

# Romagnolas expand marketing horizons



By MELISSA MARTIN

**E**XPANDING marketing options has been the impetus behind western Queensland cattle producers, Dan and Sue Lynch's decision two years ago to introduce Romagnola genetics into their 100 percent Brahman herd.

The crossbreeding operation at their 13,000 hectare property Tara, 100km north of Cloncurry, has seen Romagnola bulls sourced from Matt and Anna Ahern, Romagnola Beef Genetics, Roma, over the past two years.

As Dan explains, there were numerous reasons why they turned to the Romagnola breed.

"We have great difficulty in marketing our Brahmans into the south when the live export market falters a bit, so the cross will open up more marketing opportunities to sell to meatworks or lotfeeders," Dan said.

"But because they still have that 50pc *Bos Indicus* content, the live exporters would have no problem taking them so they're still saleable into a live export market.

"Whereas with the Brahmans, you're quite heavily discounted going into the south with them.

"In addition to that we all know about the hybrid vigour and weight gains you can get from the cross-breeds."

Dan said bulls sought from the Aherns particularly suited his criteria.

"Matt and Anna have got other clients up here and we had seen their cattle and they certainly seemed to be able to handle the environment and they had very good weight gains

similar to, if not better than other crossbred cattle.

"Matt and Anna have got a lot of data on their herd that we can select from and we put a fair emphasis here on reproduction, so we wanted bulls that were out of dams with a 12 month days-to-calving interval.

"Fertility is very important and also the sperm morphology in the younger bulls, and Matt and Anna test for that.

"The other important thing was we didn't have to go and buy bulls as two-year-old or two-and-a-half year olds at a sale.

"Not that we're against competing at a sale but I prefer to buy young bulls in that 14 to 16 or 18-month-old bracket and bring them up here at least three to six months prior to joining to settle them in and acclimatise.

"And obviously those younger bulls with high morphology, you get a longer working life out of them.

"We buy them out of the paddock, in paddock condition, and not full of feed.

"Matt and Anna are only too pleased to present bulls for sale under all those criteria."

The first crop of the Romagnola/Brahman cross calves are on the ground and currently on agistment south of Richmond and while Dan says he hasn't had the opportunity to weigh them yet, they're looking good.

"I estimated they were 380 to 390kg last time I saw them," Dan said.

"Because we're in a very tight control mate, our turn off means there's only a two-month difference

Introducing Romagnola genetics into his 100 percent Brahman herd has opened up more marketing opportunities for Dan Lynch, Tara Station, near Cloncurry. He can now eye off both the live export market to the north and the domestic works or feedlot market to the south.

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from the first calf being born to the last one.

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Brahmans.

"We've got about 100 Brahman steers and 800 to 900 Romagnola/Brahman cross on agistment.

"I have to weigh them yet but just looking at them the crossbreds are 15 to 20kg heavier than the Brahmans, and we know they were all within two months of birth.

"We join mid-January and that puts our first calf on the ground around November 1 or a fortnight either side of that date, and we preg-test back to two month calving envelope."

The Lynch's run between 4500 and 5000 females in their operation, and plan on increasing the cross-breeding element.

"We're joining the Romagnola bulls to cows that are kept in a 12-month calving interval, and then joining the heifer portion of their progeny back to Brahman bulls."

When turning off cattle, Dan said

they aimed to hit the 400kg-plus mark for feeder cattle, while the live export cattle now had to hit a lower weight following the recent announcement by the Indonesian authorities that they had imposed a strict 350kg liveweight limit on animals through the import permit system.

"Two years ago when we started with the Romagnolas, obviously we didn't know about the live export weight limits being imposed strictly," Dan said.

"But I guess that's another good reason to have the cross-breeding so we can go south with the heavier weight cattle just to get a bit more out of them.

"The long and short of it economically is that it's very hard to make any money or have any marginal at all with animals under 350kg when you take into account transport costs and so forth, so weight is important."



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