

The Long Black

New Zealand Lowline Breeders Newsletter No.4 February 2026

Saturday, 21 February, was our AGM and Summer Field Day at Ironclad Stud in the rolling Hunua hills. “As promised, good people enjoyed great conversation, fantastic cattle and delicious cuisine in fabulous weather,” reported NZLB on Facebook the next day. A good representation of members (and potential new members) turned up, including by Zoom, to put their views on the AGM discussion topics, elect the committee, enjoy a marvellous Lowline brisket and ribs lunch and walk it off up the track to see the Ironclad herd. Read more about the stud as in this edition our interview is with the hosts for the day, Shanan and Michelle Millar.

Julie Knight, a very knowledgeable Lowline breeder and historian of the breed, has written a piece on New Zealand’s start into Lowlines for us, and we’ve also got some information for you about BVD which can have a significant impact on your herd.

And check out our Lowline tea towel for purchase.

Let us know what you would like to see in the newsletter. Any questions or suggestions please contact our editor, Michelle, at michelle@ironcladstud.nz

2026 NZLB committee

The committee were all returned to office.

Chairperson: Fiona Henschman (Taranaki)

Secretary: Michelle Millar (Hunua)

Treasurer: David Clee (up north)

NZ Member Liaison: Matt Wilkinson
(Rukuhia) – Happy to help with anything

South Island rep: Glen Treweek (down south)

ALCA news

Members did express frustration with the lack of communication with the parent body and the current councillors. NZLB is a positive group and our focus will stay on informing and helping members with their goals with their Australian Lowlines. But we are keen to encourage better communication and efficient handling of the registration process, and a fair and equitable dealing for all members wherever in the world they are. As NZLB proudly states on Facebook: “We share (Lowline) content worldwide.” Matt W’s role as liaison is to help anyone with paperwork processes and information. As the young ones say, “Hit him up” if you need help: mattania37@gmail.com

INTERVIEW:



First generation farmers Shanan and Michelle Millar sit comfortably in the picturesque surrounds gently nestled against the Hunua Ranges Regional Park.

Together they have worked to turn a weedy paddock into what is now a productive Ironclad Stud.

Shanan and Michelle landed on Lowlines by accident, and only because their new neighbour, Steve Quinn of Ngahere Lodge Stud, was leasing their new paddock at the time of purchase and was grazing the pasture with Lowlines based on Casablanca genetics.

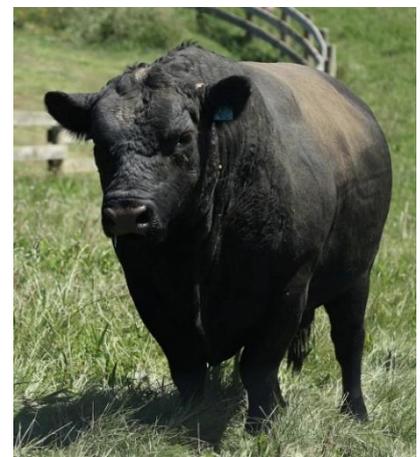
Today, 33 pasture-fed Lowline cattle graze the fertile paddocks. The Ironclad herd comprises 11 breeding

cows plus replacements and bulls. There's also room for four ponies for keen young rider Brooke, aged 8. The Millars' son, Cooper, 11, completes the family with Michelle's mum and dad also living on the property in a hilltop house with a valley view. They are understanding neighbours when the bull mob decides to have a singalong in the paddock right outside the window.

Heifers are calved as 3-year-olds and bulls are grown out to supply both stud bulls and commercial bulls to the dairy sector.

A solid dairy customer base has been built up to the point they cannot supply enough bulls. Their dairy-farmer clients choose to get several years work out of Ironclad bulls to produce easy-calving, polled calves that set up dairy heifers well for their first lactation.

Ironclad is named for a family trust that was named after a red wine from Man O War Vineyard on Waiheke Island. The vineyard itself was named in honour of the 19th Century warships characterised by the iron armour bolted onto their wooden hulls. Michelle tries to incorporate this nautical theme when naming stud bulls. Watchman, Whisky and Wingman round out the bull calves from last season with a couple of heifers named Wynyard and Whitewash. The current senior bull is Ironclad Scania, pictured right.



This last breeding season (calves expected July-August 2026)

the stud opted to give AI a miss and lease a bull with outcross genetics: Black Ridge

Unquestionable, owned by Lowland Park. Michelle says: “He ticks all the boxes of what we wanted with an outcross bull and our breeding objectives. New genetics, growth, a beef-producing frame, super quiet laidback attitude to life and handsome good looks.”

They also used a favourite of Michelle’s, Ironclad Unhinged. She says he “sits fairly on the top of Ironclad’s best performing list over all previously bred bulls. Exceptional growth, fantastic length, perfect feet, beef-producing frame and that almost dopey nothing-phases-me docile nature that I’m constantly striving to achieve.”

The couple say New Zealand Lowline Breeders has enabled good friendships, networking and knowledge sharing which enables Ironclad Stud to continually improve their cattle. They like their Lowline steaks cooked medium-rare, and those at the recent field day can vouch for Shanana’s skills smoking and cooking brisket and ribs (up at 3.45am to get the smoker on).



The crowd at the NZLB field day checks out the bulls, right, who check them out right back.

Photos courtesy of Tania Wilkinson



The rolling pastures of Hunua’s Ironclad Stud on the edge of the regional park.

From the beginning

Lowlines have a proud history in New Zealand, and the people who first established them here should never be forgotten. Their foresight, commitment and willingness to take risks laid the foundation for the breed we enjoy today – hardy, medium-sized, naturally polled cattle that thrive in New Zealand’s cooler climate. They carry forward the legacy of their ancestors, originally bred for the rugged conditions of north-east Scotland.

The Lowline story in New Zealand began in 1995, when Lowline Cattle NZ (stud name Kotinga, based near Auckland in the North Island) purchased foundation cattle from Ian Pullar of Brambletye Stud, a co-founder of the breed in Australia. While a small number of animals were imported directly into New Zealand, many of the purchased females were flushed in Australia, with embryos exported here. Semen was also collected from the purchased bulls and shipped to New Zealand, ensuring strong foundation genetics for the new and developing herd.

In 1996, new ALCA members Grant and Pam Johnson (Mt View Stud, near Rangiora in the South Island) imported a bull and two heifers from Jeanette and Peter Stebbins of Ardrossan Stud in Victoria. So keen were the Johnsons to become involved with Lowlines that Grant, then a pilot with Air New Zealand, flew Pam across the Tasman for a day trip so she could see the Ardrossan cattle first-hand, returning home again that very night.

It was a commitment that reflected the enthusiasm many early breeders shared. The following year, 1997, saw further cattle arriving in the South Island. Gordon and Debbie Guthrie (Ashmore Stud, Ashburton) and June McConnel (Cherryvale Stud, near Hamilton in the North Island) imported animals from Geoff and Kenneil Martin of Longbow Stud and Allan Beech of Avonsleigh Stud in Victoria, further strengthening the breed’s presence in New Zealand.

The appeal of Lowlines — their moderate size, quiet temperament and high-quality beef — quickly attracted interest, particularly among smaller landholders and those embracing a farming lifestyle. Studs began appearing around the country as enthusiasm for the breed grew.

The first three New Zealand-bred Lowlines registered with ALCA were Kotinga Rocky (later exported to Canada), Kotinga Pippa (exported to the USA) and Kotinga Robin. Kotinga Stud went on to produce and sell embryos to new breeders nationwide, while additional genetics, in the form of embryos and semen, were sourced from leading Australian studs to widen and strengthen the national gene pool.

From these beginnings, the Lowline population in New Zealand steadily grew. Today, as members of the Lowline community, New Zealand Lowline breeders benefit from the vision and dedication of those early pioneers and the people who have remained committed to the breed over the years. Their work has enabled the current NZ members to enjoy breeding, developing and promoting this unique and distinctive cattle breed. Current ALCA NZ members who joined between 1995 - 2005 are Gordon and Debbie Guthrie (Ashmore), David and Christina Clee



(Rancho Radiata), (Philip and) Kay Worthington (Woolstone Park), Kevin and Penny Harmer (were Araawa), Mike Harnett and Katherine McDowell (Compak Black), and Sandy and Kathryn Moore (Triple M).

----- by Julie Knight, Lowline breeder and historian

Cleaning up with Lowlines

A Lowline tea towel was designed and printed commercially for the AGM. The photos came from six New Zealand and Australian breeders, and the layout of images was Michelle Millar's concept. It's a good-size tea towel and a good, dimpled fabric. Orders are being taken. We have set the price at \$35, which will also cover postage. Michelle will have account details of how to pay when you email her with your order – michelle@ironcladstud.nz . **Orders close on March 7.** What better place to celebrate Lowlines than your very own kitchen - and the towels would make great gifts.



Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD)

BVD is an infection that can cause numerous health problems in cattle including damage to the digestive and immune system, birth defects and abortions.

The New Zealand dairy herd mostly tests and monitors milk four times per year to keep the disease out because the consequences of BVD are colossal and costly to eliminate.

Around 45% to 55% (Dairy NZ figures) of New Zealand beef herds have cattle that are actively infected and that includes Lowline herds.

New Zealand beef bull breeders who supply bulls to serve dairy cattle are aware of the risks their bulls pose to the New Zealand dairy herd and testing and double vaccinating bulls for BVD is standard practice.

NZLB recommends that anyone buying or selling bulls to test the bulls to ensure they are BVD free and double vaccinate well before selling or leasing. BVD testing can be carried out with the Allflex TSU ear punch at the time of DNA verifying or with a blood test by your vet.

Testing and vaccinating your whole herd annually are the best way to keep your herd safe. If bulls are being sold or leased, it is imperative they are tested BVD free and double vaccinated.

ALCA now has the BVD status of BVD-free animals on the database and it is free to upload your results.

BVD is a disease no one wants in their herd.

-- *By Matt Wilkinson*



M's Meanderings

This is a column of snippets from around the traps.

We welcome your contributions.

Contact michelle@ironcladstud.nz

Bye bye Bovie



Bovie was Rancho Radiata's (David and Christina Clee) matriarch cow, born in 2004. She died peacefully in the paddock in mid-February, having reached her 22nd birthday. Her sire was imported from Australia as an embryo. He won the inaugural eye muscle/body weight competition at the Sydney Royal Easter Show by such a margin over 14 other breeds, that it was never held again! Although not exactly pretty, she produced 17 calves with superb qualities. Her 12 heifers were all used for breeding, 11 were registered. The bulls were only okay, with 3 sold as lifestyle breeders. She had her first calf at 19 months, although that was not intentional. Her genes live on in her many quality descendants.

The photo of Bovie was taken at age 20 years at Rancho Radiata. (C.C.)

Tania's Art

From the what-our-members-get-up-to file: Tania "Snapper" Wilkinson provided several of the photographs for this newsletter. She is also a talented artist. The drawing pictured is of a handsome young chap, Rancho Radiata Pluto, a registered pedigree Australian Lowline bull, drawn in 2021. Check out Tania's other works on her Facebook page, Tania's Art.



Unhinged – the little sucker who grew

Ironclad Unhinged, ICDU094. Unhinged was born on August 16, 2023, on a horrible wet



and particularly muddy day. He was a big strong calf but was born dopey, not helped by being cold and miserable. Despite all of Michelle and Shan'an's attempts, Ironclad Quasi's big bull calf couldn't find the energy to learn to suck. Luckily Matt and Tania Wilkinson had some frozen colostrum in the freezer. We quickly defrosted some knowing that time was

running out and made the mercy dash to Ironclad Stud with the tube feeder, to save Unhinged at nearly 24 hours old. Unhinged didn't learn to drink quickly, hence the name, and he took several more days of care to get him to feed. Once he learned to suck, there was no holding him back - he grew on to be the fastest-growing Ironclad stud bull to date, and one of the quietest. His first progeny will be on the ground in August 2026. (M.W.)

NZLB Website

New Zealand Lowlines

- [Breed history](#)
- [NZLB- who are we?](#)
- [Buying Lowlines, a beginners guide](#)
- [Lowline Cattle in New Zealand in 2026](#)
- [Lowline bulls for easy calving](#)
- [Lowlines for beef, the NZ dairy- beef trials](#)
- [Lowline beef, Kaitake Lowlines, Taranaki](#)
- [Lowline Genetics ***FOR SALE***](#)
- [New Zealand Lowline Breeder websites](#)
- [NZLB Newsletters, The Long Black...](#)
- [Showing](#)
- [Useful links](#)
- [Archives](#)

Matt W and Glen Treweek have worked together on a group website. Thanks Glen for your expertise. The address is **nzlowlines.com** There is also a link to it on the NZLB Facebook page, **New Zealand Lowline Breeders Network**.



Matt urges members to have a look and make suggestions. The tech team is super keen for content which can currently be sent to Matt at mattania@gmail.com for posting.

At left you can see the various sections the team has set up for populating. Some pages are in development awaiting content so bombard Matt with stories, photos etc please.

Gender defender



Who has most impact on your herd? The excellent bull who has 20 or 30 calves a year by various cows or the lovely cow who gives you 17 calves in 20 years to various bulls? It was a topic thrown up at the lunch table at the field day. Lots of opinions – what do you think?



ALCA accounts Zoom meeting

For those who are ALCA members there is a Zoom meeting on Saturday, February 28, for the presentation of the ALCA accounts which were not ready in time for the AGM in November. The link for the special general meeting of the association was in an email from the ALCA council, sent on February 20. The meeting is set for 2pm New South Wales time so that's 4pm for us Kiwis. The email also contains a link to view the financial reports as they have been presented by the council. If you want to attend and don't have the link contact Genetic Hub office@genetichub.com.au

Word finder

New Zealand Lowline Studs



Find the following words in the puzzle.

Words are hidden , , , , and .

ARAWA

ASHMORE

BARNYARD

BAUMEISTER

BELLA BESTIAME

BHQ PERFORMANCE

BLACK RIDGE

CANTO ALEGRE

CB FARMS

ENGEDI

IRONCLAD

JUBILEE

KAITAKE

LOWLAND PARK

LOWRIDA

MANAPIKO

MILL CREEK

PADDOCKS

NURTURE FARM

OAKWOOD RIDGE

PEAK

PIPI DOWNS

RANCHO RADIATA

RIVERMONTE

SOOTYDOWNS

SUMMIT

TOTARA GLEN

TRIPLE M

WAKATIPU

WOOLSTONE PARK