

95/N03



## Producer Research Support

Balanced breeding approach boosts Angus genetic gain  
Angus Society of Australia



Angus breeders have a stronger understanding of the concepts that underpin balanced breeding through multi-trait selection following this Producer Research Support project.

### The project

The project was about promoting the concept of 'Balanced Breeding' as a way of meeting the conflicting needs of the breeding, growing and processing sectors of the beef industry encouraged a greater uptake of BREEDPLAN and the skills to use it wisely among Angus breeders.

When Mr Don Nicol concluded his consultancy in mid-1996, the remaining workshops were conducted by Peter Parnell, Breed Development Manager and Bob Dent, Field Extension Officer with the Angus Society.

### Objectives

To educate beef cattle breeders to set formalised breeding objectives and select their cattle on multi-trait selection criteria.

### What was done

The project consisted of three main components:

#### 1. Balanced breeding workshops

A total of 10 'Balanced Breeding' workshops were held in five states. These targeted stud breeders and their clients.

The workshops involved 170 people. This was an excellent start and produced a good response from those attending.

"There is a great need to keep providing these workshops to a wide range of commercial breeders," Mr Parnell said.

"The emphasis on setting breeding objectives, monitoring present performance and using GROUP BREEDPLAN figures in a balanced way to meet the needs of environment and target market is essential."

In addition to the balanced breeding workshops, a series of recording workshops was held for stud breeders to train them in accurate recording of performance information.

Eleven recording workshops were held in five states. These were attended by 140 breeders.

These workshops involved a basic performance recording emphasis that walked breeders through the paper trail of collecting and submitting performance records. It increased understanding of how GROUP BREEDPLAN works and what is required.

The combined workshops have influenced the growth in GROUP BREEDPLAN recording and the number of carcase and fertility records collected.

### Key points

- The number of participating herds in the Angus Group BREEDPLAN increased 29% in the next year (218 to 282 herds), partly as a result of the series of 21 PIRD workshops conducted in five states.
- Carcase records increased 38% and rates of genetic gain will have increased.
- Of the 1.4 million cows serviced by Angus bulls each year, 420,000 would now be realising increased rates of genetic gain as a result of the PIRD project.

### Contact details

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## Producer Research Support

MLA Producer Research Support offers support funding of up to \$15,000 over three years for groups of producers keen to be active in on-farm research and demonstration trials.

These activities include:

- Producer Initiated Research and Development
- More Beef from Pastures demonstration trials
- Prime Time Wean More Lambs demonstration trials
- Sustainable and productive grazing grants.

Contact Stephen Feighan - MLA Project Manager, Producer Delivery and Adoption.

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## MLA also recommends

### BeefPlan

BeefPlan is a non-traditional approach to learning. Groups of like-minded beef producers, work together as a management team to focus on property management. Importantly the learning agenda is set and controlled by the group.

Contact Steve Banney - Project Coordinator  
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## 2. Breeding objectives workshops

Workshops for stud and commercial breeders to teach them how to set market-based breeding objectives and how to use GROUP BREEDPLAN figures to maintain a balance between different traits.

## 3. BREEDPLAN recording

Increasing the use of GROUP BREEDPLAN recording and increasing the number of carcase and fertility traits recorded by members.

## What happened?

The use of BREEDPLAN recording has increased markedly in the last few years.

The number of GROUP BREEDPLAN herds increased from 218 to 282 herds during the second year of the project. There was a steady growth in the number of records submitted. With the increase in total herds and growth records, carcase records had also grown dramatically. During the last year the number of carcase scan records from Australian herds increased 38% to more than 33,500 records.

## Discussion

This Producer Research Support program had been very successful, Mr Pamell said.

In addition to the MLA resources invested in this program, the Angus Society of Australia invested a large amount of time and resources into the program and the related recording workshops.

"This work needs to be repeated over and over again to new audiences that have not yet been part of the program."

The Angus Society of Australia has applied for additional Producer Research Support funding to meet the following aims to increase the understanding and use of GROUP BREEDPLAN EBVs from stud and commercial cattle breeders by:

- improving the ability of cattle breeders to set market focused breeding objectives;
- training stud and commercial cattle breeders how to use EBVs to meet balanced breeding objectives;
- improving the accuracy of performance records collected by members and increasing their ability to explain the use of the figures produced;
- increasing the use of performance records in the judging of show and sale classes to increase the understanding of EBVs; and
- increasing the use of EBV indexes by seedstock breeders.