



HICKS BEEF

Autumn 2025 Newsletter

Tom Hicks: 0448 796 124
Andrew Hicks: 0427 147 258
tom@hicksbeef.com.au
www.hicksbeef.com.au

AUTUMN BULL SALE: **Thursday 6th March, 2025** **1.00pm “Annandale South” Holbrook NSW** **SELLING - 64 BULLS** **AUCTIONS PLUS • ALL LOTS ON VIDEO**

We welcome enquiries and visits so don't hesitate to contact us.

The Autumn 2025 Lineup

The Autumn 2025 sale lineup has come together very well with the sale averaging in the top 10% for the All-Purpose Index.

The sale team is very well balanced in terms of EPD profile and physical characteristics.

It is a very even and eye appealing line of bulls on offer, that are bred to perform under real world conditions.



Hicks Beef Autumn 2025 Sale Bull



Hicks Beef Autumn 2025 Sale Bull

Data Update

I know we have had this same API (All-Purpose Index) graph in many a newsletter and sale catalogue over the years, but it is such an important part of what we do. It's a great validation that our program is heading in the right direction.

To achieve consistent genetic gain year in year out takes an objective approach to cattle breeding, it is important to focus on the things that we can measure first. If it can't be measured, then it is hard to change.

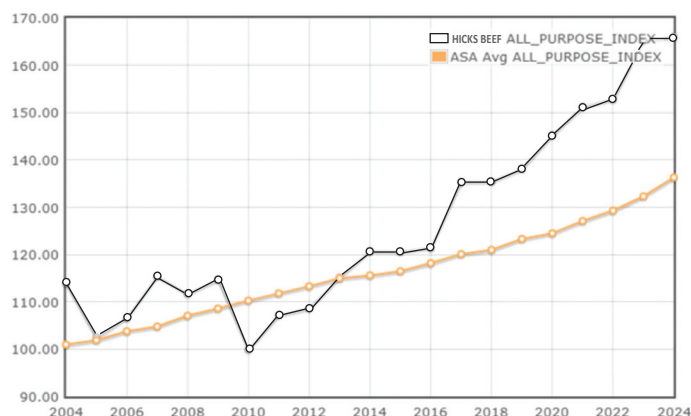


Figure 1 All-Purpose index genetic trend graph 2024

Starting from the early days of our cattle being recorded on the IGS database (2004 to 2011), it can be noted that the graph goes through some peaks and troughs, as the analysis worked to find where our herd sat within the population.

Then moving to the middle of the table (2012 to 2016) the volatility in the database has levelled out as the analysis has an accurate gauge on the population. At this point we move from breed average to above breed average.

Finally, if we look at the recent era of our program (2016 to 2025) we can really see the Hicks Beef program accelerate above the average of the ASA database. The average of the 2024 calf drop sits at \$166 that is \$30 higher than the average. This puts the average of our herd in the top 10% for the API (All-Purpose Index).

This can only be accomplished through having a disciplined approach to cattle breeding, leveraging genomically enhanced EPD's and profit driven indexes together to achieve maximum genetic gain.



Young cow with calf at foot in late spring.

Simple systems

Something we really enjoy about our job is that we get the opportunity to go all over the country and see different systems over a range of vastly different environments. Although there may be huge variation between different locations rainfall, soil types, topography, and access to markets. The one thing that is consistent between the top operators is simple yet effective systems that are straightforward to implement whilst meeting all key performance indicators.

The key to nailing down a simple system is to first prioritise the things that are most important and start by focusing on them. Using calving date as an example, it is very hard to have a profitable beef business if your calving date is wrong. It is impossible to find the perfect calving date for all years as there is a lot of variation between years. The key is to find the date that has the highest probability of matching the seasonal conditions as often as possible. If the date is too early then it is harder to get through the mid-winter bottle neck, if it is too late it can be harder to utilise the high-quality spring pasture. The methodology of matching animal requirements and pasture growth curves is far from simple, but once done, there's no need to repeat it. While it does need to be reviewed periodically, the heavy lifting is already taken care of.

Look to the top producers in your area, the hardest part of this is finding out who they are, often these aren't the people with the flashiest infrastructure and best pastures, rather they are the ones that allocate their funds to the key areas first. We joined a benchmarking group run by Agrista in 2017 to help us understand what the strengths and weaknesses of our business were. Through this process we got to look at several successful businesses from

top to bottom, this then gave us a blueprint on how to optimise our success.



Simple but effective yard design in Queensland.

One of the key strengths of utilising composite breeding systems is the fact that they are simple yet effective. There is no more complexity in running a composite herd than there is a straightbred herd. It is as simple as putting your heifer bulls with the heifers and the bulls best suited to cows with the cows.

FAQs

What is the difference between your Red and Black Composites?

Coat colour is determined by just one gene out of the 22,000 genes present in domestic cattle. We do for the most part run our Red and Black lines separately, but they are all bred from the same foundation breeds and bred using the same objectives.

What are the advantages of composites?

Hybrid vigour has been a major factor in animal production for many years, the white meat sector being the biggest adaptor. In more recent years the lamb sector has adopted composite breeding programs.

Composites provide a simple and effective way to utilise hybrid vigour without the complexity of implementing a rotational cross breeding system. It also enables complementary traits from multiple breeds to be incorporated into one animal, a great example of this is improving carcase yield and overall quality by using both British and European breeds.

How does IGS account for hybrid vigour in its analysis?

The difference created by hybrid vigour is removed from the estimated Progeny differences (EPDs), this is referred to as non-additive gene effect. This is eliminated so that we can look at an animal's genetics on their own without the effects of hybrid vigour. Therefore, with hybrid added in, the progeny will outperform their EPD figures.

Does the hybrid vigour decrease after a few generations?

A four-breed composite maintains 75% potential hybrid vigour, extensive testing over many generations has shown no measurable decrease in hybrid vigour.

What factors influence breed selection?

Several factors influence breed selection for crossbreeding, including the desired traits, genetic diversity, adaptability to environmental conditions, and the specific goals of the breeding program. Additionally, considerations such as market demand, performance data, and the compatibility of breeds can significantly impact the effectiveness of crossbreeding efforts.

Why use International Genetic Solutions (IGS) database?

The International Genetic Solutions (IGS) a comprehensive evaluation of genetic traits, access to a broad genetic database, improved accuracy in predicting performance traits, and the ability to integrate advanced genomic technologies. Additionally, IGS offers tailored solutions that can better meet the specific needs of cattle breeders compared to traditional methods.



Laura Joins the Hicks Beef Team

We have Laura Beaton from the UK joining the team for 6 months to gain experience in beef cattle on a large scale. Here are some words from Laura:

I grew up in a small village in North Yorkshire in England, on a sheep farm. Alongside the farm, my parents also owned a farm shop and more recently a butchers where we sell our own meat and other local produce. I have worked in the farm shop from a young age, and always been interested in the meat industry.



 Laura Beaton

Last year I completed a four-year BSc agriculture degree at Harper Adams University, Shropshire, where I studied a range of modules from farm business management to farm animal health. One highly regarded feature of the course is the placement year where a 'year in industry' must be completed. This year is proven to significantly boost employability, with a 98% employment rate following graduation.


I spent my placement year on McDonalds' progressive young farmer scheme, where I worked for their beef supplier OSI Food Solutions. This year taught me about the UK beef supply chain from farm to fork. Within the year, I worked in all aspects of production, from one of their flagship farms where they strive to reach net zero beef production by 2030, to the patty factory, where millions of beef and pork patties are being produced every day.

I completed my dissertation for my honours degree on the effects of feed efficiency on carbon emissions intensity in an intensive beef finishing system. I found this research project very interesting, and I think more needs to be done across the UK to improve productivity within herds to increase feed efficiency and consequently reduce emissions from beef production.

Farming in Australia has always fascinated me. My dad and grandad have both been out here to work on farms and growing up I loved looking at their photographs. The size difference from the UK is so vast, in the UK the breeding herd is declining year on year and in 2024, following a 2% decrease there were only 5 million head of cattle. Whereas the national cattle herd in Australia is set to reach its highest level since 2014 at 28.8 million head.

Within my six months in Australia I aim to learn more about beef production on a larger scale, and how the focus on genetics can improve herd efficiency. From what I've seen so far, the quality of cattle is consistently great throughout larger herds. When I return home to England, I plan on pursuing a career in the beef industry, and I hope what I have learnt here in Australia will help me to do this and I'll implement practices back home.



 Red cows and calves coming into the yards.