



HICKS BEEF

Autumn 2024 Newsletter

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AUTUMN BULL SALE: Thursday 7th March, 2024

1.00pm "Annandale South" Holbrook NSW


SELLING - 70 BULLS
AUCTIONS PLUS • ALL LOTS ON VIDEO

The Autumn 2024 Lineup

We are very happy with how the bulls have presented for the Autumn sale. They look great on and off the paper. It is a very consistent lineup with all bulls having plenty of cover, thick easy doing types with great structure.

It is important to look the part, but it is pointless without top shelf data. The 2024 Autumn will be our highest averaging line up on the All-Purpose Index (API). The average is in the top 15% of the database. It is one thing to have a few animals in the top 5% but to have the entire sale team average in the top 15% is a testament to the direction our breeding program is leading.



 Hicks Beef composite steer, January 2024

| % | API | TI |
|----------------|--------|--------|
| 1 | 185.66 | 103.09 |
| 10 | 160.84 | 93.07 |
| 15 | 155.1 | 90.62 |
| 20 | 150.83 | 88.73 |
| 25 | 147.13 | 87.05 |
| 30 | 143.79 | 85.48 |
| 35 | 140.52 | 84.03 |
| 40 | 137.41 | 82.67 |
| 45 | 134.41 | 81.29 |
| Average | 131.44 | 79.98 |
| 55 | 128.53 | 78.59 |
| 60 | 125.42 | 77.25 |
| 65 | 122.43 | 75.78 |
| 70 | 119.17 | 74.32 |
| 75 | 115.99 | 72.85 |
| 80 | 112.46 | 71.3 |
| 85 | 109.02 | 69.61 |
| 90 | 104.32 | 67.6 |
| 95 | 98 | 64.67 |
| Avg | 131.44 | 79.98 |

RightMate

Genetic providers have had solid tools to assist in making consistent genetic progress for many years. In the past few years improved EPDs, bolstered by the inclusion of genomic evaluation, have been a great step forward to making the potential for progress even greater. Now there is a tested program that offers substantially more rapid improvement and success from your investment in data collection and genomic testing. RightMate generates specific, precision mating options that take full advantage of complementarity genomics between sires and dams plus all of the EPD power created from today's massive trait databases and it is easy to use. RightMate will absolutely change the trajectory and consistency of your genetic improvement program.

Never before has a tool been available to the beef business that drives positive change and reduce variability so quickly. Yes, RightMate technology can also help you create a more consistent calf crop. With the slow nature of improvement, because of the relatively low reproductive rate of cattle vs. other species, you simply can't afford to make decisions that don't assure progress. This is especially true for those with extensive embryo programs. The cost of filling recipient females with embryos from matings that could have been much better, is just too high to take chances.

Genomically assured recommendations are the key! All of us have had experiences when a mating that looked promising and exciting just didn't work. There are simply some bulls that should be bred to some females on a genomic basis and others that should not, depending on your breeding objectives and desired outcomes. You choose the bulls you wish to use, and RightMate removes those that are marginal or risky choices on a cow-by-cow basis. The final product is a list of the best sire choices for each female ranked according to your breeding objectives along with genetic expectations for each mating result. From that sorted list, you make the call based on your experience and desires for the additional traits that matter to you and your customer's business.

Managing genetic diversity is another feature of our precision mating tool. For each mating, a "genomic inbreeding" prediction is part of the process and a breeding report with appropriate weighting applied to ensure diversity for the future at a level prioritized by the producer. This tool has great potential for commercial herds as well, where minimizing the negative effects of inbreeding can have significant positive effects on profitability.

| Tatt | Bull_Nam | GenomicInbreedin | Balan | API_N | CE_A | Year_A | Stay_A | Mrb_A |
|----------|---------------|------------------|-------|-------|------|--------|--------|-------|
| ABCT1000 | ABCT801 | 3.2% | Yes | 158.3 | 14.3 | 121.4 | 17.9 | 0.60 |
| ABCT1000 | G A R FIREPRO | 1.1% | No | | 17.1 | 140.7 | 12.6 | 1.53 |
| ABCT1000 | ABCQ579 | 4.0% | No | 179.1 | 16.7 | 121.4 | 11.9 | 0.94 |
| ABCT1000 | ABCT1064 | 3.9% | No | 183.1 | 14.9 | 125.1 | 15.1 | 0.85 |
| ABCT1000 | CLRS GUARDIA | 4.8% | No | 183.5 | 15.4 | 139.1 | 18.3 | 0.75 |
| ABCT1000 | ABCT1036 | 0.2% | No | 176.9 | 15.0 | 118.8 | 15.7 | 0.80 |
| ABCT1000 | ABCS543 | 0.4% | No | 173.4 | 16.7 | 119.9 | 18.0 | 0.61 |
| ABCT1000 | IR LODESTAR F | 3.4% | Yes | 172.8 | 13.7 | 128.4 | 16.7 | 0.74 |
| ABCT1000 | ABCT600 | 4.6% | No | 170.0 | 14.4 | 135.3 | 14.7 | 0.87 |
| ABCT1000 | KBHR HIGH RO | 2.0% | Yes | 172.6 | 15.0 | 135.3 | 17.6 | 0.63 |
| ABCT1000 | ABCS730 | 1.4% | Yes | 173.2 | 16.8 | 124.5 | 16.9 | 0.67 |
| ABCT1000 | ABCQ830 | 2.0% | No | 161.2 | 14.7 | 127.6 | 17.3 | 0.74 |
| ABCT1000 | TJ GOLD 274G | 1.3% | No | 165.5 | 15.3 | 121.2 | 16.6 | 0.60 |
| ABCT1000 | ABCT703 | 2.7% | No | 159.7 | 15.2 | 126.2 | 15.3 | 0.79 |
| ABCT1000 | ABCT879 | 8.0% | No | 156.2 | 14.8 | 129.6 | 13.9 | 0.79 |
| ABCT1000 | ABCT1087 | 3.6% | No | 179.1 | 14.8 | 110.5 | 18.8 | 0.96 |

Each animal has a report, with the top sire being the most suitable.

Finding the Sweet Spot

If you are looking to see how many different opinions you can get on one topic, ask people about mature cow weight. Everyone has a different opinion. Some like them big, some like them small and some like them in the middle. With conflicting evidence for mature cow weight vs feed efficiency vs feed conversion rates, it is hard to know who is right and who is wrong. We think the most economic and environmentally sustainable mature cow size is somewhere in the middle. A cow unlike other meat species must be very versatile to succeed, she must present enough growth to produce a decent calf, whilst being able to thrive on minimal feed requirements. Both things are impossible to get 100% right at the same time. To find the sweet spot, we have used the All- Purpose Index to balance our selection criteria. The term All-Purpose Index as it suggests is an index designed to optimise both maternal traits and production traits at the same time. Once we started using the API index as the



main selection tool, we found we ended up with more cows in the Goldilocks zone (not too big not too small).

Weaning 2024

Weaning is generally the first major job of the year. We originally started early weaning in the millennial drought as a strategy to reduce feeding costs. The advantages learnt from early weaning then, has confirmed our weaning timeframe for the future. The advantages of early weaning include.

- Early weaning allows for separation of the male and female calves from their birth contemporary group. Due to the high fertility of the Hicks composites, we have seen that many of the female heifer calves are cycling from 5 months of age. Separating the males and females ensures that the bull calves hit key weaning target weights earlier because they are not chasing the heifer calves that are cycling.
- Allows us to manage cow body condition score more easily.
- The nutritional requirements from a cow to a calf through milk decreases as time goes on and they become a companion for mateship not for survivability. It is estimated that by 6 months of age a calf is only getting 5% to 10% of its requirements from milk.

The main advantage to early weaning is pasture utilisation. Although in the past, we have typically had dry summers with minimal dry matter, recently with the wetter summers we have been getting

more green feed through this period. This has resulted in a change of tactics, rather than trying to maintain ground cover through the summer we are trying to utilise what is in the paddocks. What grows in the summer is not as good as what grows through the main winter growing season, but in its early stages can be of reasonable quality. Later in the summer when the pasture quality drops supplementation may be required to ensure weaners hit critical target weights.



Weaning the Black Composite calves Jan 2024

Queensland Road Trip 2023

In December we went on a trip from Townsville to Mount Isa visiting beef producers along the route. It was great to see so many producers changing management strategies from a very low input and output business model to a more intensive approach. Data is being collected on females and their fertility. In the past many females could go through their entire lifetime skipping production cycles and remain in the herd.

Talking to producers it was clear that the investment in profitable genetics in Northern Australia is prevalent for a productive beef herd. The businesses investing in composites are gaining 30% higher weaning percentages than businesses investing in a non-data driven breed. Furthermore, the composite based herds were able to join yearling heifers and gain an additional calf out of each cow over a life cycle. This has only been made possible using composite lines that can blend survival traits and production traits into one simple and easy to use package.

A highlight of the trip was seeing a group of 20 red composite bulls that had only been in the Cloncurry area for 5 months thriving under the conditions. On the same property we saw the first drop of calves sired by Hicks Beef composite bulls, the calves were only young, but they were expressing extra thickness and growth already.

The desire to change has been driven by the desire to increase reproduction rates, growth, carcase quality and southern market access. The live export trade has been a valuable part of the Northern industry, but many producers are concerned about its longevity.



Hicks Beef Steers – standout feedlot performance

Recently we had a call from Greenham's buyer, Andrew Maddison, on the performance of a load of Hicks Beef steers finishing on 150 days of feed, the report was "...if you put two steers together you could land a jumbo jet on their backs...."

Tom and Andrew visited Bunnaloo Feedlot, Moama, to see these steers for themselves. They were shown around by feedlot owner and manager, Shaun Mackenzie. Bunnaloo feedlot specialises in heavy turn off high quality steers, with most steers on feed for 180 days.

Shaun commented on the Hicks Beef steers, saying how pleased he was with the steers and how quickly they had gained weight. He also said how well the steers last year had done and how well they graded on the rail.

With this latest consignment still at the feedlot, we are waiting to see their kill sheet data with great anticipation. Last year's 50 steers set a very high standard. They averaged a marbling score of 4, an EMA of 75, an MSA index of 66.44, with an average for fat of 14.4.



^ Hicks Beef steers, custom feeding for Greenhams at Bunnaloo Feedlot, Moama

Optimum Performance

Balanced Traits Profitable beef cattle need to excel in many traits, from calving ease through to growth, carcass and fertility. The key to profitability is the balance of these economically important traits. We can increase or maintain growth rates, but we will not ignore fertility, calving ease, mature cow size and the carcass traits of fat, marbling and muscle.

Herd management We raise our stud herd under the same conditions as our commercial herd, with an above average stocking rate. We give our cows a 6-week joining period, you get in calf or you go. There are no exceptions. We independently measure foot soundness, structure and temperament of all animals. Our cow herd is measured for udder and teat soundness. We also measure for mature cow weight. We accurately assess our calves in large contemporary groups under identical management.

API - All Purpose Index Our cattle are assessed on the world's largest multi-breed beef performance database which has an index based on balancing economic traits. The API is based on the profit from using a bull over Angus cows and heifers, keeping most of the daughters and selling the remaining stock on a grade and yield basis. This index is a great measure of balancing all economic traits, and focusing on profitability.

Meet the Team

We were lucky enough to have Paul & Sue Sutton join the Hicks Beef team in November 2022. They bring to the team a wealth of farming experience, hard work and positive energy! Sue has written some words on their career and family:

Paul and myself grew up in Braidwood NSW, Paul on a large cattle property that his father managed and I on small acreage. Paul left school at 15 to work as a station hand on a sheep and cattle property not far from home and I left school and moved to Canberra to take up work as an accounts and wage clerk. After a few years we came into contact with each other again and the rest they say is history.

We married in 1997 and began our partnership working alongside each other in the agricultural industry, moving to Yass on a sheep and cattle property. While there our son Cameron was born, and my father passed so we decided to move to Victoria to be closer to mum. We found ourselves working on a dairy, milking and looking after beef cattle at Orbost, where our daughter Ashleigh was born. From Orbost we took up a manager's role on a Poll Hereford Stud in Deddick, a very remote place with one school and 8 students. Due to the isolation and school closure, we moved on again this time back across the border to Gundagai, where we worked as the livestock overseers on cattle, sheep and cropping property for the next 15 years.

When the kids grew up and left home to pursue their careers in the Agricultural industry, we thought we needed a sea change ourselves and moved across another border this time to Murrumbidgee QLD to manage a cattle station. What a whole different experience that was and opened our eyes to a completely different aspect of beef cattle and remote living. 150,000 acres and 3000 head is hard to imagine until you live it, its hard country and they were in their 10th year of drought. Homesickness got the better of us and we returned south to Crookwell to manage a sheep and cattle property until we arrived at Hicks Beef in November 2022. After 30 odd years of sheep, we love the fact that there aren't any here. The old saying goes you are never too old to learn, well we have learnt lots and are loving it, as well as scratching up on our computer skills (and training Paul how to use one, which he is mastering) it has been refreshing to look at beef cattle in a whole new light of genetics, composite breeds, data collection and bull sales.

In our down time we hang out with the kids doing horse sports with Ash and fishing with Cam, as well as bush trips with mates and horses to Kosciuszko or Paddy's dam. Paul and I are both passionate about our horses, dogs and cattle and lucky enough to have spent a career involving all 3 working together without killing each other. Over the last 25 years we have seen many changes to the industry and improvements which has made life easier and cattle and sheep production more efficient and we couldn't be prouder that our children have chosen the same career path.



^ Paul and Sue Sutton