



# HICKS BEEF

Autumn 2023 Newsletter

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## AUTUMN BULL SALE: Thursday 2nd March, 2023

1.00pm "Annandale South" Holbrook NSW

SELLING - 70 BULLS  
AUCTIONS PLUS • ALL LOTS ON VIDEO

### Wrap of 2022

To say there was a bit of extra water in the system in 2022 would be an understatement, which presented us with a unique set of challenges and put extra pressure on all classes of livestock.

Our spring growth normally starts to kick in around mid-August when the cows start to calve. Due to the cold and wet conditions we had an additional month of poor pasture growth. The cows with a high STAY EPD handled the conditions with ease whilst some of the lower STAY cows struggled through these tough conditions. High STAY cows tend to hold their condition better enabling them to draw down on this extra condition in tough times.

Breeding season is by far the busiest time of year for us it starts in mid-October and winds up around mid-November. This year we bred 1500 using artificial insemination and put in a further 140 embryos. We are looking forward to seeing the progeny on the ground in mid-August.

Currently we are in the process of weaning and pregnancy testing. It is a fantastic opportunity to get a good look at the up-and-coming genetics as they come through for their treatments. It is very rewarding to see the next generation enter the system and we are looking forward to seeing how they perform in their critical first year.



# Autumn 2023 Sale Bulls

The 2023 drop bulls are the best team that we have ever presented, and we have the data to back this up. Our cattle are now 50% more profitable than they were 10 years ago, this has been made possible by our disciplined approach to optimising genetic gain.

Autumn 2023 bull's average

- Top 20% API
- Top 20% Calving ease direct
- Top 35% average daily gain
- Top 10% marbling

## Southern Fortune Teller

He is described as “physically impressive, and incredibly sound” It is his balanced numbers that impress us. Fortune Teller has top 15% Calving Ease, top 25% Yearling Growth, and magnificent carcass data with top 2% Marbling and top 15% Rib Eye Area. His profit indexes are API top 5% and Terminal Index top 1%.



 Southern Fortune Teller

## Gibbs Mountaineer

A bull that is producing some great offspring. His progeny have extra post weaning growth. His daughters, famous for their sound udders, are highly sought after. Mountaineer is a curve bender, with lowest 4% Birth, progressing to top 25% Yearling growth. He has exceptional carcass data and Profit Indexes – API top 5% and TI top 1%. Another high profit sire. Mountaineer is described as an athletic bull with great feet.



 Gibbs Mountaineer

## GW Copperhead 919G

Copperhead is a well-balanced sire that excels both on and off paper. He has a massive calving ease to growth spread whilst achieving top 20% STAY, top 3% docility, top 3% marbling and top 10% rib eye. His outcross pedigree has made him one of the main red composite sires of recent times.



 GW Copperhead 919G

## Hicks Oracle Q39

A home grown Hicks Red Angus bull that is rewriting the record book. Oracle Q39 is an extremely attractive, proven growth bull, sound, docile and with carcass figures that are at the top of the breed. His U.S. profit figures rank him with Red Angus bulls worldwide in the very top percentile of the Terminal Index. His Australian Breedplan figures tell the same story, with top 1% for all Profit Indexes, and the top value for weaning, yearling and carcass weight.

## 3SCC Domain

The feedback for Domain is that he produces sons that are easy fleshing, thick and masculine, and he produces daughters that are easy keeping with good feet and fantastic udders.



 3SCC Domain



# The Value of Heterosis

by Lane Giess, Director Commercial & Nontraditional Data Programs

The adage “Our breed can do it all” has, and may continue to be pressed by some breed association representatives and certainly some seedstock producers. This concept alone is false and in some small way can be attributed to holding back the beef industry and more importantly the commercial cattlemen. Not a single breed by itself can capture heterosis.

The economic stability of commercial producers is of great importance and by continuing to push singular breed usage is a detriment to farm and ranch longevity at all levels. The value of heterosis is a reduction of production costs, an increase in animal performance and efficiency, an increase in the value of the products sold, and often simpler breeding programs.

So what is heterosis? Heterosis, also known as hybrid vigor, is the superiority of a crossbred animal relative to the average performance of its straightbred parents. Research has shown time and time again that crossbreeding results in calves that are far superior to their straightbred counterparts.

There are two reasons for the resulting boost in performance from crossbreeding. 1) Increasing the level of heterozygosity across the genome lessens the effect of gene dominance for diminished performance - i.e hybrid vigor, and 2) an increased use of breed complementarity of parent breeds - i.e maternal line & terminal line.



A cross of two strains of maize (left and right) yields a hybrid (center) bigger than both parents.

Credit: David Cavagnaro with assistance from Lois Girton and Marianne Smith.

It's clear the benefit of heterosis results in improved performance across an array of economically relevant traits, but perhaps even more important is the compounded production advantage through crossbred females. The largest economic impact benefit crossbreeding yields is through maternal heterosis and crossbred females.

Would you find it valuable to have females produce 600 pounds more weaning weight and last over a year longer on average than straightbred females? Crossbred females make more money. Period.

And maintaining crossbred females in your production system is not as difficult as some may think. There are many types of crossbreeding programs that range from 2 or 3 breed rotations to terminal crosses using purchased F1 females. However, perhaps the most popular and simplest to use is by integrating a composite breeding program with hybrid seedstock where 2, 3, or 4 breeds composites are developed.

These systems exist today and are perpetuated by the rise in composite seedstock bulls available in the market. Determining the right breeds needed for a composite program can be evaluated through admixing complimentary breeds - where the strengths of one breed are integrated to address the weakness of another breed.

While these breed groupings provide a start to developing composites, the more useful tool at your disposal are breed agnostic Expected Progeny Differences (EPD). Being able to compare parent animals across breeds for the same economically relevant traits without adjustment factors provides commercial producers with targeted tools for hybrid development.

The EPD generated from the International Genetic Solutions (IGS) genetic evaluation incorporates data from millions of animals across numerous breed populations. The resulting EPD are directly comparable across breeds and are a targeted tool to help commercial cattlemen develop and amplify composites.

Research informs us that crossbred females and crossbred calves perform better and are more valuable than their straightbred counterparts. These studies are backed by controlled efforts like the tri-county futurity which showcased that SimAngus and Simmental sired calves by British breed mothers were worth \$15 to \$24 more than the straightbred British calves.

The beef industry demands crossbreeding alternatives for the simple fact it makes commercial cattlemen more profitable. We are already seeing the rise in demand for hybrid bulls, but I suspect as we look into the not-so-distant future of this industry, the concept of “one breed can do it all” will be firmly rooted in the past.

**Table 2. Summary of crossbreeding systems by amount of advantage and other factors\***

Type of System		% of Cow Herd	% of Marketed Calves	Advantage (%) +	Retained Heterosis (%)	Number of breeds
2-breed rotation	A*B rotation	100	100	16	67	2
3-breed rotation	A*B*C rotation	100	100	20	86	3
2-breed rotational/ terminal sire	A*B rotational	50	33			
	T x (A*B)	50	67			
	Overall	100	100	21	90	3
terminal cross w/ straightened females	T x (A)	100	100	8.5	0	2
terminal cross w/ purchased F1 females	T x (A*B)	100	100	24	100	3
rotate bull every 4 years	A*B rotation	100	100	12-16	50-67	2
	A*B*C rotation	100	100	16-20	67-83	3
composite breeds	2-breed	100	100	12	50	2
	3-breed	100	100	15	67	3
	4-breed	100	100	17	75	4
rotating unrelated F1 bulls	A*B x A*B	100	100	12	50	2
	A*B x A*C	100	100	16	67	3
	A*B x C*D	100	100	19	83	4

+ Measured as the advantage in percent increase in lbs. of calf weaned per cow exposed

\* Adapted from Beef Sire Selection Manual: Crossbreeding for Commercial Beef Production. Ritchie et al., 1999; Gregory and Cundiff, 1980

# Introducing Gabby Robinson

Gabby joined the Hicks Beef team in August last year in the peak of calving with a bull sale just around the corner, she could not have started at a busier time! Gabby has fit seamlessly into the Hicks Beef team. Here are some words from Gabby.

I grew up in North East Victoria in a small country town, Chiltern, where my childhood days usually consisted of riding horses, playing netball and swimming. I was fortunate enough for my family to have a tiny hobby farm where I spent most of my time outside helping dad in his shed, helping mum in her enormous garden or mucking around with my horses.

Following on from Year 12, I completed my Diploma in Agriculture at Tocal Agricultural College in NSW. After completing my studies, I started full time on a family-owned farm just outside of Wangaratta VIC, where I previously had been working during my VCE. This farm had a small Aberdeen Angus stud which drove me to develop a passion for the seedstock industry. In 2020 I completed my Diploma in Agronomy and Advanced Diploma in Agribusiness at Longerenong Agricultural College in VIC. After studying at Longerenong and still having a passion for seedstock, I started working on a Hereford stud in Holbrook in 2021. Sadly, the stud was dispersed, and the property was sold, BUT, that then led me to be here with the Hicks Beef team in 2022.

I love being outdoors every day as a job. I enjoy the new challenges that arise and being able to learn new and unique things from all the different people you meet in the industry. There are so many branches within the agriculture industry, the opportunities are limitless. I particularly love seedstock for its statistics, data collection and correlation, genetic focus and love for cows.



 Gabby Robinson

# Upper Murray Beef Producers DINNER AND FORUM



**Saturday 1st April 2023**

**Jingellic Hub Facilities  
3211 River Road  
Jingellic NSW 2642**

We are pleased to let you know about this upcoming event for beef producers. The Jingellic Hub organising committee have put together an interesting program. Following the forum there will be a break for canapes and drinks. Naturally beef is on the menu for the dinner, sorry Sam Kekovic there will be no lamb chops. Come along and see what Sam has to say about that.

**Tickets \$150 per head booking via EventBrite, keep an eye out, ticket release date coming soon.**

## FORUM SPEAKERS

Robert Herrmann, Mercado

*Topic: Agricultural Commodities*

Mark Inglis, Thomas Food International

*Topic: Branding & Marketing Beef*

Tom Gubbins, Te Mania & Milly McKinnon,

Tintaldra Station

*Topic: Genomics*

Professor Mark Howden, ANU, Nobel Peace

Prize recipient

*Topic: Climate Change*

Sam Kekovich After Dinner Speaker



 Introducing Peggy Helen Pamela Hicks . . .  
 The newest member of the Hicks Beef team