

THE VICTORIAN BUSH FIRES

As we all know, Victoria has suffered the worst bushfires in Australian history. With many parts of the state affected, farmers have lost pasture, hay, livestock and property.

Several Beltie breeders have been affected in the fire areas.

Trevor Campbell (*Glenmerritt*) of Boolara was unlucky, in losing his back boundary fence and had burnt areas in one paddock. The neighbour behind Trevor lost everything.

Pam Edwards (*Forest Brow*), also of Boolara, remains worried, but is safe.

Peter and Jenny Kudelka (*Yeaburn Park*) of Yea at this stage are ok, but have been under alert for several weeks.

Allen and Lizette Snaith (*Warialda*) of Clonbinane, near Kilmore lost their shed, and all equipment in the shed including their show gear and AI tank, cattle truck, ute, all fencing and, at this stage, three head of cattle are still missing. Allen and Lizette were extremely lucky to save their house. As Allen is a member of the CFA, his knowledge no doubt helped in saving their house.

There possibly are other breeders that have been affected, but at this stage we only know about the breeders mentioned above.

Anyone that needs assistance regarding agistment, hay or other issues, please contact me as numerous members have phoned offering support.

To these people, on behalf of ABGA and all of our members, I'd really like you to know that our thoughts and prayers are with you.

- Kerry Heazlewood
Victorian Councillor
03 5167 1048

MAITLAND SHOW!

Saturday, 21st February 2009

It seems the weather is affecting everyone up and down Eastern Australia. Maitland, like much of the Hunter and Mid-North coast, received torrential rain a few days prior, flooding the showground and threatening the cancellation of the show. Indeed, the cattle sheds were underwater and pumps were installed to clear it.

Studs intending to show animals simply could not. Vehicles could not reach loading yards due to mud. It was a real shame. Why couldn't the rain have fallen in Victoria?

It was decided by organizers that the show should continue regardless, as people had put in so much effort. The waters finally receded and, with much good humour, the show went on!

Numbers across all breeds were substantially down, including the Belties and Galloways. Only two studs made it, *Eadale* (Solid Galloways) and *Sassafras* (Belties). As only one beltie was present, everyone agreed to the animals being judged together, not separately as was planned, so some competition was provided.

Results

Grand & Junior Champion Bull & 1st - Bull: 8 months & under 12 months

Eadale Balboa (*KKT Australia Pty Ltd*)

Reserve Junior Champion Bull & 1st - Bull: 12 months & under 15 months

Eadale Ali (*KKT Australia Pty Ltd*)

Reserve Senior Champion Bull & 1st - Bull: 20 months & under 24 months

Minto Lancelot (*KKT Australia Pty Ltd*)

Senior Champion Bull & 1st - Bull: 24 Months & over

Peppercorn Ben (*Sassafras Belted Galloway Stud*)

Grand & Senior Champion Female

Minto Irene (*KKT Australia Pty Ltd*)

Reserve Senior Champion Female

Minto Lolita 4th (*KKT Australia Pty Ltd*)

Held the previous night at Monte Pio Function Centre, the dinner was far better attended (it was undercover!), very enjoyable and successful. Terry Pierce made rice-crusting Beltie Breseola (marinated cured beef, like a prosciutto made from beef instead of pork) for the entrée that was very well received. Main courses consisted of Belted Galloway rump with parsnip truffle and walnut remoulade, and Roast Galloway Sirloin Bordelaise with braised brisket, bery sauce and bone marrow, the sirloin particularly commented on. The dinner was well entertained by The Minmi Magster (aka as Bob Skelton) a well-known poet who impressed people with his capacity for improvised verse, and also by two young Scottish dancing girls.

A special thank you must go to the brilliant students of Hunter River High who have enthusiastically supported the show as handlers and grooms for the studs over the past two years – and *still* want to come back next year! They are very hands on, reliable and just a great bunch of kids.

Chatting with the Maitland Judge

The Maitland judge was Leonie Ball, of Bowmans Creek, near Singleton NSW. Together with her husband, Greg, she runs a Charolais x Angus composite commercial herd. They also run a stud herd of Charolais cattle on their property *Grenell* and have had great success in carcass competitions.

On Peppercorn Ben (7832 – ABGA Herd Book):

Leonie described Peppercorn Ben, sired by Peppercorn Xtra (Supreme Exhibit, Canberra 2006), with “walks out well, very smooth, with masculine traits, good testicular development, structurally put together well, and of finer bone.”

After judging, Leonie told me that Peppercorn Ben had caught her eye the previous day during the handler classes and had found him “very eye appealing and well-presented.”

On her judging criteria:

I asked Leonie what her judging criteria was i.e. whether on breed characteristics or on commercial beef standards. She replied that both sets of criteria were applied equally.

Maitland was Leonie’s first time judging any of the Galloway types. I asked whether she had been supplied with any breed specifications by anybody or society. She replied no, that no specifications were provided and that she had relied solely on her own research.

What does this say? This isn’t the first time I’ve heard this from a judge. Is there an opportunity here for the ABGA to create an information package relating to specifications and general breed info, and target its national dissemination to stud and carcass judges, and the various associations that host these competitions? In one inexpensive swoop a lot could be gained, both in breed education and raising the breed profile. It would also help in levelling the playing field for breeders if judges were all working from the same script.

The ABGA is privileged to have a cattle judge, Dennis Griffis, on council. By utilizing his advice, we have an insight to what information judges may find useful.

On what beltie breeders should be breeding for:

Leonie believes breeders should stick to the traditional breed type and not stray too far from that in development strategies. She feels that it isn’t necessary to follow the American example of breeding up for size. Leonie felt that the same thing that has happened with the Angus breed in Australia (i.e. increasing size through the use of American genetics) should not happen to belties. She feels that many

Please update your email address!

Could ALL breeders *please* ensure that the ABGA has your **CURRENT** email address? Recently, emails were sent to breeders regarding the bushfires in Victoria, but many addresses bounced back. You may be missing out on information, simply because you have changed your email address & forgot to inform us!

Updated email addresses can be sent to either:

Kerren Britton at Livestock Business Centre, Kiama
kerren@lbcentre.com.au

or Francie MacLean (Vice President)
franciemaclean@ozemail.com.au



Peppercorn Ben being judged in the Maitland Interbreed class

breeders of modern Angus have now realized how far they have moved away from the traditional Aberdeen Angus and are beginning to acknowledge the current problems, and that beltie breeders could learn from the Angus experience.

On the Fine-Boneness of Belties:

Leonie finds belties structurally different in conformation than most other breeds. In particular, she finds them finer boned. I asked if she found this objectionable, if this is something breeders should be breeding out? She said no. She simply found them different.

Its not often these days that belted and solid Galloways are judged together. That Peppercorn Ben took Leonie’s eye was noticed by a few of us watching, beltie breeder or otherwise. Indeed, when it came to awarding the cattle, we also noticed it took Leonie just a little longer in making a decision when Ben was involved. Just as we noticed her multiple references to the point that she felt Peppercorn Ben was finer boned.

Eventually, she awarded the grand champion to the junior champion, Edale Balboa, a nice little solid Galloway, saying that she went for the “safer and sounder bull on the day”.

In short, it appears she went for the mainstream concept that “bigger bone means more meat”. She found Ben to be an excellent bull in all other aspects but she was unsure about the fine bone of belties.

This confusion of fine boneness in belties is something I had in common with Leonie when I first investigated what a beltie really was. In the first instance, I, too, took on board that “bigger bone means more meat”, a mantra that is supported by the years of experience and study of other mainstream beef breeds. But over the past couple of years, I’ve begun questioning that premise with regards to belties and I wonder if the traditional full blood beltie is capable of producing bigger bone without the infusion of solid Galloway blood, or blood of other breeds? And yet, in instances when you actually can verify full-bloodedness, the belties appear to do very well in carcass competitions despite their daintier bone, and have very competitive dressing percentages in comparisons with other British breeds. (I should perhaps add here that Peppercorn Ben is 100% full blood.)

Without writing an essay on a very important breed characteristic, my research into belties has never uncovered any statements that the traditional beltie is, or ever was, of big bone. Indeed, it’s quite the reverse. Those in the past, who have doubted the traditional belties capacity to be carcass competitive, have resorted to crossing out to achieve heavier bone and a levelling of hindquarters. However, these

breeders and animals don't seem to have bequeathed any substantial record or statement of achieving anything particularly superior or progressive to that of the fullblood in terms of final carcass results.

Is it then really desirable that we reconfigure the breed in this way?

After 36 years of Australian breeding, it's interesting to note that it's a full blood steer that holds the record for the highest pointing beltie carcass (89.92points – Sydney 2007).

It's also worth the reminder that the traditional beltie is a dual-purpose animal and was active in both the production of milk and meat up until the mid-twentieth century. Milk-producing animals generally have finer bone. The Australian focus on breeding doesn't seem to have ever discussed production of milk, only of beef.

It's probably necessary to say that the beltie must maintain enough bone to carry its own beef. But if the fine boneness of the traditional beltie is enough for it to remain successfully competitive in carcass comps, why alter it to cater for mainstream perceptions? Why not alter the perception instead? Would we be original in this approach? It's rather how the Angus initially succeeded. Perhaps we need to educate rather than recreate.

On the Public Perception of Belties:

As beltie breeders, we are all generally aware what happens when cattle queens go frock-shopping at the saleyards – the prettiest cattle are chosen only for the front paddock pets and, as such, are only offered half as much as the plainer animals in the pens next door. Aaah, it's hard being good-lookin'!

There is no point really in warring with people on their perceptions of things – they will often defend their view vigorously until the end. All you really can do is put out the facts (perhaps disguised as an interesting story - much more fun!) and encourage people to consider.

Leonie left me with a positive impression that she liked Belties as a breed. At least, intrigued. Her Maitland Show experience piqued her curiosity. She wanted to know more.

What she didn't know at the time was that, during the course of our conversation, and when she revealed that she and her partner, Greg Ball, were both involved in the Singleton Beef and Land Management Association, I suddenly realized who I was speaking with.

In August 2006, *The Newcastle Herald* (NSW) published an article relating to the drought and the perceived need to replace older and under-performing bulls with younger, harder-to-find, quality ones. Limousin and Charolais achievements were noted. The article quoted Greg Ball, representing the Management Association, as saying "People are getting rid of the older bulls that aren't performing... There is a shortage of quality cattle because of culling during the drought."

The article then went on with "Eurocross cattle, such as Charolais and Limousin were in strong demand, as were Angus, Mr Ball said."

The article proceeded to a small profile on beltie breeders "going against the grain" which included the statement, "They breed belted Galloways, or belties, a small breed that other hard-nosed cattlemen and women do not rate highly as meat producers."

This statement was directly followed by "Mr Ball described belties as "pretty"."

2009

MELBOURNE ROYAL

Steer Competition Update

Allen Snaith (*Warialda*), a RAS Victoria Cattle Committee councilor, would like to advise breeders who are entering steers in the 2009 Steer Competition at Melbourne Show don't have to sell their carcasses to the killing abattoir.

Breeders may elect to sell their carcasses privately or take them home. Breeders would then have the opportunity to secure better cents per kilo price. Breeders also should be aware that they would then be responsible for the \$100 slaughter fee, normally covered by RASV.

Allen also advises that he has space for thirty Beltie/Galloway carcasses (for the Melbourne Steer competition) in his boning room at North Melbourne Institute of TAFE. The carcasses would be available for viewing on the Tuesday. Any breeder wishing to have their animals sent to NMIT, please contact Allen on **03 5787 1560** to secure a spot.

Getting Involved?

If you are considering entering a steer, check out
www.royalshow.com.au/results-2008.asp

to download the 2008 carcass results.

That Greg Ball was clearly promoting his own choice of breeds is of not of issue; he is expected to do so as a successful cattleman. That he chose to deride another breed while doing so was, perhaps, not so elegant.

But I'm glad he said what he did. This article was the first article I discovered where objective evidence of the general derision of belties we encounter for their outer attractiveness was actually on the record. I felt it significant in terms of the Australian history of our breed to have this record.

Although Leonie was the main Galloway judge, Greg Ball was also a cattle judge at Maitland.

The irony of this situation is that Leonie actually liked Peppercorn Ben and awarded him Senior Champion over a solid Galloway. Ben was bred by the beltie breeders who were the subject of *The Newcastle Herald* article.

Now it's far too easy to focus on the gossipy aspects of this story. The fact is that it has a very happy ending.

Leonie is curious to know more.

So we should provide for her. Her mind is open. Let the facts speak to her for themselves.

Leonie also mention that she heard about a Belted Galloway doing well at the 2008 Scone Carcass Competition, the first time belties had been entered into that competition.

A little bit of effort in judicious planning in choosing events from beltie breeders can have an effect.

Leonie is a lovely lady with a genuine concern for doing the right thing by the breed she is judging. I'd be happy for Maitland Show to invite her back next year. She has recognized that belties are different, and demonstrated that she is disinclined to judge them negatively for it. She is putting the Australian ethos - a fair go for all - into practice.

This story would not have played out like this had the Maitland Show been cancelled due to the wet weather, or if very enthusiastic and conscientious beginners had decided that bringing the only beltie to be shown wasn't worth the effort. From this point of view, I'd like to thank new breeders Jason & Kimberly Astbury (*Sassafras*) for their part in providing an opportunity to help change attitudes.

For those curious as to why bother reporting on what is essentially a regional country show, Maitland Show as a focus and location for displaying Galloway cattle north of Sydney has much commendable potential to offer in terms of expanding breed presence and recognition, and subsequently - if approached correctly, a potential market. Last year, 29 Galloways (including 12 belties) were present. Its sustenance and long-term viability will largely depend on the breeders of that region and their own capacity to support it with their co-ordinated organizational effort and enthusiasm. Sydney and Canberra shows aren't always practical locations for breeders situated in the northern parts of NSW - they tell you that. A convenient location for these people is needed and Maitland is serving a purpose.

They must be genuinely supported by the Galloway breed societies in an effort to expand the breed in NSW. It would be lovely if next year, the ABGA could organize to be there displaying its banner and promotional material as well.

On adults learning to prepare cattle:

We chatted about where do people go to learn about prepping cattle for show or to learn about the finer points of cattle conformation. Most events held to provide experience for people seem to lean towards kids. Leonie recognized this gap and commented that during junior handler training events, it was the parents that often had the most questions!

Leonie mentioned that the Angus society, Angus Australia, run **Beef Cattle Assessment Courses** and I should investigate these. So I did.

Leanne Stuart (02 6766 5400 OR 0408 621 784, email: info@beefcattlecourse.com.au) was very positive about Belted Galloway breeders being involved. "It's tagged Angus," said Leanne, "but all different breeds are discussed, and the more the merrier!"

The NSW Cattle Assessment School runs 13-16 July at Tocal (CB Alexander Agricultural College), 15kms north east of Maitland. It's a live-in situation, costs \$590 and will cover topics such as steer selection and judging, breeding cattle and carcass assessment. There is lots of hands-on involvement. Go to www.beefcattlecourse.com.au for more info.

These schools are also run in Victoria (13 July-2 August, contact Sue Morgan on 0427 248 456) and South Australia (11-13 August, contact Damien Brookes 0427 165 088).

I'm going, wanna come?

- Andrew Monaghan
Jandrew Belted Galloway Stud

THE GALLOWAY

The Galloway is an old breed of obscure origin. Two hundred years ago it occupied, to the almost complete exclusion of other breeds, a very large area in the south-west of Scotland. The extension of dairying in this district had caused it to be largely displaced by the Ayrshire, but, on the other hand, it has extended into the north of England, and has won a place for itself in Canada and the United States. Like the Aberdeen Angus, the Galloway is black and polled, and of beef type; otherwise it has few points of similarity with the northern breed. In the Galloway the head is very short, with a broad poll, and ears set rather low; the neck is rather long, the body deep, but lacking the great width of some of the most highly-developed beef breeds. A certain slackness of back and prominence of shoulders are common faults among ordinary commercial individuals. The skin is thick and the coat very abundant, consisting of a very dense mossy undercoat with an outer covering of long fine hair.

The Galloway is one of the hardiest of breeds, whether under the cold and very wet conditions that obtain in winter among its native hills or in districts of intense winter frosts. The cows of most herds live out-of-doors throughout the year, being brought to lower ground in winter and returning to higher altitudes soon after calving. The quality of meat is excellent, and the carcass is never patchy or wasteful from excess of fat. The breed is, naturally, a somewhat slow grower and feeder, yet wonderful examples of early maturity are often seen at fat-stock shows. Judged by the Smithfield weights, the Galloway is nearly 15 percent lighter than the Shorthorn at the same age. After the breed had been registered in the "Polled Herd Book" along with the Angus, for fifteen years, a separate register was started in 1877.

Crossed with the white Shorthorn the Galloway produces a "blue-grey" that is hardier, if somewhat slower in maturing, than the corresponding Angus cross, and equally esteemed for the quality of its beef. The Galloway is not noted for dairy qualities, though deep-milking cows do occur. Dun and occasionally red Galloways are found, and a white-belted strain also occurs, particularly in the north of England. Certain herds of the last type show pronounced milking qualities and are kept for dairy purposes. The dun and belted varieties have now a separate herd book.

*Extract from
Agriculture - The Science & Practice of British Farming
Chapter III: Cattle - Types and Breeds
Pages 389 & 390
James A. S. Watson and James A. More
Published 1924 by Oliver & Boyd, Edinburgh and London
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