



IRRABINA GALLOWAYS

13th Century Cattle for 21st Century Needs

“In the 21st century of fast foods and feedlot forced beef, Galloway cattle represent the slow food concept of food production where bigger is not necessarily better and faster is not necessarily efficient”.

In 1999, Steve Gapes established the Irrabina Galloway herd, breeding Galloway cattle based on Scottish bloodlines at Irrabina, a 200 acre organically certified farm at 1,000 metres on the Gwydir River in the New England region of NSW.

For 20 years Steve had directed his disciplined principles of livestock breeding to developing the highly regarded Irrabina Mohair. The Angora goat herd based on elite Australian, Texan and South African bloodlines enabled Irrabina Mohair to develop markets worldwide and Irrabina still is the only Australian Angora goat breeder to grow and process mohair professionally within Australia.

Galloway cattle are versatile, have gentle natures and for the last 800 years have shown how adaptable they are, from the highlands of Scotland to the prairies of the Americas, the savannahs of South Africa, the steppes and tundra of Russia and from Tasmania to northern Queensland and the outback of Australia. Galloway cattle are unique in the beef producing world, originating when the survival of people depended on the ruggedness and high production qualities of their cattle.

“This makes them ideally suited to adapt to climate change”, said Steve. “They’re the climate change cattle breed”

Steve Gapes with calf from 40 year old semen



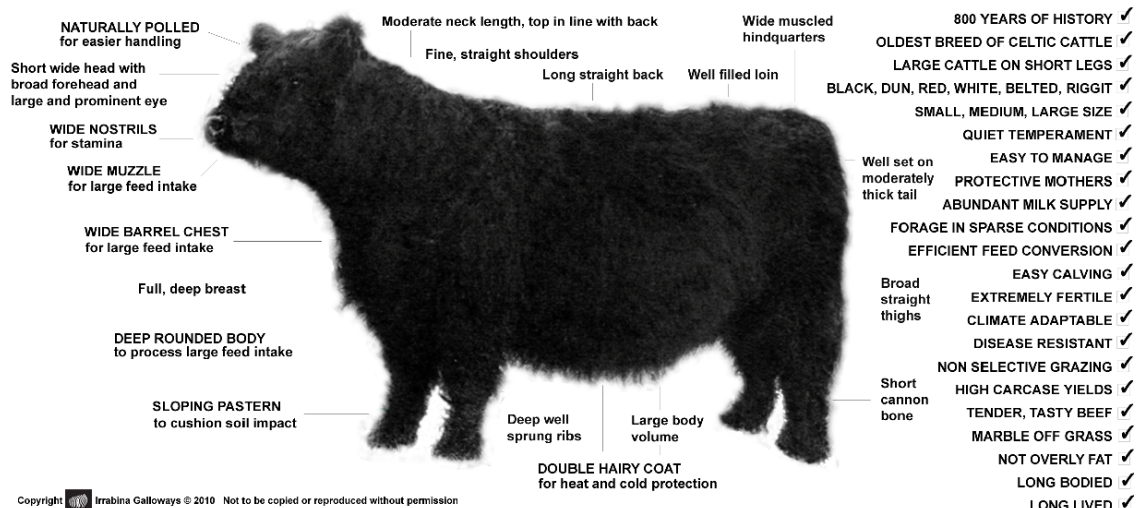
“I’m developing the traditional Galloway characteristics of the type of cattle that were bred over a hundred years ago” he said. “To do this I’ve been using semen up to 50 years old from original Scottish bulls in extensive AI programmes and flushing embryos from the best of the cows sourced from an original 1955 Scottish herd import”.

Winning the Champion Led Lightweight Steer and Reserve Champion Lightweight Carcase (by 1 point) Competition against

all breeds nationally at a Royal Show is proof of Irrabina’s successful breeding programme for developing the meat qualities of the Galloway.

"Galloway cattle are unique in the cattle industry as they combine so many features of the high producing breeds. They have always been known as large cattle on short legs and my cows weigh up to 600kgs with the bulls to 950kgs. Their weight comes from producing meat on large frames, not fat on long bones. Their foraging ability, gentle temperament, natural poll and double hairy coat make them the ideal breed for small farms while their marbling ability off grass, efficient feed conversion, easy calving, milking capacity and high fertility mean a higher return to the commercial cattle producer".

Traditional Characteristics of the Galloway



Like most cattle breeds, Galloway cattle have always come in a range of heights with a variation in type due to selective breeding and the quality of the land on which they were kept. They also have a range of colours and coats patterns to suit the aesthetic taste of the cattle owner.

"Galloway cattle are smaller in height than European breeds. They aren't miniatures although those at the lower height scale, after over 800 years, have recently been called miniature in Australia" he said.

At Irrabina, breeding a centuries' old breed of cattle certainly contains an element of history and reliance on the observations of earlier breeders. "In the 21st century there are also scientific tools such as Breedplan and Genestar DNA mapping that can be used as part of the selection process of breeding stock and to measure the direction and success of breeding decisions" said Steve. "These tools are an aid in decision making whereas intuition, a knowledge of the animals and a subjective eye are necessary to retain type, those characteristics that define a Galloway."



Heifer calf from 45 year old semen

“Galloway cattle are serious cattle for commercial cattle production”.

Until the 1970's when the larger European breeds came into fashion, the Galloway was widely recognised by cattle producers, butchers and consumers as producing superior quality meat, consistently winning carcass competitions against all breeds. Their cross breeding characteristics were highly sought after.

“The purpose of Galloway cattle is meat production. At Irrabina, I've successfully grown out steers for that purpose” said Steve. **“Working with a local butcher, the carcasses have been hung for 3 weeks in the**

Tenderstretch (or standing) position to enhance the tender, tasty and highly marbled beef. This is how beef used to be aged. The results have surpassed expectations with extremely positive consumer feedback. Being organically certified, producing grass finished cattle has attracted national and international enquiries through the Irrabina website, most notably from the Epcot Food Division of the Disney Corporation in Florida, USA”.

“Irrabina is working to set up a network of Galloway beef production with other cattle producers of both Galloway and non Galloway cattle by supplying the bulls and/or semen to those herds at a reasonable rate” Steve said. **“Individually we may have small herds but collectively, we're a pretty big herd, regardless of the animals' size, colour or coat pattern. They're all Galloways”.**

In the 21st century where mass food production often means tough, tasteless beef, consumers in the developed world are demanding better quality.

“Generic feedlot-type cattle, infused with Galloway blood, provide consistent flavour and tenderness to the meat. Galloway cattle are the slow food cattle breed” said Steve, **“not a fast food breed”.**

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