

Violet Hills Charolais



Summer Newsletter 2011



INTRODUCTION

At Violet Hills we have been very fortunate to have experienced a mild winter and a relatively good supply of paddock feed. We have calved down approximately 300 pedigree Charolais cows this spring. We now look forward to regular falls of rain after some timely falls in late November to give us a good season.

BACKGROUND and BREEDING PROGRAMME

From my early days of cattle breeding it was always impressed on me by my father, to breed cattle that met market requirements and were suitable for the environment that they were produced in. Briefly, good doing, easy care cattle that meet market requirements. Since starting to breed Charolais in 1972, we have retained this as one of our main aims.

To expand the genetic base for Charolais in Australia we rely on importing genetics from overseas countries. These countries have different environments, different management systems and different end product requirements to Australia. In a large, diverse country, like Australia, these same limitations exist, especially when we compare the North to the South.

In France, the home of Charolais, the intensive production systems have led to less emphasis on calving ease, structure and efficiency of the cattle than we require. In many European countries beef markets require a much leaner, larger framed animal with most of the beef coming from young bulls or cull cows. As a result, many of the French Charolais are late maturing, which makes it difficult to join the heifers before they are 2 year old, and can also make it difficult to fatten the progeny of these bulls at our required slaughter weights. This is especially so with our grass based production systems. A lot of the genetics from the UK and Ireland have similar problems as their breeders rely heavily on direct importations from France.

The North American breeders have been breeding Charolais for many years longer than we have in Australia. They have placed emphasis on improving maternal characteristics (fertility, milking and calving ease) as well as finishing ability. In the process, performance and conformation have sometimes suffered. Their strong emphasis on performance recording (EPD's) as a marketing tool has resulted in many structural faults being overlooked. Poor temperament is also a problem in particular lines. The North American production system is based on feedlot finishing while the animal's ability to perform on grass has often been neglected.

These are general comments to which there are exceptions. It remains a challenge for Australian Charolais breeders to "shandy" the desirable traits of these overseas genetics with the genetics that have proven successful for Australian conditions and markets.

A further challenge is the diversity of environments, target animals and market requirements in Australia. For example, in northern Australia with its harsher environment, Bos Indicus target animals and different market requirements, has resulted in a market for larger framed, later maturing Charolais. Compare this to the southern production systems, where the climate is milder, the pasture is of higher quality and the target animals are British Breeds and their crosses. Here, the most successful Charolais are the moderate framed, earlier maturing strains with good conformation and an ability to perform on grass. The use of the larger framed, later maturing Charolais in the southern beef industry can often lead to problems in meeting market specifications.

Fortunately, some of the progressive stud breeders have accepted the challenge to breed Charolais that are appropriate for the Southern production systems.

The sad reality is that many breeders still think that the use of overseas genetics will provide the instant "silver bullet" for their breeding programme. If only it was that simple!!!!

At the end of the day there is one indisputable fact, and that is, if the appropriate Charolais are used, the progeny produced will be exceptional and the financial benefits will be significant. The emphasis is on "APPROPRIATE".

At Violet Hills we have found our home bred sires much more predictable and capable of producing cattle appropriate for our customers.

We still use a selection of AI sires for two main reasons:-

- 1) It enables us to benchmark our homebred sires against outside genetics that are used in other herds.
- 2) It enables us to introduce new genetics to our sire battery. Each year we trial a number of yearling bulls by giving them 20-30 cows each. Some of these will go on to be successful herd sires.

BREEDPLAN

We pride ourselves for having one of the most comprehensively recorded Charolais herds in Australia. With very few exceptions, all of our calves are weighed at birth, and then weighed at 200days, 400days and 600days, if they are still with us. All of the heifers and most of the bulls are scanned for EMA, rib fat depth and rump fat depth. The sale bulls also have their scrotal circumference and marbling percent age measured.



We mainly **use Breedplan as a tool to give us a guide to our**

progress from year to year, as well as benchmark our cattle against other herds.

One of our aims is to improve the Domestic Index for our cattle.

We are pleased to say that most, if not all, of our bulls in our next sale, will have a Domestic Index above breed average.



We place very little value on Show ring results as a Sire selection tool. The feedback from our clients, our own experience, industry supervised trials coupled with our extensive performance recording all play an important role in the direction of our breeding programme.

2011 VIOLET HILLS SALE REPORT

Being our first sale we were on a very steep learning curve. Sean had a few very busy months supervising the construction of the sale shed and fitting it out. It certainly was a relief for him when most things worked well. He has identified a few small areas for improvement, which should ensure the 2012 sale runs even better. The offering of commercial females (PTIC) and steer weaners prior to the bull sale was well received and will be a feature of the sale again.

The bull sale was very encouraging with 30 selling for an average of \$4200. The top price of \$10,000 was paid for Violet Hills Executive (P) by Ashwood Park Charolais, Yea, Vic. In all, 7 Charolais studs purchased bulls at the sale. Our miscalculation on the number of bulls to

Offer, led to some very good buying towards the end of the sale. Andrew Bickford and the gang from Elders Bathurst, along with John Horne and Paul Dooley from Elders Stud Stock did a sterling job.

On reflection we were pleased with the first sale.

Violet Hills Edgar was purchased by Geoff and Glenys Thompson, Stoney Creek, Victoria for \$5,500. VHV Edgar is one of the many good examples of Violet Hills Barclay's progeny.



PERFORMANCE TRIALS and STEER CARCASE COMPETITIONS

Australian National Field Days Steer Trial

Violet Hills entered a team of 4 purebred yearling steers in the 2010/2011 Australian National Field Day Steer Trial. The steers were run on grass for approximately 100 days and the finished at the Gundamain feedlot for 100 days. Finally they were slaughtered at Cargill Beef, Wagga Wagga. All carcasses were VIA scanned, MSA graded, photographed and measured. The visual assessment was carried out by Jeff House from NSW DPI, Forbes. The competition consisted of 31 teams with many breeds represented.

The Violet Hills steers were in Class 2 (the heavier class) and won the live weight gain on grass, the pen of carcasses, and were the overall winner of Class 2.

They were then awarded the John Sharpe Trophy, which is awarded to the Champion pen of steers scoring the highest total points of all groups entered in the trial.

The steers were by our home bred sire, Violet Hills Alexander, and they demonstrated that when the APPROPRIATE Charolais are used, they **will** meet industry requirements both in the paddock and when slaughtered.

The longer we are involved in breeding Charolais the more convinced we are that the best (and maybe the only) way to combine extra muscling and early finishing ability is to select well muscled, moderate framed, early maturing types of Charolais. This has been clearly shown with our results in the ANFD steer and carcass competition, where our purebred steers met all of the commercial requirements.



The 3 winning steers just prior to slaughter.

RAS Sydney Steer and Carcass Competition

Hurlstone Agricultural High School prepared and paraded a pure bred Violet Hills steer at the 2011 Sydney RAS show. The steer was by Violet Hills Alexander. The steer won the Reserve Champion Heavyweight Carcass award with a score of 90 points.

This follows Violet Hills winning the Grand Champion Carcass of the Sydney RAS show in 2004 and the Champion Heavyweight Carcass in 2005.

Canberra Royal Steer Competition

Hurlstone Agricultural High School also prepared and paraded the Reserve Champion Heavyweight Steer (on the hoof) at the Canberra Royal Steer Competition. The purebred steer was by Violet Hills Alexander.

CASE STUDY

Grahame and Debbie Edgell, Somerton Park, Sodwalls, recently purchased a Violet Hills bull to mate with a portion of their high quality Murray Grey herd. From the first crop of calves the weaning weights of the Charolais cross calves were 50 kg heavier than the pure bred Murray Grey calves of the same age and run under the same conditions. This gives a margin of well over \$100 per head for the cross bred calves. This translates into a margin of well over \$5000 in ONE YEAR for the progeny of one bull. There are not many investments that give you this sort of return!!! Needless to say the Edgell family has since purchased another two bulls.

One of the Murray GreyX Charolais steer calves was prepared by students of Richmond High School and entered in the Central Coast Prime Beef Competition 2011, where the carcass won the Reserve Heavyweight Championship with a score of 92 points. The Champion scored 92.5 points!! (only 0.5 points more).

One of the real pleasures of stud breeding is being associated with progressive beef producers.

VIOLET HILLS ANNUAL SALE 3rd of MAY 2012

Our next Annual On-Property sale will be held on the **3rd of May 2012.**

The sale will be held in our under-cover sale shed, and we will have approximately 45 bulls to offer. The majority of these bulls will be polled and will have a Domestic Index above breed average. This means that they should be better than the average Charolais bull for producing vealers and yearlings. We are **SURE** they will be!

Also on offer will be approximately 25 commercial Charolais X Red Angus heifers PTIC to Red Angus bulls. 50 weaner steers will also be presented for sale. All cattle are E.U. accredited.



Young 14 month old bulls that will be in this year's sale.

SOUTHERN BREEDERS SALE – WHITTLESEA VICTORIA 29th FEB. 2012

Violet Hills has been invited to enter 12 bulls. We have selected a line of quality young bulls that will be ideal for the vealer/yearling market. These bulls will carry our usual quality guarantee.

NEW SIRE---Violet Hills Dane 3yrs old

Violet Hills Dane is an outstanding young sire, who has outstanding growth figures, excellent conformation and excellent feet and legs. He was used as a yearling and this spring is his 3rd joining. His first progeny are exhibiting his conformation and should make superb vealer sires. He is by Violet Hills Alexander, who has been an outstanding performer in steer trials and carcass competitions. At this stage we will be using him over V.H. Barclay's cows as we believe they will compliment each other. He weighed 1126kg when this photo was taken just before joining this spring. His first sons will be in our sale (2012).

V.H.Xceed (VH VX53E)
V.H.Alexander (VH V A47E)
V.H.Taboo (VH VT33E)
V.H.Dane (VH V D130E)
Impair
V.H.Y32E (VH VY32E)
V.H.Sioban (VH VS30E)

OCTOBER 2011 EBV's for VIOLET HILLS DANE

B.W.	200M	200G	400G	600G	G.L.	S.S.	CE Dir	CE MI	M.Cow	C.Wt	C.Rib	C.Rump	CEMA
0.6	2.0	16	33	39	-2.5	-0.4	2.8	4.6	49	27	-0.5	-0.7	2.8
87%	43%	82%	81%	77%	60%	57%	52%	40%	64%	67%	50%	50%	40%

DOMESTIC INDEX 33 (top 10% for breed)

EXPORT INDEX 42 (top 10% for breed)

400 DAY WEIGHT +33kg (top 5% for breed)

At Violet Hills we are always pleased to show visitors our herd and discuss our breeding programme. We would also encourage prospective purchasers to inspect the sale bulls prior to our annual sale. A selection of



sale bulls will be on display during the **CENTRAL WEST BEEF WEEK DISPLAY** (23rd March 2012) at the CTLX , Carcoar.

Seasons Greetings and Best Wishes for 2012,

The Jenkins Family. Daryl and Kaye 0263593221 m 0428639674

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