

MEATING THE COMMERCIAL MARKET WITH VITULUS LOWLINE BULLS

The Lowline breed is now really beginning to gain greater acceptance within the commercial environment. Vitulus Lowline Stud now has a significant number of commercial clients in the St George and Texas districts. Word of mouth has seen our number of clients grow each year and result in repeat sales..the best recommendation there is. Our breeding program strategically caters for this market supplying larger framed bulls that we will know will be able to not only serve these females but also survive in the harsher environment.

Meet the Poulsen Family: John who along with his wife Brenda and two sons Greg and Mark have 74,000 acres, spread over three properties in the St George area and run 1,100 commercial breeders. They are currently building up to have 1,300 breeders. The Poulsen's have recently started using Lowline and Lowline cross bulls over all their heifers and they are exceptionally happy with the result. John admits that when he first started using Lowline other producers in the district were sceptical but for him the results speak for themselves.

Why Choose Lowline? As John Poulsen relates "we use Lowline bulls over all our heifers for two main reasons. Firstly for ease of calving which has greatly reduced our problems and secondly they produce a better quality carcass than any other option we have tried in the past". Their commercial heifers, mainly Herefords and Hereford/Angus cross, in the past have experienced a number of calving difficulties.

The Poulsen's now are happy to report that they no longer have that problem. John concedes that many producers in his area, due to the size of the paddocks and number of breeders, just let their heifers die if there is a calving problem but they can't afford to take that attitude. Not only from a commercial point of view but also from one of animal welfare.

The Poulsen's had tried using Jerseys but found they produced a smaller yield and no substantial weight gain. They also tried using Littermates (young bulls of other breeds) and straight Angus bulls but neither of these options gave a satisfactory result.

Their Operation. John and his family turn off 10 head per week, every week of the year, to the local butcher in St George. As stated previously the female herd is mainly Hereford and Hereford/ Angus cross. None of the F1 Lowline calves are kept. The Lowline bulls are run in 1000-acre paddock with expected serving capacity of between 60-70 heifers. Calving occurs all year round for continuity purposes.

Market Specifications:

When sent to the butcher these steers and heifers expected dressed weights range from 200-220kg with 5-7mm fat. The Poulsen's have also been able to make the Jap Ox market with a recent bullock that dressed out at 400kg. He was 25% Lowline!

What is the feeding regime? The calves, once weaned between six and eight months of age, are grass fed on buffel grass. The weaners have continual access to Anipro which is a liquid molasses based supplement until they are yearlings. They are then brought in and finished on grain for between 50-60 days. At any one time they have between 80 and 100 head of yearlings on grain from continual access to self-feeders. The cattle on average put on 1.5kg per day at a cost of \$1.00 per day. The cattle are fed on a combination of grain, which is all hammer milled on site, cottonseed and feedlot 80 ration.

When asked how long they feed for John replies: 'Until they are fat'. i.e. there is no specific time and most are assessed visually. Having been MSA accredited since its inception and also being in the butcher trade himself John knows what he is looking for. He also states that from his experience and on his type of country any animal that has an Angus component will always be ready for market faster than any other type of breed.

The Final Verdict: Perhaps the most significant result for the Poulsen enterprise has been, by investing in Lowline bulls, the ability to increase their beef sales by 40% due to continuity of product and quality.

MEET SOME OTHER BREEDERS:

I had been looking around for a bull for sometime time and knew what I wanted but not really where to find it. I attended the Small Breeds Field Day in 2007 and found exactly what I wanted, Lowline/Angus cross bull. He was young, good structure, very solid unit & with great temperament (So quiet he loves a pat & scratch in the paddock).

I run a small property of nearly 200 acres with 23 breeders mainly Angus heifers and some Murray Greys at Dalveen near the border in classic Granite Belt country. This country is unique in its own right very cold winters sometimes even snow/sleet. I do not live on the property so when choosing cattle male or female look for a specific animal type. My requirements are very strict they must be: quiet, solid consistent performers, non-strayers, easy calving and most importantly black. Not being there it's important that all of the above happen without me.

I have had the first lot of calves hit the ground this spring from this Vitulus Lowline/Angus bull. With one to go he will have had 100% calving rate that's excellent in anybody's books. This little man is certainly adding value to my property and I would recommend any body looking at an easy to handle but solid performing bull look at Lowlines and especially Vitulus Lowlines. **Scott Wooley. Dalveen**

The **Cross family** have properties at Dirranbandi and St George. In total they have in excess of 10,000 acres with over 250 breeders. They use purebred Lowline bulls over their Hereford and Hereford Angus cross heifers. They calf from September to November and then turn their progeny two years later between 18months to two years of age. All progeny from these heifers are sold at the Dalby saleyards averaging \$1.99 kg return. The biggest benefit for the Cross family has been peace of mind during the calving season with **NO** calving problems whatsoever. They have also retained some of these Lowline cross bull calves to grow out to use as well to see if they can slightly increase the finishing weight of these progeny.

Anonymous, St George: We have had to alter the details of this client and his story due to breed society pressure. He came to Vitulus, via recommendation, as a new client. He rang to buy a bull, as he 'was sick of pulling calves from his stud females'. He even had to shoot one of his \$30,000 stud heifers due to a broken pelvis from calving'. We decided on a bull and delivery arrangement was made.

As the seedstock industry chases bigger and bigger frame scores thinking that bigger is better the resultant problem is that these heifers just cannot calve to these large framed bulls and they end up with dead calves and often dead cows as well.

This client has over 40,000 acres between two properties with over 600 breeders running Charolais, Charbray, Santa Gertrudis, Angus and Hereford breeders. Last year as well as having to contend with the drought and continual hand feeding of his animals he has also had significant calving problems. As he explained "with the two properties being over 200 km apart it is hard to keep a check on things". He also intends to keep some of the bull calves from these joinings to use as heifer bulls on his other breeders as well. He is even entertaining the idea of starting his own Lowline Stud!

THE VITULUS COMMERCIAL HERD

Vitulus uses purebred Lowline bulls over its commercial breeder herd. They are Limousin/Murray Grey and Senepol/ Belmont Red cross females. These are large framed, 550-600kg females. The reason we choose these breeds is that the European content gives the muscling whilst the British content gives the softness and finishing ability. The bulls have no problems reaching these females and the resultant progeny fits the domestic supermarket trade **absolutely perfectly**.

Vitulus turns these steers off between 18 to 23 months achieving finished weights of around 350-450kg. These steers are what we have allowed us to be so successful in the carcass competitions. You will see from the following carcass results that the Lowline content allows these steers to obtain the perfect fat coverage so that they obtain maximum points available. Our 2007 Grand Champion Carcass steer was achieved with only 90 days on grain. Vitulus, to date, has been placed in more carcass competitions than other Lowline breeder in the nation so we know what it takes to win those places. The rewarding part of carcass competitions is that it is open to all breeds and it is judged on specific defined criteria and is not subject to any personal opinions.

Science Makes Our Beef Better: Margo Hayes is a also a firm believer that smaller cattle have finer grained beef and finer grained beef is the most tender. To that end Vitulus places a large emphasis on using GeneStar technology and in particular the tenderness gene. The majority of our bulls that we use in our breeding program are recorded with a seven or eight start tenderness score. Margo also believes that the finer grain and resultant tenderness explains why a number the breeder has been successful in MSA awards. The MSA Grading Model predicts eating quality of 40 muscles by 6 different cooking methods. This is the benchmark standard for high quality table beef.

The Market of the Future: Lowline genetics are based on high 200-day growth, moderate 400-day growth and low 600-day growth. With these growth patterns, producers have been able to enter the exclusive end of the domestic market, by producing steers that can fatten and marble off grass or with 90 -120 days of grain. The commercial advantage begins to emerge at about 12 -14 months as the Lowline starts to mature and begins putting his energy into developing muscle and fat rather than bone growth and body form. The argument than many breeders of other traditional breeds will have is that their cattle will be 50 kg heavier at this age. Whilst this may be true the difference lies in the cost of getting those animals to an eating standard i.e., the cost of finishing that animal which is the major cost to meat producers. Time and time again we see producers trying to fatten their large framed steers that continue to grow rather than producing fat. Lowlines help 'down turn' the high growth curve of regular cattle so that they can mature earlier and express fattening ability at an earlier age". Once again this is evident in the fat scores in the carcass competitions.

Exhibitor	Weights			Fat Depth PB		Fat Depth Ribs		Fat Colour		Meat Colour		Marbling		Meat Yield		E.M.A.		Fat Dist.	pH	Carcass Total	Hoof Section	Overall Total
	Animal Live Wt.	Animal Dressed Wt.	Dressed %	Depth (mm)	Points (Max 15)	Depth (mm)	Points (Max 15)	Score	Points (Max 10)	Score	Points (Max 15)	Score	Points (Max 3)	%	Points (Max 10)	Area (cm ²)	Points (Max 15)	Points Max(15)		Points Max(100)	Points Max(50)	Points Max(150)
110 Hayes M	338	191.6	56.7%	9	15	5	15	0	10	1C	14	0	4	64.5	10	70	12	12	5.56	92	42.5	134.5
101 Wieland P A & E J	336	182.6	54.3%	9	15	3	12	0	10	1C	14	1	5	66.77	10	72	14	10	5.55	90	38	128
113 Bremelty Angus and Charolais	338	185.2	54.8%	8	14	5	15	0	10	1B	15	0	4	64.02	10	64	11	10	5.59	89	38	127
103 Holy Trinity School	339	196.6	58.0%	7	12	4	14	0	10	1C	14	1	5	64.91	10	70	12	8	5.57	85	44	129
109 Paton, B A & Chicken, M J	345	218.6	63.4%	5	7	3	12	0	10	1C	14	1	5	66.56	10	88	15	9	5.46	82	41.5	123.5
108 Farrawell N I J	328	183.8	56.0%	8	14	9	8	0	10	1B	15	1	5	61.05	7	63	11	11	5.48	81	38	119
105 Lunney P V & B T	367	207.8	56.6%	6	10	3	12	0	10	2	11	1	5	65.72	10	76	13	9	5.56	80	38	118
112 Martin M R, S R & A M	346	200.2	57.9%	5	7	3	12	0	10	1B	15	0	4	65.13	10	68	12	9	5.51	79	42	121
102 Wieland B J	340	189.2	55.6%	6	10	4	14	0	10	2	11	1	5	64.66	10	65	11	8	5.51	79	38	117

Vitulus Carcass Competition Placings:

- 2008 Warwick Show & Rodeo Society Hoof and Hook Competition: *3rd place Medium weight*
- 2008 Royal Brisbane Show Led Steer Carcass Competition: *3rd place Medium weight*
- 2008 Royal Sydney Show Purebred Steer Carcass Competition: *3rd place Light weight*
- 2007 Royal Brisbane Show Led Steer Carcass Competition: **GRAND CHAMPION CARCASS**
- 2007 Warwick Show & Rodeo Society Hoof and Hook Competition: *2nd place Medium weight*
- 2006 Royal Brisbane Show Led Steer Carcass Competition: *Winner of MSA Eating Quality Awards in lightweight classes*
- 2005 Warwick Show & Rodeo Society Hoof and Hook Competition: *1st place Light weight*