



The strength of the cattle market and the improvement in seasonal conditions in most areas has given cattle producers a real boost. The only negative for us was the very cold conditions in the Spring, which slowed pasture growth, resulting in a very late and “bob tailed” Spring.

The long, cold, wet, winter had been very hard on the cattle and the 2 year old heifers in particular really cut up at calving. They have recovered their condition and hopefully have gone back in calf in the 2 month joining period. If not they will be culled.

Being arguably the only Charolais stud that specifically breeds for the “young cattle grass fed market”, we regularly receive very positive feedback about the performance of our bulls. The maturity pattern of our animals continues to set them apart from most other Charolais. Having genuinely early maturing animals enables the progeny to be finished at a young age. Too often we hear the comment that Charolais are too hard to finish. The reason is that inappropriate Charolais are being used. Calving ease, doing ability on grass and carcase characteristics are also high priorities in our herd. At the end of the day it is not a question of whether the bulls are good or bad. The real question is, are they appropriate for the job given them and do they maximise the profits of the beef producer?

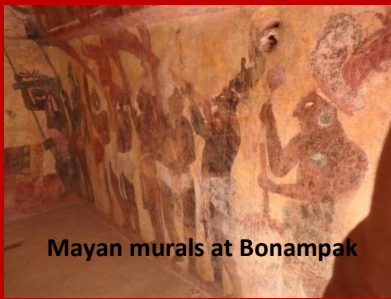
Violet Hills will, once again, be presenting 30 polled Charolais bulls at Yea, Vic., on Wednesday the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February, 2017. They are a very uniform line up of easy care, well structured, 18 month old bulls. The Violet Hills on-property sale will be on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> of May, 2017 with 50 bulls presented. They will be 20 months old, very uniform, thick, early maturing, bulls.

## **World Charolais Conference Mexico 2016**

In April Kaye and I visited Mexico for the World Charolais Congress. We were accompanied by our daughter in law, Louise, and grandson, Kallum. Prior to the conference we spent 2 weeks visiting ancient Mayan sites on the Yucatan Peninsular with our friends and fellow Charolais breeders, Bob and Margaret Ferguson from Kumbia, Qld. The scale and grandeur of the cities is mind blowing, especially considering that the Mayan society collapsed about 400 years before the Spanish arrived. The reason for the collapse seems to be exhausting resources and climate change. They certainly could not blame fossil fuels for climate change!!! When will we ever learn?

Only a very small portion of the ancient cities have been cleared and some restoration carried out. Some sites are still being discovered in the jungle. The main building material is limestone and many of the buildings were originally covered with a lime stucco that was painted in bright colours and adorned with elaborate murals.

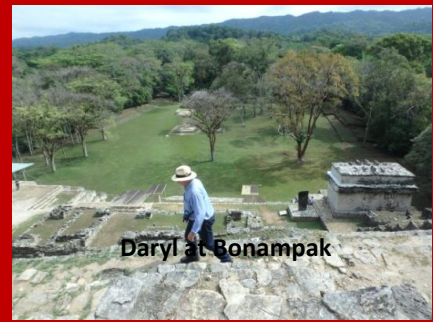




Mayan murals at Bonampak



Chichen- Itza



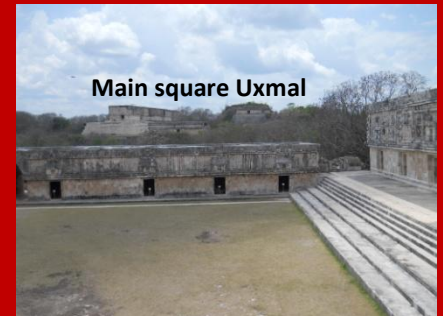
Daryl at Bonampak



Kaye following the guide at Uxmal



Palenque



Main square Uxmal

The Mexican hosts could only be described as fantastic. The cattle we saw were very good. They are basically full French and as such, are big, well muscled, horned cattle. Producing polled Charolais does not seem to be a high priority at the present. A lot of the cattle country is hard with buffel grass one of the main pasture plants. There is a distinct wet and dry season with a lot of the inland cattle producing areas being very arid. The calves are weaned at a young age with many of them going to the USA to be grown out and lot fed.



Bull by Ijoufflu at La Castellana



La Providencia Ranch



Main sire on Altamira Ranch



Buffel grass and mesquite trees



Cattle yard cleaners



Cowboys near Monterrey



Excellent security



## The Mexican culture was on show



## Managing Young Bulls

The bulls that we offer for sale are 18 to 20 months old. They have been early weaned at 6 months or less and grown out on pasture, oaten hay and a protein supplement. During our hard winters we aim to keep them growing at a steady rate of about 1 Kg. per day. The spring allows them to grow at a faster rate. The final 80 days before sale is usually spent in the finishing pens where they can be closely monitored and kept on a uniform ration of oaten hay and a protein meal. If there is a seasonal break this also prevents them from chasing any green pick and going backwards in condition.

At Violet Hills we often use 15 month bulls and find they don't have any trouble handling 30 to 40 cows over a 2 month joining period. A 20 month old bull will handle 50 cows without any trouble. It must be remembered that even with good nutrition this early work will delay them reaching their full mature size by up to a year. The mature size of our bulls is usually somewhere between 1000 and 1200 Kgs. At the end of the day, while it is nice to look at a big fat bull, it is the performance of his progeny that is important.

Drenching for liver fluke and worms is important with young bulls and can easily be overlooked as bulls can be a pain to drench orally (fluke drench). We have had a few cases where clients were concerned about their young bull and a fluke drench was all that was needed. This is particularly so in the higher rainfall districts.



When joining, it is not advisable to run a new young bull with an older bull. As well as not getting many calves the young bull runs a real risk of a penile hematoma (broken dick) when he gets belted by the older bull as he tries to serve a cow. A safer move would be to run the young bull with the cows for 3 weeks or so and then replace him with the older bull.

## New Sire Violet Hills Jolly Joker (VHV J187E (P) )

Jolly Joker now has 42 progeny on the ground and so far we are very impressed with his calves. His structure and temperament can't be faulted and his calving ease is excellent. All of his calves are polled, which backs up his DNA test which rated him as a homozygous poll. As a 3 year old he weighed 1130kg. His EBV's have his Birth weight as -1.3, Milk as +2, 200DW as +14, 400DW as +29, 600dw as +42, SS as +4.1, CE Dir as 10.6, CE Mat. As 10.6, C.Wt as +28, Rib Fat as +1.4, Rump fat as +1.9, EMA as +1.3 and a Domestic Index of +59. His calves seem to be growing very well and appear to be very good doing types. Over the next year we will get a better idea on their performance. Jolly Joker has just come out from joining 50 cows. We consider him an outstanding Poll Charolais bull.



## To Poll or not to Poll

There is no doubt that we have to move away from breeding horned animals. Dehorning can be a messy business and can place the animal under a great deal of stress. It then becomes an animal welfare issue. Breeding polled animals is fairly simple. The polled gene is dominant over the horned gene, so using a homozygous polled animal will result in polled progeny (see a previous article on the poll gene in my newsletter, Autumn 2014). There are major problems with this approach.

- 1) Finding decent polled animals without neglecting all or some of the other traits is, in my opinion, difficult. This is one of the reasons for us virtually closing our herd and being extremely cautious about outside genetics.
- 2) It can be a very long process to completely remove the horn gene from a herd and still maintain your other breeding objectives. Some of your best animals may be horned and you can't just throw them away. Look how long it has taken the Herefords to poll their herd. They still have a long way to go.

There are a few points prospective buyers should keep in mind.

- 1) Two horned animals will not produce polled progeny no matter how much polled breeding is in their background.
- 2) Two polled animals can produce horned progeny if they are both carrying the recessive horned gene.
- 3) A horned bull will always produce polled progeny when crossed over pure polled breeds such as Angus.

And, yes, I am aware of so called pure Angus throwing horned progeny. That is the result of "creative" breeding in America and elsewhere. At Violet Hills we are now principally using home bred polled Charolais bulls.

## Coming Sales in 2017.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Violet Hills Southern Bull Sale.....Yea Livestock Selling Centre, 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 2017 at 1pm

30 polled Australian Charolais (18 mths old) especially developed for the grass fed, young beef market.

Agents are Rodwells with Andrew Allan (Alexandra) 0428410341, Adam Mountjoy (Yea) 0428926610

Tyson Bush (Sheparton) 0419756746, Anthony Delaney (Pakenham) 0429136055

### 7<sup>th</sup> Violet Hills On Property Bull Sale.....4<sup>th</sup> May, 2017 at 1pm

50 Charolais bulls (20 mths old) especially developed for the grass fed, young beef market.

Agents are Elders with Brian Kennedy (Elders Stud Stock) 0427844047 and Andrew Bickford (Elders Bathurst) 0427943781



***A special thank you to our clients for their continued support and valuable positive feedback. With your help our aim is to continue developing the type of Charolais that will improve the profitability of your cattle enterprise. We wish you all a happy, healthy and prosperous 2017.***

The Jenkins Family

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