positive.

Our main herd bull BA Ryda was one of the lucky ones. Two of the PP yearling bulls will be for sale to members. Any of our members can now access the test via Neogen Australia. Contact their agent: DNA@pbbnz.com if you want to run samples. Turn-around time is up to 6 weeks and a fee will be payable.



Photograph: BA Ryda as a rising 4 year old, pictured in greener days.

Don't forget to enter the AGM date in your diary and please consider sending us your stud report for inclusion in the next newsletter. Your comments are always welcome via myself or the other Council members

Dirk Sieling, Acting President

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Members List

[\(click here\)](#)



Important Dates to Remember

30 th April	Membership Subscriptions Invoiced
May 2nd	AGM
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 animals fees cows invoiced
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

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