

Pair share a passion for herefords

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Okawa Major this year for \$55,000.

They have taken on board Morrow's philosophy of producing great cows.

"He tries to breed the best possible cow and the bull will be the byproduct. We are trying to produce the best possible female line we can and then add in these bulls to put the cherry on the top," Pip says.

A breeder could sell a bull once, yet a good cow could produce several good bulls or heifers.

His selection criteria were based around pedigree and confirmation and EBV's were there as a guide. He also culls any replacement heifers or females that do not get in calf.

"When you're looking at cattle, you *really* need to look at them. You can't learn about cattle from sitting on a computer, looking at figures."

The stud operation consists of 150 cows and heifers and offers around 40 yearling bulls for sale every year. The cows calve from July 10 through to September and are sorted into sire mobs, each mob allocated a different bull when mating gets underway on October 1.

Pip works closely with Crawford and in the late summer they plan what paddocks the cattle will go into for that season.

The cows calve in a break-feed system for ease of management while the sheep are run separate on the farm's harder country.

The calves are weighed and tagged at birth. Their sex is checked and the information is collected by Pip.

They are weighed again at weaning on February 20 and monthly for weight gain and shortly before sale.

The yearlings are winter-fed kale for six weeks and then strip graze, allowing the Robinsons to lock up the paddocks over winter.

The stud animals are treated the same as the beef finishing commercial herd.

"They are allocated those paddocks and they don't get any more or less," Pip says.

The only time the cows mix with the sheep is after weaning in



Proof of breed: If you breed a great cow, then a great bull will be its byproduct, Pip Robinson says. Pictured are hereford stud cows and their 2-week-old calves.

bulls to sell at the AgInnovation expo, held in Feilding every year.

He also has an eye on supplying the Auckland hospitality market.

"There is a real hunger there for quality beef and there is a bit of a story there as to where it's come from and herefords are an unknown source."

For that to happen, Bruce and Pip will need to increase their stock numbers so they can guarantee supply to that market.

They would also need to further establish a market for people buying their bulls so they would have somewhere to sell them into.

Bruce and Pip believed the beef industry was at a crossroads.

While dairy beef was a big market, in the near future there will be a strong market for pure beef cattle because they yielded more than their dairy-beef counterparts.

In recent times, there had been a move among breeders to shift to more traditional looking, high-yielding animals rather than the larger North American cattle.

"I think in the years to come, Countdown and the others will pay a premium for beef-bred cattle, so we're trying to breed a bull that has all these things," Bruce says.

"This Auckland market is such a huge beast, and I don't think we have really tapped into it yet," Pip adds.

Looking ahead, Bruce and Pip hope to increase the size of the breeding herd to over 200, which will see the commercial operation cut back. But that expansion will not come at the expense of the quality of the stud.

"Expanding the stud will be quite a few years down the track. I would rather have quality first, then expand from that."

Pip says he is always striving for higher standards for his bulls.

"That's the challenge of breeding cattle. I don't think you're ever going to be content and if you are I think you might be losing your edge a little bit."

the summer, when they are used to clean up paddocks.

The stud's sheep operation has 3500 romney ewes, of which 1000 are mated with a blackfaced ram and lambed early for the early trade market.

The farm's pastures had good winter growth, which helped those early lambing sheep and enabled the Robinsons to get the lambs away quickly.

The rest of those ewes are mated to a romney ram and lamb a month later. Those lambs also provide the flock with any replacements.

The two-tooth flock are mated to coopworth rams in an effort to boost their flock's hybrid vigour and fertility in the future.

They run 1150 ewe hoggets and 680 of those were mated this season and 480 are in lamb.

The lambs are sold to Progressive Enterprises, who process the stock at their Wilson Hellaby plant in Auckland.

Out of 4800 lambs, they killed 3700, averaging \$102 per lamb. Any cull ewes are processed by Affco.

It is an important money

earner for the stud, bringing in \$450,000.

Crawford deserved a lot of the credit for the success of the sheep operation, Bruce says.

"We are very fortunate to have Roger here. He's a real sheep man and he works very hard with them and it's a credit to him to get them up to those weights."

They also finish about 600 steers, buying in 15-month exotic crossbred cattle and finishing them at an average of 700kg LW (350kg carcass weight). Depending on the season, they can return a margin of about \$550-\$600/head.

They also finish about 70 heifers for local trade.

The farm used to run 1100 commercial cattle, but those numbers have dropped back to 900, including the stud cattle, as the income from the stud grows.

The Robinsons sell yearling stud bulls to mostly dairy farmer clients who mate the bulls with their cows. This year's sale on September 10 will see 32 bulls on offer.

Those cows produce a white face dairy-beef cross calf for the

farmer that they can sell for a premium at the calf sales.

Their bulls leave the farm at about 460kg live weight, but do not service the cows until they are about 16 months, in July.

As a result, the Robinsons try to produce a sizeable bull to do that job.

"There's no low birthweight here. We're trying to breed yearling bulls to go over mixed age cows," Pip says.

Dairy farmers had simple demands.

They liked bulls that were well marked to give the calf a white face. They wanted bulls with a quiet temperament and the size to be able to mate with their cows.

The most common feedback he has had from clients about his bulls are their ability to shift from their hill country environment to flatter dairying country.

Trying to breed a stud bull was a different challenge and was a longer term goal for the stud.

The markings had to be perfect, it had to have the right pedigree and a good estimated breeding value (EBV).

Pip hopes one day to take his



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