UK Scanner Training  
Course a success in UK

As BREEDPLAN attracts users in the United Kingdom, seedstock producers have become interested in the opportunities provided by real time ultrasound scanning for carcass traits.

In November 2005 a course was organized to introduce prospective scanners to the equipment and techniques associated with collecting measurement of fat depth, eye muscle area and marbling (percent intra-muscular fat) in UK seedstock herds.

The four day course, conducted at Moffat in Southern Scotland, attracted 12 participants from Scotland, England, Ireland and Wales. Five PIE Aquila® machines (similar to those currently used in Australia, New Zealand, South America and Southern Africa) were made available to the scanners courtesy of PIE Data UK, with facilities and animals for the course provided by Andy Ryder of Moffat Farms, Moffat.

The course was organized by the Aberdeen Angus Cattle Society and conducted by Matt Wolcott (Animal Genetics and Breeding Unit, Armidale, Australia). The course provided a theoretical component which included discussion of scanning techniques, important considerations when collecting data for BREEDPLAN, understanding EBVs, EBV accuracies, and the importance of accurate contemporary groups. The scanners were also able to gain significant hands-on experience working with a wide range of animals.

Following the course, 2 operators were granted provisional accreditation to submit scanned measurements for calculation of BREEDPLAN EBVs after participating in an accreditation test. Both operators were accredited for all traits (P8 and Rib fat depth, eye muscle area and marbling).

A follow-up training will be conducted in March 2006 followed by a full accreditation test which will require animals to be scanned twice (to assess operator repeatability) and then slaughtered so carcass traits can be measured and operator accuracy tested. The same standards will be applied in the UK as have been put in place in Australia and other countries submitting scanned data to BREEDPLAN.

ARGENTINA  
Beef Tour to Armidale – Oct’05

Last Spring, a delegation of 40 leading Cattle Producers, Veterinarians, Livestock Agents and Government Officials from Argentina spent a week in Armidale attending lectures and field visits organized by ABRI and ANF.

The week long tour involved informative sessions on the latest technology available to Australian Beef Producers. The topics ranged from Selection Index and MSA Grading through to the global marketing of Australian genetics which, incidentally, Argentinean breeders have been sourcing for many years and a market that has the potential for exponential growth.

The highlight for many was a generous invitation by UNE’s Chancellor – John Cassidy to visit his property “Merilba” for an informative tour viewing his prized South Devon cattle, the latest ultrasound scanning techniques, handling SRS Merino clip and the all important demonstration of the trusty “kelpie”.

The day ended with a memorable dinner at the homestead drinking “Vino” produced on the property and eating “Merilba” beef cooked on a “Australian Parrillo” that for many, made them feel right at home (in Argentina)!

Argentine visit – Dec’05

Matías Suarez visited Argentina for a series of meetings with existing and potential ABRI clients. These included Grupo BREEDPLAN Angus Argentino, Asociación Argentina de Criadores de Bonsmara, LIAG and some breeders from the CREA Caballos Group among others.

Matías presented an overview of BREEDPLAN with emphasis in data collection issues and the theory behind Selection Indices. Discussions with Grupo BREEDPLAN Angus Argentino reviewed the parameters used in their current BreedObject Pampas $index, with the possibility of developing an additional $index focusing on the Argentinean “Export markets”.

HerdMASTER Español

Matías’ trip coincided with the timely release of Saltbush’s HerdMASTER (Spanish version) and he was able to demonstrate the features this herd recording program has to offer. With the assistance of María Calafé and Máximo Lichtschein, they were able to cover a vast array of features that many Australians have taken for granted.

For Argentinean breeders this software will help bridge the gap between the producer and tools like BREEDPLAN to assist in improving their breeding objectives.

Recent outbreaks of Foot and Mouth disease in the Mecursor and the ever increasing political issues makes beef production a challenge in Argentina. There is growing interest from Latin American breeders to forge closer relations with countries like Australia because of the expertise and beef improvement technology we have to offer.