

Violet Hills



Charolais

Summer Newsletter 2013

The Spring of 2012 and early Summer of 2013 have been the complete opposite to those experienced in the previous two years. Luckily, the cows came out of winter in pretty good shape, and hopefully, have gone back in calf. The large bulk of low quality grass that resulted from the very wet summer last year restricted the growth of the weaner bulls and heifers, resulting in their 400 day weights being up to 100 kg lighter than the previous two years. With no worthwhile rain since June 2012, we have had to make hard management decisions. All surplus heifers and steers have been sold as stores, cows that were to be sold in the autumn had their calves early weaned (at 2 to 4 months) and were slaughtered and we are in the process of early weaning the rest of the calves.

Being in an area where we normally do not hand feed, it comes as a shock to have to hand feed all of our cattle through spring and summer. As for autumn and winter.....who has a crystal ball???

Even with the poor start, our bulls are looking pretty good, and should be every bit as good, if not better than last year.

Sale Dates for 2013

Our Annual On-farm Sale this year -Thursday 2nd May.

50 Charolais bulls - An outstanding selection of easy doing bulls....mostly polled.

45 Charolais and Charolais X Red Angus composite heifers, PTIC Red Angus bulls.

Whittlesea Invitational Sale - Wednesday 6th March 12 bulls (most polled)

Wodonga All Breeds Sale - Friday 12th April6 bulls



This is a photo of Violet Hills Granton, who is an outstanding son of Violet Hills Dane. Granton has excellent calving ease and a Domestic index in the top 5% for the breed. Granton will be one of our led bulls at Whittlesea and exhibits all of the characteristics you would expect in a top class vealer producing bull.

The loss of Barclay An altercation with another bull left our No 1 Sire, Violet Hills Barclay with a busted hip. We have withdrawn the last remaining semen from the market and will use it selectively for the next few years.

What we look for in a New Sire

We are more convinced than ever that the maturity pattern of our Charolais bulls is the most important characteristic in getting the balance right between increased muscling and finishing ability at a young age. Getting the carcass characteristics right, ie. a high yielding carcass with the correct selvedge of fat, can be a more important profit driver than growth rate in young cattle.

Let us look at an example:-

In 2008 it was demonstrated that a 21 cent/kg live weight premium could be obtained in the saleyard for a one unit increase in muscle score eg from a C score to a B score (Beef CRC fact sheet).

With this in mind a 400kg vealer, with B muscling, would bring an extra \$84.00 compared with the same weight vealer with C muscling.

Now let us look at the progeny of a Charolais bull with a high 400 day EBV (top 5%) compared with the progeny of a Charolais bull with average 400 day EBV's. I won't bore you with the mathematics, but assuming the vealers are worth \$2.50 a kg live weight (a very high price on today's prices!!), then the vealers, from the high performing bull, are worth an extra \$22.50 compared to the vealers from the lower performing bull.

In summary, vealers with an extra muscle score will get 4 times the premium that you would get by using the higher growth rate bull. This of course will all depend on all of the vealers having the appropriate finish.

The only way to get the balance between yield and finish is to select well muscled, EARLY maturing Charolais with adequate growth.

Of course traits such as calving ease, temperament, doing ability etc are important in any beast.

New Sires

At Violet Hills we continue to try new sires via AI each year, in a hope of introducing new genetics that will continue our herd improvement and benchmark our homebred sires. Unfortunately, this is a very frustrating and disappointing exercise with most AI sires that are on the market falling well short of what we expect. Luckily, every now and then we have a win and can successfully "shandy" some new genetics into our breeding programme. In this regard the feedback we get from our clients is most valuable.

VIOLET HILLS ELLIS

Ellis is a homozygous polled bull with tremendous muscling and an early maturity pattern. As he was used as a yearling we do not have any carcass data on him. His first progeny will be scanned this year. His calving ease has been good and the calves are real stand-outs from the day they are born. A number of bulls by Ellis will be in our sale this year.



An example of one of his sons is Violet Hills Gascon, who was 13 months old at the time this photo was taken at the Australian National Field Days at Orange, Oct, 2012.

VIOLET HILLS DANE

Dane is an outstanding beef bull by our proven sire, Alexander. With excellent calving ease and perfect structure (especially feet and legs), he is in the top 5% for 200 day, 400 day and 600 day growth. He is in the top 1% for carcass weight and top 5% for retail yield. His Domestic Index and Export Index are in the top 2%. His daughters are easy calvers with plenty of milk from well formed udders.

We have used Dane over Rex and Barclay cows with early results looking very promising.



VIOLET HILLS FLAMBEAU

Flambeau is by Pinay out of a very good old Rex cow. He has excellent structure, with perfect feet and legs.

He was an outstanding performer amongst the "F" bulls.

He was used as a "clean-up" bull, after an AI programme, when he was a yearling. That was when this photo was taken. The excellent success of our AI programme, resulted in him only getting one calf. He was joined to 45 cows this year. His maturity pattern looks good, with good calving ease and a Domestic Index in the top 10%.



WORLD CHAROLAIS CONGRESS...UK 2012

We (Kaye and Daryl) were fortunate to be able to attend the World Charolais Congress, which was held in the UK in June 2012. The Congress tour started at Gatwick, progressing to northern Wales, Northern Ireland and finishing in Scotland. All in all, it was a well organised, very interesting, and very wet tour, combining stud visits, shows and tourist attractions.



The lovely village of Castlecombe



Cows at the Seawell stud



1900 kg. bull, Royal Highland Show

The overall impression of the Charolais cattle that we saw was that they were larger, more heavily muscled and “harder doing” cattle, that would not suit our requirements in Australia. They were harder calving, with many stud cows exhibiting caesarean scars, and a high percentage of the cattle had shocking feet. Fertility was obviously a problem as heifers were not calved down until they were 3 years old. On display at one leading stud were 3 year old heifers, weighing 1200kg, having their first calves.

At the end of the Congress we travelled through the Scottish Highlands, and then visited the Orkney Islands. The Orkneys can only be described as stunning, with beautiful pasture land and a fascinating archaeological history. Everywhere we went the influence of Charolais was evident. I would estimate that more than 80% of the herds were using Charolais. In the commercial herds a more moderate type of Charolais was evident. The high maintenance, extreme type of Charolais seemed to be more for the show ring enthusiasts. Does that ring a bell??

Good quality Charolais and Charolais cross store steers (15-18 mths old) were making about 1,200 pounds per head. This equates to a little under \$AU2,000 per head. A fantastic price when compared to our market! It must be acknowledged that their cost of production is much higher than ours as a result of the need to house the cattle during the winter in huge barns. This practice is mainly necessary to stop the cattle from “pugging” the pastures. Because of the extremely wet conditions, while we were in the UK (their summer), some of the farmers were considering housing their cattle early to protect the pastures. They were even having trouble getting on the fields to cut silage.



An old “Crofters” house, The Orkneys



Charolais on Westray Isl., Orkneys



5000yo neolithic dwelling. The Orkneys

The “take home message” that we got from the trip is that there is probably little value in importing UK genetics into Australia and if one did, to be very mindful of calving problems and structural faults. There is also very few polled cattle. This may be an area where they could benefit from importations of Australian genetics.

2012 ANNUAL SALE

We wish to thank all buyers and under-bidders for their competition at our 2012 annual on property sale.



Top priced bull was Violet hills Flashjack(P) purchased by Phillip and Carolyn Nankivell, Limestone Stud, Blayney for \$8,000.00 . Overall, 39 of the 41 bulls offered sold for an average of \$4,538.46.

The joined heifers demonstrated their quality by averaging \$1,575.00.

VIOLET HILLS FLASHJACK (P)

THE FUTURE

We will continue to endeavour to increase the polled content of our herd but not at the expense of quality. At present approximately 75% of our calves are polled. Having reached the maximum number of stud cows that we wish to run (in excess of 300) we can now be even more "brutal" in our culling. Any animal that has any foot defect, has calving problems, does not get in calf, or shows an unruly nature will book a date with Mr. Swift or some other processor. As mentioned earlier, the real profit drivers for our clients are calving ease and carcass characteristics (associated with maturity pattern). The use of the Domestic Index can be of help here even if it does not put sufficient weighting on yield.

Family Addition

Kirsty presented us with a beautiful grand-daughter last July (Quinn Kaitlyn). It goes without saying that grandparents, Uncle Sean and grandson Kallum, are thrilled by the addition to the family. She is carrying the Jenkins' trait of "good doing ability".



From all at Violet Hills we wish you a happy and healthy 2013 and hope the season and cattle prices are kind to you.

Daryl and Kaye 0263593221 m0428639674

Sean 0263593292 m0419416197

Email: violethills@ipstarmail.com.au

Web: violethillscharolais.com.au

STOP PRESS 29th Jan

75mm of rain has given us some hope of a change in the season!

Please contact us if you require any information or just for a chat.

**Central West Beef Week Open Day is 13th March, 2013. All sale bulls will be close by for viewing
Other times, visitors are welcome to phone, for a time to view, that suits everyone.**

We will also be at the Mudgee Small Farm Field Days, and Australian National Field Days at Orange, later in the year.

***A final reminder that our annual "On farm Sale" is on
Thursday, 2nd May.***