

Speckle Park International Inc

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Letter to Members

Dear Speckle Park International Members,

Rockhampton 2015

Some members plan to have a stand at the above event in 2015 – the next time it is held. It is an excellent promotion tool which I mention below with great exposure. It can be costly and takes considerable planning. If anyone is interested in taking animals up to Rockhampton for display or show, let me know. Beef 2012 was attended by Waratah, Speckle Central and Six Star, speak to them for their thoughts. We thought for that year we could have the AGM there. The downside is that accommodation is tight although you can camp at the site. I rebooked as I left this year.

New Zealand

There may be a regional meeting of members in New Zealand in January. I will keep you advised. It may be a good time for an Australian contingent to see what is happening across the Tasman.

Calendar

The Association is considering producing a calendar in time for Christmas. We have a couple of options. The first is to have the single photo with the tear off monthly calendar. This is likely to cost \$4.00. An alternative is to have a 12 photo calendar with members sponsoring each month. On the front page will also be postcard advertisements for those 12 members plus other advertisements by other members. This would defray the cost and make it a handy give away or Christmas gift. The directors organising this are myself, Mike Todd, Mark McKenzie and Marilyn Kusely. Please contact them soon if you are interested.

DNA Testing

We are looking to build co-ordination of DNA testing in both NZ and Australia and I will let you know how that develops.

Website – www.specklepark.org

Don't forget to have a look at the website from time to time. More things go up onto Downloads over time. I mention this more below. The board discussed this aspect recently and it has been decided that we should set up a calendar of events on the website. These events will also be mentioned in more regular newsletters. Please let me know what events you have planned. Advertising on the Sales section is currently free of charge and open to all members.

Members' Feedback

Recently I received two letters from members complaining about the inaction of the Board and asking specific questions. Generally if a couple of members have taken the trouble to write, there may be more members feeling the same way.

Background: Before I address the issues involved specifically, it may be helpful if I offer some background comments. The Association was set up in 2008. It was established by a loan from Six Star to enable the setting up of the ABRI supported Internet Solutions (Animal Enquiry) and the provision of registration and general administration services. This loan has since been forgiven. This was done because we believed

that the Association should endeavour to be as professional as possible. We decided that the fee structure would be annual membership fees combined with cow inventory fees. In addition to this, there would be permits for AI and ET as well as certificates for the progeny. We made this decision knowing that the Association would not have a lot of money to promote the breed in the early days. We felt that this burden initially could be carried by the major stock owners in the Association. This is essentially what has occurred. In my view this marketing and promotion has been extraordinarily successful including the beef tasting sponsored by Cross Bones Rise SP in Gippsland which I and one other director attended. The result of this success is that pure bred full age bulls in the breed have largely been sold and are hard to come by.

Financial position of Association: Prior to the AGM this year, in accordance with the rules under which the Association is governed, I distributed the financial statements to all members. I reattach those statements to this letter. The observations I made at the AGM were similar to the statement I have made above except that I had advised that the Association would have some spare cash in the forthcoming 12 months and we would have to consider how best to spend it. I now attach the financial statements for the end of June and I draw your attention to the trade debtors. This is confirming the forecast I made at the AGM.

Board Activities: The Board is voluntary. The only paid activities are those carried out by ABRI through Ashlee. Members may recall that ABRI had struggled to provide continuity. We are, I believe, fortunate to now have Ashlee who is also Executive Officer and Company Secretary of the Brangus Society.

You will have just received the minutes of the AGM. I had prepared them immediately after the AGM and circulated them to the Board with the intention of getting them to members as quickly as possible. There is no legal requirement for them to go to members until the next AGM however I think it is another and important medium for communication. Unfortunately I forgot to send them and then was in the fool's paradise of believing that I had – my apologies for the oversight. In the minutes are set out the accomplishments in the previous year. In summary, these are:

At the last meeting the following matters were requested by members. These included sending a newsletter to members advising them of the availability of BREEDPLAN; sending out a circular advising members of show attire; preparing a starter pack for new members; preparing a pack specifically aimed at youths; sending out BREEDPLAN reminders; making the AI & ET Guidance more understandable and incorporating into a manual for members; providing advice of which members will be attending which shows; making the logo more accessible for members; get the DVD prepared at Agribition from Rod Remin for distribution in Australia and New Zealand; and a 'buyer beware' checklist for new members which could be on the website.

Of these matters, the logo is now available on the Members section of the Animal Enquiry site. A newsletter was sent out advising of BREEDPLAN. The show attire is on the home page of the website. The AI & ET Guidance was improved but is still being updated. A FAQ is on the Downloads page of the website. The Canadian Society advised it would allow us to adopt their manual once it was updated. This has not occurred as yet. It is difficult to advise who is going to what shows unless the members advise the Board.

A committee to prepare a SPI manual was formed comprised of Neil Gorrell, Leanne Ferguson, Mark Baker and Julie Knight. This is waiting for the Canadian Society manual.

A committee was formed to prepare a brochure comprised of Glenda Gorrell and Mark Baker with input from Rod Remin. This brochure has been produced and is now in its second printing.

The members requested the Board examine a procedure regarding docility over the next three months with a preference for whatever measures are put in place that it is handled within SPI and that the Board report back to the Members at the end of that period. This report on temperament was produced in June 2011 and circulated to members. Feedback from 2 members was received. The issue will be reviewed again in the next 12 months by the Board.

A list of DNA Case numbers for Canadian bulls is now on the Downloads page of the website. A similar document for Canadian cows will follow in the next few months.

In the 5 months since the AGM, the following activities have occurred:

- The brochure has been refreshed and is currently being reprinted. The cost of production is now approximately \$0.20 per brochure (down from 80c) and these will now be available free of charge through Ashlee. The new brochure is also available on the website for downloading.
- A new list of members has been produced replacing the 2011 list. It is available electronically in Internet Solutions as was the 2011 version. A hard copy is on the website and was also sent to each member.
- The AI and ET certificate system has been finalised with the certificates now available from Ashlee. This entailed a little more effort than expected. The Guidance Note on AI and ET has been updated and placed on the website.
- DNA numbers for most Canadian cows and bulls is on the website to assist in registrations.
- The regulations have been updated and placed on the website with a guide at the front stating the changes that have been made since inception.
- The Board agreed to the implementation of a privacy policy to better enable the use of member data by other members for promotion. This is also on the website.
- Rockhampton Beef 2012 was a joint venture between Speckle Central and Six Star however the association had its banner there and its brochure was widely distributed. All Australian directors were in attendance. We believe that during the week over 5,000 people entered the tent and made enquiry. This has given impetus to the breed in Queensland particularly after the beef tasting that occurred at Ekka in 2011 which was attended by all Australian directors at the time.
- Six Star had its third sale at Holbrook and thus exposing the breed further in Victoria. The Board is conscious of the fact that there are only 13 members in Victoria compared with 43 in New South Wales. Four directors attended this event.
- Speckle Central had its annual open day in May. Three Australian directors were in attendance.

Where members of the board have attended any association activity, they have done so entirely at their own cost.

Over the recent period, SPI supports each Royal Show on the East Coast of Australia with prize money and a banner. The same offer has been made to our NZ members. I have the banner for Melbourne at home ready just I had last year. I generally will do ring announcements at each show I attend. I generally attend Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. This year it also included Rockhampton.

The second letter raised specific questions and I address each of the questions below:

1. Has the Association's Sale committee selected a date and venue for the Inaugural Speckle Park Inc. approved sale?

The sale committee have opted for an Autumn 2013 sale. The sale committee is Chris Garvin, Dale Humphries, Leanne Ferguson and Greg Ebbeck.

2. If not why not? If members are to plan, prepare, and present top quality animals the planning should have begun.

Refer above. The venue is possibly less important than the date for animal preparation.

3. List of up to date members should be made available to all members once a year in electronic format that can be attached to an individual members email contact list, as well a in hard copy so as not to disadvantage those who do not operate electronically.

See my comments above. Compliance with the Privacy Act (both NZ and Aust) is always a consideration. Members should be mindful of the requirements of the Spam Act (Aust) when sending electronic messages.

4. What has the "Association" been doing to actively promote the breed?

See my comments above. An opportunity now exists to do more. Many people see advertising as the main way to promote. Generally advertising is untargeted and expensive. It is useful for profile building if done often enough (assume a low end budget of over \$10,000 per annum per breeder). More targeted marketing is important. Generally this is best done by the breeder. The Association is happy to support wherever possible.

5. Banners and promotional Equipment that is available to members for outings and promotional days should be kept and returned to a central location that every member is aware of, and all members using same should be prepared to pay postage on that equipment, and return it to that location at their expense a.s.a.p. allowing for it to be available upon request to the next person promoting the breed. Also the banners, brochures etc. Should be renewed and updated at least once a year, maybe at the Associations expense, depending usage and the budget of course.

The Association has a banner which was unfortunately marooned at Rockhampton temporarily. It did a very good job there and deserved the rest. A central location is optimal and I am happy to provide the default location.

6. A newsletter in the format of an email to keep members up to date with matters relating to the breed, breeders and the activities of the Board should be available at least 4 times a year.

I open this suggestion for more volunteers.

7. The Web site seems to need more attention that it's getting, for a progressive association representing the breed the website should be more informative, changing and exciting etc. Offering breeders and potential breeders a hub of information. There is nothing worse than to visit a website over the period of a month or two and have nothing different, nothing changing.

I am the first to admit that the site lacks razzle dazzle. I am the one who updates it. I don't seek to do that role however as long as I do, my philosophy is to make it useful for members and a form of promotion. I welcome contributions from members.

8. More than one General Meeting should be held each year and be held in strategic locations so to be fair to as many members as possible, it's the members Association and members should be kept in the loop as to any decisions made.

The Association shall retain one general meeting each year. We can explore casual get togethers at shows and other events. I and other directors shall be at Melbourne in September, New Zealand in January, Canberra in February and Sydney in April. Regional groupings would be an option as numbers build.

9. For a group or committee be formed to put a list of "Speckle Park Approved Shows" an example would be about 10 shows (or whatever number) distributed fairly between states, to encourage show committees to put on Speckle Park Classes and to encourage breeders and the Board to plan and support and promote all Approved Speckle Park Shows.

Criteria could consist of shows that:

- a) Run stand-alone Speckle Park classes
- b) Hold junior events for Speckle Park breeders
- c) Have a reasonable standard of housing and washing facilities for cattle
- d) Are willing to have individual Championship classes for Speckle Park Cattle.
- e) The association could have a point scoring system over all the approved shows for several categories and have an end of year awards night, Sydney Royal could be the final show with the award presentation night, invite the press, seek sponsorship for major awards. This could be a great promotional tool and a huge encouragement to "get more breeders out there exhibiting their cattle.

This would need to cover both Australia and NZ and would be quite a task and would involve a lot of travelling. The Association is happy to support this type of activity and asks if anyone is interested with running with this. Currently where requested I organise with show committees the establishment of Speckle Park as separate breed. Generally a guarantee of numbers is required. This has been done at Canberra, Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne. If members have other shows where this is required, please let me know.

10. All breeders should be encouraged to meet EBVs for:

- a) Birth Weight
- b) 200 day Weight
- c) Docility (after some recent observations maybe breeders should be addressing this trait to alleviate what could become a problem further down the track.)
Set a time frame for the 1st three EBVs to become compulsory, this will assist the breed to progress "in the right direction"

The Board's view is that BREEDPLAN should be voluntary and participation is encouraged. Numbers are such that any data will for the next few years be inaccurate. However undertaking the measurements now will reap dividends for the breed down the track. It is a useful tool however it should be remembered that the E stands for Estimated.

11. If there is an up to date brochure available of the "History of the Breed" could all members be notified of this fact and distribution made available to those interested. Maybe members could be asked once a year on how they would like the brochure and information changed and updated. E.G. what are the main questions they are asked by their clients, or potential clients.

See above. I am always happy to receive feedback on the brochure, it is important that it is relevant to needs.

If other members have questions, I am always available to provide feedback.

Regards,
Mark Baker
President