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# Southern Beef Technology Services

## Update - May 2006

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Southern Beef Technology Services (SBTS) has had a busy time since the project commenced in early 2006. For those of you who may not be aware, SBTS is a project that has been launched by 14 Breed Societies (in association with ABRI & MLA) to provide technical support to their members in the use and understanding of the different genetic technologies that are available. This newsletter provides you with an overview of what the SBTS team has been up to during the past few months and outlines the activities that are planned for the remainder of the year.

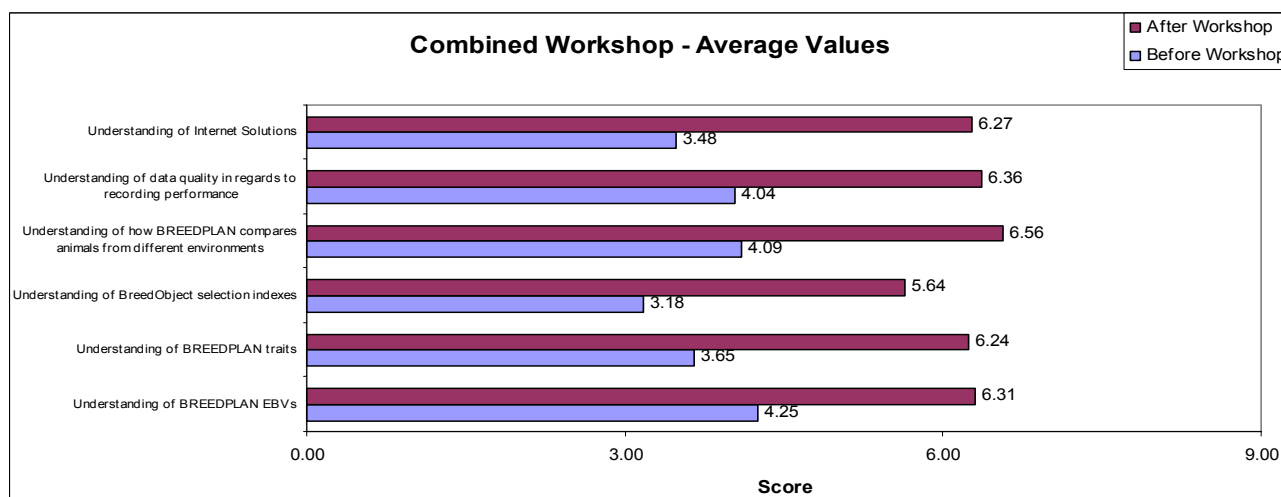
### 2006 Workshop Series

#### BREEDPLAN & Related Genetic Technologies – “Getting Back to Basics”

The first 4 SBTS workshops were successfully held in Inverell, Quirindi, Roma & Toowoomba during February & March and created a 65% increase in participants’ perceived understanding of BREEDPLAN. A combined total of 89 people attended the workshops, ranging from long term users of the BREEDPLAN technology to producers looking to record their cattle with BREEDPLAN for the first time. Feedback from the workshops has been very positive with producers leaving with a much better grasp of the fundamentals involved in BREEDPLAN, BreedObject and Internet Solutions.

Two surveys were conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of each workshop. Firstly, participants were asked to complete a true/false questionnaire at both the start and end of the day. Producer knowledge increased on average by 30.2% with participants being able to answer on average 82% of questions correctly at the end of the workshop.

Participants were also asked to rate their level of understanding on a scale of 1 to 9 in six key areas relating to BREEDPLAN and other genetic technologies. The results from this survey are illustrated in the diagram below.



Any member of the seedstock industry that is looking to improve their knowledge in the basics of BREEDPLAN, BreedObject and Internet Solutions is strongly encouraged to attend one of the remaining 12 SBTS workshops in 2006. A list of workshop venues is provided in the table on the next page. Complete workshop details can be accessed from the SBTS website or by phoning the SBTS office.

**Upcoming SBTS Workshops**  
**BREEDPLAN & Related Genetic Technologies – “Getting Back to Basics”**

| <b>Date</b>                | <b>Location</b>  | <b>Venue</b>               |
|----------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| July 3 <sup>rd</sup>       | Adelaide, SA     | The Park Convention Centre |
| July 6 <sup>th</sup>       | Naracoorte, SA   | Naracoorte Town Hall       |
| July 10 <sup>th</sup>      | Hamilton, VIC    | Vic DPI                    |
| July 31 <sup>st</sup>      | Seymour, VIC     | Seymour Racing Club        |
| August 3 <sup>rd</sup>     | Sale, VIC        | Duart Conference Centre    |
| August 7 <sup>th</sup>     | Launceston, TAS  | Sanders on the Park        |
| August 10 <sup>th</sup>    | Burnie, TAS      | Burnie Civic Centre        |
| August 21 <sup>st</sup>    | Northam, WA      | Northam Country Club       |
| August 24 <sup>th</sup>    | Bridgetown, WA   | TBA                        |
| August 28 <sup>th</sup>    | Albany, WA       | Albany Golf Club           |
| September 11 <sup>th</sup> | Forbes, NSW      | Forbes Services Club       |
| September 14 <sup>th</sup> | Wagga Wagga, NSW | Commercial Club            |

\* For catering purposes, please register prior to the day of the workshop by contacting the SBTS office.

### New SBTS Website

SBTS has recently launched it's new website. The website not only contains all the upcoming SBTS News & Events but a comprehensive range of technical brochures that will assist you with your use and understanding of BREEDPLAN. The SBTS website address is <http://sbts.une.edu.au>.

### Changes in BREEDPLAN contacts

Some fairly significant changes have occurred recently within the BREEDPLAN processing team at ABRI. The following is a current contact list should you have any queries regarding your performance data submission to the BREEDPLAN office.

| <b>Breed</b>      | <b>Contact</b>  | <b>Phone</b>   | <b>Email</b>                      |
|-------------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Blonde D'Aquitane | Charlotte Fox   | (02) 6773 3056 | blondes@breedplan.une.edu.au      |
| Charolais         | Ruth Hughes     | (02) 6773 3320 | charolais@breedplan.une.edu.au    |
| Devon             | Krystal Bailey  | (02) 6773 3059 | devon@breedplan.une.edu.au        |
| Limousin          | Charlotte Fox   | (02) 6773 3056 | limousin@breedplan.une.edu.au     |
| Hereford          | Krystal Bailey  | (02) 6773 3059 | hereford@breedplan.une.edu.au     |
| Murray Grey       | Coby Kruger     | (02) 6773 3032 | murraygrey@breedplan.une.edu.au   |
| Poll Hereford     | Ruth Hughes     | (02) 6773 3320 | pollhereford@breedplan.une.edu.au |
| Salers            | Charlotte Fox   | (02) 6773 3056 | salers@breedplan.une.edu.au       |
| Shorthorn         | Coby Kruger     | (02) 6773 3032 | shorthorn@breedplan.une.edu.au    |
| Simmental         | Krystal Bailey  | (02) 6773 3059 | simmental@breedplan.une.edu.au    |
| South Devon       | Maria Butler    | (02) 6773 3546 | southdevon@breedplan.une.edu.au   |
| Red Angus         | Colin Rex       | (02) 6773 3022 | redangus@breedplan.une.edu.au     |
| Red Poll          | Charlotte Fox   | (02) 6773 3056 | redpoll@breedplan.une.edu.au      |
| Wagyu             | Michael Beattie | (02) 6773 3355 | wagyu@breedplan.une.edu.au        |

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## Upcoming GROUP BREEDPLAN Analyses

A number of GROUP BREEDPLAN analyses are scheduled for Breed Societies participating in SBTS in the coming months. Please do not hesitate to contact the SBTS team should you require any assistance or advice in the lead up to these GROUP BREEDPLAN analyses. A summary of the cut off dates for submitting performance information to ABRI is provided in the table below.

| Breed       | Cut-off date for data submitted on paper forms | Cut-off date for data submitted electronically (eg. email, web, excel) |
|-------------|--|--|
| Murray Grey | May 26 <sup>th</sup>                           | June 2 <sup>nd</sup>   |
| Limousin    | June 9 <sup>th</sup>                           | June 16 <sup>th</sup>  |
| Charolais   | June 16 <sup>th</sup>                          | June 23 <sup>th</sup>  |
| Shorthorn   | June 30 <sup>th</sup>                          | July 7 <sup>th</sup>   |
| Simmental   | August 18 <sup>th</sup>                        | August 25 <sup>th</sup>  |

### “Technically Speaking” – Calving Ease EBVs

There has been a reasonable amount of discussion in recent times regarding calving ease EBVs. The following provides a timely update on all things “calving ease”.

BREEDPLAN currently produces two calving ease EBVs – Calving Ease Direct & Calving Ease Daughters.

**(i). Calving Ease Direct** - an estimate of genetic differences in the ability of a sires’ calves to be born unassisted from 2 year old heifers. The EBVs are reported as differences in the percentage of unassisted calvings. Higher, more positive, Calving Ease Direct EBVs are more favourable. For example, a bull with an EBV of +5.0% would be expected, on average, to produce 3% fewer difficult calvings from 2 year old heifers than a bull with an EBV of –1.0% (6% difference between the Sires, then halved as they only contribute half the genetics).

**(ii). Calving Ease Daughters** - an estimate of genetic differences in the ability of a sire’s 2 year old daughters to calve without assistance. The EBVs are also reported as differences in the percentage of unassisted calvings. Higher, more positive, Calving Ease Daughters EBVs are more favourable. For example, a bull with an EBV of +4.0% would be expected to on average produce 2 year old daughters that have 3% less calving problems than the daughters of a bull with an EBV of –2.0%.

Like all EBVs, calving ease EBVs do not give an estimation of the actual level of assisted births, rather the expected difference in assisted births between the target animals and/or the breed benchmark.

Calving Ease EBVs are calculated from three main sources of information - calving difficulty scores, birth weights and gestation length records. By far the most important of these sources are calving difficulty scores.

#### 1. Why should Calving Difficulty Scores be recorded?

Calving difficulty has an obvious negative impact on the profitability of a herd through increased calf and heifer mortality, slower re-breeding performance and considerable additional labour and veterinary expense.

Whilst many large studies have consistently shown birth weight to be the most important genetic factor influencing calving difficulty, there are also other aspects that need to be considered. For example, calf

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shape, pelvic area and calving “will”. Recording calving difficulty scores allows for all these contributing factors to be evaluated and subsequently, the best possible genetic improvement made for ease of calving.

## 2. How do you record Calving Difficulty Scores?

Calving difficulty should be measured at birth by visually scoring females on the following scale of 1-5.

| Score | Code                | Description  |
|-------|---------------------|--|
| 1     | Unassisted          | Cow calved unassisted / No difficulty  |
| 2     | Easy Pull           | One person without mechanical assistance   |
| 3     | Hard Pull           | Two people without mechanical assistance or<br>One person with mechanical assistance |
| 4     | Surgical Assistance | Veterinary intervention required   |
| 5     | Mal-presentation    | Eg. Breech   |

\* Note that a blank score will not be interpreted as “unassisted”. Instead, it indicates that calving difficulty was not scored

## 3. What considerations should be made when recording Calving Difficulty Scores?

- ❑ If you regularly check your cows (e.g. on a daily basis), it is reasonable to assume that a cow who calves without assistance between visits can be considered as unassisted (no difficulty) even though you did not see her calve.
- ❑ Record a score for all calves rather than just difficult or easy births. Scores should be recorded for dead calves, if possible.
- ❑ If calving difficulty score is either blank or [0], it is interpreted as no score recorded rather than "no difficulty".
- ❑ There needs to be some level of calving difficulty in the herd for the scores to be used effectively by the BREEDPLAN analysis. That is, simply scoring all births in a herd with a calving difficulty score of [1] will not identify any genetic differences in ease of calving.
- ❑ As with birth weight and gestation length, a birth weight management group should be recorded if there are different treatments of the females prior to calving that may affect calving difficulty. For example, where one group of cows have had different feed availability.
- ❑ When calculating the Calving Ease EBVs, calving difficulty scores of [3] and [4] are grouped together. Calving difficulty score [5] is excluded from the BREEDPLAN analysis as the problems are considered non-genetic in origin.

## 4. How do you submit Calving Difficulty Scores?

Calving difficulty scores should be submitted to your Breed Society/Association when submitting your calf registration details. Please contact your Breed Society/Association should you have any queries about how to submit this information.



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