

# Charolais cattle on track

A new bull trial unit launched this month puts Charolais cattle on track towards reappearance at Beef Expo.



In just under three weeks an expected 25-30 Charolais bull calves will arrive at Potaka, south of Taihape where sheep and beef breeder Andrew Totman and son Matthew will run them alongside their own commercial herd, on a stony, dry area devoted to beef fattening. As well as the main herd, a mixture of Friesian bulls and own-breed Friesian Hereford cows with Charolais bull over them, Potaka also has a small Charolais stud.

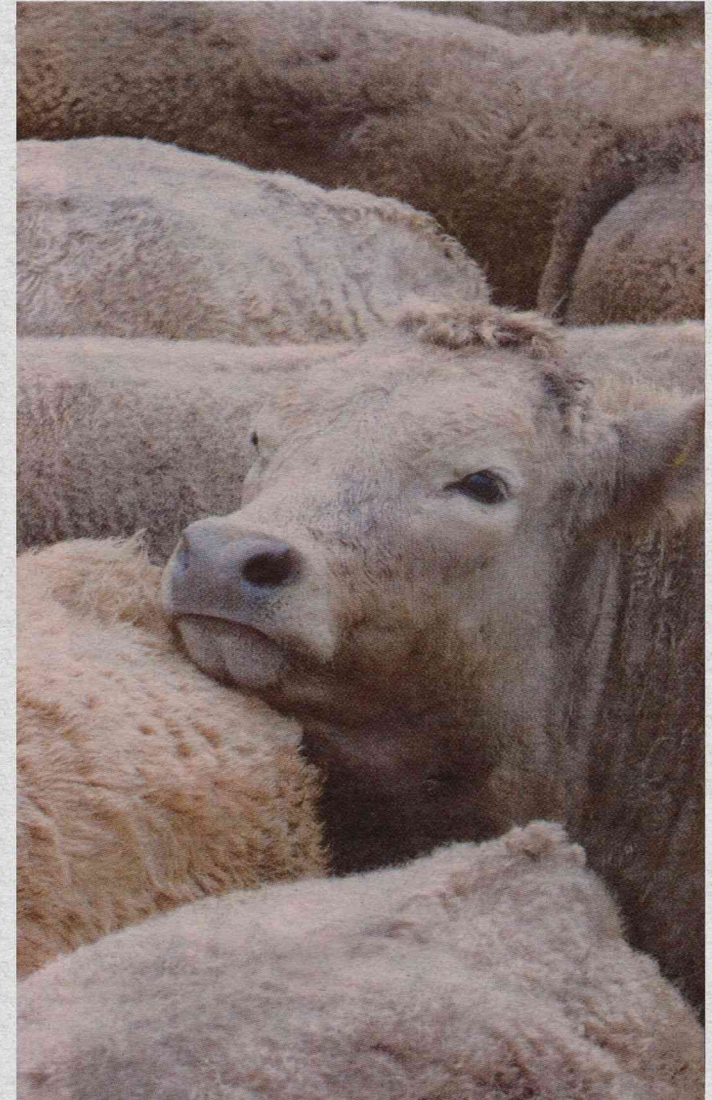
The test unit bulls will undergo strict culling to ensure only the best go to sale and those passing will be released as R two-year bulls at next year's Expo, marking a return of the breed to the national spotlight after an approximately 10-year absence.

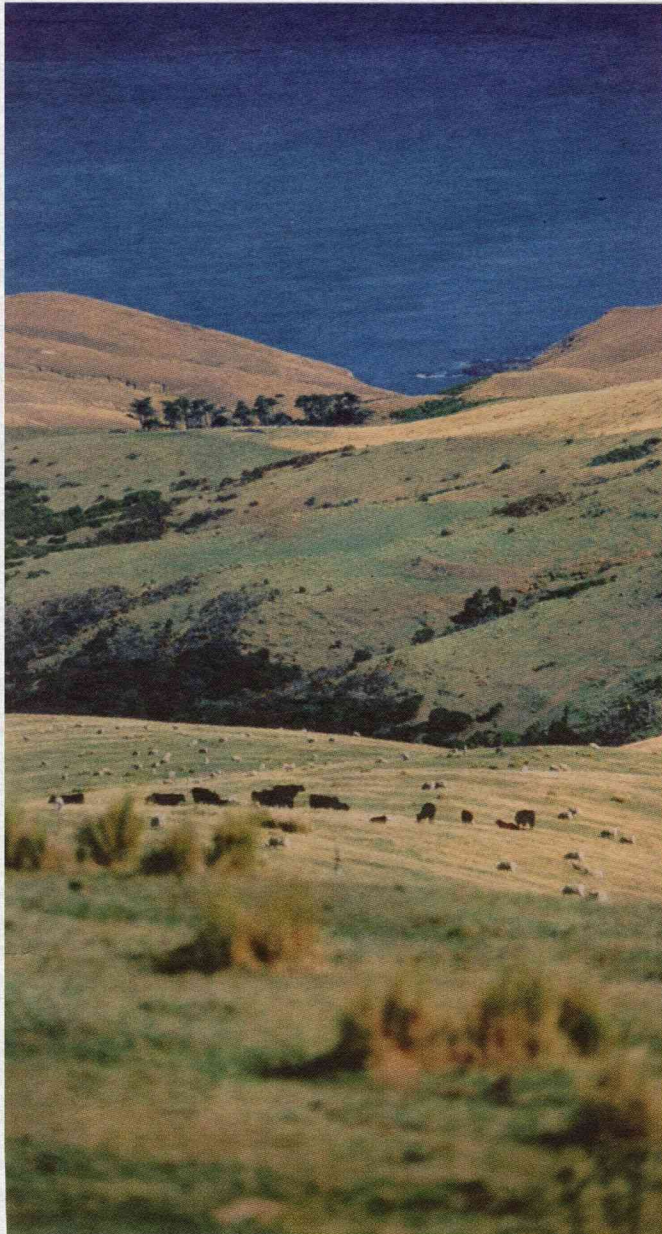
The unit is the initiative of Charolais Breeders New Zealand. Fielding, a 46-member

organization established in 2002 to provide a more commercial alternative to an existing breed society.

Trial unit liaison officer Liz Gwillim of Kaitoke Charolais, Dannevirke, says the national sales former emphasis on led cattle had proved a barrier for most commercially-oriented breeders, with the long preparation time often not justified by returns. In recent years, the breed had also been notably missing from A&P Society shows. It had however, continued to have a strong general market presence, topping sales at 18-month spring fairs and autumn weaner fairs. "It's really deserved a much higher profile though and with Beef Expo taking a more commercial approach, we now have the opportunity to be back in the national arena," says Liz.

Breeders had proved enthusiastic about the move and applications for a place at the unit had come from throughout the country.





## An eye on the New Zealand picture

When Malcolm Campbell set up Williams and Kettle's Hawke's Bay stud stock department 31 years ago, he took on the grand role of manager.

"In reality, I was it – the whole department, typist, administrator, PR consultant..."

And it's been that way ever since as the department expanded to now service the sale and purchase needs of pedigree sheep and cattle farmers throughout Hawke's Bay, the East Coast, Wairarapa, Manawatu and Taranaki.

"You can't always do the best for your clients within the immediate area so you also have your eye on the New Zealand picture." In the early years that meant being away from home more often than not, and even though greater familiarity with the territory since has changed things slightly, he's continued to travel a lot, notching up 2.5-million kilometres driving (and only three speeding tickets) and also crossing the Tasman to see Australian clients. At now 70-years-old, that's one of the reasons he's looking forward to retiring at the end of June. It will bring more time with his wife

Merle, and for other things – their Marlborough Sounds holiday property, canoeing, biking and croquet. And it will end a 40-year involvement with livestock and with Williams and Kettle that began with a position as livestock salesman in Wairoa and later in Napier. In 1979 he was seconded away from his Hawke's Bay stud stock role for a year to open and manage Williams and Kettle's Fielding branch, now one of the company's most successful.

Asked to name highlights of his years, Malcolm mentions big sales, top among them Atahua Legacy which went to Kaharau Station for \$155,000. There was also a trip to the United Kingdom in 1979, accompanying two cattle to the 30,000-acre Perthshire property owned by the United Arab Emirates ambassador. An eye-opener, it provided the opportunity to see the overwhelming luxury of several of the other UK properties of this enormously wealthy man.

On a more day-to-day level, there are also Estimated Breeding Values and carcass data, advances he acknowledges while remaining a traditionalist.

"I still prefer eyeballing the cattle as the ultimate test. EBVs, providing they're accurate, do indicate breeding potential, but I'd hate to see the industry dominated by scientists and rules for breeding by design that remove

the characteristic individualism of breeders as they've responded to New Zealand's environment"

Withholding judgement on the long-term performance of composite sheep breeds such as Finns, he's developed his own favourites, but says they can't intrude on his responsibility to provide equal service for all clients.

As a young man, Malcolm had his own farming aspirations and trained at Smedley before winning a scholarship to do a two-year agricultural diploma at Massey. But he has no regrets at having changed course.

"I love the industry, the people in it, both the breeders and the people I work alongside. Williams and Kettle's' culture suited me perfectly – a small family company that was tremendous with staff and clients.

"It's been very rewarding to get to know clients' needs so well you can instinctively select animals that suit them and they develop the confidence to hand over their buying to me."

Will McFarlane, with Malcolm Campbell.



# Wallace - breeding quality stock

If Preston Wallace has one sin, it's certainly not attention-seeking, but it might be a virtually all-consuming passion. With a 54-year farming career behind him he's still not satisfied, and as enthusiastic about the industry as ever, would love to be starting again.

Despite partial retirement, at 74 years of age he hasn't stepped down completely. He still acts as a consultant and continues making his mark, recently for instance being instrumental in lifting lambing percentages at one operation from 97 per cent to 144 per cent over five years.

He could no doubt reel off a string of similar achievements over a farm management/consultancy career that in the past 25 years saw him responsible for up to 12 properties at once, throughout the North Island and ranging up to 24,000 acres.

But he won't. Sitting guardedly on a large envelope stuffed with certificates from competitions in New Zealand and the United Kingdom, all he will admit to is absolute commitment to his specialist interest in breeding quality stock,

improving percentages and returns and "very good at what I've done"

So good, he never had to apply for a job; the offers rolled in and included requests to trade and source stock that took him to sales New Zealand-wide.

He's equally reluctant to be drawn on the strongest of the opinions developed over years that saw the boom in genetic knowledge and its application to farming.

"Some has been reasonably successful and the new breeds that began arriving in the '70s certainly provided a comparison that made New Zealand breeders aware something must be done to improve the very average production levels of the country's stock at the time,"

However, he's convinced that now much-improved, New Zealand's traditional breeds - Angus, Hereford and Shorthorn, Romney, Perendale and Borders - should remain the mainstay of the country's stock population.

Their proven ability to withstand drought and farm on higher country where there's often minimal feed, is yet to be matched by similar long-term achievements among the new arrivals and composites, Preston says.

"Furthermore, percentages of 150 are all very well, but it demands a lot of expertise from farmers to carry those stock through to useful maturity."

It's all a far cry from the family dairy farm where he had his first taste of rural work in the days of hand-milking. It was soon after the Second World War and in the uncertain circumstances of the time, his father insisted he learn a trade.

"I complied, reluctantly, and served my time in upholstery, but once I'd finished I was back in the country as soon as possible." There he moved through the farming position ranks to management on

several Hawke's Bay properties, before taking on the 2200-acre mixed stock-cropping operation of Mission Estate, Greenmeadows. Twenty-three years later he was considering moving onto a non-farming occupation, but before he had the chance, an unpassable offer to manage a good Hawke's Bay property that needed an upgrade, provided the challenge he needed.

"That's what I've really enjoyed, that constant striving after improvement," he says.

Although a severe accident soon afterwards removed him from field to 'office', his interest was undampened and he was on the path to a career that's convinced him that despite its modern day complexity, pressures and challenges, farming is in good heart.

"Farmers today are more conscious of how to produce good stock, the requirement for better water, higher rates of fertiliser to boost feed, and so on and they have enormous wisdom to draw on from those who've been through the hoops."

Preston Wallace

