



Dennis and Susie Stewart quickly recognised the decade-long contribution of Southern Beef Breeding Technologies Services to developing genetic selection tools and resources, impacts on their business almost every day.

Susie and Dennis Stewart, with their granddaughter Georgie, use breeding and selection tools to keep their herd achieving an above average rate of genetic gain.

The Stewarts, who run an Angus breeding operation on 8,502ha west of Condobolin, are dedicated herd improvers.

They employ technologies such as Fixed Time Artificial Insemination (FTAI), BREEDPLAN estimated breeding values (EBVs), and apply selection pressure on fertility and reproduction to their females to ensure each generation is more profitable and productive than the last.

Maximising genetic gain

To maximise their rate of genetic gain, Dennis and Susie have been members of Team Te Mania, an initiative of the Victoria based Te Mania Angus stud, for the past nine years.

"It was a way of getting access to the latest genetics for our artificial insemination (AI) program and, for our cow herd, a way to access bulls of high genetic merit through their lease program," Dennis said.

"The team provides some economies of scale and we also have expert genetic and technical advice on tap."

The Stewarts run 800 breeders with half calving in spring and the rest in autumn to make better use of their bulls.

Using Fixed Time AI

Heifers are artificially inseminated, at about 14-16 months old, with one round of FTAI and no back-up bull.

AI pregnancy percentages are generally good, and Dennis and Susie have used highly ranked sires, which combine low birth weights and short gestational length, with above average growth and \$ index values in the top 5% of the breed.

"We usually AI in November and this year we're looking for a suitable sire to tick all those boxes and improve marbling," Dennis said.

Split calving

Any heifers that fail to fall pregnant from AI are transferred to the other herd (e.g. spring heifer goes to the autumn herd) and there they have another opportunity to reproduce.

With an extra six months maturity, the heifer will be joined and, at three years old, will calve without additional supervision.

Cows are joined for eight weeks to sires with above average EBVs for calving ease, growth, particularly 200 and 400-days, and intra-muscular fat (IMF), also known as marbling.

"Most of the steers are grown out to 380kg-420kg and are sold direct to feedlots, such as Rangers Valley, or offered on Auctions Plus and the feedback we're getting from buyers is that marbling is a trait they really value," Dennis said.

Young herd

Cows that fail to become pregnant are culled. Those that remain productive in the herd are sold between six and eight years as breeders.

"Our first calvers usually achieve about an 80% pregnancy rate which is down on the cow herd average of about 93%," Dennis said.

"With their whole breeding life ahead of them, and the fact they possess some of our most superior genetics, we tend to give them a second chance with the alternate herd."

Snapshot

Dennis and Susie Stewart, Condobolin, NSW.



Property:
8,502ha

Enterprise:
Angus beef breeding for feedlot entry, cropping (share-farmed)

Livestock:
800 Angus breeders

Pasture:
Oats under sown with lucerne, medics and clover

Soil:
Sandy loam, red and grey clay soils

Rainfall:
400mm



Dennis and Susie Stewart
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