

McKellars find their ideal fit

BY MATT SHERRINGTON

IT WAS while attending a genomics conference at Rockhampton during Beef Australia 2012 that organic commercial producers Michael and Helen McKellar found the ideal breed to fit their needs in the form of the Belmont Red.

The McKellar's purchased Belmont Red bulls that year and began joining them with their 600 head composite breeding herd, on 17,990 acres of mixed Brigelow, Mulga, Ironbark, and Box country at Booka, situated north of Morven and east of Augathella.

Mr McKellar said with what he took away from the conference in combination with what he'd learned about the breed while attending pastoral college "it made sense to go with a stabilised composite breed, which excels on pasture or in the feedlot, and had been designed specifically for use in the Northern Australian environment".

The decision was made easier for the McKellar's when they met with Jeanne



GREAT FIT: Helen and Michael McKellar have been joining Belmont Red bulls with their composite breeding herd since 2012 and say they're the ideal breed to suit their requirements.

Seifert and Ian Stark, Seifert Belmont Red's, Jandowae, the most prolific breeders of Belmont Reds in the nation.

"Their personalities and credibility were factors that made it an easier choice to

start using Belmont Reds at Booka," Mr McKellar said.

"Their integrity regarding the cattle they produce, along with their passion and commitment to the breed is first rate," he said.

He said when the season was good they were selling their Belmont-cross steers at 540kg to Arcadian Organic, for good returns.

But over the past two years they've been "rudely

interrupted by a lack of rain" and being organic producers they've been "under the pump" in the dry.

"Traditionally we're a breeding and fattening operation, but because of the dry

we've been unable to finish our cattle to their required weights, which means we've been having to sell our steers at discounted rates to the markets, and their aren't any premiums offered for organic store cattle."

"We've also had to destock heavily, though this has allowed us to focus on restructuring the composition of our breeding herd."

When the rain does return, Mr McKellar said they'll gradually shift to a pure Belmont Red herd.

"The breed is positioned well for changes in the market, and because of their diversity they fit in well in a lot of geographical areas."

The McKellar's will be returning to the Belmont Red Sale after attending the inaugural sale which was held in Rockhampton last year.

"We'll be looking to buy bulls that are right in the middle of specs, we like purchasing good reliable cattle that we won't get any surprises from, which is made much easier through the monitoring and testing Jeanne and Ian carry out within their herd."

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