

Betting on UltraBlacks

NICK HEYDON

WORLD demand for Angus as well as the desire to breed fleshier cattle in the north of Australia are behind the introduction of a new composite: the UltraBlack.

The breeding of Brangus bulls with Angus females, leading to cattle with roughly 80 per cent Angus content and 18pc Bos Indicus content – named the UltraBlack – has been taking place in Queensland after several years of progress in the US.

UltraBlack cattle had their origins on an Alabama cattle ranch near the Mississippi border.

Cow Creek Ranch bred its first UltraBlack cattle in 1993 (the actual name was trademarked in 1998).

Since then, UltraBlacks have been growing in popularity in the warmer southern US, particularly Texas, as well as in Mexico and South America.

Leading the charge with their introduction into Australian cattle herds is Nick Cameron of Nindooinbah UltraBlacks, Beaudesert, Queensland, who has seen firsthand their progress in the US and South America.

Nindooinbah held its first female sale in March this year where a total of 179 PTIC heifers sold to a top of \$2800.

Among the buyers at the sale was Mr Cameron's father and Charolais breeder Ian Cameron, "Boongalla", The Gums, Qld, who purchased 29 heifers.



The Charolais breeder had been impressed by the work carried out into UltraBlacks by his son and Nindooinbah owner Euan Murdoch.

Mr Cameron said he had also witnessed something of a swing away from Charolais in the region.

"The thing is, everybody is crossbreeding these days, so to continue to get hybrid vigour you've got to keep moving from one breed to the other," Mr Cameron said.

"The Charolais have done a brilliant job over the Brahman in the north, breeding Charbrays, so now I guess people are looking for – and there is also a demand for – the fleshier cattle that give you the smaller cuts but a bit more meat on them; that's what the supermarkets and the butchers are demanding."

He said demands constantly changed within the cattle industry, but there was evidence that there was more demand headed to black cattle.

"Demand changes all the time and fashions change, it's like women's fashion, and all of a sudden black Angus are it," Mr Cameron said.

"But with trends in any industry – and the beef industry is no different – it only takes half a dozen breeders to start a trend, and that's what has happened."

He said there were many appealing features which the new composite possessed.

"As they have got 18pc Brahman in them they just show a bigger ear, they are a bit leggier and longer."

Mr Cameron said the Angus society had allowed them to

record the composite.

He said while straight Angus were known for many great qualities like fertility, yield, weight gain and cutting ability, the UltraBlacks appeared to be harder than the straight Angus and were better suited to northern conditions.

Mr Cameron said he was due to have calves on the ground in a couple of months and was excited about the future potential in UltraBlacks.

"Obviously Angus are being used a lot more in the south and they are being used a lot more worldwide, because they seem to suit the supermarket better, so you have just got to go with the trend and go with the flow."

"I've had good success with the Charolais, but I can see an opportunity for them (UltraBlacks) now."

He said even though the composite was still in its infancy, there had been plenty of demand from other northern producers.

Of his son, he said he had enough inquiry from cattlemen to more or less continue to breed stock at the same rate.

"He can continue to supply that demand, but he is not really going to be breeding a whole lot of cattle that will be left in the yard that he can't sell, because he's getting enough interest to take all the UltraBlacks that he can breed."

He said there would likely be growing interest in the UltraBlacks in the north.

"The northern fellas have Brahman herds, and they got into the Charolais, so you get a lot of Charbrays in the north and that will be something to cross back to," he said.

"The industry is looking for a bit more of a lift in fat cover on their cattle ... so I just think that these UltraBlacks will fit in."

In what is likely to attract plenty of interest, Nindooinbah will be holding its inaugural bull sale in October this year, where in addition to Angus and Brangus bulls, UltraBlacks will also be offered.

Nindooinbah is not the only stud to be making headways with UltraBlacks

Charolais breeders David and Prue Bondfield of Palgrove, Dalveen, Qld, have also ventured into UltraBlack territory, in addition to their Charbray and Charolais composites, and have already sold bulls into north west Queensland.



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