

AI program benefits herd

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DENILIQVIN beef producer Locky Gleeson, Colligen Creek Station, saw an opportunity in an artificial insemination (AI) program through Team Te Mania, Mortlake, Victoria, about five years ago.

His father Dennis made the initial transition with Mr Gleeson following and now positioned as stock manager of the intensive, yet rewarding, operation.

Their pure Angus herd consists of 100 heifers and 250 cows.

The commercial operation, part of their 7284 hectares, is run alongside 8000 composite ewes, 300 stud ewes as well as 2429ha of cereal crop and 485ha of rice.

Working with farm manager Ash Amor, Mr Gleeson is stock manager at both the Colligen Creek enterprise as well as the neighbour's farm.

The Gleesons joined Team Te Mania in 2011 after buying 300 cows from an existing Te Mania

team member, Puunyant Angus, Victoria, in 2010.

"We joined the Te Mania team just after we purchased the Puunyant cows," Mr Gleeson said.

"The following year we started the AI program through Southern Cross Genetics, Cowes, Vic, and now we AI everything."

He said the decision to introduce an AI program was to access the best genetics available.

"We saw Team Te Mania as a really good operating plan," Mr Gleeson said.

"With the quality of the semen from the best bulls Te Mania produces and the quality of the back-up bulls, it works well for us.

"This year I can see the difference in our heifers and how good they looked.

"The steers are some of the best we have seen come through."

This year they had 150 steers they put through their small on-farm feedlot, where they were left for 70 to 90 days and weighed once a month.



Locky Gleeson, Colligen Creek Station, Wakool via Deniliquin, NSW, with his dog Dora checking mixed age cows and late August drop AI calves. Photo by Rachael Webb

"Overall they averaged 2.3 kilograms weight gain per day," Mr Gleeson said.

"They reached 530kg on average before they hit 12-months of age."

The steers were sold at 12 months of age to Thomas Foods International (TFI) in September 2015, averaging \$1800 (on-farm price).

"That was when I first saw the bottom line benefits," Mr Gleeson said.

"Obviously the way the current market is helped, but the condition on them - they are some of the best we have had come through."

This year their strike rate with their AI was 70 per cent - up on the previous year's figures.

Mr Gleeson believes there is a portion of luck involved, but said following the program accurately could make all the difference.

"If you get them in really good order and stick to the Te Mania program during the weeks leading up to the AI date it will give you the best chance of getting good results," he said.

The heifers are artificially inseminated at 15 months old in late October and the older cows are serviced in early to mid-November.

The process involves about 10 days of administering the fertility drugs.

Mr Gleeson said an advantage of the AI program was a more precise window when calving.

"It's an easier process to keep an eye on them when it comes to calving," he said.

At Colligen they aim to breed animals with good eye appeal and to finish young cattle from weaning.

During the weaning period of four to six weeks and when the cattle are not in the feedlot they are grazing on clover and improved pastures.

Home-grown grain delivers results at Deniliquin

AT COLLIGEN Creek Station, Deniliquin, the feedlot operation mostly uses grain grown on the 7284-hectare property.

Farmer Locky Gleeson says it's a worthwhile combination of AI and feedlotting.

"It is a cost-effective ration because everything is grown here," he said.

"The feedlot ration we use is 80 per cent grain grown on our farm - a simple mix of barley, straw and lucerne, gradually increasing the barley."

He said they used syrup, which was a bi-product of ethanol, similar to molasses.

"That binds the mix together and they seem to love that," Mr Gleeson said.

"Then we will just alter the percentages, increasing

the grain, as they stay longer in there."

Mr Gleeson admitted this was the one area something could go wrong within the process.

"If they run out overnight, have licked clean the bunks and you hit them with a heap of grain in the morning - this is when they could gorge themselves," he said.

"Subsequently they could get grain poisoning and even die."

This year they didn't have any problems, making sure they had excellent bunk management.

"If you spend an extra 10 minutes each morning making sure the mix is right, that can make the difference," Mr Gleeson said.

"If you lose one you can potentially lose \$1800."



Mixed-age Angus cows on Colligen Creek Station, Wakool, NSW.