

RED DEVON

— Cattle Breeders Association —

Newsletter September 2021

Hello to all – hope we are all managing to keep our heads at this busy time of year!

I can report that I'm just hanging on by my fingernails! We only expect 5 calves this round so I didn't put much time aside for managing things, and that may have been a mistake. The latest complication is this first time mother who spent the first day trying to push her new calf into the drain. Poor wee thing showed up at the very civilised hour of 10:30am and was standing within half an hour but the cow kept head butting her quite aggressively, pushed her under the tape and into the drain. She then wanted to continue licking the calf and found the tape a frustration. We'd fish the calf out and put them into the paddock and it would happen all over again. Again and again and again! We finally cleared the other cows out of the paddock and got the calf far enough away from the drain that she'd drop out of exhaustion before the cow could push her to the drain. Not exactly a solution but at least she was no longer in danger of drowning.

The next challenge was getting some nutrition in to the calf and with both of them first timers it was not a minor task. The cow seemed intent on being oriented with her head closest to the calf, and the calf seemed to get lost, exploring around the cow's front legs. Even when we got the calf to the right end of the cow, we had to actually guide her mouth onto the teat, and the two of them didn't manage to maintain the connection for very long. Eventually they got the idea and bought in to the goal, but they remained remarkably poor at execution for the rest of that day. I wonder if introducing the bull to the cows first and heifers later will time the calving better for next year, so that there is an example to follow for the newbies. If any of our more experienced members have some thoughts on this I would appreciate hearing them!

I should put some further context around this story, lest readers new to Red Devon think this raises concerns. We come to Red Devon with zero prior breeding experience. This is our fifth round of calving and we have had 23 births now, 7 of these were first time calving. We had never witnessed a birth before nor been around for these early stages. Usually we find a spritely calf all cleaned up and fully functional, prancing about the paddock a day or two after the birth. There was only one time there was an issue, in which the calf's crossed legs kept it from vacating the cow. Cow survived but calf did not. So that's 22 events which the cows managed entirely on their own, which makes it a fair assumption that they have no need of assistance. Which is great because, as newbie breeders, we don't really have any means to offer assistance!

But this year I intended to finally get a birth weight, as registered stock are meant to be weighed at birth, so we had the cows in the paddock near the house and I was checking on them regularly. Perhaps this cow and calf would have successfully navigated their challenges without any intervention and we've made work for ourselves that didn't actually need to be done? Again, I invite comment from more experienced members: was my mistake not putting aside time to manage the calving, or was my mistake being too involved with the new calf and cow?



If I had to put my money on the answer, I'd say these two would have worked it all out on their own. Here's a picture of them now, and when the calf is not happily engaged getting milk, she's running circles around the cow. All's well that ends well.

Meanwhile, on to the matters of the Association for the month!

- Danielle, Novice breeder from the Association's lifestyler segment

Council advice on Tilbrook Ruby semen

As mentioned in the newsletter last month, the Council reviewed data on this bull and identified it is at least one generation short to register in our herdbook. Council wants members to be aware that his progeny are not suitable to be registered. They can be listed in the supplemental register and will require two full blood breedings before they can leave the supplemental register.

Membership Changes

Welcome to new member Shan Ali, based in the Waikato between Hamilton and Auckland at Te Kauwhata. We hope to have a brief introduction for the next newsletter.

Regretfully we see Ross Balemi and Jill Kellick departing the Association as they wrap up their breeding activities.

Ken McDowall

Members were recently advised of the sudden death at home of Ken McDowall, the Rotokawa stud master for 29 years, and one of our life members. It is now appropriate to expand on Ken's involvement with Red Devons.

In the mid seventies Ken was managing a property out of Wanganui for Jeanie Lilburn, called Rotokawa. He had no knowledge of the Red Devon breed, but Jeanie wanted to establish a herd of the red cattle she had known on her grandfather's farm, in her early years, in Taunton England. So began a shared interest in the breed that led to the formation of the Rotokawa herd.

In 1979 the first 13 cattle were purchased from Graeme and Helen Holmes of Rakaia. The herd grew to 50-70 cows and became one of the most significant herds in New Zealand, selling genetic material worldwide until the herd was sold to interests in the USA and exported in 2008.

Ken was involved with the Association and Council from the formation of the Rotokawa herd and served as chairman for over a decade, taking the Association into the new millenium at which time he resigned from Council due to a health scare. Upon the sale of the herd to America Ken and Prue

retired to Wanganui, Ken was awarded life membership of the Association for his service and promotion of the breed.

I attended Ken's funeral and sent Prue flowers and condolences on behalf of the Association. Thanks to the Dreardons and Tuppy and Arthur for assisting in compiling the necessary information.

- Heughan Gordon, Chairman

New member introduction

Danielle had a chance to learn more about new members Jarred Sircombe and Amanda Henderson. They run Kairuru which is a 1400ha farm (half of which is effective with the other half being in native bush and scrub). The property has been in Amanda's family since 1911. It is located about half an hour from Motueka on the Takaka Hill where they run 1600 perendale ewes, 450 hoggets and 120 cattle. It is very steep rugged country with no flat or easy land that gets long cold winters as the altitude ranges from 400-1000 meters above sea level. There is a significant amount of Karst country and marble was quarried on Kairuru from 1915 to build parliament building.



They had Angus X Hereford stock when in 2017 Jarred bought an unregistered Red Devon bull from Rebecca Lawrence, and later added registered bulls from Heughan Gordon's Millstone stud in 2018 and 2020. He formed the Marble Mountain stud this year after purchasing 4 heifers from Steve and Jill Dirksen's Manu stud. He selected the breed after doing research online and appreciated Red Devon for being hardy, medium sized stock with calm temperament. Jarred reports that the Red Devon bulls do stand out as nice and quiet, as do their calves. He tends to cull quite hard on temperament but has never had to do that with a Red Devon. He plans to use only Red Devon bulls from here forward, and sold his last Hereford bull a few months ago.



In terms of what he expects of the Association, Jarred would like to get around to see some Red Devon studs, and he thinks the NZ focus on Angus in the beef industry needs to be challenged. He's also keen to see some more Association members in the South Island as well as more commercial herds.

Advertising and promotion

Adverts have been run in Farming First and Dairy Exporter, with enough impact that most bulls available have been sold. When further spend was considered with Northern Lifestyle Farming a decision was therefore taken to delay that advertising until summer, and closer to the northern region field days.

Dirk's Tips: Bull selection for beginners

Spring calving herds will be at the start of calving now. Most of our members have small herds and run just the one herd sire. The choice of bull for them is particularly important and if they breed their own replacement heifers, they need to replace their bull every few years to prevent inbreeding.

Considerations apart from structure and colouring (see the standards of excellence) are the soundness of feet and temperament. Remember that the attributes of the bull will express themselves in the offspring as a rule of fist. Breeding from a bull with bad temperament is ill advised.

Infertility is uncommon but any unproven bull can be semen tested. Inbreeding is a very relevant consideration especially in NZ where there are less than 1000 active cows on the register. That's why some of the bigger breeders use imported semen. To be able to assess inbreeding, look up the inbreeding coefficient on our association's website. Under animal enquiries you'll find a mating predictor tab. To use it effectively log in, so you can select all your females against any particular registered bull. Most breeders are reluctant to use anything with a coefficient greater than 10%. Exceptions are where line breeding is practiced to work on a particular trait. In our stud the cut-off is 5% but it means we have to use up to 5 bulls and mating mobs.

Another important choice is between polled and horned. If the bull is tested for horn/poll traits you'll know more about the offspring. Say a bull is a homozygous poll, you'll know that all offspring will be polled even from a homozygous horned cow as the poll gene is dominant. A heterozygous polled bull can throw either horned or polled calves and the dams genes will have more influence. Please note that a scurred bull is considered polled as the scur results from a different gene.

Buy only from reputable breeders with fully registered cows, you can find them on the website. If the breeder uses Breedplan the bull will be backed up by more reliable data that can be found under its EBV's. It pays to find out the bull's birthweight and any history of calving problems in its ancestry. Finally, the best looking calf is not necessarily the best looking weaner and the best weaner is not always the best 2 year old. More about that next month when I will discuss cow selection.

- Dirk Sieling, Association member supplying to the beef and dairy industry

Get out and about - Planning underway for stud visits

Our first field day of the year is shaping up to be in the northern region in October, at Rockview Stud.

Additional farm visits are planned for late March and another to coincide with the AGM in the Hamilton region in May. If you are enthusiastic about hosting, contact Council member Colleen.

Seeking cute cow pix!

We have some great images on the website, but we'd like to have even more. We also want to give credit for those who have provided images, but we don't know where all the images came from. Help out by claiming your photos, let Danielle know via email which are yours and she'll credit you on the website.

Calf entries go digital

That is, if you want to go digital. You should now enter the calf information via the ABRI system. These figures are used to calculate Association fees charged at the end of September. If you prefer to report on paper, please email Lindy requesting the paper form be sent out to you.

Next Council meeting planned for 5th of October

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Members List



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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	Request calf entry form if you want to use paper, otherwise enter directly into ABRI
30 th September	Annual animal pre-list dam fees invoiced
May 2022	AGM
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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