

GELBVIEW BULL SELECTION AND USE

FROM A COMMERCIAL PERSPECTIVE

Bull selection & buying is not rocket science ! However, as stud breeders & sellers you have to keep in mind, paramountly, your commercial clients' requirements. This is particularly important with a relatively small genetic based breed like **GELBVIEW**. Also there will be no one set of requirements that suit all your clients and also, general requirements may well vary from region to region.

We farm at Muller station in the Marlborough high country and run approximately 700 cows calving plus supporting replacements and dry stock, making cattle numbers up to 1800 wintered. We have been using **GELBVIEW** genetics for about 8 years now and almost exclusively cross them with Angus dams to give us F1 females to, at this stage, cross with Charolais bulls to optimize hybrid vigour.

This system has given significantly improved commercial return compared to our original Hereford & Angus cross-breeding programme. The dominant improvement has come from the F1 Angus/**Gelbview** female. She is a wonderful mother, milks well, gets back in calf and recovers her own condition quickly post weaning and, most importantly, is still a cow with a moderate frame. It has also given us the opportunity to mate yearling heifers which I never thought possible in this environment.

The above are the traits that we were looking for when we began using **GELBVIEW** genetics. The real bonus, however, has been the growth rates of the steers. Consistently they are outperforming the three way cross, including the Charolais. Our **Gelbview**/Angus cross 14 month steers at 30 January 2000 were 25kg per animal ahead of the three way cross steers. Apparently, genetically, this should not be happening but maybe is explained by the fact that the majority of our first cross cows are still Angus-Hereford.

So why we continue to use Charolais is a question we are seriously considering at the moment. The simplest and most efficient cattle farming system we could have would be for all our cows to be F1 Angus-**Gelbview** and be able to source quality F1 Angus-**Gelbview** bulls to cross with them. In that system we could have hybrid vigour in our whole cow herd, have cattle (nearly) all of one colour, get our steers all to marketable weights quicker and – one of the greatest benefits- have all heifer calves available for selection as replacements. The surplus would then be saleable as potential breeders rather than just fatteners.

However, my main concern at this stage is being able to source quality **GELBVIEH** (and F1) genetics. I am not criticizing the bulls we have been buying to date – in fact we have had some outstanding animals and these have laid the foundation of our successful use of **GELBVIEH** genetics. However we really have tried to source the best bulls available and in doing so have seen a number of bulls going to auction that don't meet our requirements. There is nothing more off-putting to a prospective new user of **GELBVIEH** genetics than to go to a sale and see bulls that are conformationally deficient – particularly in the legs and feet.

Remember that **GELBVIEHS** are predominantly a maternal breed, so structure has to be right to be introduced into our cow herds. Also, in my opinion, moderate frames and sound muscling are other very important features. New Zealand cattle are predominantly grass fed – not feedlot reared and fattened- so they have to be mobile and good foragers, with constitution able to handle our climate and topography.

If you, as stud stock producers, can supply bulls that meet these requirements, then you have every likelihood of **GELBVIEH**'s market share growing. Also, if you agree that **GELBVIEH** and Angus compliment each other, then there could be significant demand for F1 bulls. I see this last option as being particularly attractive to smaller cow herd producers. It gives them a simple system of having hybrid vigour in all their cows which they can then use for best commercial advantage.

Steve Satherthwaite