



VIOLET HILLS

NEWSLETTER Spring 2014

What a year 2014 has been! For us on the Central Tablelands of NSW we went from our second totally failed spring (2013) to a horrible summer where the main decision to be made was, what mob of cattle do we sell next so that we can pay for the fodder required to keep the rest going. Again early weaning of all of the calves occurred at 3 to 4 months of age. This enabled us to give them preferential treatment so that they continued to grow and reduce the fodder requirements needed to maintain the cows.

Just when we were wondering what our next move would be, it started to rain in mid February. This was the start of one of the best autumns that we have experienced for many years. Not only did we get adequate rain, the temperatures were mild and the quality of the pasture exceptional with a massive sub clover germination that did not have the usual dry weather set back, that quite often happens in the autumn. As a result, the cattle have done exceptionally well as the photos of some of the dry cows, taken in May, shows.



Dry cows- Photos taken May 2014

The massive turn off of cattle in the North continued to dampen the market into the winter giving us returns approximately half that equivalent cattle were making in the USA.

There are a lot of positives in the beef market. The huge female kill since mid 2012, that has averaged in excess of 20% above the normal female kill, has to have a positive effect on prices. Live exports are on track to exceed 1,000,000 cattle in 2014, and demand for grinding beef is at record levels in the USA as a result of the huge herd reduction that has occurred in recent years. All of this, coupled with expanding markets in Asia, must eventually result in much better prices in Australia. Of course the weather and limited competition in the market place are the big worry. The fact that some new players are coming into the processing sector is a welcome development.

Violet Hills Annual sale May 2014

In a year of uncertainty we were pleased to have a good clearance at our annual sale. Including immediate post auction sales we had 100% clearance at an average of about \$4000.00 for the 45 bulls. The top priced bull was Violet Hills Hanford, who was bought by Mackaway Past Co., Walcha for \$6750.00



Setting up the canteen prior to the sale (left) and the top priced bull (Violet Hills Hanford) with Owen



and Leone Mackaway of Mackaway Past Co and Daryl Jenkins

The most pleasing aspect of the sale were the number of repeat buyers, who spoke highly of the progeny that they have by Violet Hills bulls, that they had purchased previously.

New Sires

Each year we try new sires, many as yearlings. Some of the sires that will feature in future bull offerings are:-

Violet Hills Flambeau (VHVF38E) born 19/8/2010



Flambeau is by the well credentialed Full French sire, Pinay, out of an excellent old Violet Hills Rex cow, Violet Hills X9E. He showed outstanding growth as a calf and yearling and has excellent structure and muscling. We are now assessing his first main crop of calves that will be in our 2015 sales. Picture was taken June 2014

B.W. -0.2, 200D +9, 400D+26, 600D +28

With a Domestic Index of +\$44

Violet Hills Gaelic Warrior(VHVG16E) (P) born 14/8/2011

Violet Hills Gaelic Warrior (P) is by Violet Hills Ellis out of an outstanding Pouriwai Sonny Cow, Violet Hills Briana. He is a very easy calving, easy doing, bull with tremendous muscling. His first main crop of calves arrived this year and it won't be until 2016 sales that we will present his progeny. Photo was taken June 2014. B.W.-1.2, 200D +12, 400D +21, 600D +20 with a Domestic Index of +\$48



Violet Hills Hilston(VH191E) (P) born 3/9/2012



Violet Hills Hilston (P) is by Pinay out of another outstanding Pouriwai Sonny cow, Violet Hills Bronwen (P). He is also a very easy calving, easy doing bull, with excellent structure, balance and volume. Photo was taken June 2014. B.W. -1.7, 200D +11, 400D +23, 600D +27, Rib fat +1.2, Rump fat +1.3, EMA +2.1 with a domestic index of +\$54

The three bulls were only on grass when the photos were taken and have their winter coats on.

Australian National Field Days Steer Trial 2014

Violet Hills entered two teams of four steers in the 2013-2014 steer trial. The teams were based on single sire groups and were out of first calf heifers. They were purebred Charolais. Because we have a limited numbers of steers, this is the only steer trial that we enter. In our opinion it is the most industry relevant trial available, as the steers spend 100 days on grass after induction. They then enter a feedlot for a further 100 days before being slaughtered and then having their carcasses fully assessed.



By entering purebreds we can assess the success of our breeding programme, which aims to produce a type of Charolais that performs on grass under Australian conditions and whose carcasses meet the requirements of the Australian meat industry.

Overall, our steers performed creditably being awarded 1st place for the **pen of live steers**, 1st place for **calculated yield of saleable meat** and 1st place for the **highest points carcasse**.

A steer from the Champion pen of steers.

A Producers Story

Grahame Edgell of "Somerton Park", Sodwalls, near Lithgow, said his decision to introduce Charolais genetics was driven by a desire to increase the profitability of his high quality Murray Grey herd. After seeing Charolais calves in his neighbours' paddocks and being impressed by the shape of the animals Grahame purchased his first Charolais bull from Violet Hills in 2009 and hasn't looked back since.



"I knew the Jenkins family (of Violet Hills Charolais) had been supplying producers in the local area for about 40 years and driving around, I could see the progeny in the paddocks and the type of animal that were being produced. From that I could see the style and shape of animal that I could provide if I got involved with them." Grahame said.

He was already happy with the temperament and calving ability of his Murray Greys and the introduction of the Charolais did not alter this at all. After the first year of introducing a Charolais sire, at weaning time, he found the first drop of steer calves were about 50 kilograms heavier than the purebred Murray Grey calves.

Grahame said the thing he likes most about the Charolais from Violet Hills is the fact that they are genuinely early maturing. This makes a huge difference because being in a cold climate he has a very short pasture growing period and it is essential to turn the animals off as soon as he can. Since 2009 he has purchased a further 5 bulls costing around the \$5,000.00 mark.

Grahame calves twice a year to ensure a constant flow through of animals, which he sells directly to "My Butcher on Main" in Lithgow and also directly to customers as boxed beef in 20kg packs. Grahame concluded by saying, "We now have animals which grow fast, finish easily and have plenty of meat, which is of excellent eating quality".

SALES for 2015

Violet Hills Yea (Vic) Sale 25th February 2015

Violet Hills will conduct its own sale at Yea saleyards on the 25th of February 2015. We will present 30 specially selected Charolais bulls that will be approximately 17 months old, very thick, genuinely early maturing bulls, that have been specially bred for the vealer/yearling market. A big percentage of the bulls will be polled. The agents will be Rodwells with Andrew Allan, Alexandra (0428410341); Adam Mountjoy, Yea (0428926610); Tyson Bush, Shepperton (0419756746) and Anthony Delaney, Pakenham (0429136055) as the contacts.

Violet Hills Annual On Farm Sale 7th May 2015

The annual sale will again be conducted, on farm, on the first Thursday in May. We will present approximately 50 bulls and 50 PTIC heifers. Half of the heifers will be CharolaisXRed Angus composites and the other half purebred Charolais. They will be PTIC to Red Angus bulls, to calve August/ September 2015.

The bulls, as usual, will be heavily muscled, genuinely early maturing, easy care bulls suitable to the Australian markets. A big percentage will be polled. The agents will be Elders with Andrew Bickford, Elders Bathurst (0427943781); Brian Kennedy, Elders Stud Stock(0427844047) and Josh Crosby, Elders Stud Stock (0428634658) as the contacts

Client Sales

Ray and Robin Hadley, Kanimbla Valley, sold vealers at Carcoar sale on the 8th July with the 10 month old CharolaisXHereford calves selling for \$970.00 per head (\$2.19 c/kg) for the steers and \$873.00 per head for the heifers. This is a good example of what can be achieved when competent stockmen combine good management with good genetics. The same week the rural press had an article about a producer being very happy to get \$600.00 for his Angus steers. WHOOPEE. He probably believed that he got a premium as well. The Tooth Fairy and the Easter Bunny will never be threatened while people hold these views!!!

SYDNEY RAS Steer Competition

A steer bred by Violet Hills and prepared by The Scotts School, Bathurst was judged the Champion Charolais steer. He was a pure bred Charolais by Violet Hills Ellis. He had an EMA of 122 sq. cms., which was 20% more than the next best Charolais and optimum fat cover.



DARYL'S SOAP BOX

We are all aware that there is a wide range of types within the Charolais breed. This is one of the breeds great strengths enabling progressive stud breeders to produce animals that are appropriate for different markets, production systems and environments. This brings me to the word **APPROPRIATE**. There are many good bulls being sold that are NOT appropriate for the task given them. This problem is being amplified by the Show ring especially when judges are "imported" from other regions and other breeds. One of the great strengths that the southern regions of Australia have is the ability to produce quality grass fed beef. This is being sort more and more by consumers seeking a "clean green" product. The Supermarkets can see a real marketing advantage and are actively procuring and promoting grass fed beef.

One of the problems faced by grass fatteners can be the variable quality of the pasture over the period of time the animal is being grown and fattened. There is usually a limited time when the pasture is at its best for fattening the animal and if you miss this fattening opportunity there may be a 6 month wait before the pasture is at its best again. This is entirely different to the lot feeding situation where the animals have optimum feed quality all of the time.

In my experience, from breeding Charolais for over 40 years and specialising in developing a strain of Charolais that is appropriate to our grass production systems, it is essential to have a very early maturing, heavily muscled animal with an excellent constitution. There is nothing more frustrating than an animal having a growth spurt just when you were trying to finish it. This is what happens with the taller, leggy, later maturing Charolais that are popular in the North. You may be able to finish their progeny at a young age by placing them in a feedlot but can be very frustrated trying to finish them on grass. The description of the maturity pattern is at best very subjective and what one person will call "early maturing" will be a medium maturity pattern or late maturity pattern to another person. A short broad head, and shorter legs can indicate an earlier maturity pattern. This **does not** indicate poorer early growth performance as there is no reason for the "blockier" animals to be lighter than their leggier cousins.

From the Jenkins family at Violet Hills we wish you all the best for the festive season and may the weather be kind and cattle prices continue to improve.

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