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INBREEDING AND POPULATION
STRUCTURE STUDIES IN
THE NEW ZEALAND ANGUS BREED

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WENG KEONG CHEONG
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To my Mother and Father

ABSTRACT

The breed structure and genetic history of the New Zealand pedigree Angus breed were analysed by Robertson and Asker's (1951) modification of the Wright-McPhee (1925) pedigree sampling method.

The pattern of the breed structure obtained is generally similar to that found in other studies, but it is both diffuse and dynamic owing to the present rapid expansion of the breed. There are changes taking place in the herd composition of the major breeders' herds and many new herds have yet to find their level in the structure.

Considerable emphasis has been placed on the use of imported animals in the development of the breed. Of all herds registering in Volume 61 of the herd book, 20.5% used imported sires, and the percentage of genes in the breed in 1966/67 derived from animals imported since 1863 was 85.4.

The most important herd in 1969 has a genetic contribution to the breed of 21.9 per cent, while the contributions of the four next most important herds were 8.72, 8.7, 4.7 and 3.7 per cent. In the four-generation pedigrees from which these figures were derived, the contribution of imported animals was 42.4%. The relationship between herd size and importance of the herd was considered. Herd duration was also discussed, in so far as it relates to improvement of the breed.

The animal with the highest relationship to the breed was Blackleg (11.65% in the 1900 pedigree sample). But overall, the most important animal over the period 1900-1966/67 was Lancer of Advie. Of the 33

sires and 9 dams whose direct relationships are 3.0% or more in any of the 8 sample years, 19 sires and 3 dams were imported.

The total inbreeding in 1966/67 (base year 1863) was 1.80%. This comprised 0.09% current inbreeding, 0.95% long-term inbreeding, and 0.76% strain inbreeding. The index of subdivision calculated from the non-current and long-term inbreeding is 1.79, indicating that there is only a slight tendency towards family formation in the breed.

The effective generation length is approximately 5.6 years. About 50-56% of the animals in the 1966/67 sample were sired by bulls 4 years old or younger, while about 38% are from dams 4 years or younger.

It is unlikely that there is much genetic variation between herds. This is because bulls from major breeders' herds are used widely throughout the breed while about 80 percent of sires and 37 percent of dams are bred in herds other than the one in which they were used.

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"Lewontin confessed that each year he lectures
on inbreeding, and each year he realises that
he does not yet completely understand it."

Bruce Wallace, 1968.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Chapter</u>		<u>Page</u>
	ABSTRACT	iii
	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
	LIST OF TABLES	ix
	LIST OF FIGURES	xi
	LIST OF APPENDICES	xii
1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	BREED EXPANSION	4
3	REVIEW OF LITERATURE	7
	I. THE MEASUREMENT OF INBREEDING: SOME THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS	7
	II. ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO INBREEDING	12
	III. COEFFICIENTS OF RELATIONSHIP	17
	A. Relationship coefficients between collateral relatives	18
	B. Direct relationships	18
	IV. THE MEASUREMENT OF INBREEDING IN COMPLEX PEDIGREES	19
	V. THE EFFECTS OF INBREEDING	23
	A. Evidence of inbreeding depression in farm animals	24
	B. Explanations of inbreeding depression and hybrid vigour	27
	VI. STUDIES OF GENETIC CHANGES IN LIVESTOCK POPULATIONS	29
4	METHODS AND MATERIALS	33
	I. METHODS	33
	II. DATA	37

<u>Chapter</u>		<u>Page</u>
5	GENETIC ANALYSIS	40
	I. THE INFLUENCE OF IMPORTATIONS	40
	II. AMOUNT OF INBREEDING	48
	III. HOMOGENEITY OF THE BREED	56
	IV. GENERATION LENGTH	65
	V. IMPORTANT HERDS	75
	A. Genetic contribution of important herds	83
	B. Important animals	87
6	BREED STRUCTURE	93
7	REGISTRATION PRACTICES	99
	I. HERD SIZE	101
	II. THE USE OF IMPORTED STOCK BY NEW ZEALAND HERDS	105
	III. THE USE OF BULLS FROM PROMINENT NEW ZEALAND HERDS	107
	IV. HERD DJRATION	110
8	DISCUSSION	113
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	122

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table</u>	<u>Page</u>
2.1 Proportionate increases in number of females registered per annum and number of herds during seven periods of time.	6
3.3 The effect of inbreeding on body-weight and milk yield.	25
3.4 Inbreeding and subdivision of the pure breeds of livestock.	30
4.1 Proportion of the registrations included in each sample.	39
5.1 Numbers of Angus cattle imported into New Zealand during ten-year periods from 1863 to 1975.	42
5.2 Angus importations 1863-1976 distributed according to country of origin and year of entry into New Zealand.	43
5.3 The effect of the different importations on the breed at ten yearly intervals.	44
5.4 The extent of current inbreeding in eight sample years for the New Zealand pedigree Angus.	49
5.5 Extent of current inbreeding in other cattle breeds.	51
5.6 Amount of total inbreeding in eight sample years for the pedigree Angus in New Zealand.	53
5.7 <u>Inter se</u> relationship and non-current inbreeding, subdivided into long-term and strain inbreeding in eight sample years for the New Zealand pedigree Angus.	58
5.8 Contributions by imported animals to the non-current inbreeding and <u>inter se</u> relationship ties in the New Zealand pedigree Angus.	62
5.9 Number of inter se relationship ties contributed by the seven most often appearing imported animals and the three most often appearing New Zealand herds in eight sample years for the New Zealand pedigree Angus.	63
5.10 Average length of interval between generations.	65
5.11 Parent-offspring intervals and average generation length for pedigree Angus cattle in New Zealand.	67
5.12 Differences between the various parent-offspring intervals (years) for the New Zealand pedigree Angus.	72

<u>Table</u>	<u>Page</u>
5.13 Herds in order of importance for each of the three methods of analysis used to determine the important herds of the New Zealand pedigree Angus.	77
5.14 Years of origin and dispersal of the most important pedigree Angus herds in New Zealand in 1900, 1930 and 1966/67.	79
5 15 Distribution of herds supplying the sires in the four-generation pedigrees of samples of females born in 1900, 1930 and 1966/67.	82
5.16 Genetic contribution of Imported and the nine major herds to a sample of pedigree Angus females born 1966/67.	85
5.17 Percentage direct relationship for animals important to the breed in eight sample years.	88
7.1 Herd types and registration practices of herds registering in volume 61 of the New Zealand Aberdeen Angus Herd Book.	100
7.2 Analysis of Breeders' Herds (1), (2), (3) and (4) by numbers of females registered in volume 61 of the New Zealand Aberdeen Angus Herd Book.	102
7.3 Numbers and percentages of herds in each stratum using imported sires and dams.	106
7.4 Numbers of herds in each stratum using bulls from B.H.(1) herds.	108
7.5 Percentages of sires and dams bred in herds other than the one in which they were used, in eight samples of the pedigree Angus breed in New Zealand.	109
7.6 Percentage distribution of Angus breeders distributed according to duration of breeding effort.	111

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure</u>		<u>Page</u>
2.1	Growth of the Angus breed in New Zealand: number of male and female registrations in each volume of the New Zealand Angus Herd Book since 1917.	5
4.1	The 16 possible ties in an eight-line pedigree.	34
4.2	An actual pedigree drawn according to Robertson and Asker's (1951) modification of Wright's "Short Method".	36
5.1	Angus importations 1863-1976.	41
5.2	The genetic contribution of foundation stock and importations since 1863 to eight samples of pedigree Angus females.	45
5.3	Current inbreeding for each of the 8 sample years.	50
5.4	Non-current inbreeding subdivided into long-term and strain inbreeding.	52
5.5	Distribution of the sire-son and sire-daughter intervals in the New Zealand pedigree Angus for the 8 sample years.	68
5.6	Distribution of the dam-son and dam-daughter intervals in the New Zealand pedigree Angus for the 8 sample years.	68
6.1	Diagrammatic representation of breed structure based on registration data in volume 61 of the New Zealand Aberdeen Angus Herd Book.	96

LIST OF APPENDICES

<u>Appendix</u>		<u>Page</u>
I	Number of male and female registrations in each volume of the New Zealand Angus Herd Book.	128
II	Number of female registrations and number of herds in each of the eight 10-year periods (1900-1970).	129
III	An example of the use of Wright's (1922) formula for the computation of the coefficient of inbreeding.	130
IV	An example of the use of coancestry for computing inbreeding coefficients.	131
V	Number of male and female pedigree Angus cattle imported into New Zealand since 1863.	134
VI	List of importations (1863-1976).	136
VII	Parent-offspring intervals of the New Zealand pedigree Angus for eight sample years.	152
VIII	Prominent animals from studies of various cattle breeds.	160