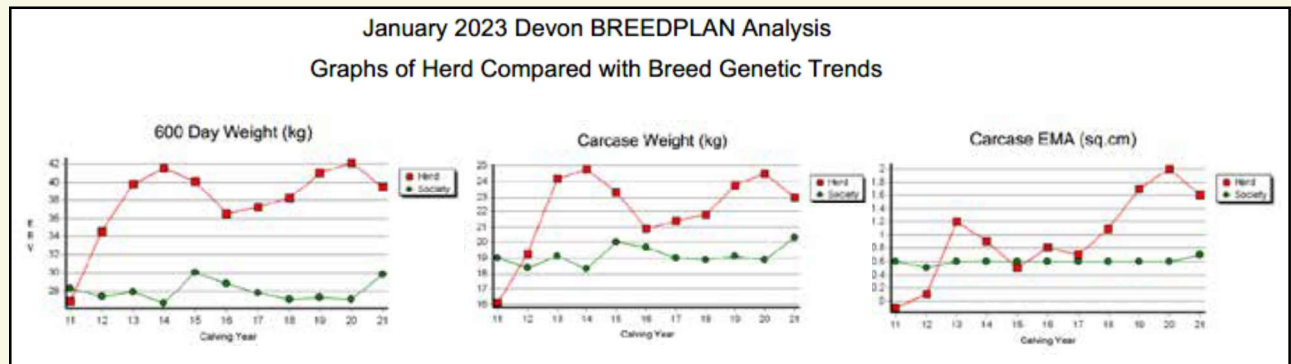
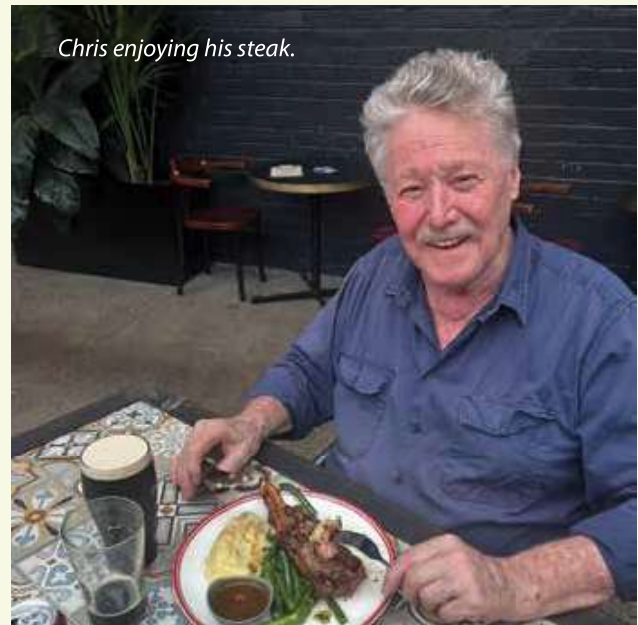


# LimeRidge Devons

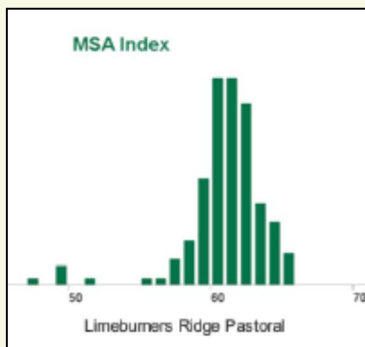
I last reported on our approach to pasture improvement and herd development in a BullDust article in 2015. There have been good and not so good years since and Covid hasn't helped, but overall we have attained a level of pasture improvement, although with scope for further substantial progress. The excavation of five 2-3 Mega litre dams and several smaller dams throughout the property in 2017-18, provided a capability to intermittently irrigate pasture in dryer times and keep stock in lower value native grass areas; preventing them camping on and overgrazing the better pastured paddocks. It has also 'drought-proofed' stock water availability.

Maintaining a consistent effort to obtain 200, 400 & 600 day weights, measure carcass traits and report abattoir carcass feedback to Breedplan for all animals, both registered and commercial, has provided a basis for breeding selection that I believe has led to substantial improvement in our herd. This is evident in graphs included with our herd Group Breedplan reports, examples of which are shown (RED –our herd, GREEN - Society average) below:



LimeRidge Devons is a registered Devon stud comprising mostly self-replacing breed females with foundation lines from Barnstaple, Mograni, Vix, Benoak, Ashwood, Bongalabi, Gowan Ross and Gundooee, providing a diverse genetic breeding base. Our primary focus is to improve our breed females to maintain the integrity of the Devon breed and to produce high value commercial animals for the beef industry. We have bred several high EBV bulls in recent years although stud bull sales is not our focus. What lately has been a surprise was a high local demand for heifers for breeding.

Our financial stability for some time has relied on a commercial 'product line' that was developed following poor returns from saleyard disposals in earlier years. That product line has for at least 10 years delivered MSA grade steers and cull heifers to Wingham abattoirs for their Manning Valley Natural (MVN) branded grass fed beef range. Not only does this approach provide our base income, the carcass feedback provides valuable information on just



how well we are doing and is input to Breedplan to further support our breeding selection and development.

However, it is difficult to pass up an opportunity; one in which my brother Tony and myself, as beef producers, never contemplated venturing. That opportunity was to trial a 'paddock-to-plate' approach, supplying steers and heifers to two Hunter Valley pubs operated by Tony's sons. The two publicans have many years' experience in the industry, more recently successfully re-invigorating old hotels, turning them into family friendly places supported by the availability of healthy food, including high-end steaks.

The value proposition posed by the publicans to the beef producers was a 'dollar and a bit' more per kilo FOT (free on truck) and all abattoir, butchering and transport costs would be borne by the publicans. The publicans determined they would get consistent and better quality meat (LimeRidge median MSA Index 61.36) at a lesser cost; the better cuts able to be sold at a premium improving customer satisfaction and return. Nothing new! Simply a new opportunity and the ingredients for a win-win situation.

Previously, the weekly meat order placed with the wholesaler or local butcher was for ribeye, sirloin or rump steaks of a certain weight and thickness, plus sausages and mince. Steak quality was observed to be variable and the mince tended to be less on the lean side!

A new approach always brings new challenges. Obviously, a whole carcass needs to be butchered to produce as much



saleable meat as possible. That problem was posed to the pub's chief chef – prepare a cutting list for the butcher to yield 'creative' low and high-end steak cuts and improve the meat content of low-end hamburger mince and sausages. Simple!

Chief chef Steve now receives ribeye, sirloin and rump whole and cuts to his requirements. Blade is marinated, grilled for a Beef Rice Bowl. Other lower grade meat cubed for pies and stews. Mince is now an 80/20% meat/fat mix.

Further, there is only so many ribeye, sirloin and rump steaks you get from a carcass. The menu cannot offer too many selections. The solution for prime steaks was to offer the Chef's Selection - Today's Cut.

The first delivery of two 2yr old steers was in early November 2025. The pair dressed 459cwt, the butcher commenting "... look like good bodies". Since then there has been two further deliveries of two heifers each and the general opinion is that the trial is working well.

As beef producers we have not had the chance to taste your own product, until now. That opportunity came late January this year when I dropped in at one of the pubs to have lunch with family. I knew that our steaks were on the



*LimeRidge meat packs.*

menu and just had to try one. The steak of the day was a 400g rib eye.

At the risk of self-promotion I would have to say that it was the best steak I had tasted since I had a very nice rump at the Longyard at the 2022 AGM dinner.

It was tasty, very tender and juicy with a real 'meaty' texture – simply delicious!



*LimeRidge steak.*



*LimeRidge carcasses.*

