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MARCH 2020

PUTTING THE
SPARKLE IN
THE SPECKLE



HEAD 'EM UP, RAWHIDE

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Cover photograph:

A magnificent
Speckle Park at the
Black Diamond stud.

Full story page 6

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WELCOME to our March edition for 2020 and its unashamed concentration on livestock—whether that livestock is used for meat, wool or fibre.

We have decided to focus here because areas ravaged by bushfire all summer long and, on a national scale, were confronted with an appalling loss of farmland, infrastructure and, sadly, a lot of shearing sheds, garden sheds and homes, stockyards and countless kilometres of fencing.

None of this will be solved overnight, possibly not even over a year. For some, hopefully just a few, this will prove to be the final straw—they and their families will have finally had enough and they will walk away.

Meaning farming has just lost them twice over—first to fires and then to emotional and/or financial collapse—and the only way to move forward is to take just one step at a time.

Breeds we have covered here range from the Texas Longhorn (itself something of an endangered species) to

the striking Speckle Park breed—plus we catch up with a Lowline breeder, an alpaca enterprise and have a poignant conversation with a cow and goat dairy devastated by the blazes around Bega in NSW.

Our livestock special takes us from Queensland to Victoria and looks at the innovative and enthusiastic way each farm family is tackling their future.

And speaking of the need for feed to take care of the national flocks and herd, we chat with one farmer about the niche lucerne business he is running on a broadacre farm.

As for the rest, we have our usual collection of the highly unusual, such as bacon made from lamb, a product starting to take off in the Middle East, and we also catch up with a couple of short sorties checking out the lucrative lucerne market and the Kelpie breeder who's working dogs are spread from the Arctic Circle to the outback.

We hope you enjoy reading these stories as much as we enjoyed writing them for you.



Andrew Mole, Editor.





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The terminator takes on Australia's weeds

With current media and industry attention focusing on the use of non-sustainable chemical herbicides, their potential effect on human health and the detrimental effect on soil health, the community at large is on the lookout for alternative weed control options

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- FarmSafe Weed Terminator

Contact Organics inventor and founding director William Briggs said “in today’s era of toxicity and with the liberal use of herbicides and pesticides, Contact Organics has now confirmed the value of being sustainable in all industries — including farming”. “At Contact Organics our aim is to increase the benefits of our soil and produce grown here in Australia, and to spread the benefits of our knowledge contained in our products world-wide,” William added.

He said the company’s Safe Series of Weed Terminators are non-selective contact herbicides.

They are made from a proprietary

composition of acetic acid as active ingredient and synergistic natural adjuvants delivering the acetic acid into the plant.

“Weed Terminator works by dehydrating the weed that has been sprayed,” William explained.

“It strips the waxy protective film of the weed leaf and seeds, allowing plant moisture to escape,” he said.

“As Weed Terminator enters the plant, it quickly breaks down the weed cells creating total dehydration and thereby termination of the weed.”

Already used in tree crops and viticulture, those in the equine and bovine sector are fast switching too.

The Weed Terminators have been proven to be comparable to conventional herbicides and have outperformed the other natural herbicides.

William said Contact Organics is an Australian company dedicated to seeking out innovative ways to create a non-toxic product range that is effective at killing weeds — and killing them fast.

“We’ve spent the past three decades

focusing on the research, development and production of non-toxic products,” he added.

“In this time, we found a correlation between illnesses and chemicals used across a range of soils and crops. And, in turn, the foods produced from these crops.

“This discovery triggered our expansion into agricultural research.

“Surely, we thought, chemicals in herbicides would have a negative effect on the food we eat — and it turned out we were right.

“The industry was missing effective, non-toxic weed control products and that’s why the Safe Series was created.”

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YOUNG MAN, OLD HEAD, STUNNING RESULTS

Black Diamond Speckle Park might be one of the new brands in the glamour market of these black and white beauties, but Murray Van der Drift is taking the market by the horns with his small stud and selling high-priced genetics to some of the biggest players in the brand. SOPHIE BALDWIN reports >>>



MURRAY Van der Drift might only be young, but when you see him around his herd of Speckle Parks he looks as though he has been running a stud for decades.

Starting out with just four cows and two bulls purchased from the Riverina Speckle Park open day in 2014, the Black Diamond Speckle Park herd has come a long way in a short time, thanks to a lot of embryo work and sourcing genetics from Canada.

This season the stud will calve down 100 purebred Speckle Park cows plus embryos.

"Speckle Parks have been recognised for 12 years as a breed, so we decided to go back to the heartland in Canada, to improve and expand our genetics," Murray said.

His passion for agriculture has always been obvious but his love for showing beef cattle began back in secondary school.

"I was in year eight and we had an older ag teacher who wanted to bring showing beef cattle back to the school," Murray said.

At the time his parents were donating Limousin and Limousin cross steers to

help the cause.

"I was involved in the show team throughout my senior years and because I grew up on a beef farm, I just loved cattle and the challenge of breeding quality cattle," he said.

Initially the family ran Macorna Limousin stud along with commercial cattle but added the Speckle Parks more recently.

"It has been my great desire to have my own input into the business and start something new for us.

"Speckles are the fastest growing beef breed in the world. Their moderate frame and doing ability, along with their unbelievable docility, makes them a great multi-purpose breed," he said.

In October last year a Black Diamond Speckle Park steer, BDS P399, was awarded champion steer on the hoof at the Van der Drift's local Swan Hill show.

After being graded and scored through the MSA scoring system he was then named champion on the hook as well.

"We couldn't have been happier with these results. P399 was in the export division of the competition weighing in at 480 kg on the hoof and returning a dressing percentage of 56.56 per cent," Murray said.

He also had the third biggest eye muscle of the competition which is a big focus of the stud given its importance in the overall value of the carcass.

"We had a total of five head entered in the carcass section of the Swan Hill Show and four of them were Speckle or Speckle Park cross steers. We were very happy with how they all performed."

Murray said the breeding goal is simple. "Our goal is to maintain a good carcass along with developing a strong female line with good udders, and conformation to allow us to sell cattle into all sorts of climates and able to walk long distances," he said.

Murray said the long turn around in genetics is challenging because it can be five years before you know if you have made the right breeding decision.

As an extension of their business the family also run some elite Speckle Park cows in partnership with other Canadian breeders to help to provide and source important outcross genetics for their breeding plan back here in Australia.

While recent focus has been more on the Speckles, the stud has had some pretty serious success across both breeds including Supreme Speckle Park



Exhibit at The Royal Adelaide Show with Black Diamond Marcho Man and Grand Champion Female 2019 at the Limousin National Show at Wodonga with Macorna Nancy Rachel N158.

They also topped the Speckle Park sale at Scone last year when a female sold for \$17,500.

Murray said continually putting their cattle up against others allowed them to benchmark their performance.

"We participated in the Jindalee feed trial entering three teams — two Speckle Park/Angus cross teams and one of purebred Limousins," he said.

"Three of our five Limousin steers dressed out at greater than 60 per cent, the highest dressing percentage of any animals in the competition."

The Speckle Park/Angus placed eighth and 14th out of 95 teams.

"This is the second year we have competed in the trial.

Last year's results weren't as good as we hoped for, but it was good to come back and crack the top 10 this year. The Trial really cemented what we were seeing at home with the overall performance of the Speckle Park cross cattle." ■





HOW NOW KATE COW? AND RED. AND ANN. AND DARKY

There was a small farm which had always had a house cow. So when the chance popped up to get a new one—and help a dairy farmer selling his herd—one family could not resist the temptation. But as SOPHIE BALDWIN reports, that irresistible cow quickly became part of a mini herd

KATE, Red, Ann and Darky are probably four of the luckiest cows in Australia.

The former dairy cows have found a home on a 400-acre sheep farm owned by Robyn and Ken Richards from Terip, near Mansfield in Victoria's High Country.

Robyn has grown up with the ritual of milking and she already had a couple of dry old girls and was looking to crank up her milk supply again.

"I have had a house cow all my life and when we had our own kids, I wanted them to learn milk comes from a cow and not the supermarket, so I just continued on," Robyn said.

When she saw a Facebook post from Yalca dairy farmer Steve Dalitz seeking homes for some of his girls because he was selling his herd, Robyn got in contact.

"I was aware of how much the dairy industry and farmers were hurting and I

wanted to do something," she said.

Robyn had every intention of taking only one cow, but the ensuing conversations saw her end up with two—Kate and Red.

"When I agreed to take two cows I had no idea where Steve's dairy farm even was—it could have been anywhere in Australia and I was suddenly thinking 'oh, my God, I have just bought two cows and I don't even know where from'," she laughed.

Luckily for Robyn, Steve was only about an hour away so transporting the cows proved to be no major drama and the girls settled well into their new life.

Kate is a Friesian and Red is a Red Shorthorn (although she has since had a name change to Maddie to match the tag in her ear).

"Kate calved first, and it took a bit to get her to stand in her outdoor bale, but once she got the hang of it she was back

in production pretty quickly. All the cows have adapted well which is a credit to Steve as they are not scared, which tells me that they have been treated well in his dairy."

Robyn said she continued to keep in contact with Steve to offer support through his transition of selling his herd and the two have now become friends.

Steve had kept a few old cows he knew he could only sell as choppers—Ann (an old cow with a bung eye) and Darky, an old Jersey.

With Ann springing in early December, Steve messaged Robyn in the hope she might like to add to her herd.

Ken thought four milking cows was a bit of overkill for a family of three, but Robyn couldn't resist, especially when Steve decided to throw in Darky the Jersey.

"Ken wasn't too excited, but I couldn't bear to think of Darky as a chopper, so home she came, and she is just a delight.



"And Ken has warmed to all the girls, especially Darcy, and she is his favourite — she is so quiet when you feed her, she comes right up and puts her head in the bucket."

The cows are kept with their calves and are milked on a rotation system.

Milking is a family affair with all the pets on farm in attendance.

"We lock the calves up together overnight and milk just one of the cows. We obviously don't need all the milk from four cows, but we do have four dogs and two cats who always hang around for a drink."

Robyn said she loved the sense of calm that came from milking a cow every day.

"There is no phone, no internet, just

peace and quiet. It only takes me 15 minutes by the time I say hello to the girls."

With four milking cows Robyn is now looking at leasing a Murray Grey bull to get them all back in calf.

"We will often eat one of the calves and I think it is a better end for the animal when it is put down on farm. Kate's calf is out of a Wagyu bull and has been ear tagged for our meat supply in 2021."

Robyn laughs at the thought of how she has doubled her milking herd in just six months.

"All our cows will stay here with us on the farm until they die, they won't be going anywhere else," she said. ■



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Move 'em on, head 'em up

Head 'em up, move 'em on

MOVE 'EM ON, HEAD 'EM UP, RAWHIDE

Texas Longhorn cattle may be relatively new to Australia, but the passionate advocates of the legendary northern-hemisphere breed are slowly but surely transforming their profile from hobby-type breed and movie stars in westerns to having a genuine place in commercial herds. SHARON WRIGHT reports

First introduced to the country by American Patrick Holt, who imported live animals from the US to his Victorian property in 1986, the breed can now be found Australia-wide.

Fifth-generation Queensland cattleman Wes Offord was so taken with them that five years ago he converted his red Brahman enterprise into a fledgling Texas

Longhorn cattle stud.

"I had been looking into them for a while before I bought one, I was fascinated with them," Wes said.

"Originally I thought it would be a bit of a sideline for me, but the more I worked with them and learnt about them, I took the plunge and made the switch."

A butcher by trade, Wes said the meat was excellent quality and was the lowest in saturated fat and cholesterol of all of the beef breeds.

Their docile nature, longevity, fertility and adaptability to most climates were other keenly sought-after attributes.

"It's common to still have

cows breeding at 20 years of age," Wes said.

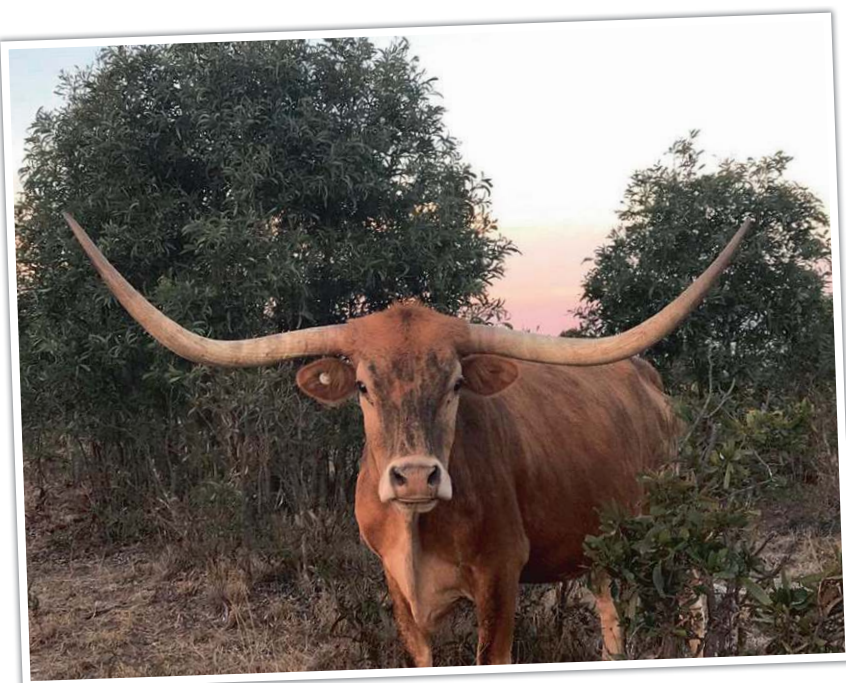
Ease of calving is also seeing the breed gaining popularity with dairy farmers and black angus breeders for use on their maiden heifers.

"There is a real misconception with them, people see the big horns and think they're wild and feral but in reality, they're very quiet," Wes said.

The Offord family routinely take cattle to agricultural shows to display, answer questions from interested passers-by and promote the cross-breeding benefits and meat quality, in an effort to raise the profile.

Brigalow Longhorns operates from a 162ha property at Marmor, 50km south west of Rockhampton, with additional lease land further inland at Tambo, and at Silkwood in far north Queensland.

With encouragement from wife Hayley, Wes bought his first bull from Judy and





Shelby and Sage Offord help out on the farm.



Wes Offord was invited to be a member of a five-judge panel at an American Texas Longhorn event in October 2019.

Warren Matotek, Arosfa Texas Longhorns, Ridgeland and along with two crossbred longhorn cows, they had the basis for a herd.

“Buying that bull really kickstarted our passion,” Wes said.

Within six to eight months the red Brahman were gone and thanks to the savvy purchase of 13 registered in-calf cows their herd doubled in a matter of months, when the calves hit the ground.

Herd numbers now sit at about 75, with 50 cows, 15–20 steers, one bull and a few replacement heifers.

Wes said the stud is in the building phase, but he would cap numbers at a maximum of 100 head depending on the season, with the focus now turning to improving genetics and introducing new bloodlines.

Poor seasonal conditions in 2019 saw a decline in the number of cows in the AI program with only about 20 percent of cows joined to semen imported from the USA.

A return to reasonable rainfall will see that figure jump to 50 percent.

“The gene pool in Australia is very limited, so the best and quickest way to improve genetics is to use AI,” Wes said.

The enterprise has bought the semen rights to a young bull in the USA to underpin the breeding program and continue to build the number of full-blood animals in the herd.

Wes said a grading system operated in the Texas Longhorn breed and animals can only be classified as full blood if they are direct descendants of embryos or live animals from the US. >>>

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Brigalow Longhorns' herd is 70 per cent full blood, with the balance graded cows.

Ideally calves will stay on their mothers for six to nine months, and post weaning are fed a diet of grain, pasture and hay.

Surplus heifers are sold at a combined sale with two other breeders at Roma or to other local breeders, with some steers having been sold to hobby farmers for paddock ornaments.

The home property, which has been in the family for 16 years relies on natural rainfall to grow the mix of native pastures, coastal grasses and legumes.

"We had 85mm of rain in January, and since the start of February we've had 170mm, it's the best rain we've had for two years," Wes said.

"My family has been in the area for five generations and the last two years has been the driest in their history."

Although the breed is drought tolerant the big dry forced the Offords to offload stock to the lease blocks and they were ritually hand-feeding animals, with mostly Rhodes grass hay, sourced from central Queensland.

"It's just a good all-round hay that will help them fatten," Wes said.

Now that the season is looking more promising, the pasture renovation program will ramp up in an effort to

replace the native pasture with more high-value crops.

A mix of coastal grasses including Callide Rhodes and legumes such as butterfly pea and seca stylo will soon go into the ground with the expectation of providing ongoing quality feed.

One of the challenges of marketing the meat, Wes said was finding a meatworks to process the animal because of the horns, and he uses a privately-run butcher at Monto.

He also uses portable panels for stockyards, instead of a more conventional fixed style to accommodate the horns.

Calves are born with horn buds and adult longhorn cows can have horns ranging from 1m to 2.25m, bulls up to 2m and steers more than 2.5m.

The skulls, with the horns attached, are a sought-after collector's item and one Queensland artist is using the horns to make unique pieces including jewellery, cups and cutlery handles.

Both Wes and Hayley are committee members of the Texas Longhorns Australia association; Wes is a former vice president and last year was invited to judge at the International Texas Longhorn Association championship show and convention in Texas, USA.



He was on the five-member futurity judging panel and said it was a great experience.

"I've judged cattle here in Australia before, but I never dreamed of getting an opportunity like that, it was an honour to be asked," Wes said.

The farm is a true family operation with children Maddison, 25, Levi, 22, Allie, 19, Sage, eight and Shelby, seven all involved, with Allie taking it to the next level and starting her own Texas Longhorn stud. ■

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THE FIRE CAME THROUGH LIKE A FREIGHT TRAIN

By the time the bushfires had finished with one Bega family they had barely 2 ha of their property left, the other 95 per cent had gone up in flames. One house burnt to the ground and another was saved, but the goats are now milked on the veranda because the dairy went up as well but SOPHIE BALDWIN reports this family is refusing to focus on the losses, preferring to plan how to revive a future after the fire >>>



>>>



>>>

“HELL had opened its doors for business.”

That’s how Jane Ellem described the fire that ripped through her family property at Wandella in the Bega Valley, in the early hours of December 31.

Jane and husband Michael Spannari — and her mother Irene Ellam (her father Denny was in hospital with pneumonia) — stood side by side for five long hours as they battled to save their livestock — 130 cows, 80 goats, 60 sheep, 10 horses, 17-year-old deaf Labrador Barney and the family’s pet cats.

It was a herculean effort that left the family battered and bruised — but definitely not broken.

While all the animals were saved, the dairy and office, shedding, animal shelters, workshop, tools and fencing equipment went up in flames.

Along with 95 per cent of their property — barely 2 ha escaped the destruction.

Jane said the fire sounded like a freight train.

Initially she thought it was a westerly wind change but within five minutes fire had broken out on a neighbour’s property, spotted in the back paddock, and in the blink of an eye they were surrounded by a fire circle gaining speed and force; fanned by howling winds.

It started raining embers and the spot fires turned into fence high flames.

“We had no grass yet even the dirt was burning,” Jane said.

The winds were hot, the smoke was thick and choking, and embers pelted the family.

As minutes turned into hours, they battled exhaustion, compounded by nausea and cramps.

“After hours I remember praying for it to just end, we were all so exhausted and barely able to move our legs.”

It was when the converted stables for the goats caught fire the focus quickly

turned to saving livestock.

“Mum raced over and got the goats out and sheltered them under the house along with the sheep, Barney and the cats. We had a sick doe in an old bird aviary near the house and we continued to hose her down so she wouldn’t get too hot and we did manage to save her as well.”

Come hell or high water, saving the family home soon became the number one priority.

“If the house had gone up and we had lost all our animals I would have never been able to set foot on the property again,” she added.

“Even today, now, I still don’t know how it is still standing.

“A nearby caravan exploded, pipes to the water tank melted — along with the tank — but nothing burnt. We later found a burnt hole on the back veranda under the freezers and it was peppered with embers continually, I just don’t know how



If the house had gone up and we had lost all our animals I would have never been able to set foot on the property again. Even today, now, I still don't know how it is still standing



it didn't all go up," Jane said.

The same could be said for the cows and horses sheltering in different paddocks.

"It was a fluke they just happened to be in a green paddock with 10 cm high green grass at the time. The fire burnt right up to the fence lines and just stopped—it was like someone was looking out for us that day, we were very, very lucky," she said.

A month on and the family is slowly starting the clean-up—along with the mountain of paperwork; including insurance claims.

The assessor was incredulous the family saved the old farmhouse, when it was insured for \$500,000.

But Jane said no amount of money could have persuaded her to let it burn while her precious livestock sheltered underneath.

"I couldn't let my animals die that way. It's not the way I was raised and taught

to treat animals—we made the right decision."

While the livestock has been saved, the effects of the fire will be felt for years to come as the family focuses on rebuilding.

The cost of everything lost is "up there" but Jane said they were determined to move on and are taking things day by day.

They are still without power but have become used to life with a generator.

"We are actually considering going off grid in the future. We have got used to having no power, but we are missing a hot shower," she laughed.

Rebuilding will be a massive task and will take some serious time.

They are hoping to have an operational dairy in five months, just to milk the goats.

The Jersey herd has been dried off and the family is unsure what the future holds for them. They are hoping to sell the cows and concentrate on milking goats and eventually sheep.

Exiting the dairy industry has been a huge decision considering Jane's great grandmother moved to Wandella in the mid-1950s, started milking and supplied the Cobargo Butter Factory until it closed in 1980. The family continued in the industry, supplying Bega Cheese with fresh milk until the fires.

A dairy was built 15 years ago and there were plans to milk cows on one side and goats on the other as they transitioned their business to total goat milk.

Currently the goats are milked once a day in a makeshift dairy on the back deck.

Jane summed up the arrangement as interesting and hectic.

"We ended up walking the goats through the house to get them outside the other day, it was just easier," she said.

There are no fences anywhere and, of course, the goats have come in season a couple of months early.

"You can imagine what that has been like as the bucks have had free access to all the does, but you have to look at these things with a sense of humour."

Mentally Jane has been too busy to think about the day of the fire as the focus is very much on rebuilding, but she remains grateful her father was in hospital and her mother was with her at the time of the fire as their home burnt to the ground.

"Dad had been in hospital since Christmas and the night before the bushfires came through, mum had grabbed some clothes, the car and came to us for the night—thankfully she did as I don't think had she stayed she would have made it out of the house.

"Michael did an amazing job as did my mum, and I am so proud of them both.

"The fire has brought us closer as a family and we now share an unbreakable bond for what we went through—things could have definitely gone in a different direction that day and we are lucky to have survived." ■

Slow start as alpaca breeders build some serious momentum



Drew and Courtney Plattfuss with 'Fawknor' following his Supreme Light Fawn Huacaya Fleece win at Wodonga.

One young farming couple in northern Victoria picked the perfect time to establish an alpaca stud—just before she got pregnant and had their first baby and just before he transitioned from farming to launching his own excavation business. But right now the only thing not changing in their lives is their combined love for their alpaca and building the stud to 100 head

It was about four years ago that Courtney and Drew Plattfuss decided to become alpaca breeders.

The Blighty couple are still slowly building their Galaview Alpacas bloodline portfolio but are already starting to see success.

With Trevis Bird from Kialla's Grey Gum Alpacas, Courtney and Drew own male alpaca Fawknor, which last year won the Supreme Light Fawn Huacaya Fleece at the Wodonga Show with an October shorn entry.

"The judges were looking for low micron, which is as similar to Merino fleece as you can get it, but alpacas are a long way off that as they don't have the lanolin a Merino would," Courtney said.

"The judges are also looking for a high frequency crimp which carries

throughout the whole body.

"With Fawknor they remarked he had that high frequency crimp across the staple. He managed to carry the crimp throughout his body which is important for consistency.

"I was shocked and elated (to win), and I was also happy for Trevis because he's bred this alpaca himself. He also had five other fleeces in show and gained the highest score all up."

Courtney said deciding to buy in on Fawknor will continue to pay dividends for the Blighty stud.

"Trevis bred Fawknor and we really liked it, so we decided to purchase a half share to be used as a stud alpaca," Courtney said.

"Fawknor's first babies are just starting to hit the ground now and they look very promising.

"We (Drew and I) also own another stud male—'Bruce'—and we've also won awards with him."

The average life of an alpaca is up to 25 years, but it can vary when you take into account breeding and workload.

Courtney said they're an easy animal to breed.

"Alpacas are quite low maintenance, friendly and easier to deal with than cattle or other livestock.

"Compared to sheep they're a lot cleaner. You mainly need to clip their toenails, if their teeth get too long you need to trim them and of course shearing the alpaca which is only done once per year.

"Alpacas are friendly with humans, except when the females are pregnant but they are still easy to handle."

Courtney said alpaca fleece is also becoming a growing market among wool types.

"They're starting to export a high number of alpacas to China and they're using the fleece in a lot of products. In Australia I'm starting to see more alpaca fleece on sale," she said.

"Bigger brands such as Country Road is one example of who and what are using it in their winter ranges."

Galaview Alpacas currently has 55 alpacas on the property bred for stud bloodline, fleece and wethers.

Courtney said stud development has been slower than anticipated, but she said they were happy to take their time.

"We haven't progressed as far as we would have liked because we've been blessed with a child. Drew was a farmer up until this year, and we've now started our own excavation business.

"Even though we might not be where we should be, we're not too worried and

We're still in the building phase of the stud. An alpaca's gestation is 11 and a half months and don't twin, which means you're looking at producing one alpaca a year. Then you need to hope that the baby lives and it's a girl, so it's a slow process

we're still loving it.

"What we plan to do in the future is work on our stud bloodlines. You need to hope you have a few females and then can spend the money on stud males."

Courtney said the drought and the NSW Murray having no water allocation made available so far this irrigation year has also been an impediment to their progress.

She said when opportunities improve, they intend to grow their own feed on their property.

"We dry feed our alpacas at the moment. We are planning on developing our farm to water the paddocks and become self-sufficient by growing our own hay.

"Although we have 55 alpacas we would like to see an increase of numbers. But we would still cap it at 100.

"We're still in the building phase of the stud. An alpaca's gestation is 11 and a half months and they twin, which means you're looking at producing one alpaca a year.

"Then you need to hope that the baby lives and it's a girl, so it's a slow process." ■



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GETTING THE SKINNY ON SIZZLING STEAK

STEVE BAIN is not the man you want to get into a heated argument — not with the number of sharp knives he carries around. And when it comes to preparing wafer thin slices of steak (to be sizzled) sharp takes on a whole new meaning. Unless you are as sharp as Steve, who as always has a few tricks up his sleeve on how to get the best result even if you aren't the sharpest knife in the drawer

SO THE first question we need to consider is: What is sizzle steak?

Sizzle steak is, in a nutshell, a very thinly sliced cut of meat.

In this article we'll highlight a few home butchery tricks to cutting thin steaks as evenly as possible.

These tricks include a heel block, refrigeration and knife choice.

Typically, cutting sizzle steaks is an option used as a technique that takes tougher, but more flavoursome larger roasts and trims them down into very thin strips so they are easily bitten through and eaten.

Of course you can also do the same thin cut with tender 'prime' cuts.

The thin cut yields a very easily chewed piece of beef or pork.

Heel Block: A block-heel is a shoe; a heel-block is something I came up with one-day. I've been promoting the heel block, you can see it in a photo hereabouts, for many, many years.

In my earliest version it was an

upturned, square sided baking tray that performed the role of an abutment to hold a roast firmly in place when slicing the meat into steaks.

With one end held in place, the shape of the roast stays intact, which then results in even thickness steaks.

The block is held in place by the heel of the palm of your non-knife hand.

Knife: If you don't have a super sharp knife; then a bread knife may be a more consistent option ... yes, you will get sawing marks on the steak ... but this isn't necessarily a bad deal if the sizzle steak is being used for recipes that cover the steak with, for example, cheese.

You may have noticed a bread knife's edge is only sharpened on one side.

This also helps you perform straighter cuts to produce slices of even thickness.

This is desirable in sandwich and/or toast bread, and also desirable in a steak.

You can also use a sushi knife or alternatively a ham slicer — both are sharpened on only one side and thus are

considered ideal for cutting even thin slices.

I used a bread knife this month for the sizzle steak but next month we'll use a sushi knife for the perfect steak (more on all that in the April issue).

For now this month the aim is to slice the thinnest sliced sizzle steaks possible.

Refrigeration: Chilling fresh meat in your refrigerator prior to slicing, or even slicing the meat when it is still partially frozen (half-way through thawing for example) will make it easier to slice the meat evenly.

This trick is particularly important to remember if you intend cutting very thin slices.

Handy Hint: Using the flat side of a meat mallet, some will even flatten the sizzle steak even thinner after it is first cut from an uncooked/raw 'roast'. We've covered this flattening technique, as well as a few of its' variations, in a few previous editions of *Small Farms Home Butchery*.

Method

1. A block of meat (in this case a marinated Scotch Beef Fillet 'roast') and a bread knife.
2. An upside down baking/lasagne dish on a non-slip (or slip-reduced surface — in this case I use a hand towel between the upturned dish and the cutting board). The heel of your non-cutting hand rests with downward pressure onto the upturned dish to hold the dish in place.
3. The first thin cut. Carve across the grain, rather than with/along the grain. This is particularly important when processing tougher cuts of meat because it gives the meat a more easily 'torn' texture. This gives the mouthfeel of very tender meat. Very tender cuts such as fillet or loin, can be cut with the grain, but if in doubt always cut against/across the grain.
4. An end view of the sizzle steaks being thinly sliced from a marinated uncooked roast.
5. Using a bread knife will leave 'saw' marks on the thinly sliced meat; however this is not an issue with the majority of recipes that use sizzle steak.
6. The hand/heel-block in action. A thick hand towel under the upturned dish stops it from sliding around on the cutting board.
7. Sizzle steaks for Philly Cheesesteak Subs.



THERE'S NOTHING QUITE LIKE SINKING YOUR TEETH INTO A SUB

Being prepared to go to any lengths to get the recipe right, the *Small Farms* queen of the kitchen LYNN BAIN has even schlepped all the way to Philadelphia in the good old US of A to personally taste test its legendary Philly Cheese Steak and this month present the antipodean alternative

A SUB is a sandwich built by inserting fillings into a long, baguette type bread roll.

The term sub is said to be a shortening of the term submarine because the rolls are in the traditional shape of a submarine.

A Philadelphia cheese steak is a sub style sandwich made from very thinly-sliced pieces of steak plus melted cheese in what we Aussie's would call a hot dog roll.

The real deal uses provolone cheese, sort of like mozzarella.

It is the use of melted cheese that typifies this version of a sandwich roll.

The famous Philly Cheese Steak originated in the city of Philadelphia in the 1930s. However these days there are a few variations away from the original that many agree are just as good — just different.

As a side comment; I've visited Philadelphia on a road trip and while there I ate my way through a variety of their Philly Cheese steak offerings.

Handy Hint: I find that putting the meat into the freezer for about half an hour makes the slicing of the meat into thin slices a lot easier.

Because the dish is cooked quickly with high heat, then the better quality, more tender cuts of meat work best.

Notwithstanding this, tougher cuts are a workable alternative because the thin slicing results in meat that is easily torn by your front teeth when you bite into the sub/sandwich.

Handy Hint 2: Use your favourite melting style cheese for this sub. Any cheese that melts. Mozzarella, bocconcini or Monterey Jack are some of my preferences if I don't have any provolone to hand.

Handy Hint 3: Cheese blends, such as grated blends containing parmesan, will also work. However in my opinion, these pizza type cheese blends, while super tasty, mean that you've just made your sub 'pizza' rather than 'Philly'.

Ingredients

- 2 crusty hot dog style bread rolls, cut into half horizontally
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 onion, thinly sliced
- 2 green capsicum, deseeded and then cut into thin strips
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- freshly ground salt and pepper
- 400g steak, thinly sliced
- Sliced cheese, of your choice





Method

1. Heat a cast iron frypan over a medium high heat. Add the oil to the pan and when it is hot, add the sliced onions and green capsicum to the pan. Stir-fry the onions and capsicum for about five minutes or until the onion mixture has softened and caramelized slightly. Once the capsicum and onion has sweated down. Now add the garlic, salt and pepper to the onion mixture in the pan
2. Continue to cook for a further minute. Then remove the mixture from the pan and place to one side on a plate while you sear the meat.
3. Add the thin meat slices to the pan and sear. These steaks will cook very quickly. Continue to cook the 'sizzle' steak on each side, for just a couple of minutes.
4. Arrange the meat on one half /side of each halved bread roll (in the photo I've just topped one of the bases with a slice of meat; next I'll add meat to the top of the bread roll that is beside it). Then top the meat with the onion/capsicum mixture.
5. Then arrange thin slices of the cheese on top of the onion and capsicum mixture.
6. Place the loaded roll halves (the loaded bottom halves) into an oven and heat the cheese (ideally heated from above) until the cheese is golden and melted soft.
7. Pop the other half of the roll on top of the melted cheese, squeeze down for a moment, and serve.

KELPIE BREEDERS

snap up a new export market

The kelpie is one of the great stories of Australian agriculture. But ZOE McMAUGH found dogs from one stud have been sold around the world, and can be found herding reindeer inside the Arctic circle or unloading live export sheep at Middle East ports

MARY and Ken McCrabb's Avenpart Kelpie Stud was founded in 1962, and quickly became well known across the world.

They exported their first dogs internationally soon after establishment; and have now supplied quality working dogs to 23 countries to work all different kinds of stock.

The Avenpart Kelpies have experienced great success in countries where climatic conditions vary greatly to their native Australia.

These hardy dogs have adapted well to their working environments and can be found mustering reindeer in the ice-capped fields of Norway or unloading export wethers off the boats in the hot humid conditions of Saudi Arabia.

Today, the demand is for semen—a process pioneered in Australia by the famous Wanganella Merino stud.

It started when a colleague of Kate Bottoms, a previous client from the UK, sought to expand his bloodline with Avenpart genetics.

"By the mid-1990s new blood needed to be introduced to the UK to increase the small gene pool," Mary said.



"John Brown from Scotland had owned and worked some of Kate's imported kelpies on the sheep and cattle stud he managed; and he was impressed enough to come and visit us in 1996 and see the kelpies work here.

"It was then that it was decided that he would import semen rather than have to put another working dog through the traumatic experience of the compulsory six month rabies quarantine in kennels, which was the rule at the time.

"Semen from two dogs was sent over, resulting in three litters of seven pups and one of 11.

"Semen was later sent to California and Florida, and some is still being used today."

Earlier this year, the McCrabbs organised semen from Avenpart Gambler—who they describe as an all-round worker and is a placegetter in three-sheep trials—to be despatched to South Africa.

At about the same time, semen from Avenpart Wump was sent to Hughenden in Queensland.

"Sires only go into the semen bank at Avenpart if they have excelled at general station work on all types of livestock, and if progeny are proven successful workers," Mary said.

"Trial successes are a bonus and many of our sires have won or been placed in three-sheep, utility and yard trials, as well as cattle trials.

"We have a lot of people coming to us specifically in search of quiet, paddock working dogs—so many we cannot keep



up with demand.

"Dog AI is very different to other livestock in that they produce litters instead of, in sheep for example, one or two.

"Apiam (at Deniliquin) and Annie Romanin really do a marvellous job for us."

As well as being renowned as a breeder, Mary is also famous for her training.

She conducts dog training schools across Australia and internationally and has previously run schools in Hawaii, Holland, Norway and Sweden.

Mary said her dogs have worked in some amazing areas of the world, including mustering reindeer in the Arctic.

The Kelpies have played an important role on the family's 16,500 ha properties, where they are an integral part of the economic viability of the family business.

At Avenpart she said they placed great emphasis on natural working ability at an early age, combined with excellent conformation and temperament, the dogs are successfully used for mustering, yard and shed work on sheep, cattle goats and pigs.

Various strains within the stud excel at different jobs, some have more "eye" some more bark and others are more suited to cattle work.

This diversity allows the stud to offer a range of dogs to suit the requirements of both the large property owner and the trial enthusiast. ■



Lucrative lessons in LUCERNE

LUCERNE is a tough crop to grow, but it can produce good quality results for the farmer if harvested correctly.

About 15km east of Deniliquin is a farm that specialises in lucerne, owned by Doug Knight.

This season he has 70 hectares, which will be cut, baled and sold to farms for sheep, horse and cattle feed.

Doug started growing lucerne about 10 years ago and hires Deniliquin contractor Don Thomas to cut it.

Don said the lucerne grown at the Deniliquin farm is a high quality crop.

"Lucerne has a very high balanced nutritional value the animals can benefit from," Don said.

"Doug diversified into making hay and selling it, rather than just using it for his lambs.

"There are a few farms around here that grow lucerne but quite a lot is grown in Victoria."

Lucerne is a summer crop planted in September and usually harvested in April.

Don said lucerne "needs a lot of tender loving care" throughout the season.

"If you over-water lucerne you'll kill it. You must get the water on and off the plant quickly," he said.

"You can't afford to water the crop on high heat days because it'll cook the plant, so we mainly water during the evening. We normally like to cut it and be

out of the paddock by 10am.

"In the afternoon all the nutrient value has gone underground into the root system. From about 10pm to midnight the nutrient value will start to rise into the stem.

"If you cut it early morning you're getting all nutrient value inside the plant.

"During summer months the crop is cut then mowed with a mower conditioner. It's then raked into 3.2 metre wide rows about the length of the paddock, before every two rows are raked into one wider row.

"That keeps the green colour. The lucerne is baled into hay once it's cured.

"The plant has a high moisture level and so to cure it you need to wait for the moisture to reduce before it can be baled.

"To test the bales you pick up the loose hay and twist it. If it breaks in three twists it's ready to bale. If it's not ready you can twist and twist and make a rope out of it.

"There is a need to cure it right down because if it's baled too early then the hay will go mouldy and those bales will rot away."

Lucerne is particularly good as feed for sheep, and Doug has 150 ewes on his property — all waiting to lamb. He also grows rice, oats, barley and wheat.

Lucerne can yield up to 2100kg per

hectare and, because it is watered twice between each cut and up to five times in a season, it can need up to 10 megalitres of water per hectare.

Doug's crops have been independently tested and produced high quality results.

The key figures for his lucerne in percentages are as follows:

- Crude protein – 23.5.
- Digestibility (DMD) – 66.5.
- Moisture – 13.8.

Estimated metabolisable energy (calculated) (MJ/kg DM) 9.8.

Don said the figures point to a "really good" product.

"If I want to use that hay, I look at the protein," he said.

"The DMD is a good number, hay coming in at 65 per cent is considered high quality.

"For metabolisable energy if it's 10 per cent or better that indicates the nutritional value of the hay.

"We have extended the season to May in the past, however we learnt it was too hard to dry that late in the year.

"All hay degenerates over time from when it's baled, whether it's cereal crops or lucerne because of the air getting into the product.

"Lucerne can last three years in the shed because of its high quality." ■

Websites for Farmers

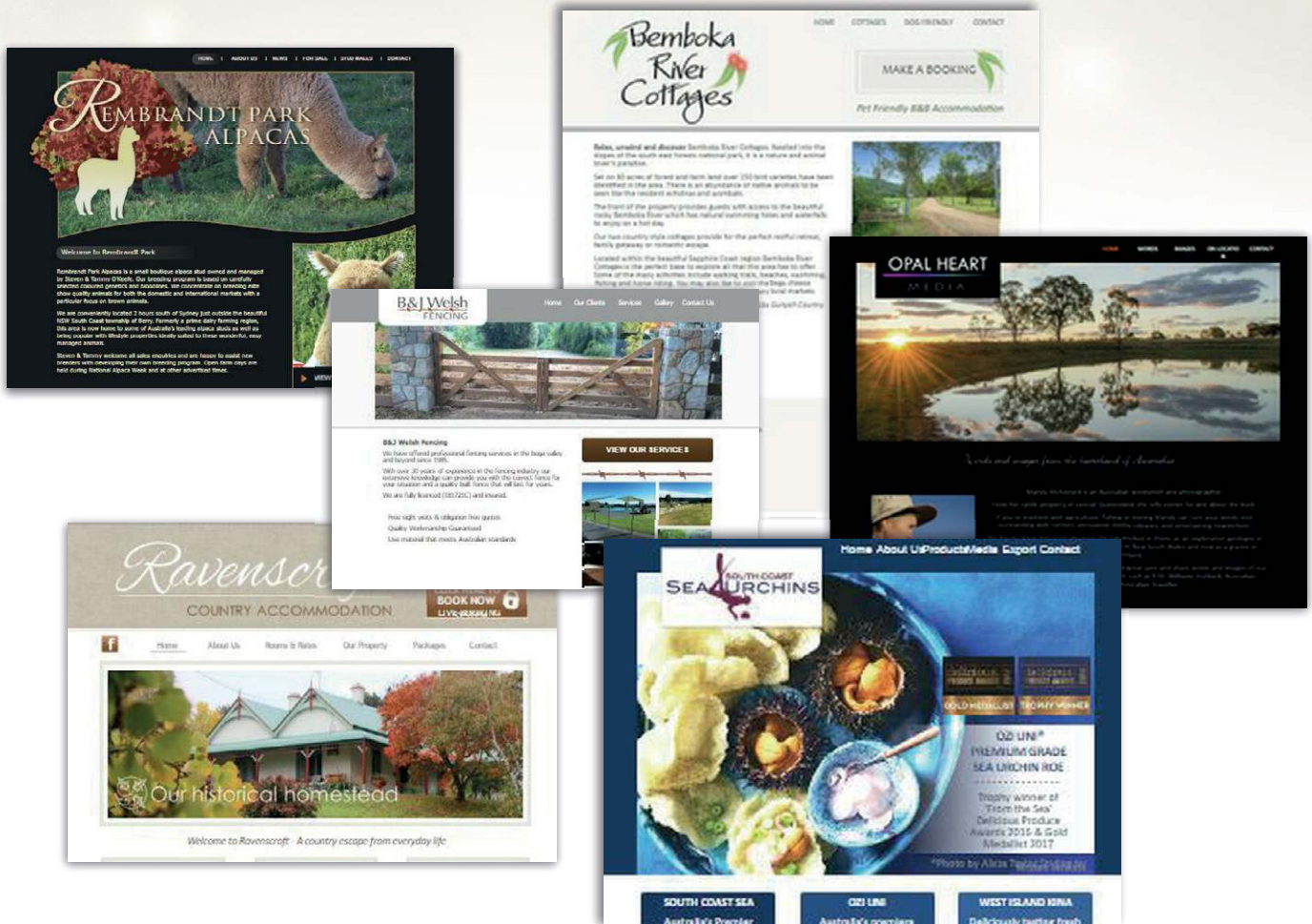
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HEAT STRESS

In alpacas in Australia

By Dr George Jackson
BANKSIA PARK ALPACA STUD. WA

What is heat stress?

It occurs when an alpacas core body temperature is elevated to a point where it interferes with normal metabolic processes. It is caused by excessive heat gains or an inability to lose heat (this excludes fever due to infection) The condition is also called “heat stroke” “sun stroke” and “heat exhaustion” but most accurately, it is hyperthermia.

Alpacas are very adaptable animals and are capable of surviving in a wide range of climatic conditions. Especially suited to cold, they will nevertheless manage in warmer climates with sensible management.

Heat stress is a continuum along a line from the animal being able to cope to not coping at all. It is not possible to put a figure on the temperature at which an animal will pass from being a little warm to suffering from heat stress. Temperature at approximately 38.0 to 38.5 degrees Celsius. Some of these can be observed as the level of heat stress progresses (see the table below).

NORMAL

Seeking shade, seeking cool water, maintain a low activity level.

MILD

Panting, nasal flaring, obsessively seeking water, sweating.

SEVERE

Open mouth breathing, collapse, incoordination, convulsions, shock and weak pulse.

However some of the effects of a period of heat stress are not so obvious.

Infertility of male alpacas can be caused by relatively mild increases of body temperature. It may take 6-8 weeks for their sperm count to recover and more prolonged or permanent damage is possible. Some males definitely appear more fertile in the cooler weather. Females can also be affected by infertility due to heat stress, premature labour, abortion and stillbirths have been reported that could be at least partly attributed to an episode of heat stress.

How alpacas lose heat

Evaporation

Heat is removed from the body during the process of water evaporation from the body surfaces. The alpaca loses heat through the respiratory tract during respiration by evaporation from the mucous membrane and also through the exchange of air. The efficiency of these methods of heat loss is dependent on ambient temperature and humidity.

Radiation

Heat is lost from the body through direct radiation into the surrounding atmosphere. The alpaca has a ventral area of its caudal abdomen that is sparsely covered in hair, called a “thermal window” as it allows heat transfer in heavily fleeced animals.

Heat moves from areas of higher temperature to areas of lower temperature at a rate proportional to the temperature difference. If ambient temperature is greater than body

temperature an alpaca will tend to absorb heat. If ambient temperature is close to but below body temperature, heat loss by radiation will be very slow and inefficient.

Conduction

Heat is transferred directly by close contact between bodies of different temperatures. Alpacas make use of this method very efficiently by wading into water or sitting down on wet or cool ground. Heat is lost directly to the ground or water, especially through the thermal window on the ventral abdomen.

Risk factors for heat stress in alpacas

High ambient temperature

The alpaca itself generates heat and needs to dissipate this. Dissipation of this heat is made more difficult when ambient temperature is close to normal body temperature. The body will tend to absorb heat when the ambient temperature is greater than body temperature. Heat loss mechanisms will be fully tested.

Humidity

Heat loss becomes difficult with high humidity because evaporative cooling (panting & sweating) becomes very ineffective. LaRue Johnson (USA) proposes an index for the calculation of the possible occurrence of heat stress. The index is the sum of the ambient temperature in degrees Fahrenheit and the relative humidity. Eg an ambient temperature of 80 degrees Fahrenheit and 80% humidity gives an index of 160. An ambient temperature of 90 degrees Fahrenheit but a relative humidity of 25% gives an index of 115. So you can clearly see how relative humidity plays an important part in the likelihood of heat stress.

Index of less than 120 = heat stress is unlikely

Index of 120 – 180 = heat stress is possible

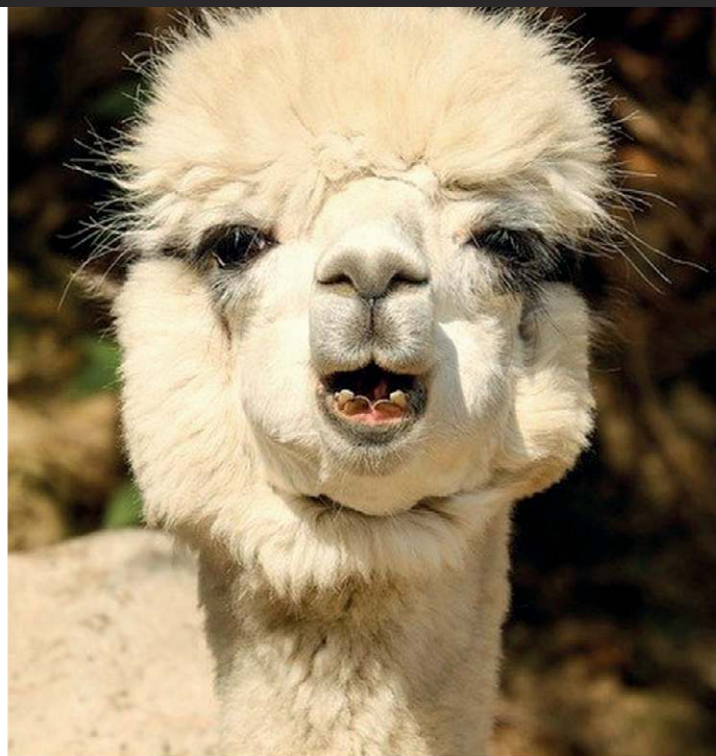
Index of more than 180 = heat stress is likely

Poor ventilation

Ventilation assists more effective cooling by evaporation and the removal of radiated heat. It is especially important when transporting alpacas in enclosed floats to have adequate air movement and remember not to park in full sun.

Full dense fleece

Full dense fleece does not allow effective heat loss by radiation because of its insulating effects. Full fleece also severely affects heat loss by sweating due to the lack of air movement across the skin. In full fleeced animals heat can only effectively be lost through the thermal window.



Open mouth breathing

No fleece

Without fleece, the alpaca body is directly heated and this can cause a rapid increase in body temperature. Studies performed during a period of heatwave conditions have shown that the core body temperatures of full fleeced and minimally fleeced animals were significantly higher than the core body temperature of animals with a 40 mm fleece length. The time of shearing has a dramatic effect on the levels of heat stress experienced over summer. Plan your shearing to have the animals go through the hottest part of the summer with some fleece coverage. Sunburn is also an issue for alpacas shorn too late in the year.

Physical activity and stress

All management, which involves some stress or activity will add to the risk of developing heat stress. Consider this when taking alpacas to shows over the warmer humid months. The time of weaning is important in this regard. Cria and mothers may continue to seek each other, standing out in full sun or run along fence lines, failing to take normal measures to reduce heat stress.

Overweight alpacas

A large body mass loses heat more slowly, consequently overweight alpacas will be at an increased risk during periods of continuing hot weather. Fat also acts as additional insulation to prevent additional heat loss. Male alpacas will deposit fat in their scrotum that will severely affect their fertility in hot weather.

Advanced pregnancy

Additional metabolic rate and body weight increase the risk of heat stress. In some areas of Australia it may be

advisable to manage breeding programs to avoid birthing in the middle of summer. I am currently managing my herd to have two birthing seasons, one in spring to early summer and another in autumn.

Shade and cool water

Shade prevents direct heating of the alpaca and provides a cooler ambient temperature. Cool water to drink is extremely important. Beware of dominant animals who may tend to defend their drinking place, consider multiple drinking points in each paddock. Cool ground or grass allows efficient heat loss by conduction but be aware that the use of sprinklers and soaker hoses can dramatically increase the relative humidity and add to heat stress.

Newborn and old animals

These animals have impaired or inefficient thermoregulatory mechanisms and are at increased risk. Crias small bodies heat up very rapidly especially when lying out in full sun during their first few days of life.

Feeding

Feeding generates heat, creates activity and competition. It is best done in the cool of the evening.

Unacclimatised animals

The moving of animals from cool or temperate areas to hot locations needs to be sensibly managed.

Veterinary Treatment

It is extremely important to check rectal temperature regularly and work to reduce the core body temperature slowly.

Mild cases may require the provision of shade and cool drinking water, access to water to sit or wade into, fans to provide air movement. More severe cases may require a cool bath, cool intravenous fluids and drugs to control shock.

Beware the use of cold enemas as suggested by some US authors as you will lose the only method of assessing core body temperature.



Recommendations for management

Shearing

Shear animals at an appropriate time of the year to minimise the risk of heat stress in summer but still provide some insulation. This may require shearing crias as young as 6 weeks of age. We would be planning to have the majority of our animals shorn in September

Water

Provide plenty of cool clean water, preferably at numerous watering points which can't be dominated by a few animals

Plenty of shade

Employ methods to provide cool ground, either by shade trees or open shelters

Management practices

Activities likely to cause stress and competition, stud servicing, feeding, transporting should all be carried out in the cool of the morning or evening, this will benefit both the owners and the animals.

With sensible management and a greater understanding of the risk factors for heat stress we should be able to continue to successfully farm alpacas in a wide variety of environments



ILLAWARRAS

Illawarras may not be the biggest players in the national dairy herd, but when they are good, they are very good. SOPHIE BALDWIN looks at two of the stars at this year's International Dairy

Week where small farms can mix it with the heavyweights of the industry and come out on top



Senior Champion Illawarra Cow Ovensdale Pearl 534 led by owner Matt Henry, owner Shane Burke, judge Greg English, Natalie Henry with daughter Livia and Kellie Bryant.

Sun shines on visit to IDW

When Queenslanders Shane Burke and Matt Henry visited International Dairy Week in 2019 they took the opportunity to take a trip out to Whorouly in north east Victoria for a peek at the famed Ovensdale herd of Robert and Maree Newton

THE family was holding a complete dispersal of their Illawarra herd and standing out in the paddock, Ovensdale Pearl took their eye.

"She was the best 'type' cow in the paddock," Shane said.

Tough times in the Queensland dairy industry had seen the mates already buy a couple of cows together and they decided to add Pearl to their syndicate.

It was a fortuitous move.

The six-year-old is now IDW grand champion Illawarra exhibit for 2020.

Shane and Matt purchased Pearl in March last year and by the end of April

she had found her way to Queensland, had a bull calf that will most likely be collected, and settled into life in the Sunshine State.

"We entered Pearl in the Gatton show where she won the Illawarra show and supreme all breed and best udder," Shane said.

As time went on Pearl continued to hold form and the boys decided to bring her down to Tatura—an 18-hour, one-way trip.

"We stopped overnight at the Forbes show ground, milked her there and then spent the lead up to the show with the Hayes family at Girgarre.

"Pearl is a great traveller and she didn't

miss a beat. She doesn't stop and if you keep the feed up to her, she will just keep eating," he said.

Getting Pearl up and ready to walk the ring at IDW might have been a long haul but the mates said they would do it all again if they had a cow that was good enough.

Interestingly Pearl alternates between Matt's farm and Shane's—Matt has a herringbone and Shane has a rotary, but she doesn't seem to care which shed or herd she is milked in.

"She doesn't hesitate to get on the rotary, as long as there is food in front of her, she is happy," he said. ■



Dingee's Ben Govett with partner Michaela Shrimpton and son Cooper and Champion Brown Swiss Tandara Etvi Heidi 217.

When it comes to showing, Freda's a showstopper

International Dairy Week just got better and better for Illawarra Llandoverly Guses Freda

OWNED by the Hayes family from Girgarre, in the heart of Victoria's northern dairy industry, she was good enough to win Illawarra junior champion on Tuesday and then turn around on Thursday and take out interbreed junior champion.

It was Freda's first show and while the family thought she looked handy; they had no idea she would do so well.

"As the week progressed, she just got better and better and as she settled into the show, she looked the best she ever has," Zoe said.

She said on the day of interbreed judging she got someone to ring her dad who was home working on the farm.

"I thought maybe Freda had a shot at reserve and I wanted dad to be there but when we won champion interbreed it was very exciting. That is the first time

we have ever had an interbreed win," Zoe said.

She said Freda doesn't come from one of their more typical show families, but rather an old foundation family.

"Freda's mum placed third in her class as a heifer, but we sold her, and she went to Queensland. Freda has those modern dairy characteristics that everyone is looking for—she is dairy right through but still has the strength to make up a very good cow."

Zoe said it is exciting for the breed in general to see an Illawarra animal compete so well in the ring and win top spot.

Reserve junior champion Llandoverly Foremans Betty is another new member of the show team the Hayes family are looking forward to working with.

"She has had two class wins at IDW

and it was good for her to win reserve," she said.

Reserve intermediate champion Llandoverly Foremans Betty is owned by the Hayes family and their worker Charlie Lloyd.

"It was great for him as an up and coming young breeder to have some show success and it was exciting for us."

Zoe said IDW 2020 was full of ups and downs—cows they thought would perform might not have done so well, while others did.

"It was a show of mixed emotions but overall we are happy with the result and it was another great week."

On a personal note Zoe said she was excited to win the state judging, which will see her go on to compete at the national final in New Zealand in October. ■

Doing things backwards but always going forward



Two sheep meat producers in south west Gippsland have a problem for which almost any other Australian farmers would be prepared to sacrifice their firstborn — they are having problems with way too much water. But they also told SOPHIE BALDWIN they are having less trouble (mostly) with their Wiltshire Horn commercial flock and the stud they run in parallel

THERE has been nothing but smiles, well mostly smiles, for Jill Noble and Gary Tie since they purchased their first farm in the Strzelecki Ranges, four years ago.

Jill and Gary run a flock of around 200 Wiltshire Horns, including 100 breeding ewes which they sell direct to customers through their business Hallston Valley Farms.

The couple are passionate about farming and play to their strengths to ensure their future continues to look bright.

Jill is originally from Ireland and has farming, in particular sheep, running through her veins. She makes most of the animal husbandry and breeding decisions while Gary formerly from Mansfield, looks after the pasture side of things.

Both have off farm jobs which

contribute additional skills to the business — Jill in human resources and Gary in sales.

Their principles of community, environmental sustainability and animal welfare are at the core of every business decision which has resulted in a successful regenerative approach to agriculture.

Jill laughs as she says the journey into farming began well before they bought >>>





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their first farm.

"We were a little strange — we joined the Australian Wiltshire Horn Sheepbreeders Association before we even bought a single animal and we received some pretty good advice from our mentor — wherever you buy land, just make sure you have access to water," Jill said.

The couple looked across the state of Victoria before settling on a 62ha property at Hallston, near Leongatha in south west Gippsland.

The main criteria was location, with the property having to be within half an hour drive of a large town.

"Geographically we are in a great location and we managed to find a place with no fertiliser history and lots of gullies suitable for what we wanted. It is a really pretty place and a lovely place to farm, with the Tarwin River virtually providing a border for a large slice of the holding) running at the edge of the property," Jill said.

As with all farms, the couple have spent a lot of time and effort making improvements, ironically, they have had

to address a few issues arising from too much water.

"We have installed 20 culverts and have got to the stage now where we can at least drive a ute around most of our property," she said.

Managing their flock and land has been a steep learning curve they have both embraced, after starting out with just a flock of 14 sheep.

"We are not about large scale farming and we have gone chemical free. We don't use synthetic fertilisers or sprays and we are minimal chemical intervention with the animals."

Jill said rotational grazing has helped improve pastures along with moving sheep regularly and avoiding over grazing.

"If we keep moving the sheep to fresh paddocks they are less likely to be affected by parasitic worms. We have found infection is at its worst when temperatures are in the mid 30s and wet, while temperatures over 40 are too hot and kill the worm."

Choosing to farm Wiltshire Horns was a relatively simple decision for the couple

who were looking for an easy care, meat sheep.

"Wiltshire's were the original meat sheep. The meat is renowned for quality and the fat distribution is just lovely. Our customers tell us they have been spoilt for taste and can no longer eat supermarket lamb and that is a huge reward for us."

A whole cut and pack lamb sells for \$12.50/kg and customers fill out an online form, choosing the cuts they would like. Orders can be picked up from the butcher, the farm, or the couple will deliver to town and even into Melbourne.

"Selling direct to the consumer is a great business model as it cuts out some of the 'middleman' costs which means the price our customers pay is lot less than supermarket prices. It also gives us price stability," Gary said.

A slower maturing breed, Wiltshire Horns meat retains its tenderness to a much older age. Animals are butchered around 12-18 months when the meat has developed more flavour.

"Customers enjoy the cost savings from buying direct but what really keeps them



We have installed 20 culverts and have got to the stage now where we can at least drive a ute around most of our property

coming back is the flavour,” Gary said.

Jill and Gary also sell plenty of live animals for a range of purposes.

Some people are looking for a small number of sheep to keep the grass down and to fill their freezer while others want quality breeding animals to start their own cut and pack business.

“It’s a great way to earn some income from small acreages and the low equipment and infrastructure requirements of easy-care sheep make it easy to get started. Everyone has friends and family who love lamb and would like to save money,” Jill said.

Wiltshire Horns, originally from England, do very well in cold wet winters and black feet are an important trait to look for.

“To be ‘easy-care’ you need hardy sheep that give you less work and less worries and that’s one of the factors we breed for,” Gary said.

The pair offer an after sales service which includes vaccine and animal handling advice to help new sheep owners get established.

“It can be daunting to start a new

venture on your own but with a supportive community of like minded people to call on, success is much more achievable,” Jill says.

On a personal note they run Hallston Valley Wiltshire Horn Stud, winning multiple ribbons in the showing, including at Royal Melbourne.

Jill said meeting customers and developing a strong rapport has been a key aspect of their business and they are more than happy to open their farm for visits.

“It is a twofold approach; customers buy our lamb because they love the taste but they also like the sustainable way we farm. We have had people come to visit who have stayed all day just to look and learn what we do.”

The couple also have 80 fruit trees and an extensive vegetable garden full of produce which finds its way into seasonal hampers.

Jill said having a business plan is important and at nearly a third of the way through a 10-year plan, they are very happy with where they are sitting.

“We have a goal to use every bit of land

to the max and extract as much produce as we can using a total farm approach. I can see myself getting more involved in the farming community and advocacy space in the future as well.”

Located only a two-hour drive from Melbourne Jill said Hallston Valley Farm offers an irresistible taste of country life. “From fruit picking, hands-on animal activities and produce to take home direct from our paddock to your plate — we are a day tripper’s dream,” she said. ■

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Limousin are **MUSCLING IN** on the beef industry

Retirement. It sounds like that time of life when you get to slow down. But as DANEKA HILL discovered, one couple thought with all that spare time on their hands why not buy a small farm and launch a beef cattle stud. So they did. And they're doing very well thank you very much

John and Barbara Mollard at Seymour Alternative Farming Expo. John said with a two-year Australian exclusivity on three high-impact French Limousin bulls — Dixdeder, Domana and Genghis Khan — he has some “magnificent” next-generation bulls for sale.

“In 2019 there were 5500 Limousin cattle registered in Australia but only 463 were 100 per cent Limousin, which is what we are producing at Yarralea,” John explained.



SOME people enjoy retirement, others, however, just don't seem to know the meaning of the word.

When John and Barbara Mollard decided to take a step back from work their idea of slowing down was to start up a cattle stud.

"I grew orchards for a while, and I enjoyed that and thought it would do me in retirement," John said.

"It didn't."

Growing up on a dairy farm John was keen to return to the country with his Melbourne wife after a lifetime in the suburbs managing a timber company.

The couple bought a 140-acre property 23 years ago in Yarck and started off running Hereford cows — with a Limousin bull.

Little did they know that bull was to be the first of many Limousins on their farm.

A rarity in Australia because of their double-muscling gene, the Limousin is a French cattle breed known for being the king of muscle.

For the Mollards their fondness for the breed started when their first Limousin bull delivered on all the hype.

"What I read about them when we had the commercial cows was that these would give me more money for my weaners — and they did," John said.

"We got really good sale figures for our calves but we weren't making enough, so we expanded into the stud."

In the start the Mollards were a bit too keen and the going a bit too good, the herd grew to 120 head while John was still working full-time, leaving his wife to step up.

"I'm a city girl," Barbara admitted.

"I help, but he does most of it." John said they've been

cutting back the herd ever since.

"Technically we are still trying to cut back," he said with a glance to his wife.

The couple are now the proud custodians of a 70 strong Limousin herd, regularly supplying cattle to 30 farmers.

"I'm 75 now and this gets me out of bed every morning, I intend to be around a long time," John said.

"Anyone who's got cows and wants to put some muscle and volume into their cattle, these are the animals to use."

John said they were great crossed with Shorthorns and Herefords in particular.

When it came to Murray Greys, the cross-breeding produces some of the "best looking calves I've ever seen" according to John.

The retired timber man also liked the Limousin's for their colour and personality.

"They are as good as anything," he said.

"They had a terrible temperament when they first came to Australia, but there is not an animal on my farm which would do anything to you. They are very personable animals; they like to interact with you."

"I'll go out, and there are seven big blokes in the one paddock and I don't get worried about being knocked over, and I'm within arm's distance. The young ones I'm more worried about getting a foot trodden on because they are pushing and shoving."

A good temperament is the central quality in the Yarralea Limousin stud breeding program.

"Temperament is the main thing," Barbara said.

"The second is ease of calving."

John said their program was producing cows who were birthing earlier.

"My calves are between 36 kg and 44 kg, which is really good, they are scrawny and long legged when they hit the ground," John said.

"When I first saw these earlier calves I said to Barbara 'I think we're breeding miniature Limousins', the calves were so small, you look at the calves now and they are growing out magnificently," John said.

Their current reigning champion on the farm is a bull known as Nelson.

"He is a prime specimen of what a true Limousin should look like, he is now our stud king at the moment," John said.

"He's about a tonne heavy — if you could imagine, he was 38 kg at birth."

The Mollards aren't big showers, preferring to stay on their isolated Yarck property, but with Nelson out and about at the Seymour Alternative Farming Expo they've been raking in the compliments.

"We don't do shows, but we've had a couple of Limousin breeders come through and they reckon Nelson is in the tops, to get that said from other breeders is a real honour," John said.

"We've worked very hard on the herd, we've now bought semen in from France from three different bulls, and we did that purely for docility, easy of calving and volume."

John said the decision to go back to France and invest in some high-quality genetics was made because the breed outside of Europe was "losing their shape".

"We've gone back to the original, 100 per cent French pure Limousin," he said.

"We have bulls for sale at the moment with genetics no one else in Australia has."

In North America the breed has been diluted in an effort to create a naturally polled Limousin.

"They aren't 100 per cent Limousins, so they lost all the depth and barrel in the cattle," John said.

The Mollards know from experience how different the Limousins can be depending on what bloodlines they have.

The paddocks on their Yarck property can be bare dirt at times, John explained.

Whenever there were American genetics in the herd, the Mollards found they struggled when the grass went off.

The Americans "did it tough" while the French "seemed to do it easy", according to John.

"We've culled a lot of cattle over the years, what we've got now is a program where there is no animal on our farm which wasn't born and bred there. >>>





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Not many herds can say that," John said. "We've had quite a few disasters from cows and animals we've brought in from outside," Barbara explained.

"It just hasn't worked for us, we bought two heifers from a sale, one came home and was absolutely crazy — the other had trouble getting into calf."

John said he took pride in his animals and their condition.

"When you come and buy an animal off my place, what you see is what you get."

"When we first started we bought two heifers at the national show on sale, when we got them home three months later they looked terrible and they were always hanging around the gate wanting a feed — they had been handfed all their lives," John said.

Barbara said their Yarralea Limousins could retain their condition when sold off to other properties.

"We are on hard country here," Barbara said of Yarck.

I'm 75 now and this gets me out of bed every morning, I intend to be around a long time. Anyone who's got cows and wants to put some muscle and volume into their cattle, these are the animals to use

Currently the Mollards are feeding their Limousin herd and sheep while they wait for grass.

"I'll put a roll of silage in, three days later I put a roll of oats and straw in, and another three days they get another roll of silage, and they clean every bit of it up," John said.

Barbara said the sheep paddocked with their bulls were in the habit of getting in between the bulls front legs and eating the silage under their chins.

"I've found them very easy cattle to work with," John said.

"Some stock agents are still arguing because there is not as much fat on them, but butchers in Melbourne absolutely love them because there is more saleable meat in the animal."

John said if a Limousin steak was put on a plate in front of him alongside several other breeds, he could pick the Limousin because of its finer grain.

He said if there were more in Australia, the Limousins could give the Angus a run for their money. ■

YARRALEA



LIMOUSIN STUD

BULLS AND FEMALES FOR SALE

Yarck, Victoria

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**In the Middle East
pigs won't fly
—but lamb bacon does**



Toni Barton with some of her lamb bacon

Toni Barton had it all — a career on Wall Street, jet-setting lifestyle, vegetarian by choice. But she told DANEKA HILL she fell in love with life off the grid, on a small farm way out of the city. Then she had an epiphany and came up with lamb bacon and now she is ready to conquer the world with her new product

A LOT can be said about Toni Barton's lamb smallgoods: genius, delicious and, most often, I can't believe it's not bacon.

Toni describes her remarkably innovative lamb products as 'plainly obvious'.

As the founder and owner of The Original Lamb Bacon Co., Toni has gone from a marketing manager living in Manhattan and working on Wall Street, to newbie sheep farmer living off the grid, to a farmers' market stand out.

"I wanted to grow my own food, that's how it all started," the 42-year-old said.

"I've got these guys flying over from Kuwait because they want to meet the woman who created this product — but it was sitting right in front of them the whole time," the first-generation sheep farmer said.

"The beef bacon and turkey bacon are terrible, they are dry and hard to process, I don't know why no one thought to try with lamb."

Her passion for food brought Toni out of the city in 2014 and into the farming life, but it was her years in the business world which would see her thrive on a disused farm in Nulla Vale in central Victoria.

"Smallgoods is a charcuterie (delicatessen) term, there are 204 smallgoods producers in Australia and they are all pork — the most popular smallgoods product is bacon and half the world can't eat it," Toni said.

Lamb bacon is a name that instantly catches the eye of meat lovers, but lately Toni had to improve the name after massive interest from the Middle East.

"Lamb bacon is a great word for westerners because we love bacon, whereas lamb rashers here isn't as recognisable, but lamb bacon in the Middle East creates confusion because they don't eat pork. Over there I sell the original product with the lamb rashers brand."

A day after giving talks and selling stock at the Seymour Alternative Farming Expo, Toni was jetting off to Dubai.

"The trip is to finalise a deal with five big supermarkets in the Middle East," she

said, far more blasé than most people could manage.

For Toni the switch in speeds from local farmers' markets to international supermarkets isn't a scary one.

As a former insider of the world business scene, she's taken it all in her stride — even the financial expenses dealing with Dubai has caused.

The licensing process took a year and cost Toni \$75,000 in fees.

"Basically the first 10 shipments I don't make a single cent, only the government does with licensing fees, that hurts a lot because I feel like I'm never going to get out of the gates. All I'm doing right now is paying bills and paying everyone else, so that's frustrating."

From where she is now, it's hard to believe six years ago Toni was a vegetarian looking to purchase five acres — just enough to raise livestock for her own kitchen pantry and nothing more.

"Living in New York City was what made me vegetarian, I was exposed to mass produced meat, if you ever go to a meat section in a supermarket over there it is nothing like you've ever experienced before. Rows and rows of meat," she said.

To this day Toni only eats meat if she raised it herself; or knows the farmer who did.

The big farming change happened when she fell in love with the countryside around Lancefield and Tooborac.

The five acre dream turned into a 200 acre reality when she purchased a farm in Nulla Vale.

"You can't get five acres up there because it is proper country so I bought 200 acres, and that was the same price five acres was down near Melbourne," Toni said.

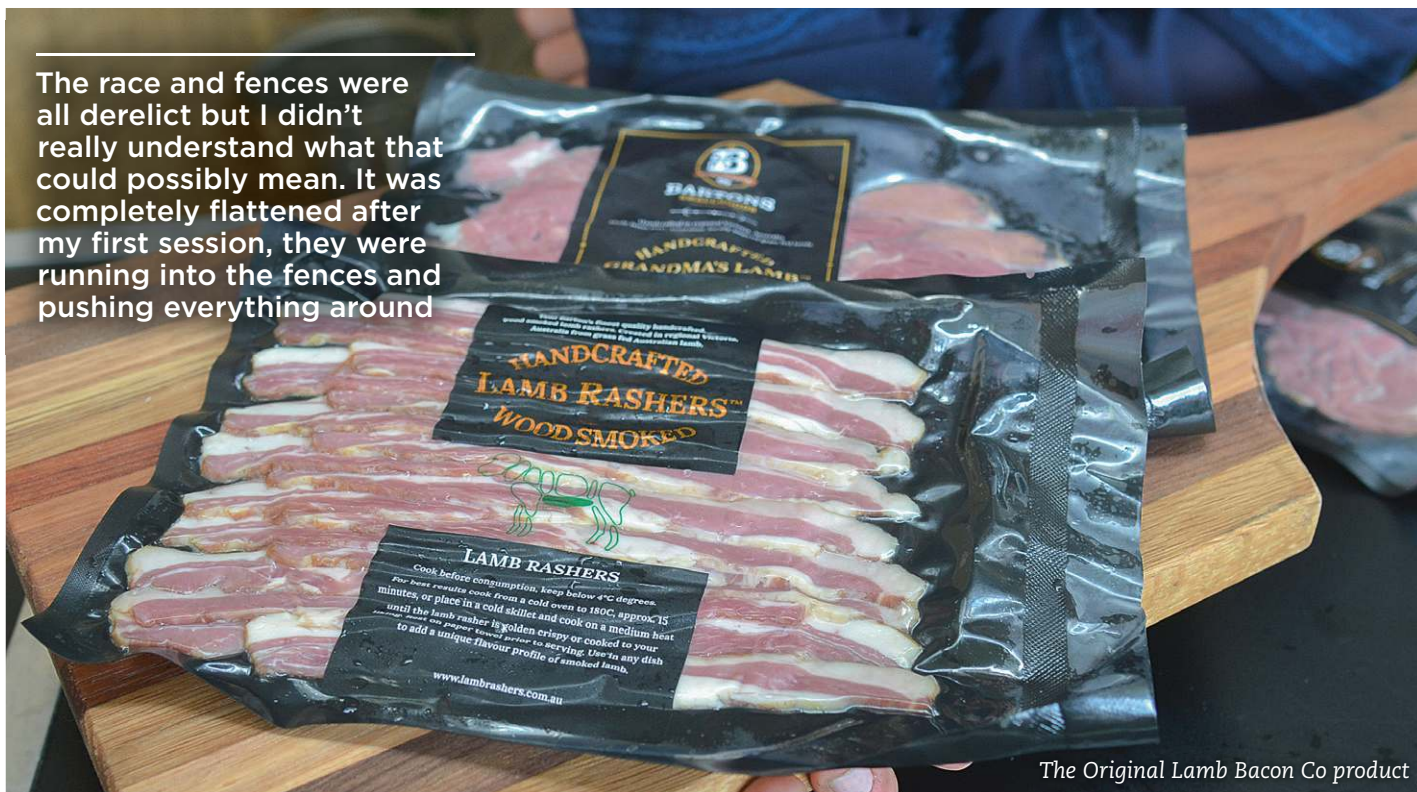
"I thought I was getting a bargain but the farm hadn't operated for years."

Toni remembers the first time she worked with sheep in the yards.

"The race and fences were all derelict but I didn't really understand what that could possibly mean," she said.

"It was completely flattened after my first session, they were running into the fences and pushing everything around." >>>

The race and fences were all derelict but I didn't really understand what that could possibly mean. It was completely flattened after my first session, they were running into the fences and pushing everything around



The Original Lamb Bacon Co product

>>>

"I didn't even know how to hold a sheep; I remember worrying they were going to jump away from me. Now I do everything, I give them pedicures, manicures, the lot. It was weird I knew nothing about sheep at all."

The jump from backyard to small-scale farming was a gradual one. Over two years her 200 acre property wore her down with its beauty and potential.

"I was going up there on weekends, living completely off-grid and loving it," Toni said.

Slowly, as she started learning her craft, making sure her sheep were 100 per cent grass fed and the pasture was thriving without chemicals, a love for farming took hold.

"You get really inspired by learning from other people. I learnt from second and third generation neighbours, I went to farming expos and got really involved in all the aspects of it.

"When I bought the property I didn't have the pressure to make a return, because I was working in the city, but when I moved up full-time in 2016 it needed to make a return.

"I started mapping out different things I could do, and because I had the business and marketing background to me it all felt achievable."

Toni originally started with a few Murray Greys cattle and Australian White sheep, but found she preferred the Whites.

"The sheep were by far much easier to handle," she said.

"The Australian Whites are like a Dorper but instead of shedding they moult — they constantly shed all the time. If you hug one it feels like hugging a cat.

Toni said she chose the Australian

Whites because they were easy to manage and a good meat breed.

"They have a beautiful temperament on the ewes, very gentle, and they have marbled meat. Customers love it, I sell out at farmers' markets every week with fresh meat."

Six years on and Toni runs a herd of Australian White sheep large enough to give her a year round supply of fresh lamb meat.

On top of the fresh meat business, which Toni says always comes first, is her newly fledged Lamb Bacon and Lamb Ham range — which is taking off like an umbrella in a cyclone.

"It's all about finding ways to value-add," Toni explained.

She said the key to being a successful small farmer was creating a high quality product and owning it, from cradle to plate.

"The only way to make your sheep expensive is for you to own the value add," Toni said.

"I've got a list of chefs who want my fresh meat product but I'll never sell it to them, because then they will own the value add."

Toni said a childhood spent on a dairy farm turned her into a jaded adult.

"I saw how bloody hard my parents worked and it was out of control, and then at the end of the month they only got paid based on the market price, not on how hard they worked," she said.

"You see that as a child and you start resenting the system a bit, because these farmers work hard, relentlessly — if you're an employer you want someone like that working for you, yet we treat them the worst."

"When dad asked if I wanted to take over the farm I said 'no way in hell', I want Melbourne and I want money, and I did that but here I am. A big part of what I'm doing is proving a point. If you want to farm you can't be a price taker."

"To be a price-taker is to get whatever the market tells you, you don't own the distribution or the customer, what the market says your hard work is worth, you take."

It is big words for a newbie farmer, but Toni has shown she's willing to follow through time and time again.

Last winter when the abattoirs offered her \$80 a head for her mutton ewes, she refused to accept the market price.

"It would have felt terrible putting them on a truck for \$80, I was gutted and couldn't do it," she said.

Instead, Toni processed them herself, boning them in her commercial kitchen at home and making family-sized pies.

"People were lining up for these bloody pies, I couldn't believe it. It was a good way of turning over the old birds — they deserved a lot more than being put on the cutting room floor."

In the end, each ewe returned \$880.

"I want to prove you can be as successful on 200 acres as you can be on 2000," she said.

Market beware. ■

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New era for almond growers with first self-fertile varieties

In a world-leading research project, Australian scientists have successfully bred self-fertile almond varieties for growers who are not entirely reliant on bees for pollination

THE longitudinal project centred around the industry's breeding program first began in 1997 and has since successfully produced four almond varieties that are self-fertile.

Research project lead Dr Michelle Wirthensohn from the University of Adelaide said the objective was to continue to develop new high yielding self-fertile almond varieties with improved tree architecture, closed shell and disease resistance.

"When we first started this project more than two decades ago, the aim was to identify and breed new varieties so growers could have better long-term options," Michelle said.

"Back then there were only a few old varieties and they lacked a strong taste profile and were mostly used for processing," she said.

"We needed to investigate ways to create a sustainable domestic almond industry that was robust and resilient and could thrive in a number of challenging conditions.

"Disease resistance was important, as was producing high yield with the same water use. So, we set our sights on breeding varieties that would meet all of the industry's standards and have successfully completed field trials which have shown that these varieties will set fruit without any insect intervention."

Michelle said the breeding program was now aiming to produce varieties resistant to diseases such as almond hull rot — which costs the industry millions of dollars in production losses each year; and bacterial spot disease. Both are common plant diseases that affect plant productivity.

"We're also looking to increase the diversification of current varieties for the almond industry by 2023; incorporating a selection of new self-fertile varieties with larger kernels, higher yields; and improved pollinators for Nonpareil," she said.

Hort Innovation research and development manager Dr Vino Rajandran said the almond levy investment utilised cutting-edge breeding technologies to

develop new and innovative varieties with traits such as self-fertility and precocity to enable early production while driving resource-use efficiencies through improved yields.

"The investment in transformational breeding technologies shortens the time taken to produce a new variety for Australian growers," he said.

"The Australian almond industry is expected to grow significantly over the coming years with this year's production forecast set at 108,000 tonnes. The development of new varieties will give growers more choice for their new plantings and re-plantings while increasing productivity per hectare and driving sustainability."

The new almond industry varieties (Maxima, Carina, Capella, Mira, Rhea and Vela) are now available to Australian growers through several nurseries or contact the Almond Board of Australia.

A research paper on the self-fertile varieties has been published here: [nature.com/articles/s41598-020-57498-6](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-020-57498-6) ■



On a **HIGH** with her Lowlines

This small farmer in the making went looking for some small cattle and had a few ideas at the forefront of her mind. Until she saw her first Lowlines; that's when all the plans went out the window — and when the hard work really began. DANEKA HILL reports from the Seymour Alternative Farm Expo



Julie Knight stands in her Seymour Expo stall, beside her is a perfect example of the Lowline's beefy bum.

IT WAS love at first sight when Julie Knight saw her first Lowline—or more accurately, her first Lowline bum.

Twenty-five years ago she was living on a 13-acre block and in the market for some small beef cows.

After researching her options, she decided on Dexter cattle.

"I went to the Seymour Expo because I knew Dexters would be there," Julie said. "I looked at a couple of Dexters and they were just little cows, and it was a bit disappointing, but then I've come around the corner and all I saw was this big, round bum and I said: 'I don't know what that is, but that's what I want'."

After talking to the breeder and learning more, Julie got delivered the worst possible news.

Her newfound love was a rare breed of Australian cattle, and a single average quality cow could fetch up to \$13,000 at market.

"You had to be lucky to get an animal, you had to know the right people," Julie said.

Fortunately Julie and her husband Greg were lucky, were patient, and knew the right people.

The breeder responsible for that beautiful bum ended up selling Julie the first calf she ever put up for sale.

And the couple were off and running—first heifer, then their first bull and they haven't stopped breeding Lowlines since.

Julie is now the president of the Australian Lowlines Association and owns multiple ribbon-winners—as the breed goes from strength to strength, Julie is right there with it.

"With Lowlines, because there were very minimal numbers 20 years ago you started out as a stud, when you can only get two cows what else do you do?" she said.

Why were they so rare in the first place?

Thirty years ago every single Lowline cow in the world belonged to the NSW Agricultural Department.

It began in 1929 when the NSW government set out to breed quality Aberdeen Angus at their Trangie Research Station.

The idea was to sell the quality Angus to Australian farmers and improve the national herd.

The trouble started when the researchers decided to stop producing Angus, and instead started running trials on bull growth rates.

In 1964 the large herd collected on Trangie Station was closed, meaning no more genetics were brought in for the

We've kept the breed the same rather than developing it for commercial ventures, the Angus have gotten bigger to give more meat, but when it comes to meat yield the Lowlines beat them

next two decades.

Researchers divided the herd into tall (Highlines), short (Lowlines), and a mix of heights (Controlines).

"In the end they found there wasn't much difference, but by the time they finished the trial and decided to disperse the herd, the Angus Society didn't want the Lowlines to come out," Julie said.

By 1995 Angus had come to resemble the Highlines, so the Lowlines were an outcast among their own breed.

Most of them got culled but some farmers managed to grab a few and decided to call them Australian Lowlines. "They are Aberdeen Angus, really," Julie said.

The Major Plains breeder was even of the opinion the Lowlines were a preservation of the original Angus breed. "There are very few herds who have stayed closed as such," she said.

"We've kept the breed the same rather than developing it for commercial ventures, the Angus have gotten bigger to give more meat, but when it comes to meat yield the Lowlines beat them."

The Knight's 13-acre farm has turned into a 260-acre property, and their two Lowlines have turned into a beloved stud herd.

"I like them because of their size, they aren't imposing, they are easy to handle, I love them," Julie said.

While the cows are fantastic in Julie's eyes, they aren't exactly hot property in the saleyards, making them an alternative farmer only option.

"We get crucified at the saleyards because of their small carcasses," Julie said.

Because of that the Knights have always kept larger breeds around for crossing, but Julie said when times get tough the bigger beasts "are gone" while the Lowlines thrived.

"They just do so well on very little," the former vet nurse said.

"They are drought hardy and easy going. "I had to have a big cull last year because the season was so bad—the ones who were left I waited and joined them a bit later than normal."

Julie said come springtime, with the bit of grass from winter, her remaining Lowlines "are beautiful".

>>>



Wanamara Dirty Dancing

>>>

“Those cows just wacked the weight on and calved down really well,” she said.

Julie has been showing Lowlines at national shows since 2003, and this year is the first time in 17 years she won't be taking a Lowline to the Sydney Royal.

Julie said the show circuit was getting too expensive, and with fewer breeders going, the ribbons were worth less and less.

For Julie, the joy she gets out of breeding quality animals is enough.

“I get more fun out of someone coming back to me after buying one of my animals and saying, four or five years later, ‘I’ve still got so-and-so and he puts beautiful calves on the ground’,” she said. “For someone to say, ‘I love those animals’ or ‘I really enjoy having your cattle’ is the best compliment.”

At the Wanamara Farm stud which the Knights run, temperament is king.

“We breed for temperament with our cattle, and you’ve got to work on it,” Julie said.

“We had Speckle Parks as well, but we are down to one cow. Temperament was

the main thing that put me off, they were big cows and very flighty, they would jump fences, kick, you’d put them in the crush and they’d stand there on their hind legs in the crush, they were like horses,” she laughed.

“Speckle Parks will be good in another 10 years if the breeders do the right thing.”

Julie said if any cow could thrive in a backyard, it would be Lowlines.

Their popularity as school cows in Queensland is testament to that.

“Up in Queensland they are very big (in demand, not size),” Julie said.

“At the Toowoomba Show they have 58 Lowlines entered and three quarters of them are from schools.”

At the 2020 Seymour Expo Julie is now the only exhibitor showing off her Lowlines—and their bums.

With her on the day was a 22-month-old heifer called Wanamara Dirty Dancing and a three-year-old bull known as Wanamara Dynamite.

“Dynamite’s been shown twice, he was the 2018 junior and grand champion

bull in Melbourne, last year he went to Sydney’s show at 20-months and he was reserve senior champion there,” Julie said.

The recently retired show bull seemed at home at the expo, asleep in the hay.

“He is retired to the paddock and is just a sire bull now,” Julie said.

“His first calf was born last Thursday, so he is a newbie daddy, and hopefully that’s the first of many.”

A Limousin breeder two stalls down pointed to the Lowline bull as he talked about the mass marketing of Angus meat.

“That’s what Angus looked like when I was a boy,” he said. ■

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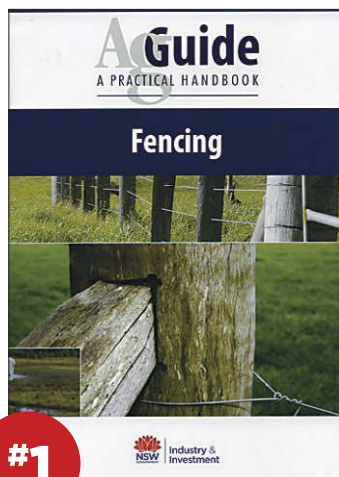
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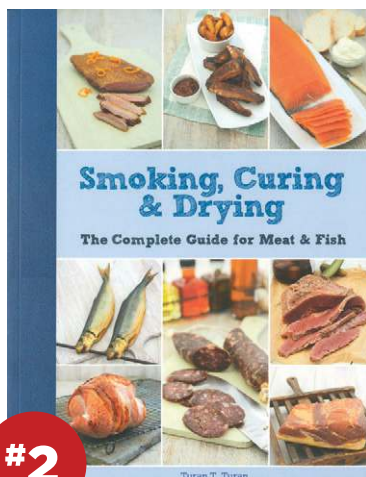
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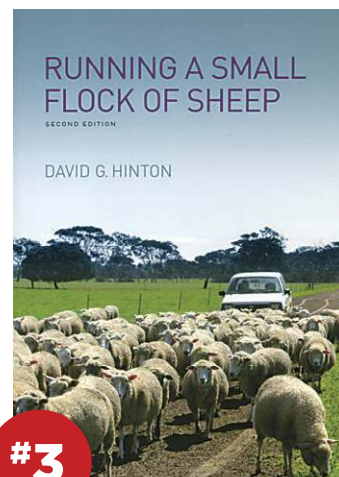
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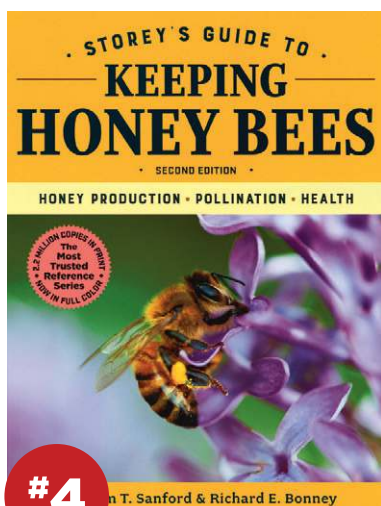
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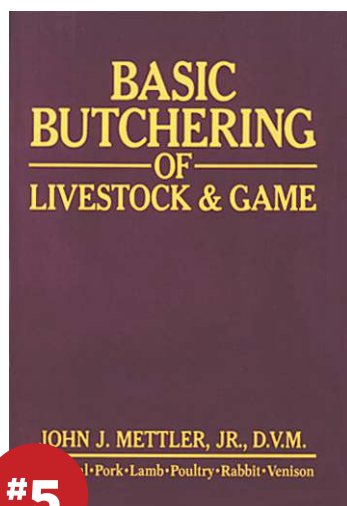
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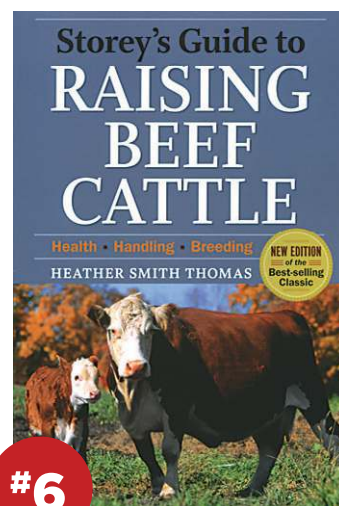
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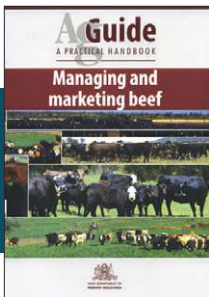


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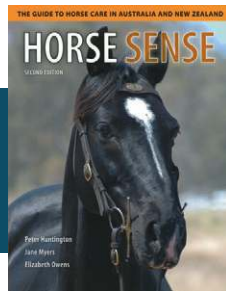
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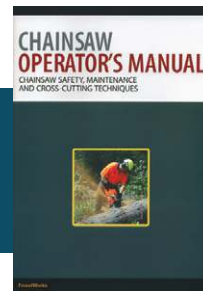
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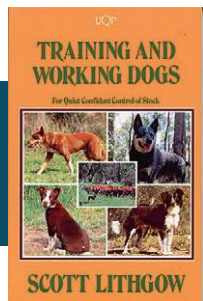
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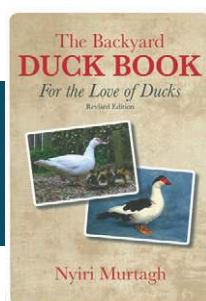
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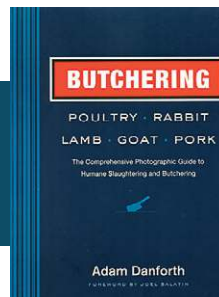
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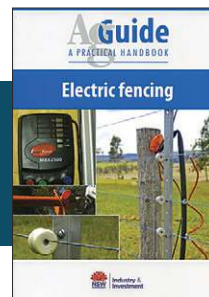
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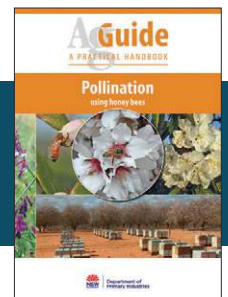
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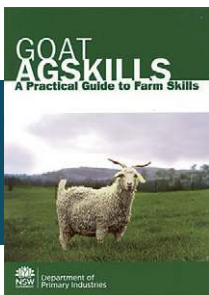
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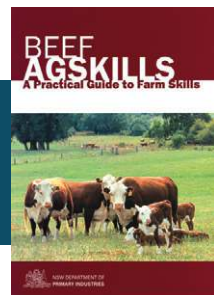
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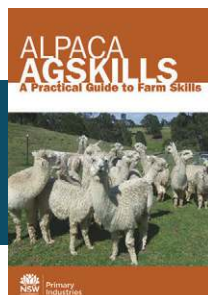
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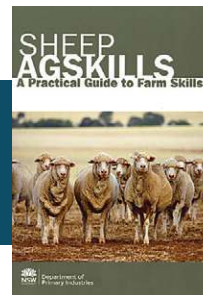
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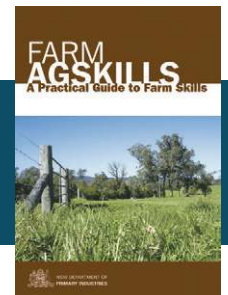
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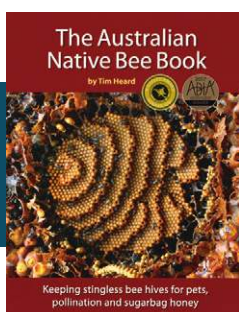
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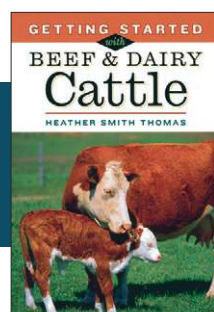
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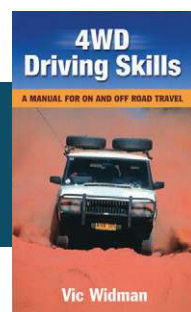
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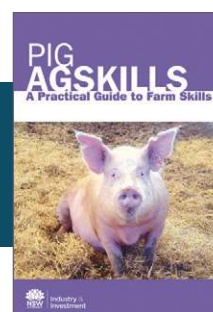
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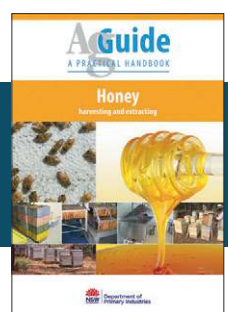
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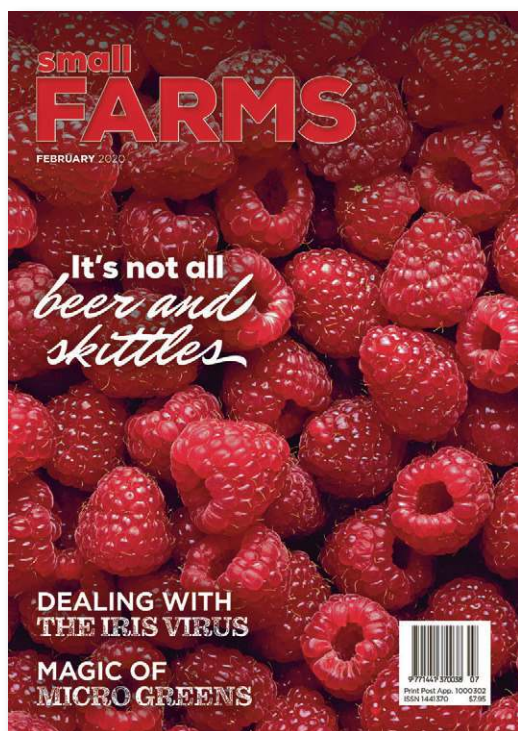
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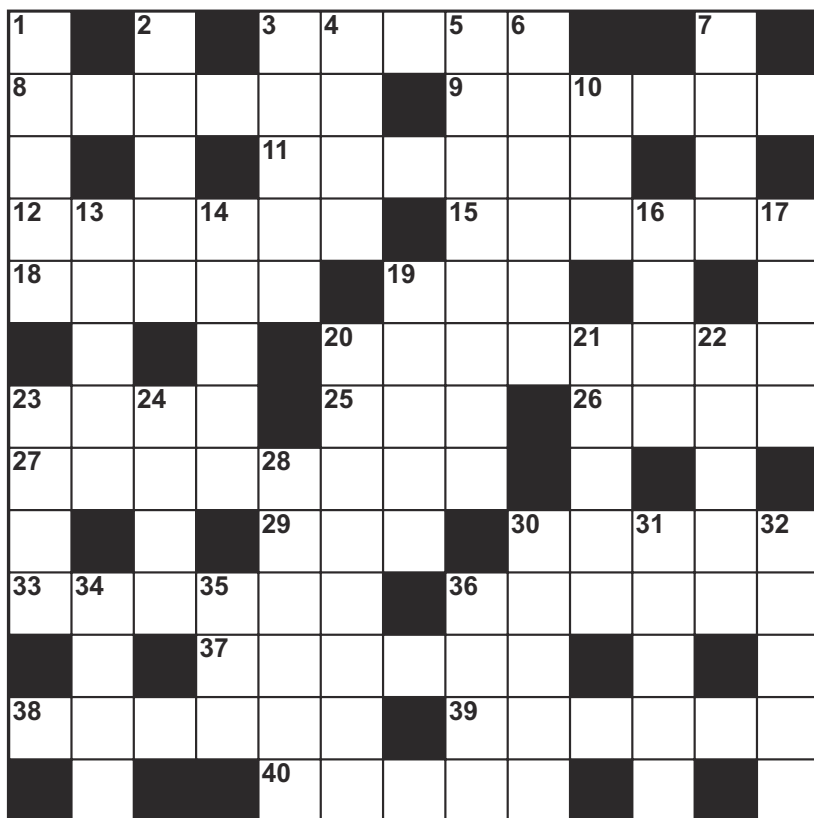
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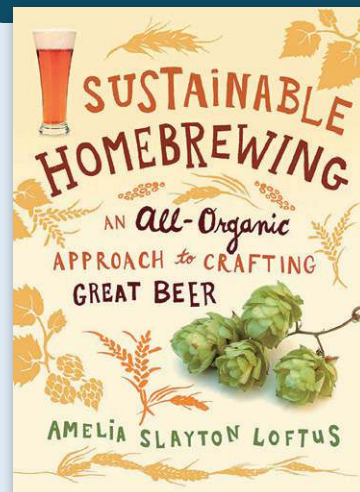
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9 Carrier
10 Fascination
11 Russian river
12 Made amends
15 Infatuate
18 Showing veneration
21 Drinking place (coll)
22 Food
23 Most unctuous
25 Purified
27 Goes back
29 Rodent
31 Distress call
32 Nullifying
35 Condition
37 Not level
38 Examination of an account
40 Applauds
41 Unrevealed fact
42 Cut off

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- 1** Weapon
2 Rut
3 Returned to former habit
4 Wear away
5 Horseplay
6 Thick slice
7 Chase
8 Keen relish
13 Storm
14 Closest
16 Calcium aluminium iron silicate
17 Offensive to modesty
19 Clamour
20 Metal
24 Easterly wind in Spain
26 Marsh
28 Persuaded by flattery
30 Servants attire
33 Assumed appearance
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35 Cult
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Sustainable Homebrewing An All-Organic Approach to Crafting Great Beer

Amelia Slayton Loftus: \$25



WHEN things are on a 'need to know' basis, then the person you need to know would have to be Amelia Slayton Loftus.

Way back in 1995 Ms Loftus brewed her first batch of organic homebrew.

It was a low-profile beginning that quickly blossomed into an award-winning career — first some local awards and quickly thereafter on the national stage.

Just two years later she helped establish Seven Bridges Co-operative, still the country's only co-operatively owned, certified organic homebrew supply store, and was pivotal in its management until 2011 when, with a wealth of brewing behind her she turned her attention to writing — mostly from her farm in Santa Cruz, California.

And *Sustainable Homebrewing An All-Organic Approach to Crafting Great Beer* has become the bible of amateur (and possibly some professional) brewers.

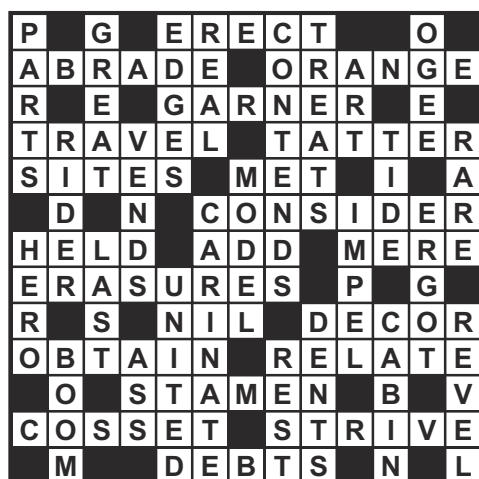
In it she shares her encyclopaedic understanding of everything homebrewers of all levels need to know to brew the best possible outcome from your laundry, garage or back shed — with an organic ambience.

She covers the whys and hows of organic brewing, the best equipment to buy things and the essence of organic ingredients (what makes them different, how to get them, and how to make substitutions).

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GOT A LEAKING DAM?

Seal it with ease using Water\$ave Plug



- ✓ No need to drain or rebuild
- ✓ Cost effective and easy to apply
- ✓ Can be applied to full or partially full dams

Building a Dam

Failure to hold water is the most common problem for farm dams.

Repairing a Dam

Structural repairs are expensive and not always successful. Sealant treatments normally require you to empty your dam.

An Easy Solution

To create a permanent plug to seal the area where the water is being lost. Water\$ave Plug is a unique blend in powdered form when applied to a dam that is leaking will get sucked into those problem areas where your water is being lost. Water\$ave Plug will expand creating a permanent seal.

We have Polymer solutions for:

Water Handling & Removal - Recover water affected areas and roadways

Revegetation and Reforestation - Increasing the survival rate of newly planted trees

Soil Erosion & Protection - Reducing soil and wind erosion by improving the properties of soil

Thanks for your great product. Watersave plug. I decided to put in a good dam. I spent \$25000 to drought proof my property. I couldn't believe my luck when it started to fill, the water was pouring out as fast as it went in!!! When I saw your advert I thought I would take another gamble. It turned out to be the best gamble ever before the week was up the dam had stopped leaking. I was over the moon. I have no hesitation in recommending your product to stop leaking dams.

G.M. Ostini Euchareena NSW

Well I'll be buggered. IT WORKS! After about three days, there was a marked decrease in the loss rate, and after two weeks, the dam wall is bone dry. I must admit, I was amazed. Thanks for the product, and for the prompt professional service.

Graham, Bywong, NSW.

Our aim is to develop products to assist in the management and efficient use of water in a Diverse range of Industries like

**Agriculture and Horticulture
Councils and Quarries**

**Golf Courses and Vineyards
Mining and Construction**

**NON TOXIC AND
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AGPRO 1200 DIESEL 4X4 UTV

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SUBSIDY

2-YEAR
LIMITED
WARRANTY



Colour: Red or Green

New Hi-Tech 1200cc 3 Cylinder Diesel Heavy Duty Workhorse

- Common Rail Direct Injection
- 2WD/4WD
- Diff Locks
- Water/Oil Cooled
- Indep. F/R Suspensions
- F/R Screens-F/Wiper
- Winch
- Hard Top
- Hydraulic Tipper 1260 x 1430 x 300 mm
- Carrying Capacity 500 kg
- Towing Capacity 800 kg

\$13,860* FULLY ASSEMBLED & PRE-DELIVERED

LAND-PRO SX 450 4X4 SSV

NEW
MODEL

2-YEAR
LIMITED
WARRANTY



LAND-PRO 450
by SxPower 4x4

Features

- Fully Optioned
- 25.8hp Engine
- Delphi Fuel Injection
- Liquid Cooled
- On Demand 2WD/4WD
- Rear Diff Lock
- CVT Auto L/H/R/Park
- Shaft Drive/Differential
- Extra Large Rear Tray
- Winch — 3500lb

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NEW
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- 250 cc Engine
- Semi Auto (5 plus Rev)
- Shaft Drive Tow Hitch



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LAND-PRO SX200 4X2 SSV

NEW
MODEL

2-YEAR
LIMITED
WARRANTY

Features

- 200 cc/4 Stroke
- CVT Transmission
- Shaft Drive (RWD)
- Differential
- IRS Suspension
- Steel Tipper Tray



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3/4 SIZE FARM QUAD

FREIGHT
SUBSIDY

Sx200AG Hammer

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- CVT Neutral/Reverse
- Heavy Duty Racks
- Tow Hitch



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