

Salers Cattle in Wyoming, USA By Peter Rogers, SALCO Partners

In March 2007 Cheryl and I had the opportunity to visit for a few days with Paul and



Paul Catherine and Cheryl feeding out hay to Salers Cows and calves

Catherine Kukowski, who run Salers cattle in Wyoming, USA. We first met Paul and Catherine during the International Salers Federation tour in New Zealand in April 2003. They are a husband and wife team who with their daughter Bridget run a 17,700 acre ranch in north central Wyoming about 10 miles east of Wynarno, a tiny town comprising a post office, a pub and 2 houses. The Kukowski herd consists of about 1000 Salers or Salers cross breeders, with a further 800 young cattle over-wintering in feedlots for turnout onto grass in spring.



Feeding out 24 hours and 2 feet of snow later!

The land that Paul and Catherine farm ranges in altitude from 5-7,000ft and comprises hilly country with steep slopes and gullies (termed “draws”). Gullies often have undergrowth where cattle shelter during storms. Winters are severe with temperatures well below zero and snow cover from November to March.



Young Salers and Salers-cross cattle in a feedlot on winter maintenance rations.

Calving takes place in autumn, although the majority of ranchers in this area work with spring calving. One major advantage of autumn calving is that calves are big and strong enough to cope with snow conditions when winter arrives. By contrast, spring calving necessitates holding the breeding herd close to the ranch, since as we experienced during our visit, a spring snowstorm can rapidly dump 2-3 feet of snow making survival of newborn calves a risky business. Paul runs 50-60 bulls, and typically purchases 15 replacement Salers bulls each year. Grass and alfalfa hay is purchased from other areas of the USA each year, and supplementary feeding occurs throughout

winter. Feedlotting is common in this area, with costs negotiated in advance for a daily

maintenance ration through winter that sets the young cattle up to be turned out onto grass in spring.

Why Salers? This is country that Salers cattle were designed for! The easy calving and strong maternal instinct is a huge advantage under rough conditions. Calves that are able to follow their mother within moments of calving are less likely to be left behind by the herd. This is a critical survival issue in territory that is shared with predators such as black and grizzly bears, coyotes, mountain lions, bob cats, and the recently reintroduced timber wolf. Land degradation and failure to utilize remote pasture resources can occur if cattle will not walk significant distances from established water sources during summer. This is less of an issue with Salers cattle since this breed has good mobility and naturally travels into the higher and rougher country without being forced. In winter, the foraging ability of Salers is also an advantage, with animals still able to find feed despite snow covered ground.

The typical Salers cow favored in this area is moderate framed, hardy and easy doing. The breed is far more commonly seen in the USA than in Australia, with Salers influence evident in many of the big commercial herds. However, the hardy attributes that allow Salers to be successful on the open rangeland have to be complimented with an ability to do well under feedlot conditions with intensive finishing regimes. As in Australia, USA feedlotter have recognized the ability of Salers to gain weight faster and for longer than many other breeds, thus providing a strong market for Salers and Salers cross animals.

We have fond memories of the wonderful hospitality Paul and Catherine gave us during our brief visit, and appreciate the opportunity we had to see how Salers have become significant players in the historical homelands of the American cattle industry.