Elrose Commits to BREEDPLAN Under Extensive Management

Rodger and Lorena Jefferis, with their children Grant and Brooke, run Elrose Brahman Stud under extensive commercial management in north west Queensland. The Jefferis’s have a long association with the breed being among the first to introduce Brahman genetics to the region in the late 1950’s

Located 70km south of Cloncurry on the eastern side of the Landsborough highway leading to Winton, Elrose covers some 80,000 acres. Soils types vary noticeably ranging from red hilly country growing buffel and spinifex to heavier pebbly black soil and Gidyea.

The north west of Queensland is noted for its extremes in temperature and rainfall. Summer is punctuated by periods of high temperatures and monsoonal storms. The majority of the 400 mm rainfall occurs between December and April.

While structural soundness is important to all breeders, it is vital in north Australia’s extensive beef country where big paddocks and infrequent water points necessitate that stock regularly travel large distances for feed and water. “It is not uncommon for cattle in this region to walk up to 8km from water” illustrates Rodger.

The nature of the country necessitates well adapted females. “From time to time we have introduced females to the Elrose herd” stated Rodger “but we have had more success with home bred females with proven fertility in our environment”.

The Jefferis’s have been active in the bull market in recent years setting a new record for an Australian bred Brahman bull when they paid $60,000 for Lancefield Ambition in 1998. Ambition is rated in the top 5% of Brahman BREEDPLAN for growth, carcase weight, RBY% and EMA, and his dam line has exhibited high fertility under the extremely dry conditions central Queensland suffered in the 1990’s.

The Jefferis’s have a simple philosophy buying bulls. “A good bull is a sound investment, not an expense”. This has certainly proven to be true for Ambition when the first five sons offered at auction more than recouped his purchase price.
The Elrose sire battery was further enhanced at the 2001 Tartrus-Lancefield sale where Rodger and Lorena outlaid $87,500 for Lancefield Signature to compliment Ambition daughters.

Balanced selection is the goal at Elrose. “Fertility of the dam line is a key priority” explains Rodger, “which is used in conjunction with EBVs, carcase data and assessment, structural soundness and temperament”. “We are looking forward to further development of Days to Calving EBVs in Brahman to aid us with fertility”.

The Jefferis’s commitment to their seedstock enterprise is substantial. This year fourteen single sire herds will be joined for 120 days, a short joining period by local standards. In an area where bulls are commonly run at 4-5% Elrose sires are worked much harder. Two year old bulls are generally mated with 30 to 40 females for their first season with older bulls given larger mobs, at times up to 70 females.

“It is interesting that sires often show similar calving spreads year after year”, notes Rodger. “Bulls that can deliver more calves earlier are clearly more desirable to our industry”.

In addition to paddock sales, Elrose bulls are marketed at the Cattle Country bull sale, Cloncurry. The Jefferis’s in association with Noel and Dallas Daly’s Caiwarra Stud, Julia Creek, and invited vendor, the McCamley family’s Tartrus Stud, offer some 200 bulls annually.

All Elrose bulls sold by auction are committed to the Cattle Country sale.

“We would expect a few of the top bulls to sell to higher prices if presented at the coastal sales where more seedstock breeders create competition” stated Rodger, “but we are happy for these bulls to end up commercial herds”.

While every bull breeder is thrilled to sell a top priced stud sire the focus for Elrose is on producing large lines of commercial bulls.

“Calves in the paddock and kilos on the bullocks of our clients is our aim. Achieving that will help put dollars in the bank for more producers than a couple of
high price stud bulls. BREEDPLAN helps deliver predictable genetics needed to achieve this”.

Rodger notes varying levels of utilisation of EBVs among their clients. “While we support our clients who insist on EBVs to aid selection decisions we are also keen to help them understand balanced selection and not become overly focused on 600 day EBVs”, explains Rodger.

“We have a another group of buyers who may not request our EBVs initially but when offered will certainly make use of the information”.

“Our most advanced buyers are doing plenty of home-work before inspecting our bulls”. “They are screening available bulls on their EBV profiles and then coming back to us with a short-list of bulls upon which they want details of dam reproductive performance.”

Rodger is comfortable to offer that committing their herd to Brahman BREEDPLAN has given them a better understanding of which genetics are performing in their herd. “We have invested considerable time and money into refining our stud management to collect meaningful data and support the ongoing refinement of the analysis to give us the best possible information”.

“Using the available data in selection and culling has made BREEDPLAN an important part of the Elrose operation” conclude Rodger and Lorena.