

THE GENETIC PROGRESS OF THE AUSSIE RED BREED CONTINUES...

Writes John Harle

When we are checking new ABVs every April and August, I always check the proof of GRASGARDE 820. He will always be a very special bull for me. When we started importing Scandinavian Red Breed Semen back in 1987, we had very limited access to bulls with proofs. However one of the Swedish AB Centres, S.O.S based near Kalmar kept some bulls alive until they received their first proofs. Thankfully GRASGARDE was one of those lucky bulls. He became a popular bull in Australia and a few years later became the Red Breeds team leader with our ABV system. This was a real achievement. There was no linkages, there was no pedigree data to help him. What got him the coveted position of team leader was the solid performance of his daughters. They proved that they could perform in the tough Australian environment which is vastly different to the environment around Kalmar.

I checked his proof this April. GRASGARDE still has the same type of proof. He is still a "Big Milk Bull". His proof is based on data from 573 Australian daughters in 167 herds. This confirms that he was a popular bull. However in the Red Breeds list he is now ranked #231. In other words 230 Red bulls now have proofs that are higher than his. At first glance this may be disappointing news to some people but in reality it is a sign of the terrific genetic progress being made in the last 25 years in the Aussie Red/Scandinavian Red World in Australia.

HOWEVER WE MUST KEEP UP THE MOMENTUM.

The Scandinavian/Aussie Reds still face strong competition from the Holsteins and the Jerseys. Currently Genetics Australia has two main roles in providing top Red genetics to both Red Breeders and Cross Breeders.

We market semen from top bulls from our Aussie Red Progeny Test program.

We also market semen from top bulls proven by our sister farmer owned Co-operative Geno in Norway. Following study of the April proofs we have ordered another shipment of semen from Geno. When the shipment is here, I will write some editorial about this outstanding team of Norwegian bulls. Right now I prefer to concentrate on discussing Genetics Australia's Aussie Red Breed Improvement program.

GENETICS AUSTRALIA'S AUSSIE RED PROGRAM

We know that we will always face strong competition from the successful Scandinavian Red programs in all four Nordic countries, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. Thankfully we are friends as well as strong competitors because we are all using the same genetics with similar breeding goals. These include the welfare of both the Dairy farmers and their cattle. We all believe in the same basic philosophy:

- PRODUCTION
- HEALTH
- CALVING EASE
- FERTILITY
- LONGEVITY = PROFIT

We all realise that Dairy Farms must be operated on a sustainable basis.

THERE ARE IMPORTANT REASONS FOR GENETICS AUSTRALIA TO OPERATE A STRONG AUSSIE RED PROGENY TEST PROGRAM.

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These include:

- It must be an advantage to Australian Farmers to have access to Aussie Red proven sires that have been tested under our environment and management systems.
- More opportunities for Aussie Red Breeders. Our philosophy is to use as sires the best Red bulls in the world and source our young bulls from members of top Australian Aussie Red cow families.
- Having access to top Aussie Red sires proven under a "Pasture Plus" system should help Dairy Farmers in many countries enjoy higher profits and a better lifestyle. Genetics Australia has a very hard working Export Manager, Robert Derksen. Rob has been successful in achieving exports of Aussie Red semen to many countries including USA, New Zealand, Thailand, The Philippines, Costa Rica and Uruguay. Very recently the first shipment of Aussie Red semen was sent to Italy!

FINALLY I am sure Aussie Red Breeders understand why I am always contacting them, looking for support to get Progeny Test bulls proven. The breed has a great future both in Australia and in many other countries. However, our main challenge remains getting bulls proven – we are always looking for more Progeny Test Co-operators and we hope many of our existing Co-operators will increase the number of doses of Progeny Test semen that they use in 2015.

WE HAVE BEEN THROUGH A TOUGH PERIOD with constant large adverts "Wanted Holstein Heifers For China". However there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Earlier this year I contacted a lot of farmers who supported Genetics Australia's Aussie Red Progeny Test Program in 2014. Thankfully the vast majority of them plan to continue supporting Genetics Australia's Progeny Test Program this year.

I also talked to a number of Crossbreeders. The ones who continued using top genetics of three Dairy breeds are happy with the results. I anticipate we will continue to get strong support from this group.

Some farmers have mixed herds, part Aussie Red and part Crossbred. Some of these farmers are clearly very happy with their Aussie Reds and may move to all Aussie Red herds. This will give us the benefits of a larger Aussie Red population.

I have been talking to some Illawarra breeders recently and plan to talk to more in the coming weeks. There is definite interest in our Progeny test sons of the leading Danish Red Sire FASTRUP. We have 3x sons of FASTRUP in our current Aussie Red Progeny Test Team – ARBBRADPITT from BEAULANDS AKS KATIE EX 92, ARBRON from BEAULANDS AKS ROSIE 2 and ARBXFACTOR from BOSGOWAN DAISY 40 EX 90. All these three Progeny Test bulls have high genetic potential and if we can get more Illawarra and Aussie Red breeders to include them in their AB Programs we will certainly be able to prove those bulls more quickly.

GENETICS AUSTRALIA'S AUSSIE RED PROGENY TEST PROGRAM IS CONTINUING TO ACHIEVE POSITIVE RESULTS.

In April 2014 four Aussie Red bulls graduated from Genetics Australia's Progeny Test Program and joined our elite Proven Team. These bulls were, ARBHILLY, ARBOBAMA, ARBICESTAR and ARBNICK. Granted these proofs were of relatively low reliability being based on data from only a limited number of daughters. However since then, they have added more daughters to their proofs and they are still in our Elite Proven Team today.

More recently in April this year another four bulls graduated and joined our Elite Proven team. These bulls were, ARBDMAX, ARBWOLVERINE, ARBJONTY and ARBLATROBE. Once again these bulls also have proofs of relatively low reliability but they do have potential. Used in moderation as members of a team they should all contribute many strengths to a breeding program. Naturally we are all looking forward to their next ABVs due in August.

GENETIC DIVERSITY

Over the years there has been a lot of discussions about inbreeding contributing to lower farm profits. Therefore it is very pleasing to report that included in our new Elite Proven Aussie Red team are sons of 10 successful sires. With a very moderate amount of checking, inbreeding should not become a problem for Red Breeders & Cross Breeders.

FINALLY – ONE MORE POSITIVE NOTE

A data panel in the Weekly Times after the release of recent ABVs included details of the Top 10 Red Breeds – Profit – Australian Proven. Genetics Australia cannot claim to have included all of these bulls in previous Progeny Test Teams. However we can claim that we are using or have used seven of the top eight bulls as sires of sons for Genetics Australia's Aussie Red Progeny Test Program. The sons that we are testing also came from some of Australia's top Red cow families.

- We are definitely on the right track.
- We look forward to the future with confidence.

MAKING THE BEST USE OF GENETICS AUSTRALIA'S PROVEN AUSSIE RED SIRES IN YOUR BREEDING PROGRAM IN 2015.

This team offers top genetics, value for money and great Genetic Diversity.

ARBONJOVI (ORRARYD X TORP 882) A2A2

ARBONJOVI remains a high demand sire. His proof includes data from 659 Australian daughters in 146 herds. ARBONJOVI is now Genetics Australia's Red team leader for improving daughter fertility with a very impressive rating of 106/87% Rel. Having a highly fertile herd of cows is very important in achieving top farm profits.

ARBHILLY (VEST DELTA X FYNAKS) 22% Holstein genetics. ARBHILLY has always been a high demand sire, both as a progeny test sire and ever since he obtained his first proof. The vast majority of farmers that I talk to milking ARBHILLY daughters, definitely like them.

To benefit the most from ARBHILLY's top genetics, I suggest he is best mated to high component, low milk flow cows to lift production of Milk, Protein and Fat in the next generation. His rating of 122/64% Rel for Cell Count will definitely help his popularity. Plus ARBHILLY should improve Type virtually across the board. He has positive ratings for the vast majority of traits for the Body & Rump, Feet & Legs and the Mammary System.

ARBOBAMA (OBROLIN X BOTANS)

ARBOBAMA was a popular bull in 2014 and the high demand for his semen should continue this year. With his rating of +17kg Protein & 0.25% Protein – ARBORBAMA is clearly a very good choice to mate to high milk flow, low Protein Composition cows.

Outstanding rating for Milking Speed – 105. He is the Aussie Red Team leader for this trait. This makes ARBOBAMA a very good choice to mate to any slow milking cows. ADHIS does not calculate Calving Ease ratings for Reds. However with a Sire Pathway of OBROLIN X BOTANS, ARBOBAMA should be a Calving Ease sire and be suitable to mate to Maiden Heifers.

ARBLIPPMAN (TMOBERG X STENSJO)

ARBLIPPMAN is shaping up as THE all-rounder in the team, with his good ratings for Production, Type particularly the Mammary System and Cell Counts. With his current proof, ARBLIPPMAN should find a place in the proven Sire teams of all Red breeders. The top proof of ARBLIPPMAN may surprise some people. However ARBLIPPMAN has clearly inherited some of the type strengths of his Danish Red sire – TMOBERG. Remember the dam of TMOBERG was a full sister of FYNAKS.

Also don't overlook the strong Bosgowan Primula cow family behind ARBLIPPMAN. His dam Primula 334 and MGD Primula 203 were two of the top cows of their generation bred at Bosgowan. Remember Primula 203 was the dam of ARBLAWRENCE, one of the great "Pioneer" bulls of the Aussie Red breed.

ARBDMAX (VEST DELTA X KREJSTAD)

We welcome ARBDMAX to Genetics Australia's Proven Aussie Red Team. However we all need to be aware that ARBDMAX, ARBJONTY, ARBLATROBE and ARBWOLVERINE have proofs of low reliability and are best used in moderation as members of a team. Used in this way, they will all contribute different strengths to a breeding program.

ARBICESTAR (ANDERSTA X CHRISTIANSBORG) A2A2

ARBICESTAR has retained his top all-round proof. As an ANDERSTA Son he may be a Calving Ease sire. With his strengths of improving production and Protein Composition plus good ratings of Daughter Fertility, reducing Cell Counts and Survival, ARBICESTAR is a strong contender for a place in the Proven sire teams of all Red breeders.

ARBBOWDOWN (BOTANS X HUSVEG)

Based on information from over 1700 Australian daughters in 242 herds, this proof is now considered to be 99% Reliable. The strengths that ARBBOWDOWN can contribute to a breeding program include:

Significant improvement in Protein Production and Protein Composition. This makes ARBBOWDOWN a very good choice to mate to high Milk Flow but Low Protein Composition cows.

Outstanding rating of 111 for Residual Survival. He is the team leader for this trait. This high rating tells us that his daughters are staying in herds longer than anticipated. With the high cost of rearing Heifers, bulls whose daughters stay longer in herds than anticipated are clearly worth serious consideration for a place in a Proven Sire Team.

ARBONICK (JUBY 1617 X ORRARYD)

ARBONICK was a high demand sire in 2014. He has added a significant number of daughters to his proof. ARBONICK does not rate highly under the new BPI, HWI and TWI. If a breeder only studied these new indices ARBONICK would not be in their team. However ARBONICK has many top ratings for individual traits.

His strengths include:

- Aussie Red team leader for farmers Likeability – rating 105.
- Aussie Red Team leader for Temperament – rating 103. He is also rated above average for Milking Speed – 101.
- Aussie Red Team leader for Cell Count – rating 142.
- In the top group for Composite Mammary – rating 103.
- Sound Production Protein, Milk and Fat.

ARBONICK deserves consideration by all Red breeders and Cross breeders. Because of his high ratings for Temperament and Farmer Likeability, he should be a very successful sire for Cross breeding programs.

ARBLEX (ORRARYD X CHRISTIANSBORG) A2A2

ARBLEX added over 200 additional second crop daughters to his proof and it fell. That surprised me because the farmers I talk to milking daughters like them. However ARBLEX still has a number of strengths and these require consideration by all Red breeders and Cross breeders.

- ARBLEX is still in the top group for Composite Mammary with a rating of 104.
- ARBLEX is still in the top group for both Udder Depth and Fore Attachment with ratings of 107.
- ARBLEX is still in the top group for Daughter Fertility with a rating of 103.