

EDDIE REA

KIRKNIE. FOUNDATION STUD.

MY DAD BOB REA bought Kirknie in 1945. He brought with him 3 K Wagons of Hereford heifers. He and his brothers were Hereford breeders north of Rocky, Eden Garry, where his brother Adam Rea first bred the Australian Braford - he is the father of the Brafords here in Australia.

I was 10 years old when the 1946/47 drought came and all of Dad's Herefords died, along with 1,100 Shorthorn/Devons. He said "Well, we need to breed cattle to suit the country".

The Rea boys had seen crossbred Brahman bullocks and steers coming off Glen Prairie and agreed that was the way of the future. And so started the genetics of Bob Rea's Droughtmasters.

A red half breed Brahman (Zebu) was sent to Kirknie by Adam Rea and this bull's stock formed the foundation of our modern Droughtmaster - this bull's females were mated to a pure Brahman bull, Viking.

Viking arrived at Home Hill in a rail wagon as a weaner. Dad and Hughie Rea scuffed him in the wagon, tied him up and rolled him into the ute for the trip to Kirknie. Viking's job was to lift the Brahman content. His sons were used in the main herd, Viking's heifers were mated to a pure Shorthorn bull (Prospect Cecil), who spent most of the day in the water of a dam with his head just clear of the water, whilst the Viking heifers were still out feeding - a bit of heat didn't worry them. Cecil must have come good after dark, he got enough calves to earn his keep. His sons too were used in the herd. Selected females from all sires mated to selected sires and only the best were used.

Remember that during this time the hostility toward Zebu/Brahman cattle was hard to believe (as told to me by my dad - people who saw him in town would cross over the street rather than talk to him). Our early breeders stuck to their guns and meanwhile dad kept on with what he was doing and gaining a reputation at the meatworks for his cattle, so it became time to test against those around at the Townsville Show. Carcass competitions were the way to go so you have a chance to go up against the shorthorn bullocks in your area. Zebu prejudice was strong, so you

had to challenge. Droughtmasters won three from five in the first year, four from five in the second year and five from five in the third year, plus second in another class. The next competition was the K Wagon Competition. One K wagon of bullocks were first judged in Townsville on the hoof, then judged on the hook at Smithfield (England). This competition was won by our Droughtmasters five times from seven attempts. My dad did show Stud cattle with some success. He always said that Stud showing was pretty much a social outing because you can't see what is under the hide "you must see them with their shirt off so you can see the muscle and fat colour".

After this success came bull sales - 180 in one day. All of this success came from an undying belief in your own ability, and Droughtmasters.

Lisgar was purchased in 1961 - my wife Dorothy and I moved to manage the new property.

Droughtmaster bulls were moved down to mate with the Hereford cows that were on the place. When they saw the cows they stuck their head in the air and took off - they had not seen such colours - we had to gather them together and bring them up-wind to the cows.

We have worked with the Lisgar Breeder Herd and DPI for many years. They are very fertile, tick resistant with some resistance to buffalo flies. No cattle at Lisgar have been dipped for forty years. Ticky cows and bulls were culled, as were empty cows.

Dad died in July 1994, and because he was such a supporter of carcass competitions, AMH in Townsville started the "Bob Rea Memorial Carcass Competition" that ran



Edward (Eddie) Rea. Society President 1988 - 1993

for eight years. Droughtmasters won every year. James Berryman (grandson) won twice. Kirknie (son) won once. Lisgar (grandson) won five times... how is that for genetics on both sides... Bob's genetics and his cattle!

We retired in 2005 to town and left Lisgar in the capable hands of our son Robert along with his wife and son Robert Jnr. After we retired Robert was offered a wonderful program that he can use for years to improve their Droughtmasters. In 2015 Robert was awarded the MLA Genetic Improvement Award for his work at Lisgar.

I am 84 years old and have worked all my life, since I was 15 with Droughtmasters, and watched them improve. I have seen the best and worst of them but never gave up.

Contributed by Eddie Rea