



Whiteface



More than One Way to win

IN 1987, a Poll Hereford embryo was conceived using some of the best Hereford genetics of the day.

Some 23 years later, the calf was born and crowned junior champion at the 2010 Gunendah show.

This is a feat Clay Pool Poll Hereford stud principal, Allen Rutherford, describes as "exciting, if not extraordinary".

In 1986, Dr Richard Nagel collaborated with Mr Rutherford to collect genetics from some of the best stud lines in Australia and Canada.

The embryos were created at a time when embryo transfer (ET) was emerging as a new technology.

"It was early days of an unknown science that was largely being led by Australians," Mr Rutherford said.

"What we produced was the pick of the crop, but there is only so much of it you can use."

The excess embryos were frozen and maintained at -196 degrees celsius for 23 years.

"I knew there would be a cost in maintaining the embryos, but I was looking forward," he said.

"I thought it was a bit like having money in the bank."

It was decided in 2008 that it was as good a time as any to test whether Mr Rutherford's investment had paid off.



From this ET program, a 56 per cent conception rate was achieved, producing 70 calves, including the junior show champion, Clay Pool One Way (pictured).

Mr Rutherford attributes proficient management of the embryos - held at various storage facilities over the years - as the reason for their "outstanding" viability.

The success of Clay Pool One

Way for Mr Rutherford highlights the strength of some of the genetic lines of days gone by.

"It is interesting to see that the genetics of 20 to 25 years ago is extremely competitive today, if the show ring is any guide," he said.

"We have basically brought back some of the best genetics of 25 years ago that otherwise had left the planet."

- NATALIE ELIAS

A pasture disaster to feed dream

By NATALIE ELIAS

DEGRADED, shallow and acidic, sedimentary soils, overrun with unproductive native grasses and spiny burr grass, may be viewed by some as a production limiting environment with little potential.

However, dynamic duo, Peter and Robin Capp, "Thurloo", Spring Ridge, saw before them a 760-hectare challenge when they purchased their property in 1976.

After 30 dedicated years the Capps have successfully transformed their property into a productive farming system that now runs a 230 Poll Hereford cow herd and a 50 sow piggery.

"Thurloo" now enjoyed excellent ground cover and once damaging levels of run-off had been significantly reduced.

The shallow soils were restricted in their water-holding capacity, but did respond well to even small amounts of rainfall.

For nearly 20 years the pasture mixes had been based mainly on consol lovegrass

tests were conducted at designated spots which allowed changes in fertility to be monitored, Mr Capp said.

From the results, fertiliser had been applied in most years to meet the nitrogen and fertiliser requirement of the sandy soils, but their preference was to meet the nitrogen requirement through use of legumes such as serradella.

Due to the sharing of available farming space between cattle and pigs, the Capps were mindful of ensuring both enterprises were running at optimum efficiency.

Poll Hereford was their breed of choice and had particularly good carcass potential in the Capps' production environment, Mr Capp said.

From an occupational safety point of view, the Capps were also appreciative of the benefits of a polled breed.

They believe the Poll Hereford stud industry as a whole had progressed in leaps and bounds in the past 10 years.

And for the past four years the Capps had enjoyed success with Oldfield Poll Hereford bulls.

With minimal rain the consol is able to produce excellent growth in summer which becomes the bulk dry feed in winter. It's like having a hay shed in the paddock without the shed

- Peter Capp

and serradella, a mix which had done particularly well in the acidic soils.

The improvement in soil type in this time had enabled the Capps to begin their progression into modern subtropical species.

The system was also supplemented by forage oats, which was used predominantly for younger cattle and regular soil

Some crossbreeding with Braford's had also been experimented with, but the herd had always been returned to a Poll Hereford base.

With the Poll Hereford sire battery back in full swing, the current breeding mix had improved calving ease of the Capp's herd and this year no assistance was required at calving time.



It was this type of focus on fixing a trait in the herd which brought them results.

"I believe you shouldn't try to select for too many traits at the one time," Mr Capp said. "Selection traits should also change depending on the needs of your herd at the time."

Some of the primary considerations through the years had included conformation, frame size and hooded eyes to minimise the risk of eye cancer.

The fertility of the bulls had also been proven, with the Capps' bulls being put out at one to 50 cows.

Heifers were joined at the end of September, one month before the rest of the mob to facilitate easier monitoring at calving time.

The Capps were conscious of allowing their heifers to reach their frame potential before joining to avoid stunting, so they joined them at 24 months old.

They recognised this might lose some productivity but they maintained it was a sacrifice worth making.

Weaning was determined by the climatic conditions, how-

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