

## Romagnola: proof in pudding

**T**HE old saying that the 'proof of the pudding is in the eating' is ringing true for the Romagnola breed.

Feedback from producers across Australia is proving testament to the breed's versatility and ability to produce a quality article in any environment.

Beef producers using Romagnola bulls in their crossbreeding operations from Victoria to the top end of the Northern Territory are singing the praises of the Italian breed, and are excited by the options they provide in the market place.

Marketing options have always been important to Julia Creek cattlemen John and Ross Walker, who have been using Romagnola bulls over high-content Brahman females for more than 20 years at Rutchillo Station.

John Walker describes the crossbred progeny as "good, flat-backed cattle with all the best attributes of the Brahman".

"We are targeting the premium MSA grassfed yearling market with our steers and surplus females but the Romagnola-cross provides the option to go south into feedlots if the season doesn't go to plan", he said.

The Walkers recently consigned a line of No.9 largely Romagnola cross steers to JBS Australia in Townsville with impressive results. The total consignment of 396 steers averaged 320kg dressed weight with 90pc compliance with the top grass-fed ox or yearling steer specifications.

Of this consignment 264 of the Romagnola cross steers were also graded



Brahman-Romagnola cross cattle are providing premium market specifications.

under the MSA criteria, with 54pc of these grading MSA and 97pc grading Jap ox or yearling steer. These results were achieved after a 750km road trip from their home at Rutchillo, 70km south of Julia Creek, to the Townsville meatworks.

Mr Walker has stopped using hormone growth promotants to assist with MSA compliance and believes, "that although the good season has made a difference, the Romagnola cross provides the weight for age required to reach premium market specifications which helps our bottom line".

Northern Territory producers Gary and Michelle Riggs produce cattle for live export on the 600sq/km Lakefield Station 150km south west of Katherine.

Mrs Riggs said they had been using Romagnola/Brahman cross bulls for about four years over their pure Brahman cows and described the progeny as "slightly longer and heavier framed with a quiet temperament".

"The steers are turned off for the live export trade in March/April each year with the heifer portion retained and mated to Brahman bulls. These are proving to be reliable breeders", she said.

In Victoria, the breed is also gaining in popularity in the production of vealers sold off their mothers.

John and Peter Favoloro, Echuca, use Romagnola bulls over Santa/Angus cross cows and recently sold 10-month-old

Crossbred progeny are good, flat-backed cattle with all the best attributes of the Brahman.

— John Walker, Rutchillo Station, Julia Creek

calves through the Echuca saleyards to record an impressive average weight of 457kg for the steers to return \$1127/head, with the heifer portion averaging 425kg to return \$1054/head.

David and Bronwyn Moon, Nanneella, Victoria, recently sold eight-month-old calves off F1 dairy-cross mothers to average 352kg and return \$832/head.

"The Romagnola cross females go back in calf quicker than the others in the herd and I like their frame and growth rate," Mr Moon said. "The calves are always well received in the saleyards. Once you have worked with Romagnola cattle, it's pretty hard not to like them."

Echuca Saleyards operator Linda Law reported similar results for Romagnola cross calves sold there. "The sale goes along until the Romagnola cross calves

come up for auction. All of a sudden the buyers stand to attention and the competition heats up", she said.

Western Australian Romagnola breeders Denyss and Harry Alers, Quinbook, report increased demand for Romagnola cattle in that state also. "Local primaries agents have had very positive feedback from the butchering company on Romagnola-sired calves," Mrs Alers said. They give a better boning yield than other calves and their curability is more efficient, saving them time and money. The butchering company is offering a 20c/kg on-the-hook bonus without penalties for this season's calves if they are Romagnola sired."

Newly elected Romagnola Breeders Society of Australia president Matt Ahern believes the Italian breed is set to make a big impact on the Australian industry, with breeders reporting increased demand for bulls on the back of positive feedback from producers who have used them in their operations.

"The background of the breed in Italy, where it was selected for eating quality, is proving very valuable in meeting a range of premium markets here in Australia," he said. "Romagnola cattle certainly seem to be on the rise, with interest from people impressed with their ability to survive and thrive."

"What sets them apart is their weight for age, eating quality and carcass characteristics which allow them to meet grading specifications and make money for producers", he said.

# Romagnola

"... no better bull"

"longer and heavier with a quiet temperament"

Riggs Family, "Lakefield Station", Mataranka NT

"What they did to the Brahman was amazing – better boned and everything we were looking for"

Henry Family, "Sugarbag Station", Mt Garnet QLD

"average premium of \$109 per head for the steers by Romagnola bulls"

Dan Lynch, "Tara Station", Cloncurry QLD

"The beauty of the Romagnola breed is it's ability to put beef where it counts"

Denyss Alers, Dunsborough WA

"All of a sudden the buyers stand to attention and the competition heats up"

Linda Law, Echuca Saleyard operator. VIC

[www.romagnola.com.au](http://www.romagnola.com.au)

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