BEEF CATTLE REGISTRATIONS REACH 10-YEAR HIGH

Statistics maintained by the Australian Registered Cattle Breeders Association (ARCBA) have shown that Herdbook registrations of beef cattle in 2006 reached 143,473 – the highest they have been in the last decade. This can only be described as an outstanding achievement in a year in which the cattle industry battled with one of the worst droughts on record.

Increases were recorded across all the major breed groups of British breeds, Tropical breeds and European breeds. When combined with a strong year in 2005, herdbook registrations are up by an impressive 11.4% in the last two years.

ARCBA also compiles statistics on secondary register cattle. These are pedigree cattle that are bred for seedstock purposes but not entered in the official herdbooks of the breed societies involved.

As with herdbook cattle, the majority of secondary register cattle have breeding values calculated on BREEDPLAN. In 2006 there were 64,308 secondary register cattle recorded on breed society databases.

The total of herdbook and secondary register cattle in 2006 reached 207,780 – the highest level since 1996 when the cattle industry worldwide was crippled by the outbreak of BSE in the UK.

The Executive Director of ARCBA, Dr Arthur Rickards said that it was a great credit to the registered sector that it has been able to make such an outstanding recovery of members through such difficult seasonal conditions. It shows that the bulls coming out of the registered sector continue to be in strong demand by the commercial industry where they provide the main source of genetic improvement for our national beef industry.

In its strategic planning, going back to 2002, ARCBA has identified that Australia could reasonably aspire to become the bovine stud farm of the world. Years of preparation are now starting to bear fruit with the Russian Federation identifying Australia as its preferred source of genetic material (live cattle, semen and embryos) to rebuild both its dairy and beef herds which have been reduced to about one third of previous levels.

In response to the Russian requirements a set of breed standards for export has been developed by ILRIC for British and European breeds. This will offer importing countries the opportunity to have official breeding certificates produced from breed society databases for export cattle.

In the dairy industry this form of quality assurance for export heifers has been in place since late in 2005.

Most of the cattle destined for export to Russia will be secondary register cattle with a three-generation pedigree available on the sire side.
“The export of quality-assured breeding cattle has the potential to double the number of secondary register cattle produced over the next five years” said Dr Rickards.

It will also allow breed societies an opportunity to attract many new members who specialise in breeding for the export market in order to add substantial value to the cattle they sell. In turn, these new herds will increase the demand for herdbook cattle.

In summary, the Australian cattle seedstock industry is on the threshold of a growth opportunity that far exceeds anything that it has previously experienced.

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