

2001/N06



## Producer Research Support

### Composite Breeding Field Days

### Composite Beef Breeders of Australia



### The project

The Composite Beef Breeders of Australia (CBBA) set out to build a program to build awareness of the use of composite breeding, with the aim of improving the utilisation of available genetics by commercial cattle breeders.

### Objectives

1. Have 500 producers attend five field days, two in New South Wales, two in Queensland and one in Western Australia;
2. Have field day attendees return a questionnaire, which identifies the characteristics of people interested in composite breeding and provides CBBA with information on which to base a composite breed development strategy. The questionnaires will have the same format for all field days and will endeavour to elicit information such as:
  - what is the level of understanding of composite breeding before and after the field day;
  - willingness to proceed with composite breeding; and
  - any changes which will be made to management and breeding objectives.
3. Produce a draft strategy for the development of composite breeding in Australia by showing producers the pitfalls of poor genetic/trait selection as well as the benefits of good planning; and
4. Grow the membership of CBBA from 100 to 200 to provide the critical mass required for information transfer.

### What was done

The group set out to conduct four composite breeders' field days – one in Victoria, two in New South Wales and one in Queensland.

A total of six field days were held – one each in Western Australia, Queensland and New South Wales, two in Victoria and one during the BIA Conference in Western Australia in June 2004.

The program at these field days typically included an introduction by the property owner, an introduction from the local state based departmental officer, a session on composite and cross breeding, and a session on composites and carcasses followed by the advantages of composites in market compliance, and thoughts on implementing composite breeding.

A session on matching cattle to the environment for adaptability, and a further session on designing cattle for market and management and then cattle on display (bulls, cows and calves) was also included.

At each session breeders were asked to complete a questionnaire.

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All members who attended the field days gained a greater understanding of the place of composite cattle in their breeding operations and many moved towards developing a line of composite cattle.

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Contact Gerald Martin -  
Producer Research Support Coordinator.

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## What happened?

Field days were held in four states and attendee response was very positive with an improved understanding of composite breeding and more interest in using composites.

The Composite Beef Breeders of Australia learnt that it is more difficult to breed composites than many people had thought and that much of the breeding that has been heralded as composite breeding is actually cross breeding.

The field days were useful for showing people the sort of numbers that they need in order to truly breed composites, the place of cross breeding and the place of composite breeding in financially successful cattle breeding businesses.

## Discussion

All members who attended the field days gained a greater understanding of the place of composite cattle in their breeding operations and many actually moved towards developing a line of composite cattle. In the past many members had had a type of cross breeding which they had seen to be composites, but in reality were not.

The results of the surveys showed that a significant number of people found that the role of composite breeding was moderately or very useful as a result of the field days, and that the vast majority rated the field days as 'excellent'.

## Next steps

Being part of this project ensured that members got a much better understanding of the role of composites in their cattle business.

One of the difficulties with collecting and collating information for this project was that some group members lost interest once their own field days had been conducted.

The group is interested in doing another project and would benefit from more centralised group administration.