The BREEDPLAN and Saltbush teams now provide breeders with three ways to enter registration and performance data and receive reports electronically. These are shown in the diagram below.

**Option 1 (See page 18)**
Is for smaller herds (say less than 70 cows). You need just a web browser, member number and password and access to Internet Solutions (See article by Murray Scholz on page 18).

**Option 2**
Is for larger herds and involves the on-farm installation of herdMASTER software and submission of batches of data via internet (see opposite).

**Option 3**
Is an alternative approach for smaller herds using herdMASTER.Net. It provides a full herd management system over the web at an economic price. (Also described on the opposite page).

Some breeds have already reached 90% electronic recording.

**SOS - Saltbush on-line support, for when you need help**

As part of Saltbush's on-going plans to provide more services to our customers, the Saltbush Web site has been upgraded to provide many new features. It is currently being tested, and when it is ready (late 2003) you will be able to appreciate these new services:

- Information about the latest product versions
- Tips about getting the most from your Saltbush product
- Answers to Frequently Asked Questions
- A search engine for finding solutions for your Saltbush problems
- Download upgrades for current Support users
- 24 Hour, 7 day a week on-line support assistance

The help and information available via the SOS is available to all Saltbush Users that have a currently active Support and Maintenance Agreement (SMA).
herdMASTER developments at Saltbush

Customer feedback about future needs for Herd Management Software has resulted in the development of Saltbush’s most ambitious development schedule ever. Many readers will be familiar with our new package “herdMASTER”, initially released in 2002. A major upgrade with many new features requested by users, was recently released. However, herdMASTER is not just a product for PC-based Herd Management, but the first in a family of products that will be released progressively from the day you read this Newsletter. Let me introduce you to the family members:

**herdMASTER.NET on the WEB**
This new product is aimed primarily at herds of less than 70 cows, which covers the majority of stud breeders. All you need is a web browser, and you can log into herdMASTER.NET on the Web. That is, you have the full capacity of an advanced herd management system without having to outlay $1000 or so for the software. You will simply pay an economical annual fee through ABRI or participating breed societies.

**herdMASTER PC**
This is our popular on-farm; desktop PC or notebook PC based Herd Management System for medium (over 70 cows) to large producers. It is the product that stud cattle breeders are upgrading to from Herd Magic and other herd management systems. Users with a support agreement automatically receive free upgrades - like Version 2, soon to be released and including a range of enhancements requested by our users. This will also include a streamlined version for commercial producers.

**herdMASTER.NET Server**
This is a herdMASTER product with real grunt! Designed for the larger or corporate producer, it has multiple-farm and multiple-user capabilities. It runs with a powerful SQL database on a central machine with users connected via a broadband network. It includes the ability to receive and consolidate performance data from remote herdMASTER PCs. If your enterprise needs a comprehensive and integrated herd recording system, then herdMASTER.NET Server is for your company. Why not contact us now, while herdMASTER.NET Server is under development, so that we can be sure it will meet your needs.

**herdMASTER Pocket**
Pocket PC’s are highly portable, calculator-sized devices capable of storing a large amount of information. They have small touch-sensitive screens. We are developing a specialised version of herdMASTER to allow these devices to be used in the field to answer those ad-hoc enquiries. They can also be used to capture data from scales and Electronic ID readers. Of course herdMASTER Pocket will have the capability to transfer your records to and from other herdMASTER systems.

**herdMASTER Field**
A variety of new technologies lend themselves for data capture and retrieval in the field. These include devices with large touch sensitive screens and also devices that are ruggedly built. They make ideal systems for field installations, such as for capturing data at the cattle yards. We are working with suppliers to produce versions of herdMASTER PC and herdMASTER Pocket for these new technologies. Stay tuned for future developments in this herdMASTER Field!

So there you have it! Saltbush is committed to providing a total systems solution for the data information needs for livestock producers covering quality assurance, NLIS traceability, performance recording and a registration interface. Before you commit yourself to a supplier for your needs for the next decade, consider these capabilities of Saltbush:

- Pioneer of Herd Management Systems for 23 years
- Able to deliver integrated Web/Server/PC and Pocket systems. We can provide a system to suit you, not a system to just suit us!
- A team of ten staff including three software engineers specialising in livestock management systems.
- A division of ABRI, the pioneer of performance recording 33 years ago.
- Ability to customise systems for your needs.

You’ve got a business to run! Talk to the professionals, talk to Saltbush!

Bryce Little, 
Systems Development Manager, 
Saltbush Agricultural Software

http://breedplan.une.edu.au
A number of Associations have already been using BREEDPLAN’s Internet Solutions for their capture of calf recording/registration data over the last year. Recently this service has been extended to also capture performance data for BREEDPLAN (eg. Weaning data, Yearling data).

This method of data submission to BREEDPLAN is particularly suited to smaller herds, and has a number of advantages over paper-based recording of performance data:

- Validation and checking of data is performed at data entry stage. Errors or warnings are displayed immediately resulting in ‘clean’ data being submitted to BREEDPLAN.
- Faster turnaround of your data (and subsequent availability of updated EBVs). Performance data is electronically transferred direct to your BREEDPLAN processor, with no need for re-keying.
- On-line summary/review screen of data prior to submission, enables easy detection of possible errors and omissions
- Drop down lists for fields ensure data integrity and ease of data entry.
- Permanent record of historic data submissions for your herd always available on-line.
- Ability to enter Mature Cow Data (weight, condition score) and live animal scan data (FATS, EMA, IMF).

Limousin BREEDPLAN users in Australia, and to a number of ABRI’s North American BREEDPLAN clients. It will be progressively rolled out to more of the Australian and New Zealand breeds over the coming months. All breeders will need is a home PC (with web browser), and access to the internet. Access to these facilities is via your Breed Association web site, using your Herd Letters / Member Number and Password. Please contact your BREEDPLAN Processor or your Breed Association regarding access to these facilities.

Murray Scholz

http://breedplan.une.edu.au
Benchmarking for stud clients

In Beef Production enterprises, it can often be difficult to simply identify the major factors driving profitability. We often hear or read of cattle producers, gleefully letting us know that they “…topped the weaner sales!” or “…sold 800 kg bullocks at an average of $X/hd”. However, these achievements are very poor indicators of overall herd profitability.

The key to understanding the factors most influencing beef profit is the same as for any other business - selling wheat, widgets or hours of consulting time. That is, you must measure and understand your costs and price received per unit of product, and how many units of product are produced. In beef production, the critical factors to measure are:

- Costs to produce a kg of Beef cattle: \( \text{COP/kg} \)
- Price received per kg of Beef cattle: \( \text{Received/kg} \)
- Kg of Beef cattle produced per Ha: \( \text{kgBeef/Ha} \)

These benchmarks are the critical profit drivers and combine to make the Beef Profit equation:

\[
\frac{\$}{\text{Ha}} = \text{kgBeef/Ha} \times (\text{Received/kg} - \text{COP/kg})
\]

Benchmarking offers the opportunity to measure, separate the components, clearly identify the strengths and weaknesses, and compare your beef business to others so as to move forward with a focus on improving profitability. In my opening paragraph, the statements involve quoting per head production or prices, while profit is the difference between price & costs and how much is produced. If you topped the weaner sales but ran half the stock as your neighbour on an equivalent property, you are unlikely to be more profitable. Benchmarking would highlight poor kg Beef/Ha and a high $COP/kg as weaknesses to work on to improve herd profitability.

At “Wirruna” we run benchmarking days for our bull clients through consultants Holmes Sackett & Associates at Wagga (Principal, Phil Holmes pictured). Benchmarking has helped our clients focus on the key profit drivers in their beef businesses. The top 20% have average COP of 81c/kg and the bottom 20% $1.24. Over the last 8 years of our own Benchmarking, we notice that the more profitable herds are highly influenced by management. The more profitable herds tend to have lower $COP/kg and higher kgBeef/Ha. The resultant cow phenotype is moderate size, with ease of calving. The high profit herd managers select bulls with a balance of genetic traits and fear extremes, particularly growth traits. With the $Indexes ranking these types of bulls highly, the past EBV selection techniques of these managers are being vindicated by the $Index rankings. It has put many of the genetic traits into perspective and in particular it has highlighted the dangers in chasing extremes. Benchmarking encourages assessing performance per kg or per ha, rather than $’s per head. Once you experience this paradigm shift, you look at cattle breeding from a different perspective.

Dr Phil Holmes of Holmes Sackett & Associates speaking to Wirruna clients

Wagyu newsflash

Wagyu is a breed on the move. In the 12 months to June 30, 2003 the Australian Wagyu Association (AWA) registered 2963 cattle - a five-fold increase on the previous year. During this period, most other breeds have seen registrations decline due to drought. The AWA’s profit for 2002/03 came in at 27.3% of gross turnover - an outstanding result. The Association held a BREEDPLAN Workshop in Toowoomba on November 14, 2003 for which 100 people registered. There is a concerted program underway to populate the AWA database with a wide range of performance measures, particularly carcase data. This is being assisted by an MLA PIRD grant. It is hoped that there will be enough information recorded by mid-2004 for ABRI to run the first Wagyu GROUP BREEDPLAN.

On November 15, AWA’s 2nd World Wagyu Symposium attracted around 200 delegates. Participants were pleased to learn that the Japanese quota for live imports from Australia in 2004 should reach 21,000 head, most of which will be of Wagyu and Wagyu-infused cattle. A number of feedlots are now each running several thousand Wagyu-infused cattle that are aimed at high value markets. The Executive Chairman of the Twynam Agricultural Group, Christine Campbell, told the Symposium that of around 15,000 breeding cows in the Twynam operation, 10% are now committed to Wagyu matings. Symposium attendees left with a great sense of optimism. In many ways the Symposium justified its promotion as the “Coming of age” for the Wagyu in Australia.

Arthur Rickards

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(Ian is also on the ABRI board and its NBRS/BREEDPLAN sub-committee)

http://breedplan.une.edu.au
Limousin - EID alternative to tattooing

The Australian Limousin Breeders’ Society (ALBS) is the first Australian beef breed society to accept NLIS ear tags as the sole alternative to ear tattoos as a means of “permanent” identification. The Society is well aware that some cattle will lose NLIS tags but breeders will continue to use large ear tags for paddock identification and the chances of both tags falling out between musters is very low.

Even with tattoos and ear tags some identities are lost in large herds when the ear tag falls out and the tattoo is unreadable. We have not changed our primary identification system of herd code, grade, year letter and number but the NLIS number is recorded on our data base and printed on the pedigree certificate so the visually readable NLIS number on the tag can be used to identify the animal. Both our web and manual registration systems allow members to record the Property Identification Code (PIC) and the individual NLIS number for each calf when it is submitted for registration. We do not allow rumen boluses as a means of identification at this stage as the number cannot be read without a scanner. If an NLIS tag falls out and has to be replaced the owner must notify the society of the new NLIS number for that animal. We have one breeder in Victoria with over 200 cows who has been successfully using NLIS tags in place of tattoos in his calves for two years. If breeders are unsure of the "permanent" nature of the NLIS tags they can still tattoo their calves but they may use a shortened version with just the year letter and number. Our members have generally welcomed the decision as it means they are getting extra value from the cost of the NLIS tags and they can do away with the laborious and messy job of tattooing each calf.

Alex McDonald
CEO Australian Limousin

Senepol optimising electronic transactions

The Australian Senepol Cattle Breeders Association is one of the latest associations to contract its registration and performance recording with ABRI. The recently formed association considered the ABRI registration and BREEDPLAN as the best way forward for the breed.

Looking to the future the Association has the goal of using the ABRI Internet services to maximise electronic registration and recording and transfer of data and to minimise the paper trail. It was initially hoped to go completely electronic, but the breed is currently going through a development phase where most breeding is with imported frozen embryos. Not all ET registration can currently be done electronically.

Senepols are a tropical breed from the Caribbean island of St Croix. Developed from the N’Dama breed of West Africa and the Red Poll from England, these tropically adapted Bos Taurus cattle also carry a slick hair gene. The presence of one copy of this gene confers a sleek coat, heat resistance equivalent to Brahmins and good tick resistance. Being an adapted Bos Taurus breed, tenderness of their beef is a strength for northern crossbreeding. As mentioned above, there is currently a high level of ET and also interest in JIVET (Juvenile In Vitro ET see p15). With a lot of imported US genetic material at present, the US Senepol website is heavily used for EPDs, but it is soon hoped to have Australian BREEDPLAN EBVs bolstered by the US information, as done by several other Australian Associations.

www.senepol.com.au

Don Nicol
Breedlink Consulting

A Senepol infused composite bull.