New progeny test at “Trangie” NSW

The Angus Society of Australia has established a progeny testing program in cooperation with NSW Agriculture at Trangie Research Station. Trangie has a special resource of 400 Angus cows, BREEDPLAN recorded with the Angus Society and all with feed efficiency records. From 1974 to 1992 the herd was closed and used for a research project to evaluate the consequences of selection for growth. This contributed extremely valuable results for the development of BREEDPLAN. Since then a project on genetic variation in feed efficiency has been conducted. This had strong links with the Beef CRC and allowed the first trial BREEDPLAN EBVs for feed efficiency to be published early in 2002 (pages 13 and 15).

Following the completion of the feed efficiency project, Trangie sought other ways to fund and use their cattle resource to generate further research information. Costs of running the new program are generated from bull nomination fees, matched by the MLA Donor Company program. Aims include further enhancements to BREEDPLAN, particularly for feed efficiency and to I/D young Aust sires which can contribute to the industry and replace some US imports.

In 2001, Angus breeders were invited to nominate bulls for progeny testing. 34 were nominated, and 13 were selected, ten for AI and three for natural service. Selection criteria ensured a range of blood lines and breeders, and good performance figures as assessed by the BreedObject $ Indexes. This process will be repeated in 2002, 2003.

400 females were inseminated in spring last year. A recent ultrasound pregnancy test by John Wilkins showed a pleasing 92% from the two rounds of AI and one cycle of natural service. John also provided foetal ageing results which indicate there will be the right number of progeny by each sire, though DNA testing will finally confirm this. All male calves will be steered and grown out from weaning to feedlot entry at Glen Innes Research Station, then finished and feed efficiency tested at the CRC research Feedlot, Tullimba. IGF-1 blood tests will be recorded during growth (see P 15) and compared to the feed intake and carcase results.

Heifers will be retained at Trangie and sufficient of each bull's daughters joined to give reproductive and maternal information. The project is managed by a committee from the MLA, NSW Agriculture and the Angus Society. (Contact Angus Society: 02 6772 3011)

Angus Alliance progeny test, Victoria

The AAA (Australian Angus Alliance) Progeny Test program has been successfully running for 7 years, coordinated by Harry Lawson and Carolyn Ebeling, with support from the MLA R&D Partnership program, Elders, Rutherglen Research Institute and also involvement from the Beef CRC. Werribee Agriculture’s commercial Angus herd is the basic breeding unit, with 1,200 heifers inseminated in spring last year.

Nominated bulls are benchmarked against proven, high accuracy reference sires. Test sires are randomly AI’d to 100 females each, ensuring large contemporary groups which are maintained from birth to slaughter.

Calves are identified and weighed at birth, the males steered and weighed regularly from weaning to feedlot entry. Feedlot performance is monitored and carcase data collected and compared with ultrasound scanning prior. Net Feed Intake data will be collected this year (also IGF blood tests, P15), with 120 steers currently under tests at Rutherglen to provide NFI information on their sires.

Over 300 Lawsons Angus bulls have been NFI tested at Rutherglen making this program the largest single contributor to the recent publication of BREEDPLAN NFI EBVs for Angus, outside Trangie Research Station (see P15).

This NFI testing has already found a sire, GAR Precision 1680, with one of the best NFI EBVs so far found in Australia (-0.83, negative being less feed consumed. There are also some Australian bulls with NFI EBVs around this level). GAR Precision 1680 has been widely used at Lawsons, through importing embryos and has a strong EBV profile and high $Index for the Japanese market. Lawsons have a partnership with Gardiners Angus Ranch, breeders of GAR Precision.

Lawsons Angus also have an interesting bull growing out unit taking weaner bulls from the 1200 cow herd and 800 recipient cows in their ET program. 400 ha of pasture and crop is managed under intensive cell grazing. Harry Lawson tells me bulls average 1.2kg/hd/day, with the unit turning off of 760kg/hay/year (target is 1000 head on the 400h a, equivalent to 30 DSE/ha). Weaners enter in May at 250kg and leave as 450kg yearlings in Sept or 650kg at 18 months, in April.

Jason Archer, who heads the Trangie team, pictured with Warren Nancarrow of New England Artificial Breeders.

www.lawsonsangus.com.au