

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF BEEF RECORDING IN NEW ZEALAND

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Recording of beef cattle incorporating objective measurement of productive traits began at Ruakura Research Centre near Hamilton in the late 1950's. Shortly after, workers at Massey University and Lincoln College commenced recording weight gain on local farms.

The first recognised beef recording system started operation in 1963 and was known as the National Herd Recording System. It operated through the New Zealand Sheep and Beef Cattle Survey conducted nationally by the New Zealand Meat Producers' Board and the New Zealand Wool Board. Technical advice was obtained from beef experts throughout New Zealand who formed the Combined Beef Breeders' Research Committee and acted both as a technical committee and as a committee representing all users.

In 1970 attempts were made to form a National Livestock Improvement Organisation aimed at providing an overall co-ordinating body for the improvement of all classes of livestock. Although these attempts failed, some aspects of the co-ordination were developed.

The National Herd Recording Scheme continued to develop and extend until the survey was disbanded in 1972. At the initiative of the New Zealand Government, the New Zealand Meat Producers Board and the New Zealand Dairy Board formed an Interim Beef Committee to formulate a national policy on beef improvement and recording matters. With a sub-committee from the New Zealand Dairy Board's Herd Improvement Council it came together to form the Combined Beef Committee. On the 10 November 1972 at a meeting of this Committee, it was agreed to disband the Meat and Wool Board's Sheep and Beef Cattle Survey and initiate a pilot scheme for beef recording. Staff from the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries together with officers of the Farm Production Division of the New Zealand Dairy Board and the six Livestock Improvement Associations combined resources in the formation of the new National Beef Recording Scheme - Beefplan. One hundred and twenty farmers were involved in the pilot scheme in 1973.

About this time, some vigorous promotion increased the number of users in Beefplan to 400 with more than 28,000 animals being recorded. However, the economic recession affecting New Zealand agriculture and New Zealand's beef industry in particular did affect progress in the growth of Beefplan over the years from 1974 to 1977.

In August of 1975 the newly elected Beef Improvement Council took over control and operation of the Beefplan service. Users were represented on this council through local Beef Advisory Committees, the Chairman of which sat on the National Council. In 1978 the New Zealand Meat Producer's Board assumed legal, financial and administrative responsibility for Beefplan with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries controlling the operation and extension of the service. Financially, the New Zealand Government along with the New Zealand Meat Producers Board each contribute \$50,000 per year to Beefplan representing half the Beefplan costs while the remainder comes from user fees. A flat rate of \$1 per cow recorded in the system is charged to users which is reduceable to 50 cents per cow where a user is recording

over 200 animals.

Recent developments in Beefplan have included updating some of the correction factors involved in the program together with a move to combine pedigree and performance recording in the one system. Considerable progress has been achieved and the new system will commence for calving in 1979 with the majority of breed societies being involved.

The sequential computerised recording system adopted for Beefplan in 1973 has outgrown its original facilities. The National Beef Cattle Improvement Council has recently agreed to changing Beefplan on to Data Base. Progress is well in hand on this development.

It can be seen that Beefplan, since it was introduced, has had a rather difficult period to face due mainly to its complex structure and the involvement of many independent bodies together with a fluctuating economic climate for beef over these years. With the recent developments in Beefplan and the likelihood of an increase in involvement by pedigree breeders, the system has been given encouragement allowing it to continue providing a dynamic recording service to beef breeders in New Zealand. Present users number over 400 (30,000 cows being recorded) and are being serviced on farms by 28 Sheep and Beef Officers supported by 12 Animal Husbandry specialists from the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

In conclusion, it is my belief that the concept of a Livestock Improvement Organisation should evolve over the next few years to co-ordinate all systems of livestock improvement, encourage better use of computer facilities and staff of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and Livestock Improvement Associations and to obtain the full-time services of a geneticist.

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#### PERFORMANCE RECORDING: A CATTLE BREEDER'S VIEWPOINT

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#### INTRODUCTION

The methods of performance recording preferred in any herd will be determined primarily by its breeding and commercial objectives, and by the ability and commitment of the owner/manager to take and maintain adequate written records. Performance recording should help one to cull animals, rather than identify the few outstanding stock. The only commercially worthwhile justification for having a "herd book" or breed society is to help in the process of providing superior sires for the improvement of the commercial beef producing industry.