

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN FARMERS EMBRACE CROSSBREEDING



Grant Evans with one of his second crop of HF X MO calves.

FARMER COMMENT:

Grant Evans: "We run a large commercial dairy herd and in recent years, we have had two main issues which worry us with our Holsteins, that is the fertility of our herd and longevity. It is not easy to make changes but when we see these issues costing us money and causing some personal frustration, we felt the need to look "outside the square" to see what we could do to address the situation. We also



L to R: Anita Price, Steve Snowdon (Auzred XB) and Grant Evans discussing the merits of Crossbreeding.

Farm:
Location:

PASKEVILLE DAIRY - PETER, GRANT & SUE EVANS
North Jindong, Western Australia.

FARM PROFILE AT A GLANCE:

Herd Size: 840 Head Holstein Friesian
Production Ave: 305 days: 531Kgs MS p/c, (Milk Fat + Protein)
Conception Rate Over 9 Wk Period: 63%
Calving Period: Split Season - Autumn and Spring each year
Farm Size: 442 hectare milking platform
Feeding Regime: Pasture based, feeding 2.7 t concentrate p/c.
Dryland farm

believe in running our farm as a profitable business, so when we identify areas of our enterprise that could be working better for us, then we need to be open to exploring new ideas and be ready to adapt to the changing needs of both our market and our business. At the end of the day whether we are farmers or mining magnates, it is return on asset that we are most interested in.

So, after some personal research, I packed my bags and headed off to California last year to see firsthand, the results of the cross breeding trials around Oakdale, California. Here, I could see the quality of the animals bred under the three way rotation. Most of the farms we saw were well into a three way crossbreeding program with fantastic results, I came back convinced that this was the way to go to address

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some of the problems we have in our own herd. I was particularly impressed with the HF X MO crosses, they retained their size but also added strength to the body and we noted a big improvement in the feet and legs as well.

Some of my neighbours are already crossbreeding, they are great farmers - well respected - we have seen their progress with crossbreeding and the results have been impressive but up until now, we have been reluctant to go that way ourselves. For me, it was mainly fear of losing size in

our cows. After seeing the results in California I no longer feel apprehensive about jumping in boots and all.

This past year, we blanket mated our whole herd to Montbeliarde bulls, after what I have seen I want to make up for the ground I think we have lost already, while we dithered around deciding if we were doing the right thing. If crossbreeding addresses the fertility and longevity problems in our herd while retaining production and adding more profit to our bottom line, then I will be more than satisfied!"

Farm:
Location:

IAN, STEVE AND BRAD NOAKES
Forest Grove, Western Australia.

FARM PROFILE AT A GLANCE:

Herd Size: 570 head Holstein Friesian based crossbred herd
Production Ave: 305 days: 8,500ltrs milk, 3.25% Protein, 3.7% Fat
Conception Rate Over 9 Wk Period: Holstein 63%, Montbeliarde X 75%
Current 7 day Production Average for 2nd lactation cows: 45 Holstein - 27.4Kgs, 3.35%P, 3.65%F, 12 Montbeliarde X - 29.4 Kgs, 3.3%P, 3.59%F
Calving Period: Split Season - Feb/Mar and Aug/Sep
Farm Size: 300 hectares
Feeding Regime: Pasture based, feeding 2.4T pellets p/c, with a mix of lupins and barley. Farm will have this season, 36 hectares of pasture under Pivot irrigation backed by lateral sprays.

FARMER COMMENT:

Ian Noakes:
"We are now calving down our Montbeliarde crosses going into second lactation. From the results we are seeing we are now confident about using the Montbeliarde in our herd. We intend to continue to select the best bulls we can in our crossbreeding program which also includes the use of the Aussie Red and the Swedish Red as the third breed. However, we

seem to be veering more towards the Montbeliarde as we really like the daughters we are milking - they compliment the Holstein very nicely and add strength to those areas that are important to us."

Steve Noakes:
"The great benefits we see in our Montbeliarde crosses, even at this early stage, are an improvement in fertility, less health problems, less lameness

and less problems related to calving. With our Holstein and Jersey crosses we intend to put Montbeliarde over them for the three way cross. We are also wanting to find a more sustainable cow in regards to feeding. We hope that by

crossbreeding with Montbeliarde, we can reduce the amount of grain we are feeding but still retain body condition without losing too much production. Having healthy and sustainable cows that work for us under varied conditions is important."

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Steve Noakes at work in the 50 Platform Dairy.