



HICKS BEEF

Spring 2024 Newsletter

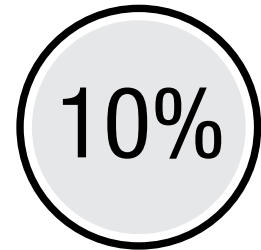
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SPRING BULL SALE: Wednesday 4th September, 2024 1.00pm “Annandale South” Holbrook NSW SELLING - 100 BULLS AUCTIONS PLUS • ALL LOTS ON VIDEO

The 2024 Spring Sale Lineup

A well thought out and disciplined program will achieve incremental increase in genetic merit every year. To stay ahead of the pack, it is imperative to stay focused on the program’s breeding objectives and to select the top sires and dams to take the program to the next level, there is no room for sentiment in the decision-making process. This has enabled us to present the highest indexing group of bulls we have ever offered, they average 160 API, this puts them in the top 10% of the International Genetic Solutions (IGS) database.

Top



100 bulls to be offered
4th September 2024

Consistent Carcase Performance

In the 2024 Autumn newsletter we highlighted the exceptional carcase performance of a cohort of the 2022 drop steers. The steers that we talked about in the Autumn Newsletter were the heavier drop of steers that entered the feedlot first. Since then, the lighter end has been processed as well with very similar results.

They averaged 440 kg dressed whilst maintaining an average marble score of 5.02. It is one thing to be able to achieve this as a one off but to be able to do this consistently shows the gains that can be made through genetic selection.

MSA Grading Results

Hump	Oss	Mb MSA	Mb FC	MC Rib	pH	EMA Index		
80	146	5.02	742	0	15	5.53	76	67.94

Red Angus on IGS

Our last Autumn sale was the first time we used exclusively IGS figures rather than Breedplan. We have used Breedplan for almost 50 years and have been happy with their analysis.

Breedplan has the problem of very small numbers participating in Red Angus Breedplan, and many that are using it are not submitting complete data. This problem has been faced by other Australian Breed Societies – Shorthorn, Simmental and Gelbvieh. These societies have decided that to improve accuracy and gain the benefits of a larger database, they should work globally with IGS International Genetic Solutions.

Why we went with IGS

IGS links our herd directly with the largest Red Angus population of 50,000 US Red Angus

IGS enables us to use genomics to increase the accuracy of our predictions. This is explained in the table at the bottom of this

page. This means we can use our youngest and best genetics with more confidence, increasing our genetic gain, and our clients too.

It allows our bulls to be directly compared to Australian Simmental, Shorthorn and Gelbvieh, and 20 million cattle world-wide.

It gives us the stayability index, which predicts how long your females will stay in the herd – great fertility index

We can use bulls from the US without slow breed adjustment from US to Breedplan.

In our case it allows our Red Angus bulls to be compared with our Hicks Beef Composites. After 4 years of using IGS selection, our Red Angus compare extremely well, some in the top 1% worldwide.

We realise that change is hard, and we will continue to have Breedplan figures available to any breeders who prefer them.



This graph shows the power of collaboration of breed societies.

Getting a Clearer Picture with the help of Genomics

Genomics has become a powerful tool in the cattle industry over the last decade, with applications in both seedstock genetic evaluations and commercial settings. Unlike single-gene tests, contemporary genomic tests aim to characterize an animal's entire genome using thousands of markers, increasing EPD accuracy and providing more reliable genetic predictions.

Historically, this lack of progeny information in EPD meant low accuracy in young animals. With the addition of genomics, we can directly identify which genetics an animal inherited from its parents rather than relying on progeny information to resolve these differences. The result is EPD that are more accurate for unproven animals. Depending on the trait, accuracy increases from a genomic test can be the same that ten to 30 calves would

generate. By identifying which genetics an animal inherited from its parents, genomics can enhance EPD accuracy for unproven animals.

It's important to remember that genomically enhanced EPD appear the same as non-genomic EPD but have higher accuracy. Using genomics without collecting phenotypes can be counterproductive, as all EPD rely on ongoing phenotype data. Commercial genomic tests are useful for selecting heifers and marketing calves but are less accurate than genetically enhanced EPD, which incorporate pedigree and phenotypic information. Ultimately, integrating genomics into the bull buying process can reduce risks by providing more confidence in the genetic potential of the animals being considered.

TRAIT	PROGENY EQUIVALENT
Calving Ease	25+
Maternal Calving Ease	4
Birth Weight	22
Weaning Weight	25+
Yearling Weight	25+
Stayability	15
Doolity	25+

This table shows that genomically enhanced EPDs are the same as an animal having multiple progeny records.

Managing the Late Break

Early in the piece the 2024 season was off to a good start with good early rains, but after that the tap turned off for the rest of Autumn in southern Australia. We knew that the amount of dry matter in the paddock was not going to be enough to get us through the winter months.

For the past 5 years we have pasture budgeted at key points in the year, these being the end of the growing season, start of the growing season, early winter and spring. The reason for this is to both optimise our stocking rate in good times and manage the periods of deficit (mainly winter).

Once we established the size of the deficit, we looked at strategies to overcome the shortfall. Firstly, we confined all young production stock to get them off the pastures and moved all cows with a high

condition score on the lower production paddocks to use some of their excess body condition.

Then we looked to the pastures to see what strategies we had to boost pasture growth. We opted for both nitrogen and Progibb to increase mid-winter pasture growth. It is estimated that untreated pastures average daily growth to be between 15-20 kg dry matter and treated paddocks to be 25-30kg per day. The cost of doing this is roughly half the cost of purchasing fodder.

Looking to the spring we now have some paddocks with good cover that are setup to bounce once soil temperatures increase. The soil moisture levels are slowly building to adequate levels to support spring growth.



^ T composites at Jingellic Feb 2024

Meet the Team

In the Autumn Newsletter we featured our newest team members, Paul and Sue. In this newsletter we are featuring Anne, who has been around Hicks Beef for a bit longer.

Andrew has provided some insights into Anne's contribution. For example, he says that in the early days, Anne couldn't believe that he and his cattle obsessed friends could talk endlessly about the one subject. She pretty quickly learnt that yes, they can. He also recalls that one of their early dates was to a cattle dispersal sale (sounds romantic, doesn't it?). Andrew's parents attended the sale too. After a few lots went under the hammer, Anne went for a walk and found the local library. Andrew's mother, Mary, was concerned that a girlfriend who couldn't last through a cattle sale was maybe not the best fit for



^ Anne Hicks

her cattle obsessed son. History proves that Mary's concerns were ill founded. After close to 50 years, Andrew says that Anne can now talk cattle with the best of them.

Andrew was happy when Anne took over the cattle recording and other farm office work. Even on a cold rainy day he would

find outside work rather than get the paperwork done. Andrew admits Anne is much more efficient at this work and Anne admits that she is not very good at the on-the-ground, outside work. When Anne started working in the business, calf registrations numbered around 60 and we recorded about 4 performance traits. We are now recording about 1,500 calves with about 14 traits measured. We are lucky to have Laura working with us now to deal with this volume and complexity of cattle recording.

Anne's history of working in the family cattle business is a classic case of "learning on the job". She still views an excel spreadsheet with a combination of fear and awe, but at least she now knows how to use the AutoSum function.

Rockhampton Beef Week 2024

Every three years we venture north for a week to attend Rockhampton Beef Australia event. It is the largest event of its kind in the Southern hemisphere. Everything to do with Beef is there in the one place.

The highlight of this event is always the people that you meet from around the country, and beyond. With the increased number of Hicks Beef bulls going to QLD in recent years it was a great opportunity to catch up with clients and see how the Hicks genetics are performing.

Greg Popplewell's site was the place to be. Greg had a sample of composite bulls on display, including one from a Hicks Beef dam.



Great hospitality at Rocky 2024, thanks Greg and family at Popplewell Composites



Popplewell composite sire out of a Hicks dam

Beef Australia is a great spot to catch up with the latest and greatest in the tech yard. From pregnancy test kits that use an animal's breath to detect pregnancy, satellite imagery that measures pasture dry matter, the latest in cattle handling gear and the latest software.

Over recent times it has had an increased focus on sustainability with a key focus on carbon farming. Although there are lots of claims made it seems there is a lot more work to be done in this space before this can be done with any accuracy.



Beef Outlook

The future of the Australian Beef industry is bright, with increased export demand caused by the lowest cow herd in the USA since 1951. With the US herd sitting so low the current cattle prices are sitting well above the five-year average for all classes of stock.

Australian prices have held steady for the first half of 2024 after recovering from the downturn of 2023. Prices are expected to increase in the second half of 2024 but are not expected to go to the highs seen in 2022. It looks as though stability is returning to the market rather than the highs and low that we have seen in recent times.

New Yards at Jingellic

We have just completed a new set of yards at Jingellic. Working on the cattle at Jingellic will be a whole lot easier now. Thanks to everyone involved in the construction. Great job.



Paul testing out the new yards