



Informing New Zealand Beef (INZB)

Quarterly Progress Report: January – March 2023

Background

Beef + Lamb New Zealand with the support of Ministry for Primary Industries is leading the Informing New Zealand Beef (INZB) programme. The overall aim of the seven-year programme is to improve profitability and enhance sustainability across the beef industry through the development and adoption of improved genetics.

The objectives of the programme are to:

1. develop a beef genetic evaluation system that includes traits that are important to NZ beef farmers and supports a sustainable beef farming industry in NZ,
2. create easy to use tools which enable data to be efficiently collected, managed, analysed and used by farmers to make profitable decisions for their operation,
3. create a new approach to extension design with the goal of increasing farmer engagement across the beef industry.

Summary of progress during this quarter

Greenhouse Gas (GHG) cattle genetics workshop planned

A GHG cattle genetics workshop has been planned for May and includes key researchers across the cattle sector in NZ. The purpose of the workshop is to create an aligned and efficient approach to GHG genetics research in cattle in NZ. The organisations that will be represented at the workshop include AbacusBio, AgResearch, B+LNZ, CRV, DairyNZ/NZAEL, Pamu/Focus, LIC, Massey and MPI.

Beef Progeny Test (BPT) activities

Artificial Insemination (AI) was carried out at the Lochinver Beef Progeny Test site in January. Angus cows were AI'd to the same Hereford and Angus bulls used at the Kepler making, as well as 4 Simmental bulls.

At the Kepler BPT site, all BPT females were pregnancy scanned, with great results - 96% of the naturally mated 2021-born heifers getting in calf, 69% of the 2020-born re-breeding heifers in calf to AI sires and 63% of the 2019-born cows in calf to AI sires. Kepler 2021-born BPT heifers and steers were also ultrasound muscle scanned, and structurally assessed.

More commercial farmers join the programme

Just over 50 Expressions of Interest were received from commercial farmers wanting to be part of the programme. Of these, 11 will be onboarded this year. The next step is to work with these farmers to develop individual operational plans for recording data throughout the year.

In addition to these commercial farmers, a small group of farmers have been included in the INZB Beef Insights Group. This group of farmers have already recorded a wealth of data and will contribute to the development of reporting tools for farmers.

Beef Progeny Test (BPT) field day held at Pamu's Kepler farm

In March, a BPT field day was held at Pamu's Kepler farm. Despite the cold weather, there was a good turnout, with approximately 90 people in attendance. The field day provided the opportunity to learn more about the BPT, including the purpose, what data is collected and how, and some of the key findings to come out of previous BPTs. The day also offered attendees the opportunity to look at some of the cattle and learn more about structural assessment of cattle, meat quality and Pamu's beef breeding objectives.



Kepler Beef Progeny Test (BPT) animals at the BPT field day

Farmer interviews yield insights in Extension Design project

The team completed analysis of farmer interviews. The report is near finalisation and has identified important insights and hypotheses which require further refinement in subsequent phases of the Extension Design process. An example of one of these insights is that decision making around

genetic selection and introducing new beef genetics to the farm is influenced by factors outside the farm gate, such as pending decisions around environmental regulations. This illustrates the importance of considering the wider context, which influences the decision making and change processes. These are important considerations in the development of our extension activities which will be key to facilitating adoption of genetic tools across industry.

Annual industry survey for programme assessment - results finalised

The INZB programme's progress is measured annually through running an industry survey. Beef farmers, stud breeders and rural professionals are asked for their views on beef genetics and available tools in the industry. With the survey being run annually, we are able to measure the changes in views and obtain indicators of the uptake of genetic tools in the industry over time.

The first survey was run in December 2021, providing a baseline level of data. In December 2022 we ran the second survey, the results of which have been analysed and compared against the 2021 results.

Some key findings of the survey include:

- There has been a significant increase in participation and engagement from farmers, resulting in a significant increase in awareness of the INZB programmes tools across the board.
- There has been a significant increase in commercial farmers using Artificial Insemination (AI)
- Survey respondents were asked about their preferred ways of hearing and learning about INZB projects and tools. Younger commercial farmers and bull breeders preferred to hear through social media and podcasts and learn through face-to-face workshops and field days. Older age-groups preferred to hear about the projects and tools through direct email / newsletters and learn through reading printed resources.

Key highlights and achievements

- Beef Progeny Test field day held at Pamu's Kepler farm
- More commercial farmers join the programme
- Annual industry survey completed

Upcoming

- Beef Breeders Forum to be held in May
- Regional Better Beef Breeding workshops to be held
- Economic model development work to commence

Investment

Investment period	Co-investor contribution	MPI contribution	Total investment
During this Quarter	\$359,154	\$239,436	\$598,590
Programme To Date	\$2.36 m	\$1.57 m	\$3.93 m