

LowlineBeef.com.au

Margo Hayes from Vitulus Lowline Stud has always advocated that for the Australian Lowline Breed to be sustainable a commercial market needs to be developed but before this can occur there needs to be widespread breed recognition. One of the most significant ways to do this is by participating in carcass competitions. The reason for this is threefold; firstly these competitions are against all breeds so the playing field is level, secondly results are measured exactly and scientifically giving the participants valuable and measurable results and perhaps most importantly eliminating any judging personal preferences or biases. Thirdly successful results allow for maximum breed publicity and exposure in the commercial environment where it is deemed necessary.

The recent success, by a number of our breeders, in carcass competitions across the nation has helped cement the Lowline Breed as being a viable commercial alternative in a cross breeding program.

Using Lowline bulls over a commercial herd of Limousin/Murray Grey and Senepol cross females has certainly proved successful for Margo. She has twice won the Grand Champion Beef Carcass of the Royal Brisbane show firstly in 2007 and more recently in 2009. Out of over 250 entrants this is no mean feat. In 2009 her entries won both the Lightweight and the Heavy weight divisions of the competition with Lowline cross animals...something that has never been achieved by any breed or breeder in the 140 year history of the Royal Brisbane Show.

The Grand Champion and Lightweight winner 'Vitulus Delicious' was 75% Lowline and 25% Senepol, aged 18 months and weighing 396kg. The Heavyweight winner 'Vitulus Cryovac' was 50% Lowline, 25% Limousin and 25% Murray Grey aged 22 months, weighing 530kg. Interestingly the highest place any of these steers were awarded in the led section of the competition was 5th.

Margo's reason for participating in carcass competitions is so she can demonstrate to commercial producers that by utilizing Lowline bulls over their heifers/females not only will they reduce calving problems but they will also produce a carcass that will fit domestic /supermarket trade specifications absolutely perfectly. She has certainly proven that! Domestic/Supermarket trade is the premium end of the beef market and where a considerable amount of large commercial producers now target due to seasonal uncertainty, reduced running costs and premium saleyard prices.

The premium end of the beef market is also where Vitulus Lowline Stud is now focused having recently developed and trademarked www.lowlinebeef.com.au to strategically target and supply both the restaurant and retail butcher trade.

Vitulus has teamed up with Farmers Choice Meats, a wholesaler, to distribute their branded product. It is embryonic days yet and the markets for distribution will be small but as the product gains a reputation and new markets are

developed then market share will expand. Online beef will also be sold and delivered to Brisbane suburbs.

All beef will be MSA graded. Steers used to supply the market will be those bred by Vitulus and other local breeders with at least 50% component being Lowline. Steers, from 15 months onward, will be finished for 90 days using their own specially developed mix. The aim of this mix is to balance the ratio of Omega-6 fatty acids to Omega-3 fatty acids.

It is envisaged that not only will grain fed but pasture fed animals will also be marketed. This will be dependent on the development of current Aus-Meat standards, allowing pasture-fed beef to be graded under Meat Standards Australia program. The pasture-fed standard will require cattle to be fed only grass or pasture for their entire lives and not fed grain or confined to a yard, be Hormone Growth Promotant and antibiotic-free. Grass fed standards will also pave the way for greater inclusion of purebred Lowline steers.

Herewith an example of what two entrepreneurial Lowline producers are achieving with their Grass Fed branded beef products in the USA.

From Pasture to Plate

Muddy Creek Ranch (MCR) Lowline Angus is a fully integrated cattle operation located in Wilsall Montana, USA in the heart of cattle country. MCR has a 100% grass-fed, all-natural herd. All cattle are born, raised, slaughtered and sold in Montana.

Muddy Creek knows that grass fed beef is better for the consumer and the animals. A high-grain diet can cause physical problems for ruminants. Ruminants are designed to eat fibrous grasses, plants, and shrubs—not starchy, low-fiber grain. When they are switched from pasture to grain, they can become afflicted with a number of disorders, and are often fed antibiotics to prevent disease.

Grass-fed beef contains a ten-fold increase in the antioxidant Beta Carotene and is 3-to-4-times higher in its concentration of vitamin E than grain-fed beef. Another significant health benefit is its high concentration of Conjugated Linoleic Acids (CLAs) with their proven antioxidant, anti-cancer and fat-burning properties. Ruminants grazing on pasture alone produce meat, milk and cheeses that contain 3-to-5- times more CLAs than animals fed on conventional grain diets. Also, grass-fed beef contains a much healthier Omega 3-to- Omega 6 ratio. People that eat diets high in Omega 3s are less likely to have high blood pressure and are 50% less likely to suffer a heart attack.

Grass feeding is also healthier for the environment. When animals are raised outdoors on pasture, their manure is spread over a wide area of land, making it a welcome source of organic fertilizer, not a “waste management problem.”

Muddy Creek breeds Lowline Angus with native Montana cows to come up with a unique commercial herd. The cows are finished out at around 453 kilograms, are highly efficient on pasture and are great milkers. They produce a market animal that is adaptive to Montana’s climate and that converts grass to high-quality beef that is tender and delicious. These 1st cross progeny are finished at 17 months of age.

To ensure the quality of the meat they produce, MCR uses ultrasound technology to preselect the animals to be slaughtered. The selected animals are brought to local, USDA- approved, Montana plants to ensure quality. The meat is then sold to the public by the piece or the side directly through local farmers’ markets or area restaurants. The Wilsall Bar and Café are jointly owned with the ranch and proudly serve MCR Lowline Angus beef for lunch and dinner. Every year at the National Western Stock Show in Denver, Colorado MCR takes one of their chefs with them who serves Lowline beef all week for the Lowline breeders to sample. Each day the queue gets longer and longer as the chef produces delicious cuts such as braised brisket and marinated ribs just to name a few.

Muddy Creek's mission is to produce quality seed stock, productive commercial cows and predictable carcasses for a growing demand for grass fed beef.

Best Beef Ever is how **California Lowlines**, run by John and Nadine de Bruin, describe and market their beef. They live in a unique area of California where the weather is mild all year round and ideally suited for the Lowline breed of cattle. The breed, due to its smaller size and ability to finish well on grass, was just what John and Nadine were looking for when searching out the various types of cattle that could inhabit their small 168 acre ranch. What sets their ranch apart is the abundance of water and a fairly long growing season.

They raise seedstock for local California Ranchers interested in "downsizing" their herd or looking for a smaller breed for their smaller acreages as well as beef.

John and Nadine found early on that crossing Lowlines with their commercial cows gave them just the right size steer for their market. They focus on raising all-natural grassfed beef for the local Santa Barbara Community. They have found many health conscious customers seeking an alternative to the grainfed beef that is promoted by food giants such as Cargill and JBL. These environmentally conscious customers really want to see their cattle raised on green pastures, where the impact to the environment is positive and sustainable i.e. everything is recycled.

Their steers, weighing around 450kg, are slaughtered at a local abattoir approximately 1.5 hours from their ranch. This facility is inspected by the US Department of Agriculture, with a USDA inspector checking each carcass slaughtered in the facility to insure it is safe for US consumers. These Lowline steers typically yield a 270kg carcass and around 180kgs of cut and wrapped meat ready for sale. All the meat is vacuum packed in 1-2kg packages and frozen for the convenience of their customers.

John and Nadine have a web site, BestBeefEver.com, where they advertise their beef and tell their story. The site contains the benefits of Grassfed Beef as compared to Grainfed, pricing and ways to obtain their beef. They sell their beef out of their house as well as at 5 different farmer's markets. Their next major initiative is develop an on-line store as part of their Internet site that allows people to order directly from the web site and have it delivered using standard commercial methods.