

The Long Black

New Zealand Lowline Breeders Newsletter No.2, July 2025

Hello everyone, we're back with the second newsletter. The name, The Long Black, seems to have stuck but we're open to other suggestions.

Spring is on the horizon, the first calves are already here so we've provided some tips for a handy calving tool box. We wish everyone well for a good calving.

Any questions or suggestions or contributions for newsletter No.3 please contact our editor, Michelle, at michelle@ironcladstud.nz

INTERVIEW:

When New Zealand Lowline breeder Gordon Guthrie says he got into the breed by accident he really means it.

Gordon and wife Debbie were living on the edge of the South Island township of Tinwald on 2.2 hectares (5 acres) of land on which they ran a few sheep when the couple were involved in a car accident.

After the crash with his broken arm in a cast and struggling to deal with flyblown sheep that summer, Gordon decided there had to be another option for his farming aspirations. Debbie, who looks after all the paperwork for their Ashmore stud, was promptly on the job and discovered Lowlines courtesy of an article about another New Zealand couple who had imported animals from Australia.



Says Debbie: "They seemed perfect – no flystrike and they were friendly and small, ideally suited to a hobby, which was all it was meant to be then. A perfect fit."

That was in 1995 and the following year, after trying to source animals closer to home, the Ashmore stud was born when the Guthries imported their own starter pack of five mature heifers from Geoff and Kenneil Martin's Longbow stud in Australia.

Fast forward 18 years and Gordon became president of the Australian Lowline Cattle Association.

Gordon grew up with farming connections, spending a lot of time on his grandparents' farm. "But strangely not with beef, they milked a house cow – my grandmother always said she could not see how I got into beef cattle."

Debbie was not a country girl and jokes that she can throw out a bit of hay and move fences if she has to but hers is not a hands-on role.

But the partnership – now based at Winchmore about 15 minutes' drive from Ashburton where Gordon was, until he retired five years ago, the chief executive of power company Electricity Ashburton – is complementary and the couple enjoy their lifestyle on 30 hectares, where the maximum number of cattle climbed to about 120 during calving and before the two-year-old bulls were sold in October each year.



Now heading for “real retirement” the couple are currently running about 80 Lowlines: 8 breeding cows in calf; 22 R2 and R3 bulls; 23 R2 and R3 heifers; 30 2024-born calves; and 3 breeding bulls. They have a two-year plan to have no stock other than two pet dogs and a cat giving them the ability to travel more.

What started as a hobby is run with a commercial yardstick – “They have to pay for themselves,” says Gordon. “Although this is my relaxation and escape, it still has to pay its way.”

He is intrigued by the genetics and breeding component and has sourced genetics in the form of semen and embryo transfers from a number of bloodlines in Australia as well as using his own-bred bulls.

The Guthries started showing almost as soon as they had Lowlines but Mycoplasma bovis and Covid disruptions stalled their showing career and now the only involvement is a bit of judging for Gordon.

Gordon and Debbie were involved with the South Island Lowline Promotion Group since its inception: Gordon as treasurer and Debbie secretary. They were involved in easing the merger of the South Island and North Island groups to form New Zealand Lowline Breeders earlier this year. In 2012 Gordon was elected to the ALCA council, becoming president in 2014, where his business acumen stood the council in good stead for several years.



He believes there’s no real reason to have a separate New Zealand Lowline association so long as communication across the Tasman is good. “I believe breed societies are international. Australia is where the Lowlines were developed.”

The biggest challenge in New Zealand he believes is creating sufficient numbers to look at marketing a branded product, probably through farmers markets. “It’s about the numbers.”

When Gordon and Debbie have spare time away from the cattle, they follow their interest in horses, breeding and racing them. This is something else Gordon got into by accident – this time a broken leg – but that’s another story.

Gordon likes his steak medium; Debbie prefers hers cooked well done.

Pictured: Ashmore Duke, rising seven-year-old bull. Top: The breeding cows. An earlier version of this interview first appeared in the ALCA journal in 2018.

Calving tool box

For some of us calving is imminent and you can never be too prepared. I'm usually totally underprepared. To get my mind into gear I'm sharing the checklist I go through pre-calving.

1. Order tags - I order tags that are printed with my stud name, year and calf number. Our calves are tagged as they are born. Their numbers carry on from the last calf born the previous year. You can buy plain tags and marker pens to write your own. There are lots of colours and various tag sizes available.

2. Check when your vaccinations are due and if it's beneficial for the unborn calf to have its mother's booster shot pre calving. Clostridium vaccine (5 in 1 or similar) should be administered 3-4wks pre calving to give the unborn calf some protection after birth.

3. Magnesium supplementation for the prevention of milk fever should commence 3 weeks prior to the start of calving and should continue till the spring grass flush has started to dry up. Daily dusting of baleage/hay with magnesium oxide powder is an easy and effective way to prevent this disease.

4. Have a basic first aid kit on hand. Over the years we have had a few calves that have needed assistance after birth.

- Colostrum - I have a bag of powder ready to make up. If you have access to fresh even better. 2 litres stored in the freezer.
- Tube drench feeder - to administer colostrum
- Calf cover - dog or xlarge lamb covers are perfect for this. Ripstop canvas and around 60cm is a good length.
- Iodine spray
- Thermometer
- Your local Vet clinic's contact number stored in your phone.



With a few items on hand and your cattle's health requirements sorted enjoy calves arriving. They are precious and a lot of enjoyment for us Lowline lovers. - *Michelle Millar*

Bovine brain benders

Where was the location of the origin of the Lowline breed?

What breed or breeds were used?

Where did these original trial animals come from?

What three lines were the original trial cattle split into?

How many animals were bred in the original trial?

What year were Lowline cattle released to private buyers?

What are the two official names for the breed?

Do Lowlines carry the Achondroplasia gene?

Which country has just created the latest Lowline Society?

What do the letters ALCA stand for?

How now brown cow ...

7% - what do you think 7% might refer to?



Let me give you a clue ...

Yes, it's that 7% of Americans in a 2017 survey believed that chocolate milk comes from brown cows!

You're laughing but it's an indication of the lack of knowledge of many non-farming people – and the hurdles that farmers face trying to make their food production and lifestyle relevant to those people.

NZ Lowline Breeders is a member of the Royal Agricultural Society. RAS is the body that governs royal shows and trains and supports judges across the showing movement. But its core ethos over 100 years is showcasing rural excellence – and part of that is trying to meet non-farming people where they're at to educate and correct misinformation.

The RAS has A&P show association members and 66 affiliated Breed and Kindred societies across Equestrian, Beef, Dairy, Sheep and Other. Groups choose to be affiliated with the RAS to gain access to the benefits of the A&P showing movement but also guidance on health and safety, risk, running meetings, laws – which is available to members only.

I attended the RAS annual conference in Christchurch on June 27-29 as a delegate for NZLB. Friday night was a social get-together, kicked off with a presentation from Caitlin Rhodes (cattle exhibitor including Lowlines and the 2024 RAS Rural Ambassador) on the Associated Shows of Australia conference she went to in February on the Gold Coast. Discussions there covered topics such as how to keep shows going, who their customer is, how to engage with those customers – both rural and urban – all things shows here share. Caitlin shared the 7% example between rural and urban from the Aussie conference.

Saturday at the Chch conference saw several sessions covering ideas for engaging people with the rural sector through the forum of shows, led by Peter Nation, former CEO of Fieldays at Mystery Creek, and Sir David Carter, ex Speaker of the House and the chairman of the new board of the Canterbury A&P Association. We also heard presentations from the Stratford A&P and Canterbury A&P who are both hosting Royal shows this year.

And we heard from five impressive young people making their way in agriculture as they competed for the 2025 Rural Ambassador. Well done Sophie Ridd, of the Western District, on your win. Sophie is a production supervisor with AFFCO in Wairoa and an active participant in showing.

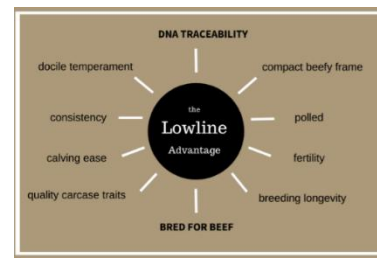
Sunday saw the Equestrian and the United Breeds meetings, then the AGM. Nothing particularly contentious in the remits brought forward - and we finished a convivial conference with a renewed determination to keep promoting farming and youth in farming.

Next survey question: Why does a red cow give white milk when it only eats green grass?

- Kay Worthington

Size matters

The original wording in the Australian Lowline Cattle Association bylaws breed description was females are about 100cm tall at the shoulder and bulls about 110cm. This was an average height of Lowlines when the bylaws were drawn up. About 12 years ago the council decided to remove the mention of specific size because people thought the animals had to be 100cm and 110cm rather than it being “about”, says former ALCA councillor Julie Knight.



Some of the foundation animals were taller and some smaller. Cattle in Queensland have always been smaller, she says. Perhaps it was due to the genetics that originally went to that state or maybe it was environmental.

The council decided to remove any mention of height because over the years breeders have been breeding their Lowlines to suit their markets. Councillors felt that as Lowlines are DNA and parent verified, they are Lowlines no matter what their height.

Gordon Guthrie, who was also an ALCA councillor at the time, recalls a key frustration with the stated height guidelines was that some show judges in Australia were taking it as a strict breed standard and, in some cases, penalising larger-framed Lowlines.

In Victoria (where Julie and Greg have their Wanamara stud) breeders find the abattoirs want a certain carcass weight in order to pay any decent money. So the smaller Lowlines aren't as profitable.

In America the American Aberdeen breeders have mixed Lowline bloodlines with other breeds to increase size, opening up the closed herd genetics.



I asked Julie and Gordon for some detail on the dropping of specific measurements from the bylaws after yarning with a couple of other breeders about bigger bloodlines. I'm not wanting to start an argument on pocket rockets versus bigger is better. But it's an interesting topic and good to know the origins of our breed. It helps us understand how it is evolving.

Lowlines were developed initially as a moderate breed that could do well with less input. A genuine beef animal but also ideal for lifestyle owners. A breed that does well when we don't have feed and fattens really quickly when we do. They are adapted to their environment, which – in the beginning at least – was Australia's droughtier areas.

The bottom line for many breeders (quite rightly) is productivity and dollars. Smaller carcasses don't return as much but does the cost of supplementing to get bigger animals take the edge off that return? Bigger animals do need more feed.

Niche markets can lift the return with specialty butcher relationships and marketing promoting Lowline beef. Australia benefits in that space from an economy of scale that we don't have in New Zealand.

I've also been told larger Lowlines can have longer gestations. Is that another benefit of the breed that will be lost pursuing bigger beasts?

I think there's a Lowline for every situation. What do you think? - Kay Worthington



M's Cattle word search:

Can you find the Lowline and cattle words in the puzzle? Cover the answers to make it harder.



Find the following words in the puzzle.
Words are hidden , , , , and .

- | | | | |
|--------------|---------|--------|------|
| MULTIPURPOSE | LOWLINE | EMBRYO | CALF |
| AUSTRALIAN | SHOWING | HALTER | BULL |
| LAWNMOWERS | DROUGHT | CRUSH | BEEF |
| REGISTERED | BRISKET | YARDS | ALCA |
| DELICIOUS | TRANGIE | STEAK | HERD |
| HAMBURGER | WEIGHTS | TRUCK | COW |
| SAUSAGES | SCALES | LEASE | DNA |
| CHAMPION | HOOVES | DAIRY | MUD |

Quiz answers: Trangie Research Centre, New South Wales; Angus; Scotland, Canada, and the United States; Highline, Lowline and Midline; 42; 1974; Australian Lowline, Lowline (in NZ); No, Lowlines do not have a dwarf gene; United Kingdom; Australian Lowline Cattle Association

Marketplace:

Stud home wanted: **Ironclad Thunderbird & Ironclad Tonka** are proudly offered for sale.

Both top of their year R3 stud bulls. Both have crossbred calves on the ground and 100% Lowline calves due very soon. Easy to handle. All routine healthcare checks maintained.

Please contact Michelle for further information michelle@ironcladstud.nz

Triple M females: Four Casablanca Bandersnatch sired heifers.

Triple M Vivana aka Ana. DOB 17/9/2024. Stone Bridge Donna/ Bandersnatch

Triple M Valentina aka Tina. DOB 19/8/2024 Quintessa/Bandersnatch

Triple M Vanessa aka Vessie. DOB 8/10/2024

Triple M Ulani. DOB 26/08/2023. Triple M Quintessa/Bandersnatch.

DNA is currently being processed before registration.

Three cows: **Triple M Quintessa** (AI) DOB 25/07/2019. Triple M Fleurs Legacy/Ardrosson Orient. Should be incalf, ran with Bandersnatch October til January.

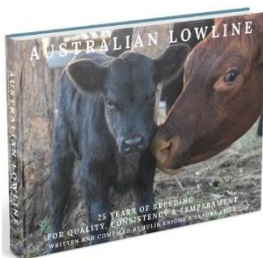
Triple M Oriental Trinket. DOB 03/07/2022. Triple M Quintessa/ Lotus Pablo. In calf to Bandersnatch, building an udder now, due to calve this month.

Triple M Pablo's Trixie. DOB 03/07/2022. Triple M Jazz's Princess/Lotus Pablo. Should be in calf to Bandersnatch. Could be three weeks behind Trinket but ran with bull at same time.

Please contact Sandy Moore for details at norfolks@xtra.co.nz or phone 027 255 4887

Book your prize

Calling all budding writers or photographers. We're putting up a prize for contributions to Newsletter No.3 due out in October. All contributors will go in a draw for a copy of the Australian Lowline history. This beautiful book could be yours so get the camera out or sharpen your pen and send us your thoughts or pictures on anything Lowline. Who doesn't love a cute calf photo? Or a fine-looking adult (bovine or human)? Send to michelle@ironcladstud.nz



The book: "A celebration of 25 years of the Australian Lowline Cattle Association and the acceptance of the Australian Lowline as a breed in its own right."

A look at the heritage and the history of Australian Lowlines — encompassing the arrival of the Glencarnock Angus in 1929, to the Trangie Research Station in New South Wales through to the Lowline cattle of today. This publication highlights the fantastic attributes these compact and versatile cattle have to offer to the small acreage farmer and commercial enterprise alike.