Understanding the Common USA Numbering System

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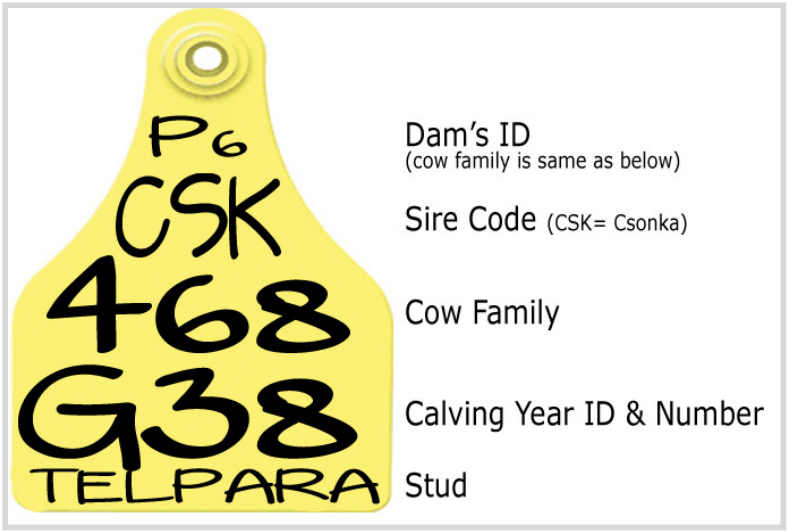

With the recent escalation of modern USA Brangus genetics into Australia, a general overview of the most common American numbering system maybe of real benefit to Australian breeders unfamiliar with its purpose and intricacies. Mr. Glen Brinkman the founder of the world famous Brinks Brangus herd pioneered this system.

Simple in its design the numbering system is based upon cow families, with the number of a family starting from a foundation cow eg 541. All daughters and their subsequent progeny will carry this number both on their pedigree certificate and also branded usually on their hip. Not only will the progeny be 541 but they will also have their year of birth signified by an alphabetical letter followed by the individual calf number for that year within the 541 cow family.

In our Telpara Hills USA herd, one of our lead donor females is JAK Miss Backside 468P6. This means that firstly she is a member of the esteemed 468 cow family and that she was the sixth (6^{th}) calf registered in the "P" year (2005) for this family in the JAK herd.

What does the JAK Miss Backside mean? The breeder's stud prefix is JAK; then follows the name of the sire of this female. Her sire was Brinks Backside 14K5. Therefore breeders can also decipher his cow family, his year of birth and which calf number he was when recorded into that family that year in the Brinks stud herd.

The actual name of USA sires is basically chosen at random by the breeder. All daughters from a sire generally are recorded with their sires name, thus JAK Miss Geronimo 468L3, the dam of our 468P6 is a daughter of Geronimo of Brinks 392F15.

Possibly the real strength of this numbering system based upon cow families is the relative ease with which one can interpret pedigrees and identify strengths within an animals breeding lines. This is especially helpful when comparing large numbers of stud animals in the paddock.

Some cow families of course drop out of the breeding scene or make little impact while others go from strength to strength. These successful cow families are then propagated through natural selection and ET programs and become renowned for the predictable phenotype, performance, fertility and carcass strengths. For example the 541 cow family is well-known for its fleshing ability, muscle, milk and scrotal circumference. Therefore if breeders are seeking these attributes in their next sire, than an animal with 541 on its brand will certainly warrant close scrutiny and consideration over animals from other cow families without these features.

It is interesting to discover that within the history of the Angus breed, which was developed in the 19th Century, the pioneer Aberdeen-Angus breeders in Scotland heavily emphasized cow families in their breeding. Certainly a great bull was effectively used to improve herd quality, but the Scots then and even today still concentrate upon and advertise their breeding stock as being from famous female lines tracing right back to the foundation cow families of Erica, Pride, Princess, Beauty etc.

In all animals and plants, only the female passes her DNA from the mitochondria portion of each cell to progeny. Family lines can be traced using this specialised DNA from daughter or son, to mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, etc. Because the Angus breed has been built upon cow families, Angus mitochondrial DNA looks different to other breeds in its remarkable similarity across a large number of cows. Therefore the use of cow families in breeding leads to greater progeny predictability and consistency.

Recording and emphasis in today's Brangus cow families, actually mirrors what was done back in recorded history in the Angus breed. Also, today's Brangus breeders are able to draw upon computer innovations to help quantify performance with their seedstock. This generation of estimated breeding values (EBV) in performance recorded herds has led to even further accuracies in the identification of superior cow families both overseas and here in Australia. The key is to keep these families identifiable in a clear identification system. Telpara Hills employs an adapted system from the US in our own herd to assist our breeding decisions and provide our clients with valuable pedigree information with ease.