

# LIVESTOCK

## Limos drive SE profits

### Warrawindi aims to lift annual sale av by \$500

#### 5 Critical Factors

- 1 ENTER carcass competitions to receive feedback on breeding program
- 2 USE Limousin sires for calving ease, hybrid vigour
- 3 TAKE advantage of price spikes early in season
- 4 SOW kikuyu pastures on light, sandy country
- 5 GET full benefit from cull cows

By CATHERINE MILLER

**A** PHILOSOPHY of being “beef producers instead of cattle producers” has paid-off for David and Alison Galpin, Penola, who took out the first Southern Grassfed Carcass Classic at Teys Brothers, Naracoorte, late last year.

Their champion entry in the commercial competition, a 350-kilogram Murray Grey-Limousin steer carcass was awarded top marks from about 130 entries from across South Australia and western Victoria.

“We had been thinking and hoping we were on the right track and dollar-wise we are producing as much as we can, but it was pleasing to find out we were producing tender meat,” David said.

On their Warrawindi property in the Lower South East the Galpins run 75 stud Limousin cows and 150 autumn calving Angus, Murray Grey and black baldy cows mated to Limousin terminal sires.

Their 890 hectares of grazing land is split between Penola and Lake Mundi, where they also run 400 stud Poll Dorset ewes and 1800 Corriedale ewes for prime lambs.

The Galpin association with the Limousin breed started 20 years ago when David’s father-in-law moved out of dairying and was looking for a European-breed bull to put over their British Breed females.

David says the breed choice was made on their calving ease, temperament and their finishing ability in below-average seasons, and with an absence of other Limousin studs in the



**WINNING FORMULA:** David Galpin, Warrawindi, Penola, says he is focused on making more money a hectare turning-off Limousin cross vealers.

area they saw an opportunity.

“We chose Limousins for their calving ease – around 60 per cent of the profit comes from getting a live calf on the ground, so if you lose one calf in 30 you lose all your profit,” David said.

Warrawindi has spent considerable money securing good genetics, particularly high Breedplan-figure bulls including black, homozygous Polled bull Mandayen Vision, in which they secured a quarter semen share.

And while their annual on-property bull sale has consistently averaged about \$3000, they are hoping to lift this average by \$500 to give them a greater budget to buy more elite stud genetics.

“No one has ever gone broke buying the best genetics – the best genetics always give the best returns,” he said.

David says despite Warrawindi stud being a labour of love, it is the commercial operation which is the number-one priority, enabling them to benchmark the progress of their latest stud genetics.

The Lower SE is great fattening country and in normal years they enjoy an eight-month growing season so it is more economical for them to buy-in their replacement Angus, Murray Grey and black baldy females.

They aim to buy second to

fourth-calvers from dispersal herds and have stuck with British Breed females, because F1 females require additional feed for their higher milk production.

“We were selling cull cows last August and September for between \$800 and \$1000 and if you turn around and buy replacements, most years you are only looking at a \$200 changeover,” David said.

The property comprises a combination of flats with mainly strawberry clover and demeter fescue, red gum country of phalaris and subclover. But in the light sandy ground they have sown kikuyu, which makes good summer feed and has the same nutritive value as lucerne.

Warrawindi cuts all its own hay and silage. The silage is fed during dry conditions, and when the winter weather comes in hay is used, and a centre-pivot area is sown-down to lucerne.

David says that in the past couple of years, instead of selling the entire drop of calves in the paddock, the best returns have come from the good buying gallery at Mount Gambier market.

The Galpins are now selling their calves at just six to seven months of age in September-October, and last year their top steers made \$730 and the best

of their heifers about \$700.

“We used to try and get 360 to 400kg calves but the past couple of years we have sold calves in September-October between 300-350kg, getting \$2.15-\$2.20/kg instead of \$1.80/kg. In the end, the dollars are very similar for less feed,” David said.

“Although it is great to sell 400kg vealers, sometimes it doesn’t make sense to take them through.”

Selling early has also paid off - their prime lambs making \$4.70/kg in mid-August compared with \$3.80/kg for those offered just three weeks later.

David says they will definitely be looking to defend their title in this year’s carcass competition and will enter animals with differing muscling patterns and fat cover, and examine the results.

“By sending vealers to Mt Gambier, the only feedback about whether we were getting was that buyers were maybe paying an extra few cents a kilogram, but there was no feedback we were producing the right article,” David said.

He says the competition will have flow-on benefits to the whole of the beef industry, and he hopes producers and agents will “really get behind it”.

• **Details:** The 2009 Southern Grassfed Carcass Classic will be held from October 12 to 23, with entries closing on September 18.

### MyTake

with JAMIE GRAY

Thomas DeGaris & Clarkson Penola



#### Overview:

The Southern Grassfed Carcass Classic is a commercial carcass competition driven by a committee of producers and agents in conjunction with Teys Brothers, Naracoorte. It is open to any grassfed cattle with the aim of giving producers greater access to feedback on their cattle and giving them the ability to deliver a consistent, high-quality product. The four classes comprise a single steer (maximum four teeth, 300-420-kilograms carcass weight); pen of three steers (maximum four teeth, 300-420kgcw); single trade steer or heifer (maximum two teeth, 180-260kgcw) and single trade steer or heifer (maximum two teeth, 261-340kgcw). Entrants can deliver purebred or crossbred cattle to the processor over a two-week period and while last year’s kill dates were late November-early December, this has been brought forward to mid-October for the 2009 event.

#### The good:

The competition has many positives for producers in the South East and western Victoria selling finished grass-fed cattle. It enables them to identify the right genetics to use to meet saleyard and processor targets. Producers also receive valuable carcass feedback on eye muscle area, fat cover and MSA eating quality to see if their breeding program is heading in the right direction. Also importantly it brings producers together and gets them talking with each other about what they are doing that is working. The competition cattle can be delivered as part of a normal consignment of cattle sold through Teys Bros and it also supports an important charity, with \$1812 raised for the Royal Flying Doctor Service at the first event last year.

#### The bad:

Really, the only downsides are that it may be hard for some producers to talk about their stock, and the timing may give some autumn calving herds an advantage.

#### The ugly:

It might be hard at first to enter if the producer thinks their genetics are not up to their peers.

#### My top 5 tips:

1. Know the specifications of each class and enter the class/classes best-suited to your cattle.
2. Identify superior animals with your agent and make sure they are on good-quality pasture right through
3. Enter a number of animals to see how a variation in types hang up
4. Take note of the carcass feedback and use it, making decisions with your bull purchases and breeding program.
5. Find out what the top-scoring producers are doing which you could implement in your beef business

#### Need to know more?

Jamie Gray, TDC Penola 0407 905 052 or Southern Grassfed Carcass Classic chairman Allan Kain 0409 366 010

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