

AUSTRALIAN BELTED GALLOWAY ASSOCIATION INC.

World Galloway Conference 2010 Australian Belted Galloway Association Report

The Australian Belted Galloway Association is Australia's oldest continuing Belted Galloway herd book. The Association maintains the largest actively-registered number of Belted Galloways with almost 1,500 currently on its own books. The ABGA has also steadily increased member numbers over the past few years.

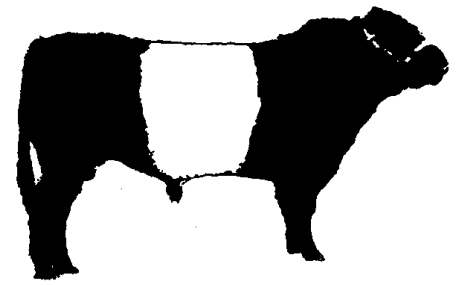
While Australia has recently suffered one of the worst droughts on record, the recent rains across the country has heartened many, and decent subsoil moisture is returning. An increase in interest and demand for Belties is subsequently developing. Further commercial herds have developed but more are required. The ABGA recognizes that additional breed support is required for the commercial Beltie beef producer who represents the breed's sustainable future.

The ABGA is an organization evolving a focus towards the commercial beef industry. Our managing council is co-ordinated by skilled people who hold knowledge in marketing, administration and corporate management. This is balanced by councilors who also hold historical and traditional knowledge of the breed and its inherent features. Together, as a team, we are working to marry the breed to a successful commercial future.

The ABGA has learnt that acknowledged carcass success is our most attractive feature to net commercial interest.

The diligent work over the past ten years of two particular breeders, Peter Koppman and Merv Presland, has managed to capture and maintain industry attention towards the Australian Belted Galloway carcass qualities. Both are very committed breeders who have continually produced notable carcasses. Between them, they have managed to achieve broad ribbons for the breed in competition, and in multiple competitions. This included a broad ribbon win at Australia's premier steer and carcass competition at Sydney Royal.

Koppman's and Presland's work has inspired other Belted Galloway breeders to follow in their footsteps. The result has been simply remarkable. Beltie steers of alternative bloodlines have proven themselves amongst the elite of Australian cattle, achieving a high average carcass score for the breed, which has been publicly acknowledged as such by rural press, government and industry officials. At this year's Sydney Royal, a Belted Galloway



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steer achieved a position in the top-ten earners at auction, and secured the top price paid by the supermarket giant, Woolworths. This was yet another first for the breed and sends a desirable and powerful commercial message.

Continuing carcass success has been supported by the ABGA in terms of marketing and promotion, and further encouragement is provided to Australian breeders to learn the ropes of commercial breeding by embracing the Aussie ethos of 'having a go'.

More breeders are donating steers to agricultural schools to encourage students to prepare steers in carcass competitions. Or they are doing the preparation work themselves. We have also learnt Belted Galloways secure 'grassroots' commercial credibility from led steer and/or carcass competitions at local rural shows.

The success of Belties in carcass competitions is remarkable, when one considers the tiny size of the national registered herd of only a couple of thousand-odd.

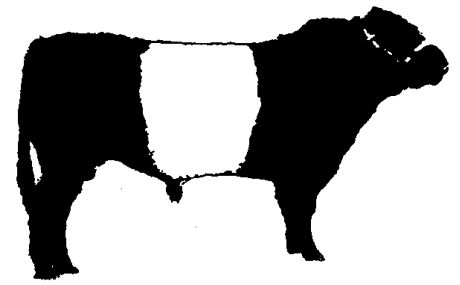
Today, there is a far greater awareness among Australian breeders that good carcass scores help demonstrate legitimate commercial and trade value. Carcass scores provide the best opportunity for analysis of Australian belties in the quest to improve their commercial value.

We need constantly renewed statistics to keep the breed contemporary and promotable as a commercial beef breed.

An issue that Belted Galloway breeders worldwide could perhaps address better is the quantity and quality of objective performance data it records on individual animals, particularly regarding bulls. It will help us breed even better quality beef. We have much room to lift our competitive edge in our effort to further support commercial producers.

Breedplan is a beef cattle genetic evaluation system that is the most widely used genetic evaluation system in the beef industry internationally. Sadly, there is an absence of meaningful Belted Galloway data. This is an area that ABGA would like to improve. Indeed, it is an improvement that all countries could embrace to further the commercial value of our breeding stock.

Pfizer Animal Health's *GeneStar* technology has rapidly advanced since the discovery of the first DNA markers using hair tail follicles to test for the three core management traits. These consist of feed efficiency, marbling and tenderness. Belted Galloway breeders using this technology help enormously in generating information to assist sire or dam selection, and thereby potentially increasing genetic improvement.



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While ABGA recognizes the dilemma of managing a small breed – one often viewed with much sentiment and romanticism – we do know that the future success of the breed really depends on our own capacity to be hard-headed regarding the breed's capacity to viably produce quality beef.

To help stud breeders improve the quality and relevance of the genetics offered to commercial producers, the ABGA has recently reviewed its rules to introduce the use of unlicensed Belted Galloway semen for the production of registered animals. This revision pulls the Belted Galloway regulations into line with contemporary industry practice.

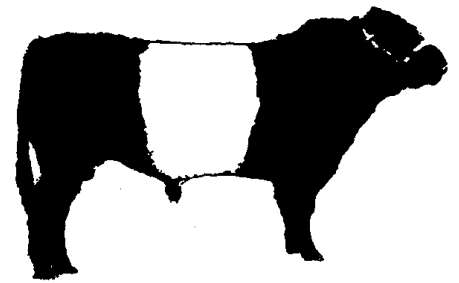
Introducing the use of unlicensed Belted Galloway semen will enable genetics otherwise not available under the previous regulations to expand the genetic diversity of the breed. From this genetic expansion, we hope comes further opportunity for breeders to develop more marketable qualities in the seedstock they produce for the commercial environment.

At the same time, the ABGA is reviewing its herd book structure to ensure that the original genetics that represent the core capital of the breed are both easily identified and protected, particularly to the uninitiated. This should help pave the way for a more contemporary development of Belties via a number of breeding strategies chosen by individual breeders without putting the original genetic stock at risk. The ABGA recognizes its responsibility for breed preservation is equal to that for breed development.

The ABGA would like to increase the amount of exported genetics. We are aware that we have credible sires in terms of genetic improvement and would like to see these animals utilized better overall. We also know that Australia, with its tough quarantine laws, has a competitive advantage regarding the health status of its animals. We would like to exploit that opportunity better.

Over the past few years, Australia has also doubled its number of producers who are direct-marketing Belted Galloway-branded beef. These professionally presented producers are hardworkers, and very successful. Besides producing a growing market opportunity for other beltie beef breeders, they have shown themselves to be great ambassadors for the beef. The ABGA is very grateful for their initiative and enterprise.

The ABGA was delighted to unite with the Australian Galloway Association late last year to stage the 'Melbourne Royal Victorian Galloway Family Feature Show'. It was the Galloway event of the year in Australia. A total of 97 Galloways of all types (47 Belties), were exhibited at Melbourne Showground, and judged by Keith Jones of South Carolina, USA. We hope he came away from the show impressed with the quality of the Australian Belted Galloway. Numerous side events involving Belties were successfully held alongside the exhibition.



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Australia is quite a vast country with often hundreds of kilometres between breeders. However, this does not seem to deter the committed camaraderie between breeders and they always seem to find a way to group together to show their cattle in urban and rural Australia. Somewhere, a Beltie seems to be up for exhibit.

Over the past couple of years, Belties have been exhibited at shows that have never had Belties present before. The outreach seems to be growing. In regional Australia, it's no longer uncommon for a Beltie to win or place in an Interbreed competition. We have achieved that several times.

ABGA has learnt the importance of succession planning in terms of continuously encouraging new breeders into the show and carcass competition world. ABGA has learnt that it is important for established breeders to nurture their replacements. The ABGA has learnt that this is imperative for the breed to grow.

Our breeders do get out and about with opportunity promotion. One major feed company decided to use a Beltie as their breed of choice to promote their major stud feed product. Belties have subsequently been used at film festivals...and in films! They have been used as focal stories in television and radio shows. The breed has built up its internet presence. We are starting to get stories in the major rural publications around the country – who are beginning to notice the beef success of the breed.

And that is what it is all about – beef.

ABGA has learned that we can be terribly confident in the quality and validity of our product. We do know that we have much more to learn and achieve in our aim to have the Belted Galloway accepted as a conventionally acceptable beef breed. We are learning to listen to the industry and respond accordingly. Our aims are quite high, and our journey a little slower than we would like, impatient as we are. But we are moving forward.

The ABGA is simply a collective of motivated breeders. We are aware that our future success – the breed's future success – depends on what each of us does individually to contribute to the teamwork.

We would like to grow the team.

Francie Maclean
President
August 2010