“Getting the Most from BREEDPLAN”

The remaining 12 workshops in the “Getting the Most from BREEDPLAN” series have been scheduled during July, August & September.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Venue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 9th</td>
<td>Clare, SA</td>
<td>July 30th</td>
<td>Albury, NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 11th</td>
<td>Keith, SA</td>
<td>August 28th</td>
<td>Northam, WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 13th</td>
<td>Ballarat, VIC</td>
<td>August 30th</td>
<td>Kojonup, WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 23rd</td>
<td>Launceston, TAS</td>
<td>September 10th</td>
<td>Orange, NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 25th</td>
<td>Warragul, VIC</td>
<td>September 12th</td>
<td>Goulburn, NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 27th</td>
<td>Shepparton, VIC</td>
<td>September 13th</td>
<td>Cooma, NSW</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In particular, the workshops will discuss:
- the development of a “Performance Recording Management Plan” for your herd
- how to ensure you are recording “good quality” performance information
- new BREEDPLAN developments such as the proposed “Data Quality” herd rating system

The workshop is available to all members of a Breed Society participating in SBTS for a cost of $55 (inc. GST). This fee covers attendance at the workshop, morning tea, lunch and an information kit.

Any member who wants to fine tune their performance recording is strongly encouraged to attend one of the workshops. Complete workshop information (including a registration form) is available from the SBTS website (http://sbts.une.edu.au). It is also important to note that the “Getting the Most from BREEDPLAN” workshops are different to the workshops that were conducted by SBTS during 2006. Members who attended the 2006 workshop series can benefit greatly by also attending the 2007 workshops.

“Closer to your Clients”

As advertised previously, SBTS is also offering a package to seedstock producers titled “Closer to your Clients” throughout 2007. This package comprises a one day workshop that you can host to demonstrate what your bulls can contribute to the breeding goals of your commercial clients. It also provides you with a great opportunity to get closer to your clients by learning more about their needs and expectations as commercial cattlemen. The day is conducted by the SBTS team and will be a mix of practical discussion and yard demonstration.

More specifically, the client day will include:
- Discussion on the effective selection of breeding cattle
- Overview of the genetic selection tools available
- Practical demonstration of how to use EBVs and selection indexes when choosing your next bull.

More information regarding the “Closer to your Clients” days is available from the SBTS website (http://sbts.une.edu.au) or by contacting the SBTS team.
One of the challenges facing beef producers across Australia is the ever increasing occurrence of drought. Drought presents many obstacles to the management of a beef enterprise with countless operational, financial and emotional hurdles testing the resolve of beef producers. While often not on the top of the priority list, one of the considerations that managers of a stud cattle operation need to make is the impact that the drought (and consequent management practices) has on both the genetics and performance recording requirements of their herd.

Why is it important to consider genetics?

Genetic improvement is a medium to long term strategy for improving herd profitability. Importantly, the effects of genetic improvement are both cumulative and permanent. The breeding decisions made in a herd today will have a direct impact on the genetics and subsequent profitability of the herd for the next ten years. Consequently, stud breeders are encouraged to persist with their long term genetic improvement strategy during short term challenges such as drought. One component of this is the maintenance of an effective performance recording program.

Won’t the poor performance of animals in a drought lower their EBVs?

No. The performance of an animal will only be directly compared by BREEDPLAN to the performance of other “similar” animals. That is, calves that have been bred in the same herd, are of the same sex, are of similar age and have been run together. It is how the animal performs relative to the other “similar’ animals that is important, not the actual performance of the animal.

What impact can a drought have on performance recording?

While the poor performance of animals is not a problem, there are countless factors that can potentially compromise the effectiveness of a herd's performance recording during a drought. Generally speaking, these factors revolve around the forced implementation of management practices that cause considerable disruption to routine stud operations and/or the poor condition of stock.

For example,
- Animals being placed on agistment, often on a number of properties
- Early weaning of calves
- Large variations in the condition of stock, often due to the effect of the drought rather than differences in genetic merit.
- Increased and varied incidence of disease/sickness
- Dispersal of a large number of stud animals

What management practices can be taken to reduce the disruption of drought?

Importantly, there are a number of strategies that can be taken which will minimise the disruption that drought has on the effectiveness of a herd’s performance recording.

- Breeders should carefully consider the traits that are important to their breeding program (or the breeding program of their clients) and potentially rationalise the traits that they record. With time often a constraint, limiting your performance recording to a core of important traits can be an adequate interim measure.
✓ Where possible, the number of animals within each contemporary group should be maximised and/or maintained. BREEDPLAN will use the performance information of an animal more effectively if there are a large number of other “similar” animals to compare it with.

✓ If a contemporary group has to be split for management reasons, create the new groups based on “automatic” criteria (eg. sex, age, prior management groups, prior weigh dates). In addition, try to weigh all calves in the contemporary group before the group is split.

✓ Care should be given to submitting accurate management group information. A management group should be entered for any calf or group of calves that have either been treated differently or exposed to significant non-genetic influences. For example, calves given different levels of supplement or calves placed on agistment. Consideration should also be given to variations in pasture quality, stocking rates, water quality, etc. In addition, a birth management group should be specified with the birth performance (eg. birth weights) of any calves whose dams have been treated differently prior to calving.

What other specific considerations should be made?

In addition to the above strategies, there are several specific considerations that need to be made when recording particular performance information.

✓ Only record scanning information on animals that are in adequate condition. To obtain effective results, animals should have a minimum average rump fat depth of 4 –5 mm. This ensures that there will be sufficient variation between animals to allow genetic differences to show up. This is particularly important when scanning for IMF% (ie. marbling).

✓ If early weaning, it is important to remember that BREEDPLAN can only analyse the 200 day weights of calves that are older then 80 days of age when the weight is recorded. Consequently, if some calves are younger than 80 days at weaning, it may be preferable to delay the weighing of all calves until the calves are closer to 200 days of age. In addition, if the recording of 200 day weights is delayed, then the recording of the associated mature cow weights should also be delayed.

✓ BREEDPLAN can analyse two 200 day weights on each animal. Therefore, if early weaning, it may be beneficial to weigh the calves at weaning (providing calves are older than 80 days of age) and then take a later weight when they are 200 days of age.

✓ If the drought has resulted in extremely low fertility (ie. a high percentage of empty cows), it would be recommended to carefully consider whether or not to submit the joining details of any cows to BREEDPLAN.

Should performance be recorded for sick/extremely poor animals?

In extreme situations, if the drought has resulted in a high and varied incidence of disease/sickness, careful consideration needs to be given as to whether to record the performance for that particular group of animals. If there have been significant differences in non-genetic influences that can’t be accounted for, recording performance may bias the EBVs of these calves.

Importantly, the best approach to maintaining an effective performance recording program during a drought will vary from operation to operation and from drought to drought. If you are in any doubt as to the best strategy for your particular situation, please do not hesitate to contact staff at SBTS.
The SBTS website has recently been updated with a range of tip sheets relating to many components of BREEDPLAN, the interpretation of EBVs and the submission of performance data. To access any of the tip sheets, simply log on to the SBTS website (http://sbts.une.edu.au) and click on the menu item titled “BREEDPLAN Doc’ments”

The following tip sheets are now available:

1. BREEDPLAN – A General Introduction
2. Comparing EBVs Between Different Breeds
3. Interpreting BREEDPLAN EBVs
4. Interpreting Accuracy
5. BREEDPLAN – The Traits Explained
6. Selection Indexes – A General Introduction
7. Bull Selection Exercises using EBVs

8. Understanding Gestation Length EBVs
9. Understanding Calving Ease EBVs
10. Understanding Birth Weight EBVs
11. Understanding Growth EBVs
12. Understanding Mature Cow Weight EBVs
13. Understanding Milk EBVs
14. Understanding Scrotal Size EBVs
15. Understanding Carcase EBVs
16. Understanding Docility EBVs
17. Understanding BREEDPLAN Management Groups
18. Comparing animals running under different conditions

19. Recording Gestation Length Information
20. Recording Calving Difficulty Scores
21. Recording Birth Weights
22. Recording Weight Information
23. Recording Mature Cow Weights
24. Recording Information for Milk EBVs
25. Recording Scrotal Circumference Measurements
26. Recording Scanning Information
27. Recording Docility Scores
28. Methods of Submitting Data to BREEDPLAN
29. Recording Management Groups for BREEDPLAN
30. Completing your Performance Recording Forms

31. Performance Recording in a Drought
32. Small Herds – Obtaining Effective Results
33. Recording ET calves with BREEDPLAN
34. Recording Multiple Sire Joinings
35. Interim BREEDPLAN EBVs
36. Using Internet Solutions
37. Interpreting your Suggested Weigh Dates Report
38. Weighing Pregnant Heifers
39. Understanding Outliers
40. Multibreed EBVs
41. Recording options for composite/crossbred herds