Editor’s Note

My ten years editing this newsletter has been challenging but always rewarding (once at the printers). Challenging in the constant chasing of contributors and trying to ensure new and accurate material. Rewarding in the learning I gain in the process and the stimulation and feedback from discussing matters with readers met in my travels.

Well, what topics to feature in my final issue – yes, final for me, as I retire this year:

- BREEDPLAN has recently improved the way it handles imported (immigrant) animals which are new to the system. This is discussed on page 12. If you read this, it is worth remembering some history: BREEDPLAN initially started immigrants at zero and they slowly found their level. The next move was to start at breed average. Naturally there were complaints about the slowness to get meaningful EBVs, on expensive imported sires for example. A few years ago a system was introduced to convert EPDs or EBVs of imports, to Australian equivalents and start them at this level. The overseas information was to phase out, as real progeny were recorded. It became evident however, that in some cases the imported information was being given too much weight. This has been rectified for 2005, but resulted in some well known imported sires changing EBVs. Most will welcome the correction once the dust settles. Note in most cases they are still high $indexing (say top 5% instead of 1%) and that the overseas information is still being used, but with less emphasis.

- We look at developments with feed efficiency EBVs (p. 11) — a most important trait, but challenging to measure. There are also some correlations with fatness to be managed and possibly fertility and tenderness links to be watched out for. These are currently being researched by the CRC as Australia continues its world leadership in this field.

- A significant extension activity for me in 2004, was a series of workshops for client groups of major feedlots (combining my CRC and BREEDPLAN technical transfer roles). Participants included cattle suppliers, agents, vets and feedlot staff, ensuring great information exchange.

- Occasionally at field days I am accused of being too figure orientated (while AGBU at times think I am not keen enough on $indexes, which we discuss on page 6 and 12). I hope I’ve always stressed the need for structural soundness in balance with BREEDPLAN figures. As evidence, see image of a model bull I helped develop with Bob Gahan and two UNE carpenters in 1992. It is still widely used at events such as the Armidale Feeder Steer School, but without the head! I am pleased to see moves towards structural EBVs in BREEDPLAN (p. 15).

- Working with such a professional group and the top class BREEDPLAN product, has been very stimulating. I have been associated with several world firsts, such as carcase EBVs from scanning in 1990. Although Lorna Pelton’s Texas A&M team was very advanced, the US didn’t have the technology into EPDs until several years after us. For the latest on scanning see p. 11.

If you would like to keep in touch, briansundstrom@yahoo.com will find me.

Cheers and good cattle breeding.

Brian

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