



PHOTO BY KASEY BROWN

Te Mania Angus

Breeders gain success through intensive knowledge gathering.

by *Kasey Brown*, associate editor

Hot pink against black certainly catches the eye. It's not a color usually seen at cattle events. That's exactly why Tom Gubbins and Hamish McFarlane, joint CEOs of Te Mania Angus, chose pink when most advertising options could run one-color ads. Pink stands out. This type of thinking has served the brothers-in-law well in advancing their high-quality, proven Angus genetics in western Victoria, Australia.

Tom's maternal grandfather, Edwyn Wilding started the herd's gene pool in New Zealand's south island in 1928. Tom's father Andrew Gubbins brought the genetics to

Australia in 1971 through importation of two sires and 58 females. Now under the Te Mania Angus team, the herd has 1,200 stud females and 400 recipient cows. Due to careful genetic and performance testing since the 1950s, Te Mania has set or still holds every Australian Angus sales record.

Constant genetic advancement

"Data sets us apart," says Tom, who is also the farm manager, specializing in technology and genetics. Te Mania's philosophy is to breed sound, quiet, highly fertile cattle with calving ease, high growth rates and

exceptional carcass quality. They do so by gathering data in all aspects of the production cycle. They gather carcass data and feed efficiency data through ultrasound scans of steers and good relationships with processing plants and feedlots. They participate in research projects and conduct many of their own projects. Most importantly, as seedstock breeders, they work hard to analyze the best use of genetics in many ways.

Aside from inheriting Angus cattle, Tom says he breeds Angus cattle because the database is exciting and the gene pool has a deep set of knowledge about it.

They have participated in large progeny tests since 1995, both at a feedlot and through many of their own projects. Hamish says they are disciplined in keeping large contemporary groups together so they can see more genetic gain. Large groups keep the estimated breeding values (EBVs) from the Angus Society of Australia's Breedplan system stable. By using large contemporary groups in the same environment, they are better able to see how the genetics themselves perform instead of worrying about how environmental differences impacted them.

When they say large contemporary groups, they mean large contemporary groups. The



smallest of 11 progeny test herds still gathered 906 progeny scans for fat depth, intramuscular fat and eye muscle area. All told, they've collected 44,870 progeny scans in 11 tests. They also have more than 10,000 structural scores, more than 7,500 docility scores and more than 9,000 mature cow weights recorded. They have received more than 5,300 carcass data.

In addition to using EBVs and Angus Society selection indexes, they go further. They use computer programs Total Genetic Resource Management™ (TGRM™) and BreedObject to customize their available genetic data.

"Objective data needs objective tools," Tom emphasizes.

TGRM uses state-of-the-art technology in genetic improvement programs. Programs within it work together to give control over issues related to inbreeding and the maximization of genetic gain. It gives breeders the power to include key technical, logistical and cost issues in addition to managing trait and inbreeding distributions in the breeding population.

He explains that TGRM randomly mates your selected animal 1,000 times in the program with your given parameters and sorts the most economic pairing.

BreedObject allows them to make custom selection indexes and rerank animals in the Angus breed to fit their parameters. It also lets them determine their own herd EBVs.

Having this much specific data on their animals helps their customers. There is a premium for Angus beef, Tom says, and their customers are getting savvy with objective decisions. They know it is necessary to



PHOTOS COURTESY OF TE MANIA ANGUS

► Many of Te Mania Angus bulls become popular AI sires, and they offer three production sales, private treaty and online sales.

improve genetics to improve the eating experience. With performance testing and recording, there is practical proof behind their genetics.

Hamish admits they used to be protective of their data, but now they enjoy sharing it. Many of their customers use the same software, and by knowing their customers' herds, they can objectively allocate sires to customer herds.

An additional benefit to the software is avoiding inbreeding. Tom notes, "The more we know, the less we have to be afraid of in terms of lethal alleles. . . . We just have to be wise and relaxed about managing recessives."

He adds that TGRM can help with that. It can create matings that would avoid breeding carriers to carriers and reduce the frequency of undesirable traits. He called it a solution for the commercial man.

One-stop shop

Genetics aren't the only advancements the Te Mania crew offers to their customers, though the genetics are a hefty advantage. Te Mania Angus cattle are leaders in many traits within the Angus Breedplan, with more than twice the trait leaders of other operations.

All cattle are independently scored on structure, in addition to Australia's foot score

EBV, and those scores are printed for each bull in their sale catalogs.

In addition to their offerings of a full genetic package, Te Mania is a one-stop shop for domestic and international customers, offering bulls, donor cows, semen, embryos and embryo transfer (ET) recipients through three "open cry" production sales, though they also sell private treaty and online.

They have a program called Team Te Mania, which is a partnership of more than 40 cattle producers within Australia. Team members have access to the latest genetics of Te Mania Angus through a bull-leasing program and discounted artificial insemination (AI). Hamish says leased bulls are backed by a 48-hour replacement guarantee.

The partnership is a win-win. Partner herds achieve higher-quality calves and the core herd benefits from progeny data to advance the genetic program.

Additionally, they also offer field days and workshops for their customers to help advance their knowledge base and own herds.

Both CEOs acknowledge that the team of people is crucial to Te Mania's success. A family business, Tom says they laid out an estate plan early. Each family member has their specialty, and the growing business has plenty to keep each person busy. Half of the workforce is family, with the help of six employees.

Tasks are divided into categories like genetics, technology and media; Team Te Mania and finance; events, catalogs and newsletters; marketing and website; ET and recipient herd manager; and accounts and administration.

While each person wearing pink will grab your eye, the high-quality cattle will certainly keep your attention.



► Te Mania Angus, with their cooperator herds through Team Te Mania throughout southern Australia, keep large contemporary groups to better analyze genetic gain.