

BENCHMARKING

RED POLL

BEEF CATTLE

Benchmarking may be sophisticated or relatively simple, it may be done as part of a group or within your own business, but the goal is to see weaknesses or areas for improvement. Monitoring over time will show the trends.

In a breeding program the important issues include:

1. *Using sires that are reproductively and physically sound and are of superior genetic quality for fertility, growth and carcase traits. An independent assessor may be helpful.*
2. *Keeping a simple breeding program that is matched to the production systems capabilities and the environment.*
3. *Operating a profitable enterprise within a sustainable production system.*
4. *Turning off animals to match the market specifications at the earliest possible age for the minimal amount of feed consumed.*

In all cases determine the breeding objectives which will best satisfy your markets for minimal cost. (*Futurebeef.com.au*)

To achieve these goals we need to clearly set our own goals, then focus on what we can control, we need to measure and we need to monitor.

Conception rates, weaning rates, calving dates and weaning weights are important.

So, what are your conception rates?

Do you pregnancy test your cows?

MLA suggests that in intensive grazing systems two bulls are needed per 100 cows, but in extensive grazing or hill country it may be four per hundred cows. It is considered by many that heifers should be 360kgs before joining.

Always have bull's semen tested before joining and use the best genetics possible.

Fertility is number 1. Even the highest priced bulls in Australia may have problems, with recent reports of two well known Angus sires underperforming. What was their motility percentage?

What are your weaning rates? That is for calves born and weaned. Temperament and good mothering is vital in achieving good outcomes.

Calving dates too play an important part in achieving weight requirements for marketing. Shorter gestation length in bulls and cows may mean a difference of two weeks in calving times. It also impacts on the females ability to re-breed on time and potentially stay in or fall out of the herd.

With the right genetics cows may require less supervision at calving. For example moderate birth weight bulls and structurally sound animals. Make sure the myostatin status is known for bulls and cows. Nutrition plays a major role as well. Cows need a condition score of 2.5 to 3 for easy calving and bulls require a condition score of 3 for joining. If a bull drops to a score 2 they are unlikely to be working. Over fat bulls won't do the job either.

Weaning weights are important for profitable outcomes too. Are these weights improving? Weigh your cattle and watch the trend over time. Another relatively simple way for commercial producers to increase weight gain is to cross breed. Angus cross Red Poll cattle are black and suitable for the midfed 1 or highest priced feedlot category.

See the attached grid from JBS. These Red Poll cross Angus and Red Poll steers averaged 406kgs and 13 head returned \$32, 815.10. Feedlots are the easiest marketing option for British bred cattle.

Angus	Price											
	250-	250+	280+	300+	330+	350+	380+	400+	450+	500+	520+	550+
Milk Tooth	2.00	2.95	2.95	3.50	5.00	5.75	5.70	5.70	5.70	5.25	4.35	3.30
1 - 2 Teeth	1.50	1.50	1.50	2.00	2.00	5.20	5.65	5.70	5.70	5.25	4.35	3.30
3 - 4 Teeth	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	2.00	5.60	5.65	5.65	5.20	4.30	3.25
5 - 6 Teeth	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50
7 - 8 Teeth	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00

Invoice Date	SAP Doc Number	Source Sys Doc Number	Invoice Number	Division	Currency	Amount
17/10/2022	200037901		100561-J4501	J&F CAROONA	AUD	32,815.10



Red Poll X Angus Steers.

Processor grids have more specific requirements so it is important to have good live assessment skills if targeting that market. The saleyards pay for yield and D muscled cattle will be penalised for their lack of yield.

Know your production system and implement a plan to market cattle to specification on time, as opposed to producing cattle for sale and then finding buyers. According to bench marking groups the most profitable producers do this well. How often have we sent cattle to the saleyards and been disappointed because we've not targeted a market?

So plan, measure and monitor. Follow the trend line . Use the best genetics, improve relationships with successful stud breeders, consider using a consultant and aim to always improve.



Speckle Park X Red Poll calves.

Written and sourced by Prue Lee.

Benchmark figures for British bred cattle in temperate zones in Australia

Benchmark	<25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-90%	91-100%	Checkpoints
Conception%	<80	80-89	90-93	94-97	98-100	Cow condition, bull testing
Calving %	<74	75-88	89-92	93-96	97-100	Reproductive diseases
Calving interval	>150 days	150 days	75 days	55 days	42 days	Cow condition, bull testing
Weaning %	<70	70-84	85-91	92-95	96-100	Vaccinating calves
200 day weight	<200	200-249	250-274	275-299	>300 kg	Nutrition
400 day weight	<330	330-399	400-429	430-449	>450	Nutrition, drench
200 day/cow kg ratio	<50%	50-59%	60-65%	66-69%	>70%	Mature cow size