

Tesla driver is major fan

Angus is suited to regen program

BY LINDA MANTOVA

MOUNT BEAUTY, VIC

YOU don't have to be a big producer of Angus cattle to be a good endorsement for the breed, as Steven Scott will attest.

The Scotts Angus stud principal thought someone was lost when they drove up to the yards on his southern NSW property near Henty in a white Tesla two years ago.... but he was wrong.

Mr Scott sold a two-year-old bull, Mr T, or Scotts Angus T338, to the Tesla driver who now produces 400-plus kilogram Angus steers at Mount Beauty in Victoria.

Enter Tom Courtice who owns a small business as well as a consultancy firm, and decided he wanted to get into Angus eight years ago.

He said Angus are ideal for small enterprises such as his.

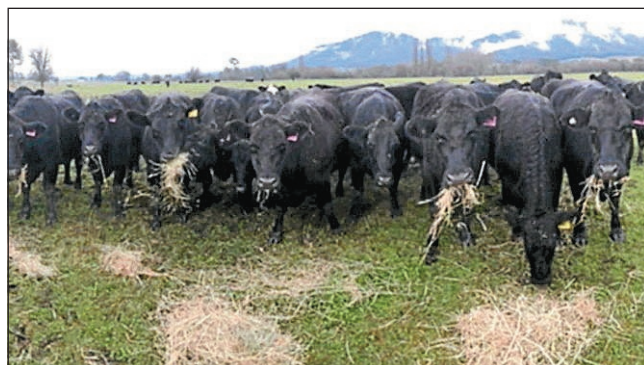
Mr Courtice operates Mount Emu Farm, in the upper Kiewa Valley, which is 40ha with another 40ha leased next door, in high rainfall country, receiving a "pretty reliable" 1100mm annually.

Both he and his partner, Juliette Begg, have some farming background in the family - sheep stations in New Zealand for Ms Begg, cattle in NSW/Queensland on his side, but Mr Courtice said they had lived most of their lives in the city before moving to their property about 10 years ago.

"My immediate family has an ecology background, and



Tom Courtice, Mount Beauty, Victoria, believes Angus are ideal for small enterprises such as his. Picture supplied



Angus cattle running on regenerative pastures at Tom Courtice's Mount Beauty property in Victoria. Picture supplied

I've always been interested in regen farming," he said.

"We have been dabbling in Angus for about eight years and due to the size of the property we have off-farm income, so we wanted something easy to market and sell given we are time poor. And most farmers in this area have Angus or Hereford."

Mr Courtice said he looked after a neighbour's farm for nine months a few years ago, and he had 120 Angus breeders.

"Seeing how he ran that place, I thought it would be good to get a bit more serious about the operation to see if we can make it profitable - like many small farms it's hard to get ahead since many of the overheads are large compared to the size of the herd," he said.

"I've been doing intensive managed grazing for a few years now (essentially a version of Allan Savory's holistic management). We are trying to reduce input

costs, increase profitability and improve our landscape function through intensive grazing practice. When you are this small, you need to do everything you can to reduce input costs, and regen farming also fits philosophically.

"Living in the country, we do a lot of km, and we have had the electric car for a few years now. It makes a lot of sense, especially with fuel prices going up. Our farm and our car run on solar power, but we also have a diesel ute of course!"

Running between 20 and 30 breeders, depending on the year, Mr Courtice said they aimed to reliably turn off about 25 steers/heifers/older cows every year.

"At the moment we are a little light with 18 cows and 24 calves from last year, so we will top up with a few heifers before joining this year."

Having borrowed bulls in the past, Mr Courtice said they decided to purchase a stud bull and knew of

Scotts Angus.

"So it was really a case of hopping in the car one day with my agent as he was heading up there anyway, and we ended up buying a bull," he said.

"I like to be able to buy directly without the hassle of an auction, as you get a better chance to chat to the stud owner. I was looking for a calm bull, with good conformation, feed efficiency and easy calving traits.

"Mr T, who is now four, was selected for calving ease, as we have a mix of heifers and older cows, and feed conversion/efficiency. While the latter is a feedlot-derived trait, I am working on the hypothesis that it may also help with regenerative farming, where cattle are eating older grass (at times), and we are always selecting the herd for good doers on the older grass.

"Having more stomach surface area can't hurt. He's also a very calm and easy-to-

handle bull, which is important in a small herd where we are moving the cows twice a day."

Mr Courtice said he joined from early November, calving in August-September.

"This means usually we don't have to feed out too much as we try to avoid buying or making much hay. We weaned early this year (end of Feb) as it was a difficult summer and the cows lost a fair bit of condition, but we ideally wean in April.

"We are aiming for the feedlot market as the regen cattle grow slower (all things being equal) so we are not turning out heavy weaners in autumn.

"Essentially we want to have products that we can turn off at different market points depending on the year, aiming to sell on average about 25 head per year - a mix of steers, heifers and older cows with replacement ideally from within the herd.

"We had a great calving rate in 2025, but due to the dry spring and summer we had poor pregnancy rates. We've had to get on top of the selenium issue and are learning to wean even earlier if the cows are losing condition, or buy in feed. However, we have had a great autumn, and it's been warm, so this winter is looking good for feed."

Mr Courtice said it was a constant juggle with the bakery and small consulting business. However, working for himself allowed some flexibility.

"We are trying to use Angus cattle to increase our soil health, carbon and water storage and biodiversity.

"The soil on our farm is improving with more organic matter and mycorrhizal fungi, which are the key to cycling nutrients without synthetic fertiliser."