

# Bald Blair Feed Efficiency Testing



## Feed Efficiency Testing at Bald Blair

Bald Blair has been one of the pioneering herds in Australia testing and selecting for Net Feed Intake (NFI) - a measure of feed conversion efficiency. A Ruddweigh Efficiency Testing Unit was installed at Bald Blair in 2000, and groups of young bulls have been tested each year since.

## What is Net Feed Intake ?

Net Feed Intake (NFI) refers to the amount of feed consumed by an animal over a 70 day test period, adjusted for the animal's weight and growth rate. NFI EBVs are reported as kg of feed eaten per day.

Progeny of bulls with negative NFI EBVs are more likely to have superior efficiency and consume less feed for any level of growth performance. Progeny of bulls with positive NFI EBVs are expected to consume more feed and be less efficient at any level of growth performance.

Research conducted by NSW Agriculture at Trangie has shown that NFI is positively related to breeding cow efficiency. In addition, research indicates that superior NFI equates to superior efficiency of growing animals on both grass and grain finishing regimes.

## IGF-1 research

Over the last 12 months Bald Blair has been involved in research with the Cooperative Research Centre for Cattle and Beef Quality to identify new and simpler ways of ranking animals for superior feed conversion efficiency. This research has involved sampling young animals across several herds, including Bald Blair, for levels of the blood hormone called Insulin-like Growth Hormone (or IGF-1).

Differences between animals in the concentration of IGF-1 has been shown to be related to differences in feed conversion efficiency and body composition. It is hoped that this research will lead to a simple blood marker test that can be used to assist screen animals for future NFI testing. This should result in faster rates of genetic improvement for feed conversion efficiency in herds like Bald Blair where we are testing and selecting for this trait.

**Further information on IGF-1 testing can be obtained from Dr Robert Herd at the NSW Agriculture BeefCentre on 02 6770 1808.**