

SUMMER ANGUS 2020

# Chasing top performance

BY KYLIE NICHOLLS  
WRATTONBULLY, SA

THE versatility of the Angus breed has allowed South Australian producers, the Woodard family, to better respond to seasonal conditions and provide increased marketing flexibility.

Trading as Peel Pastoral, Todd and Anne Woodard, their son Tom and long-time employee Bob Howieson take care of their family's 2700-hectare mixed farming operation at Wrattobully in the state's South East, currently running 1000 Angus breeders and 4200 composite ewes.

Since moving to their property, Walnamere, about 22 years ago, they have always run Angus cattle due to market demand and the premiums available.

"We are not focused on one market and that's the beauty of the Angus breed, it is such a flexible product," Mr Woodard said.

"It suits our system, which is dictated by the season and how much grass we have in front of us.

"Generally we'll run our steers out to a feeder weight, about the 400 kilogram mark, and if we have a good year, we'll grow some steers out to bullocks to sell direct over the hooks.

"But if we have a failed spring, they could be sold as weaners straight off their mums."

Peel Pastoral has been sourcing bulls from the Moyle Pathfinder stud, Gazette, Vic, for more than 20 years, with a focus on structural soundness and maternal traits, such as scrotal circumference and fertility.

Growth rates including 200-, 400- and 600-day weight are also important.

"We are focused on a balance of traits, and we don't want anything too extreme in any one trait," Mr Woodard said.

"I try to match maternal,

growth and carcase traits, including intramuscular fat depth and eye muscle area, and get as many of those traits that I'm interested in, above breed average.

"In the past 10 years we have also made sure we are not buying a big bull that is going to throw 700kg cows.

"I don't want the mature cow size too big because their maintenance is huge.

"Even with the bulls I think if you can keep them a bit more compact, they tend to be more robust and athletic for longer."

The cows are joined for six weeks from the start of September to calve from mid-June onwards.

The tight joining period ensures all the calves are on the ground before August 1, which is a key date for the Woodards, when pasture growth starts to take off.

"The six week joining period also ensures our herd is always being selected for fertility and produces an



**CONSISTENT QUALITY:** The Woodard family, Wrattobully, SA, are focused on producing quality Angus steers and heifers, which are suitable for a range of markets.

even line of calves," Mr Woodard said.

In the lead-up to joining, the bulls are capacity-tested and will be rotated three weeks after mating begins to minimise the risk of any serving issues.

Conception rates are consistently averaging 92 per cent scanned in calf cows, per cows mated, which Mr Woodard is pleased with.

According to Mr Woodard, a successful weaning pro-

gram is a key driver of productivity. They aim to ensure the calves continue to gain weight during the weaning process.

All the calves are yard-weaned on hay for two days in mid- to late January. They are handled extensively during their time in the yards and after weaning.


"If they are in the yards for more than a couple of days, their rumen starts to switch to hay and once they are back

out in the paddock, they will have a set back.

"It's about quietening the calf down but not damaging the rumen, so it can be a compromise between the two."

As a measure of success, the calves are weighed at the start of weaning, with an average weight of 280 to 300kg targeted, and then weighed two weeks post-weaning.

"If we don't achieve 1kg/day weight gain through




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**FEMALE FOCUS:** Todd Woodard has been using Pathfinder genetics for more than 20 years, with fertility and growth a priority for his cow herd.

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**Todd Woodard, Walnamere, Wrattobully**

A flexible grazing rotation is employed with the pastures monitored regularly and the cattle moved as required.

As a general rule, a stocking rate of about 250DSE/ha is maintained in a 20 paddock rotation. The paddock size averages about 20ha.

During the growing season, pastures will be grazed for two to three days followed by 30 to 40 days of rest.

In spring when growth is at its peak, the grazing period is one to two days, and in summer this lengthens to a seven to nine day grazing period with 90 to 120 days rest.

Regular applications of compost and foliar sprays, along with the introduction of dung beetles, is also boosting soil health and biology.

that fortnight after weaning, that tells us we haven't done something right in the weaning process," he said.

"But we have been achieving consistently positive growth rates within that first fortnight post-weaning and when you start measuring it over 900 calves, we estimate we can make or lose \$40,000 in that time.

"It's just one way to monitor their progress and if necessary, what changes

we need to make during weaning."

The weaners are drafted into their sexes, with the steers sent to the family's lease block to be finished.

Depending on the season, most of the steers are sold through AuctionsPlus or privately at about 18 months of age, averaging 400kg-plus.

Heifer selection is based on maturity, structural soundness and frame size, and those retained for breed-

ing are placed onto better quality pasture paddocks to be grown out.

The Woodard family generally mate about 200 heifers each year, depending on available feed.

"We like animals that grow on and mature early, a joining weight of more than 350kg is good.

"Our heifers should be our best genetics so I'm happy to cull the older cows more heavily."

Mr Woodard said selecting for robust, easy-care females has bred resilience within the cow herd with the assisted calving rate for heifers now less than 1pc.

Minimal supplementary feeding is carried out with Mr Woodard preferring to adjust stock numbers to match the feed on offer.

They aim to have about 1500kg of dry matter/ha coming into calving and lambing.

"We aim to run all our cows and ewes through until May on paddock feed and to do that we have to run some of our Dry Sheep Equivalents (DSEs) in animals such as steers so we can offload them if necessary," he said.

"For example, last year, our autumn was a bit tighter than we anticipated so we opted to release a couple of B-doubles of feeder steers a bit early, which took the pressure off."

**FIELD DAY: MONDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2020**  
**SALE DAY: FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2020**  
**12 NOON (SA TIME)**



**PRINCIPAL: SCOTT FINLAY**  
**PHONE: SCOTT – 0407 184 062**



**LOT 3** Son of Millah Murrh Doc F159



**LOT 6** Son of Granite Ridge Jurassic J76



**LOT 5** Son of Texas Mount K002



**LOT 1** Son of Rennylea K447

**BLACK GOLD**

**75 BULLS**

**ELDERS:**  
 Laryn Gogel  
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