As I was preparing to write something interesting and useful here, I was disheartened to come across a mainstream newspaper with comment on editorials. They claimed only some 20% of people read them! As a BREEDPLAN NEWS browser, who has reached this far, you must be an above average ‘investigatory reader’. Well done!

The drought has preoccupied most Australian breeders this past year. I’ve heard some amazing stories of efforts to save herds - may this be a kinder year. Thankfully it is currently looking much better in many areas.

Some interesting stories this issue include developments with web services (p6,20), Breed trends(p19) and great progress with overseas business. Another important BREEDPLAN item, from my perspective, is the release of the first multibreed table to put EBVs of some breeds onto a common base (see p 12 - well done AGBU and David Johnston in particular). While this is initially only the weight traits of four breeds (Angus; Hereford/Poll Hereford; Limousin and Simmental) it is a good, and long awaited, start. Remember, that to do this properly needs lots of data from valid head-to-head breed comparisons. Such data is hard to get. While there was very significant assistance from the MLA - funded ’Multibreed work’ at Hamilton in Victoria, unfortunately some of their carcase data is not useable, as lines of steers had been ’harvested’ at different times from the commercial feedlots in which they were finished. This is the main reason the table cannot yet include the carcase EBVs such as fat depth and marbling. Hopefully you will agree that it is best to only release adjustment figures when they reach reasonable accuracy - there have been major problems in the US with their table fluctuating significantly in recent years. With the addition of some scanning and more CRC data, the Australian table will progressively be enhanced.

A next step is to add more breeds. One move towards this is shown in the picture left: Angus heifers (from ”Trangie” research station) running with the main Shorthorn herd at that society’s Durham research herd near Orange. They will calve together this winter, then provide valuable comparisons to add to existing CRC data. We would be pleased to hear of any other potentially useable breed comparisons of this type. BS

Argentine links expanding

As you can see from the photo, there are some Australian trees in Argentina. Many of these bulls also have BREEDPLAN EBVs, and some even carry Australian genetics! The picture from a bull sale in Bahia Blanca (600km SW of Buenos Ares) is provided by one of the vendors, Martin Vergara. Martin is a leading member of Grupo BREEDPLAN Angus Argentino which now has 16 members and some 5,000 cows recording with BREEDPLAN. Martin provided some notes of their activities, on the following page. BS
ABRI has been working with various government and private sector agencies in the Philippines on the introduction of BREEDPLAN as the national improvement system for ruminant livestock. Support for this project is being provided by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR).

The Filipinos have a two-pronged policy for meeting the strong demand which their burgeoning human population has for beef. The first policy is improving the productivity of their 2.5M head local herd and the second is importation of up to 200,000 head of live cattle per year (mainly from Australia) to grow out in local feedlots.

The Philippine National Beef Congress held in April, 2002 provided a milestone in Australian-Philippine relationships. Much of the Congress was allocated to presentations on BREEDPLAN in the Philippine context. This culminated in the President of the Federation of Cattle Raisers Associations of the Philippines (FCRAP), Mr Roberto Montalvan, presenting honorary membership of FCRAP to the Australian Registered Cattle Breeders Association’s (ARCBA) Executive Director, Mr Arthur Rickards. With this membership comes the commitment to close co-operation with ARCBA on technical and policy issues affecting the two industries. This is a welcome development because of the inter-dependence of the two industries and the uneasy trade relationship resulting from Australia’s reluctance to accept fruit and juice exports from the Philippines.

Steve Skinner is ABRI’s operational manager for the BREEDPLAN project in the Philippines. He has supervised the assembly of a significant database of breeding records from public and private sector breeding herds. Routine BREEDPLAN analyses are expected to start later in 2003. This will be a momentous step for the Philippine beef industry.

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Arthur Rickards

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** Argentine links expanding.... continued **

Last October 2002, the new San Patricio del Sur seedstock, created by Beno Bustingorri and myself, gave our first auction sale outside the Pampa Humeda. This was at Bahia Blanca (See photo page 2), and started our operations outside the humid area, introducing BREEDPLAN in dry areas, around 440mm. This area concentrates 700,000 head in a radius of 150km.

Before the auction, we presented the fundamentals of BREEDPLAN and selection criteria to an audience of 300 interested breeders and professionals who were surprised by the technology implemented and the results obtained. 80 black and red bulls (18 grandsons of the Australian bull Te Mania Kelp) sold to 33 buyers for a satisfactory average of $2,270.

During December we received the interesting visit of Bob Dent, advisor from Australia's Angus Society, who shared his knowledge with the Grupo BREEDPLAN Angus Argentino members. In that opportunity we analysed the need of incorporating $Index Values and ways of relating, through genetic bridges, the Argentinean and Australian herds. We also discussed training Argentinean technicians in Australia, to help those currently working with BREEDPLAN and extend its benefits to other producers.

Together with Maximo Lischtein he visited Liniers market, the biggest cattle concentration in the world, with daily sales of 11,000 head. Then he visited my "Bueno Retiro" seedstock, which records on BREEDPLAN 500 calves per year. This herd has been selected for 25 years on adaptation to the natural environment, fertility and commercial aptitude. He then visited Carlos Sackmann’s seedstock, "Casamu", twice winner of the National Palermo’s Championship Cattle Show, recently enrolled in BREEDPLAN. Dra. Maria Calafel, member of the Bustingorri family, and Dr. Alberto Prando from La Plata National University expressed interest in travelling to Australia to learn more about BREEDPLAN.

At the Argentinean Angus Association, Bob received a technical update about their plans, then a tango show with Bustingorri and Vergara families was a good way of saying goodbye to a new friend.

Martin Vergara
"Bueno Retiro" Argentina
In the April 2002 International edition of the BREEDPLAN News we reported that the South African Brahman, Simmentaler and Simbra societies had joined BREEDPLAN. We are pleased to report that both systems in South Africa are up and running and all registration and performance data is now captured from the respective offices. The feedback we have had from the respective societies is that they are very pleased with the results.

In the last 12 months many other breed societies have come on board. A warm welcome to the 18 societies of the Namibian Stud Breeders’ Association (NSBA) who have chosen BREEDPLAN International as their National Recording system. The NSBA represents 11 beef, 5 smallstock and 2 horse societies. Their system will be installed in the latter half of 2003.

The South African Brangus breed society has also decided to join BREEDPLAN. At the time we didn't realise how difficult it would be to obtain an extract of Brangus registration and performance data from the local authorities. The Society just wants to get on with the job of offering BREEDPLAN to their clients without political interference. We thus take our hats off to them for the tenacity they have shown. Once up and running the Brangus would be keen to liaise with their Australian counterparts to get a combined analysis going.

The four South African societies who have joined BREEDPLAN represent 40% of the total beef membership and 37% of all registered females over the age of two years. Very encouraging has been the phenomenal growth in the numbers of producers who have taken up performance recording (since joining BREEDPLAN). The Simmentaler society has increased their number of cattle in performance recording from 54% to over 70% whilst the Brahman society has increased the number of members doing performance recording from 120 to over 300 members. This is proof that the introduction of BREEDPLAN into South Africa has, and will continue, to make a marked difference to our industry.

Other exciting ventures include the announcement of a National Seedstock producer of the year, cow group of the year and bull of the year competition. BREEDPLAN in Southern Africa has combined forces with South Africa’s largest Agricultural weekly (a magazine called the Landbouweekblad) to host this premier competition. We are currently negotiating with a large South African Supermarket chain (which has acquired a number of stores in Australia) to sponsor the event. BREEDPLAN in Southern Africa has also launched its own annual Southern African edition of the BREEDPLAN News. A copy can be downloaded from the www.agribsa.co.za website.

Despite the success that BREEDPLAN has had in Southern Africa there is still much work to be done. Compared to Western countries such as the US or Australia, Southern African producers selected on ratios (called an index in South Africa) for a very long time before EBVs were introduced. Thus, it is difficult to convince some producers that EBVs are here to stay and that BLUP is truly able to separate genetic and environmental effects. Many producers also calve throughout the year. This management practice makes contemporary group sizes very small and it becomes very difficult to obtain reproduction EBVs such as days to calving. A few producers are yet to be convinced of the management and financial benefits that a defined calving season has. There is clearly much work to be done in the field and a number of BREEDPLAN courses will again be given this year.

Despite our disappointments in the cricket world cup, BREEDPLAN Seedstock producers have a lot to look forward to over the coming year. Our Internet functions are proving very popular and semen and embryos have been sold to overseas clients. We look forward to introducing new traits such as days to calving into the system once historical data issues have been addressed. The HerdMASTER windows-based on farm management program will also soon be launched in Southern Africa. Finally, producers in South Africa would like to thank and compliment the ABRI team on a job well done.

Michael Bradfield

Brigette and Mecki Schneider, Namibian farmers of the year in 2000. They use BREEDPLAN as a selection tool in their herd. Mecki uses ‘curve bender’ bulls in his herd

Michael Bradfield- BREEDPLAN Co-ordinator in Southern Africa.
2002 was a particularly busy year for the New Zealand seedstock industry. Early in the year considerable time was spent evaluating new and not-so-new technologies offered by BREEDPLAN as part of their contracts with various breed societies. In 2001 they had been introduced to the new internet-based program (see also page 20), Internet Solutions, and by autumn of 2002, most societies had taken up this option. The weekly updated database, the powerful search engine and the capability of generating sale catalogues were strongly appealing features. Since being installed, this new technology has been used heavily by both commercial and seedstock producers.

$Indexes
The not-so-new technology, adopted by a number of breed societies, is another internet-based program, BreedObject $ Indexes (see also page 18). When this program was first developed, New Zealand produced a customised version, called the Sire Selector, to cater for our unique production systems. The latter has been used by New Zealand beef producers to select bulls, based on their profitability per cow mated, in specific production systems. It was decided last year, by a number of breed societies, to adopt BreedObject in preference to the Sire Selector since the latter required upgrading, at considerable expense and also most felt there was little point in ‘re-inventing the wheel’.

In February of 2002, I spent time with AGBU’s Wayne Upton and Steve Barwick developing a greater understanding of BreedObject and also initiating its customisation for New Zealand breeds and production systems. Developing customised indexes for each of the breeds, has been a very worthwhile exercise as it has forced each of the breeds to revisit their breeding objectives. In some cases they admitted having become slightly derailed and needed to get back on track. Overall, progress has been slow but steady as each society realises it must get the economic weightings correct to facilitate acceptance by its membership and commercial clients. It is hoped that by the start of the bull-selling season in 2003, most breeds will have developed their Indexes. A national series of BreedObject workshops is planned for late April 2003, using the expertise of AGBU’s Wayne Upton.

Bull Sales

Graphics in catalogues - At a recent meeting of the New Zealand Beef Expo National Bull Sale Committee, it was decided to use the BREEDPLAN version of the ‘genetic picture’ graphs of EBVs in sale catalogues (See below and page 20). For four years, New Zealand has used its own pictorial version, however, after much deliberation it was felt that as the BREEDPLAN version was accessible through Internet Solutions and was less expensive to implement, it would be prudent to use it. The ‘picture’, to the left, will supplement the usual BREEDPLAN format for displaying EBVs and it is hoped will be a more appealing selection tool, particularly to commercial buyers.

No raw data - The societies participating in the Expo have also moved strongly to abolish the presentation of raw data at the sale. This will focus potential purchasers on meaningful genetic information and remove the conflict often occurring when EBVs and raw data are presented together.

Russell Priest
Meat New Zealand
Beef Genetics Co-ordinator

Breedplan News - Issue 13, April 2003
Leader in North America

ABRI has recently become a leader in the provision of livestock recording services in North America if measured by the number of sites installed. We now have nine (9) powerful servers running in breed associations in North America and using BREEDPLAN International software. These are shown in the attached map. Three breed associations have their databases run out of the computer in Calgary (Canadian Angus office) and four (4) associations from the office of the American Salers in Denver. That makes 14 breed associations serviced overall. These cover a broad cross section of the North American livestock industries. For example, the systems in Quebec, Guelph and Westerville provide services to the dairy sector; the North American Elk have a system in Kansas City and the other five (5) sites are for beef breeds. The combined databases of our North American clients include records on 30 million animals.

Of course, only the beef breeds use the BREEDPLAN genetic evaluation service. In total they process performance records on around 157,000 calves through some or all of the BREEDPLAN options. That number is already 19% higher than the weaning weights processed by all breeds in Australia - so geographic diversification is paying off. The distribution of weaning weights processed by breed from North America is given below.

Arthur Rickards

CAAB feedback system

In January, the Angus Society of Australia placed its CAAB Feedback System and ASA Tagging System on Internet Solutions. This captures data from abattoirs as email files and provides a WEB-based graphic representation of carcase results on progeny of individual producers against all progeny slaughtered in the same lot. Sire comparisons are also produced. This system is understandably attracting a good deal of international interest.

Arthur Rickards

New Graphic Design service

ABRI’s Internet Solutions service has become so popular that we are now providing graphic design and WEB Page development services to breed society clients and individual breeders. The service is headed up by Heather Frazier who also does the layout and design of BREEDPLAN News. Heather is in her third year with ABRI having completed a 4 year graphic design degree at the University of Newcastle. The second member of Heather’s team is Amanda McNeill-Perkins who also has a number of years of PC training including commercial experience.

So if you wish to have high-quality WEB pages that link to ABRI’s databases or brochures, corporate stationery/logo, promotional items and posters designed, please contact Heather on 02 6773 3185 or email: heather.frazier@abri.une.edu.au.

Amanda McNeill-Perkins and Heather Frazier.