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**DROUGHTMASTERS**  
**2020**



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# Fresh website, branding has wide appeal

BY MATT SHERRINGTON

BY THE time this very publication is released, the new and improved Droughtmaster Australia website will have been launched for all involved with the breed to explore at their leisure.

Droughtmaster Australia general manager Simon Gleeson said the intention of the new website, which launched at the end of June, is for it to be more external facing so that it holds appeal for society members but also for potential new members/breeders and stakeholders right across the supply chain.

"The website we've replaced was limited and internal facing, meaning it only really talked to our members," Mr Gleeson said.

"The overhaul came about as a result of the members

survey in September 2019 where there was a strong push to improve brand awareness and to tidy up our brand identity," he said.

Mr Gleeson said the key objective of the website is to be a source of comprehensive information for members and the wider audience who're invested in the breed.

"One of the new features of the website is that it will have integrated sale pages for all the Droughtmaster Australia sponsored sales bull/female sales.

"On these pages vendors will be able to provide photos and catalogue style pedigree information, along with all information relating to a sales' specific details for potential buyers to view.

The society conducts three sponsored sales which will be integrated into the

new website:

- The National Sale at CQLX Gracemere on Tuesday, September 15 and Wednesday, September 16, 2020

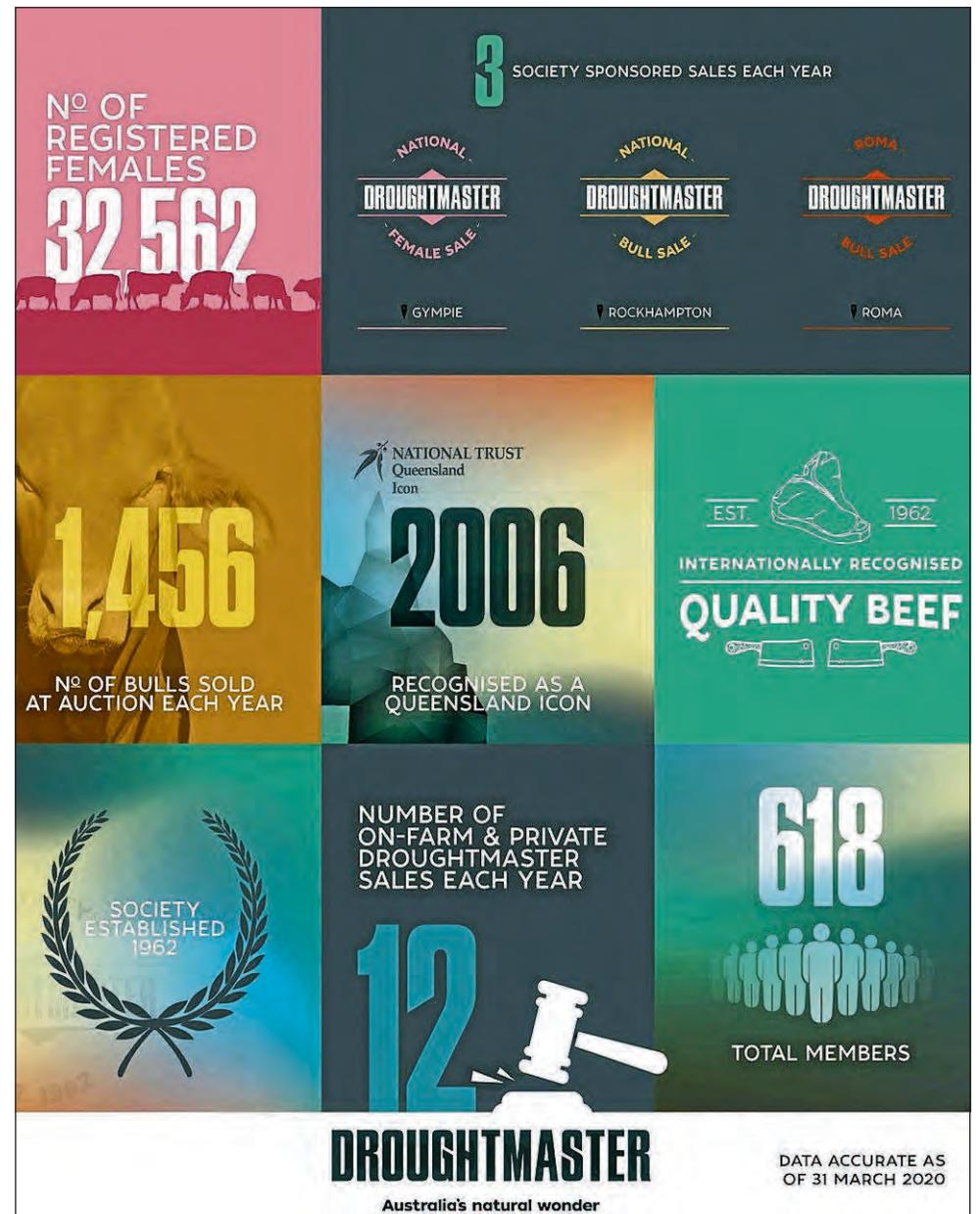
- The Roma Sale at the Roma Saleyards on Friday October 23, 2020

- The Female Sale at the Gympie Saleyards on Saturday, March 13, 2021

Mr Gleeson said through the new website the society will be conducting digital campaigns to promote Droughtmaster stock far and wide.

"These campaigns will in turn drive traffic back to our site where we'll provide the general public with necessary information on the society and the breed."

- Please visit droughtmaster.com.au to explore the new look website



**ONE STOP:** The objective of the new-look Droughtmaster Australia website is to be a source of information for members and the wider audience invested in the breed.

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Survivors when the going gets tough

# Droughties a top fit at Nolans

BY MATT SHERRINGTON

WITH a focus on sourcing tropically adapted cattle, Nolan Meats co-director Terry Nolan said Droughtmaster and Droughtmaster cross cattle suit their requirements admirably.

Nolan Meats is an Australian family-owned business, founded in 1962 by Pat and Marie Nolan. Their sons Michael, Tony and Terry have since transformed the company into a well equipped, integrated meat processing hub incorporating livestock breeding, back-grounding, and lotfeeding.

Through these operations 500 to 550 cattle are processed per day from which Nolan Meats beef products are distributed domestically and internationally.

"We roughly export 30 to 40 per cent of our product, while 60 to 70pc is sold domestically depending on how the market is playing out at the time," Mr Nolan said.

He said with the company being situated in sub-tropical South-East Queensland, they try to ensure that from an animal husbandry point-

of-view they focus on utilising tropically adapted cattle.

"The Droughtmaster and Droughtmaster cross have the climatic suitability to handle the humid Qld summers, but they also have the growth and docility required to enhance meat quality.

"We try not to favour a particular breed, but a Droughtmaster cow with a European bull over it produces fast growing, meaty, F1 progeny.

"We're believers in rapid growth through good genetics and excellent nutrition and 99pc of our cattle on feed would be milk tooth. Despite all the hype around the more heavily marketed Angus and Wagyu types we find that Australian consumers don't relate to high levels of marbling. We can achieve a similar and healthier eating quality outcome with younger cattle on good nutrition."

Mr Nolan said they rely heavily on MSA technology in relation to good animal husbandry practices, animal welfare, processing techniques, monitored chilling processes, and by utilising skilled MSA meat graders.

"MSA is a whole of chain

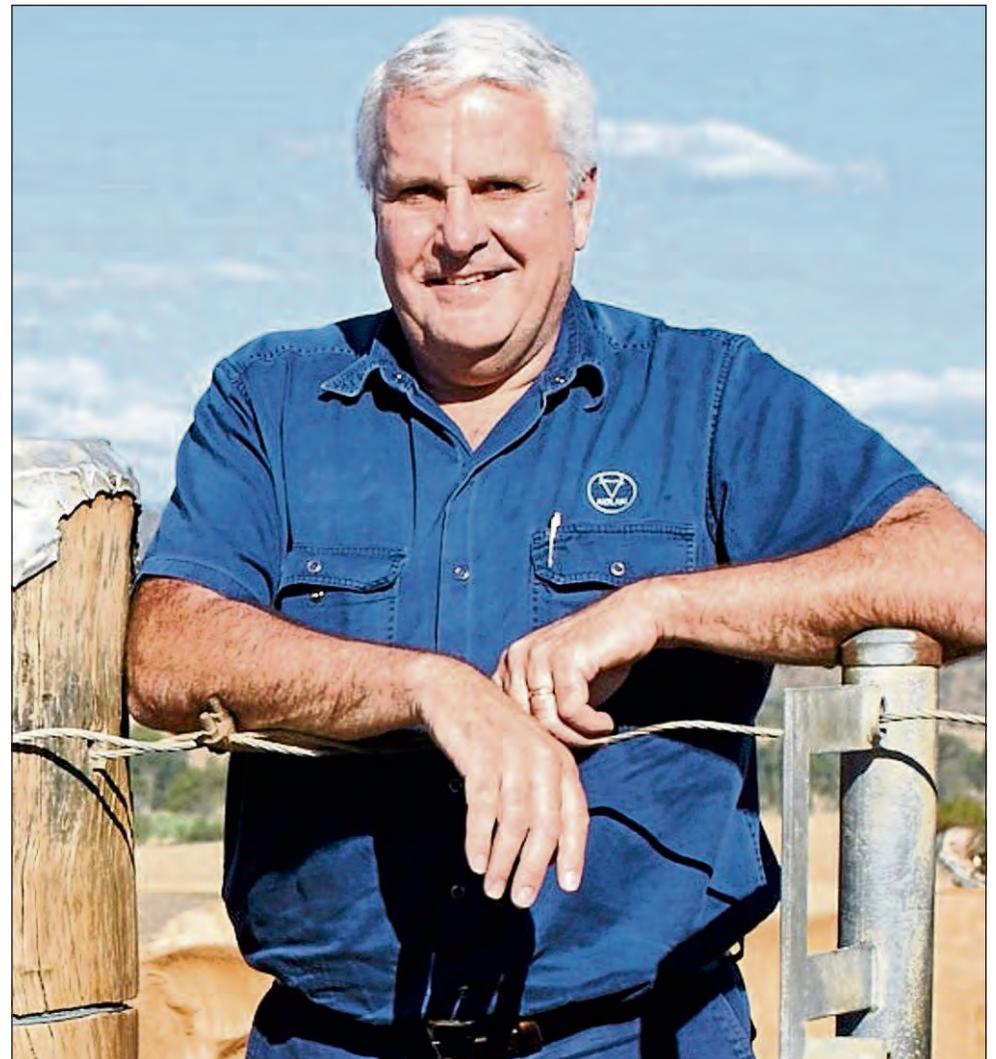
production system, having said that we don't advertise MSA products, we instead use MSA to underpin our company brands of which 'Private Selection' is our flagship product, for which Droughtmaster and Droughtmaster cross cattle are sourced."

He said the overarching vision of the company is to "deliver pleasurable meat moments every time".

"Meat moments can include anything to do with the company, from ensuring eating quality is best in class and consistent for consumers to focussing on a holistic view of animal welfare incorporating best animal husbandry practices, and more."

Nolan Meats sells its beef product into a broad range of industry sectors, including small independent butchers, a number of supermarkets, and as portion cutters for food services.

"We don't sell direct to the end consumer as the business is complex enough. We're a beef packer and wholesaler, but leave the retailing to the experts in that field."



**DEMAND:** Nolan Meats co-director Terry Nolan said Droughtmaster and Droughtmaster cross cattle are sourced for the company's flagship brand 'Private Selection'.



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<b>\$1475</b> 92mm x 260mm	<b>\$738</b> 92mm x 129mm	<b>\$368</b> 92mm x 63mm	<b>\$368</b> 45mm x 129mm

**Issue:** Thursday 3rd September  
**Bookings:** Friday 21st August  
**Material:** (we build) Monday 24th August  
 (complete material) Friday 28th August

# Johnstones' cross recognised

BY MATT SHERRINGTON

THE Johnstone family's determination to get the breeding and nutritional aspects of their Droughtmaster focussed beef program consistent has led to industry-wide recognition for the article they produce.

Rob and Carly Johnstone own and operate Dawsonvale Droughtmasters and Dawson Grazing, in conjunction with the family's commercial grazing operation, on their 3000ha of country in Banana.

Grain production and beef breeding are the primary facets of the business. The breeding herd consists of 1200 head of cattle, encompassing 500 Droughtmaster cross breeders.

Mr Johnstone said his father introduced Droughtmasters to the operation 30 years ago, for their inherent fertility and adaptability, and they're still using them in their herd today.

"We run two breeder mobs in which Droughtmaster bulls are used in a controlled mating system," he said.

"Droughtmaster bulls are mated to Droughtmaster,



**TOP STOCK:** Rob, Carly and Sophie Johnstone, Dawsonvale Droughtmasters and Dawson Grazing, with a mob of their Droughtmaster cross breeders on their 3000ha property situated in Banana.

Santa Gertrudis and Black Angus cross cows.

"Maiden heifers are joined at twelve months of age and across all stock classes this year, we've achieved a 90 per cent pregnancy rate in

our driest joining season on record."

He said using Droughtmaster bulls allows for consistency across our herd, and when crossbred they further enhance carcase suitability.

"They're an integral part of our operation and have allowed our business to tick the fundamentally important boxes which drive profits in the beef business."

The family places empha-

sis on fertility, growth, temperament and conformation in their breeding herd.

"Selection for these traits enables us to consistently produce an animal to meet our market specifications to

a high standard. Last year we were recognised in the top 100 beef producers (in which they placed 55th overall) in the MSA Excellence in Eating Quality awards. This is an award we attribute to the consistency in our breeding and nutrition."

All cattle are backgrounded on a Leucaena-buffel pasture before being finished on a grain and silage-based ration.

"We target the EU market, selling direct to the abattoirs. We aim to sell bullocks at 330 to 350kg dressed weight at 24 months of age and cull heifers at 280 to 300kg dressed weight also at 24 months.

"In recent times we've seen solid returns from selling cattle into these targeted weight brackets and markets."

He said the use of Droughtmasters within their commercial operation will continue moving forward.

"Due to the performance and reliability we've experienced with Droughtmasters we're looking at expanding into a commercial bull breeding program in conjunction with the expansion of our seedstock operation."



STUD 302

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# Meeting live export demand

BY MATT SHERRINGTON

DROUGHTMASTER cattle are proving their value in the live export market due to their climatic adaptability and their ability to pile on the kilos, says Queensland Livestock Exports Association president and Lampung Livestock director Greg Pankhurst.

Mr Pankhurst said Lampung Livestock now runs a few small cattle grazing operations, custom feeds a small number of cattle in North Queensland feedlots and undertakes consulting with a number of feedlotting operations in South East Asia.

It was in early 1998, that Mr Pankhurst formed a joint venture with one of Indonesia's feedlotting founders,

Dicky Adiwoyo and Consolidated Pastoral Company, overseen by North Australian cattleman Ken Warriner.

"Our joint objective was to build strategically located cattle feedlots in Indonesia to import and feed northern Australian cattle. We built two feedlots on Sumatra, with a combined capacity of over 35,000 head and annual throughput of between 60,000 to 100,000 head."

Mr Pankhurst said South East Asia imports close to 900,000 head of Australian cattle each year.

"These cattle come from numerous loading ports - from Freemantle in Western Australia, all around the Top End to Port Alma in Qld."

He estimates between 50,000 to 70,000 Drought-



**ON THE MOVE:** Greg Pankhurst with steers purchased from Yaralla Droughtmasters, which Lampung Livestock custom fed at Duaringa Feedlot, Duaringa.

master-cross cattle are exported each year.

"Feeders (280kg to 350kg) from the Kimberly and Pillabra regions predominantly, and slaughter types (450kg or more) from western and central Queensland are sent to Indonesia."

"The Droughtmaster-cross types are a softer animal which feed well in the hot humid conditions, especially when shedded - a number of feedlots in South East Asia have fully covered pens to protect cattle from the high rainfall, high temperatures

and wet pen conditions that can occur.

"These cattle mostly achieve above average weight gains of more than 1.6kg per day, while being fed on an agricultural by-product ration."

He said Israel, for many years, has also taken a lot of Droughtmaster-cross feeder bulls from WA.

Darwin-based, South East Asian Livestock Services (SEALS) exported close to 174,000 head of cattle in 2019 alone, and has also had success with Droughtmasters.

SEALS' Kristy Geddes said in early June the company delivered a consignment of mainly Droughtmaster and Droughtmaster-cross cattle, sourced from stations in the Pilbara and the Kimberley,

out of Broome Port in WA.

"Bred in Northern Australian conditions, these cattle have proven to be tropically adapted, tick and parasite resistant and have great meat quality and yield," Mrs Geddes said.

"The importers were very happy with the consignment. The Droughtmasters travelled well, settling in from the start, as they'd been introduced to shipping pellets in the yards prior to export and quickly adapted to the new feed," she said.

Mrs Geddes said SEALS has since included more WA sourced Droughtmasters on a mixed shipment, in mid-June out of Darwin, again with great results, and will continue to export the breed to meet the market demands.

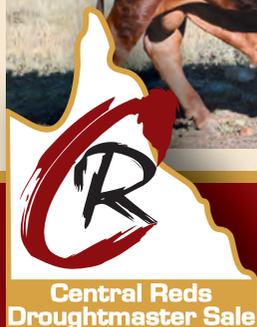
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# Client feedback supports the proven performance at Glenlands

## Charlie Hawkins, Herbertvale Station, Camooweal

"We've used Glenlands bulls in our herd for 35 years, exclusively for the last 17 years. The Childs family make buying bulls an easy job. Their knowledge of body type, qualities and requirements for today's markets, expertise in blending genetics and fertility are unquestionable. Our 180 bulls pass through the yard twice yearly. The growth, temperament, sheath quality and doing ability are exemplary, making longevity a major factor in returning to Glenlands annually."



## Dean Keirnan, Bygana, Clermont

"We seasonally mate our herd and therefore select bulls we think will not only produce for us physically in the paddock, but also possess a docile temperament and will handle well in the yards and in the open. The Glenlands bulls tick both boxes. Having purchased herb bulls on farm and at the Bouldercombe sales, we have been most impressed with not only the length and bone put back into the calves, but also the temperament of our herd. These bulls get the job done, they let down well in the paddock, will walk out with the herd and are great to handle in our seasonal operation."



## Ray Jansen, Seamark Pty Ltd., Cliffdale, Theodore

"Seamark join 2000 heifers and 8000-9000 breeders annually. Ninety percent of our bulls are from Glenlands. We've now bought 330 Glenlands bulls and their progeny definitely provide us with a premium, their progeny are always in high demand. Our properties stretch from Nebo to the coast and south of Moura. These bulls and their progeny provide us with fertility, performance, market suitability, the certainty and environmental adaptability we require."



There isn't any greater words to hear as a seedstock producer than those filled with endorsement from long standing clients, who continue to provide feedback on your genetics and the physical product that you produce and market.

"We run a balanced operation, we're not data driven, rather a performance proven herd through the success and assessment from our clients over many years."

Darren Childs, Glenlands



## John Cotter, Kinbombi Station, Goomeri

"Their genetics provide us with a huge selection base and a massive cow herd. We breed for prime cattle (grass or grainfed), MSA and Jap Ox. MSA steers sired by Glenlands bulls awarded Kinbombi one of the top 100 MSA Producers for Queensland and the NT."



## John Baker, Booroondarra, Middelmount

"We've used Glenlands genetics for 30 years. Their 'Tropically Adapted Flatbacks' perform really well, they handle the dry, are tick resistant and fertile. Our steers perform equally well on grass, forage crop, Leucaena or grain and grade well as 300kg plus Jap Ox. If dry weather forces us to sell off the surplus they always attract strong interest."



## Fred Noffke, Keronga, Springsure

"Glenlands bulls continue to work and have no trouble attaining mature weights of between 1000 - 1200 kg while they're working. They produce the type and fleshing I require. Their bulls are like a good bottle of scotch, it's only a matter of time before you give in and one will never be enough."



## Andrew Delforce, Meatant Cattle, Newcome, Augathella

"Meatant Cattle have been using Glenlands bulls for over 14 years. Our herd is totally Glenlands blood. The bulls acclimatize well, join efficiently, handle their cows and environment. They're rugged and recuperate quickly. The progeny of these bulls meet their target weights and specs off grass with a group of 130 milk tooth Glenlands blood steers recently posting an average daily gain of 1.4kg/day off grass."



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# A first-rate feedlotting option

DROUGHTMASTERS play a major role in the Donovan family's integrated cropping, beef breeding, backgrounding, and feedlotting business situated across three properties in Central Queensland.

Headed by Bruce and Beryl Donovan, the family conducts mixed farming and feedlotting activities on Duaringa Station, north of Duaringa. They also run 1100 Droughtmaster females on a breeder block north of Gogango, and background on country north of Dingo.

The Duaringa cropping program is managed by their son Simon, who produces coarse grains, pulses, cotton, and silage, while their daughter Sarah is the feedlot manager on Duaringa.

Sarah said her parents decided to build the 3000 SCU feedlot when the price of sorghum fell below \$100/tonne in the 1990's.

"We finish our own cattle and also custom feed with the majority of cattle supplying the 70 and 100-day grain-fed markets via abattoirs in CQ and SE Qld. We also feed cattle destined for the live export market," she said.



**HARDY PERFORMERS:** Through this past Summer's intense heat and humidity, Droughtmasters in the Donovans' Duaringa Station feedlot maintained a higher level of feed intake and in turn weight gain in comparison to other types.

"The feedlot ration is driven by what we can grow, what is grown in the region, and the price of those ingredients. Our ration mainly includes dry rolled wheat but it can also include other grains,

depending on availability.

"Custom feeding now represents close to 60 per cent of the feedlotting operation, which evolved as a result of dry conditions across CQ."

Sarah said the feedlot has

proven a great drought risk management tool.

"It's enabling us to prevent our paddocks from being eaten out and is keeping cattle numbers ticking over. It has also allowed us to extract

greater value from our grain at times when grain prices are less attractive.

She said other benefits of feedlotting include the ability to tracked feed to weight gain conversions and the

impact of ration variations on intake and performance. Their weather station data has also allowed them to clearly see the correlation between extreme weather conditions and feed intake.

"The past summer proved to be particularly challenging and various management strategies were implemented to help alleviate heat load in animals but what was particularly noticeable was how certain types of animals coped better than others."

Droughtmasters feature prominently in the feedlot and over the above mentioned period of intense heat and humidity, Sarah found they maintained a higher level of feed intake and in turn weight gain in comparison to other types with one mob achieving a feed conversion ratio of 4.4:1 (DM basis).

"I was impressed that these animals achieved the desired fat cover despite their low net feed intake and recorded high MSA grading across the mob. With ration prices being so high over the past year, this level of feed efficiency is highly desirable and more economical."

## ACM

### FACTS AND STATS!

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**626,301**  
online audience  
monthly

**542,587**  
social media  
audience monthly



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\*All stats and figures in this newsletter have been conducted by QARS 2019

ACM Agriculture reaches 87% of Beef Producers and 88% of Sheep Producers through our agricultural newspapers and websites monthly.

Each month we are connecting to 82% of beef producers in newspaper and 33% have accessed our agriculture websites via our masthead news sites.

We also reach 84% of sheep producers through the newspaper and 28% through our websites.

## QUEENSLAND Country Life

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# Repronomics Project creating crucial data

A WEALTH of data is emerging from the MLA-funded Repronomics Project, which was established in 2013 to enable the genetic improvement of female reproduction rates in northern Australian tropically adapted herds.

Project leader and principal scientist, Animal Genetics and Breeding Unit (AGBU), University of New England, New South Wales, Dr David Johnston said the project focusses on collecting breeding and genotyping information from the Droughtmaster, Brahman and Santa Gertrudis breeds.

"Reproduction is a key profit driver in northern Australia and earlier research has shown that there is a clear role for genetics in improving commercial weaning rates. Heritability and genetic variance estimates for reproduction traits from the Beef CRC suggest considerable genetic progress is possible in tropically adapted breeds," he said.

Dr Johnston said moving the research outcomes more rapidly into industry breed-

ing programs required the collection of considerably more reproductive phenotypes and genotypes to build the size of the genomic reference populations across an increased number of northern beef breeds which is why the project was developed.

"Through the project, we've generated significant numbers of calves and have recorded large numbers of females for age at puberty, lactation anoestrous interval, calving and weaning rates, along with many other traits. These records are being combined with DNA SNP genotypes on all project animals, as well as key industry animals, to drive new genomics enhanced BREED-PLAN evaluations."

He said it's important for producers to realise that genetic differences exist for female reproduction traits.

"If these can be well described - commercial producers can use that knowledge when buying their next bulls, and the stud sector can use the information in selection to improve the breed."

The project was primarily conducted on three research stations: Brian Pastures, Gayndah, Spyglass, Charters Towers in Queensland and Douglas-Daly in the Northern Territory. The project also involved SNP genotyping of key sires from industry seedstock herds. Droughtmasters were involved in the research at Brian Pastures and Spyglass locations.

He said the project has generated progeny data on more than 100 Droughtmaster sires from 40 studs across northern NSW, western, central and north Qld.

"As expected from previous research there are large amounts of genetic variation within the breed across all traits. Our aim is to describe this variation across the breed so producers can use it when selecting bulls."

He said males generated in the project are fully recorded from birth to weaning and all are castrated at branding.

"Post-weaning the steers have been purchased by a sister project co-funded by Droughtmaster Australia,



**RESEARCH:** Droughtmaster maiden heifers involved in the Repronomics Project in their natural mating paddock at Brian Pastures Research Facility, Gayndah.



**STARTING POINT:** A Droughtmaster calf being tagged at birth at the Spyglass Research Facility, Charters Towers.

genomic selection of these important traits. The recording of steer progeny also provides a complete description of a sire when coupled with the data from their daughter's performance."

He said the Repronomics Project has been re-funded for five years, during which the research team will continue the intensive recording and SNP genotyping on an expanded sample of Droughtmaster genetics.

"This will continue to grow their genomic reference population such that increased numbers of young bulls will have increased EBV accuracies, particularly for female reproduction traits."

— MATT SHERRINGTON

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# Doing your best does matter

BY ALAN WELBURN

EXTENSIVE study, "listening tours" and an unapologetic drive for quality has cultivated a winning formula the Scanlan family, Parawanga and Kenmay Droughtmasters, are willing to share.

Rob and Karen and their daughter Ayla have been producing high-grade articles since the 1990s and will present an imposing line of young stud bulls at the 2020 Droughtmaster National Sale at the Central Queensland Livestock Exchange in September.

The Scanlan families help found the cattle industry in northern Australia along with the Duracks. Dr Scanlan is a cattle producer, surfer, fisherman and family doctor.

"We only sell two types of bulls - good bulls and best quality bulls," he said.

"I regard myself as being very fortunate in that I have had to make my own way in cattle breeding. I came in as a blank slate and am a perfectionist by nature so I could not go into breeding cattle without trying to breed the best.



**ALL QUALITY:** Parawanga Kolonga (P), a son of Billabong Alexander and Parawanga 469, will be offered at the September sale.

"From a young age, I went to dozens of cattle shows and sales and listened to a lot of people and took it all in and was able to learn from a large number of people over a period of time.

"Jim Crombie was one of the leading lights of the Droughtmasters and he used to visit us on a regular basis and he was a great mentor."

The Scanlan herd is divided between two coastal

blocks, Kenmay (110 breeders) near Agnes Water and Parawanga (150 breeders) at Flaggy Rock.

"We have selected for all the best Bos Indicus attributes of survival in heat,

drought, flies and ticks and all the best Bos Taurus attributes of good temperament, fertility, milking and muscling combined into the one 50/50 package," Dr Scanlan said.

"The Droughtmasters have good frames with a tropical coat, long ears and plenty of leg.

"We believe very strongly in the pure original type of Droughtmaster."

The Parawanga and Kenmay stock are scrutinised for flaws right from birth such as hoof problems, small testicles or poor temperament.

"We breed for longevity and survivability with the animal capable of walking long distances without problems," he said.

"Because of low protein pastures on our coastal properties we have to wean lighter calves than inland studs and bull buyers need to consider that, therefore, our bulls may not be as fat at the sale as others from some good cattle country.

"We know what works on the coast works even better inland and when buyers take our bulls out west they grow and perform well.

"Our cattle are selected and bred to go anywhere and perform at the highest level, regardless of climate, parasites or pastures."

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## Parawanga Droughtmaster Stud

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Parawanga Kolonga (P), aged 22 months  
by Billabong Alexander x Parawanga 469



Parawanga Takilberan (P), dob 30/5/18  
by Billabong Vaughn x Parawanga 288

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# The ideal breed when the going gets tough

IT'S Owen Thompsons' belief that any cattle can do well in a good season but only the right cattle will still do the job when the going gets tough, and it's for this reason that Droughtmasters have remained central to their business.

Owen and Lynda Thompson run their commercial breeding program, with assistance from their sons Noel and Peter, on Goorah (1250ha), in the Mt Urah district west of Tiaro, and on close to 2000ha of leased forest grazing country. The core of the property has only ever been owned by Owen's family, (for more than 120 years) and each generation has added a paddock or two.

Two paddocks located approximately 8kms south of the main area on Goorah are on hilly granite country developed to legume-based pasture which is used to grow and finish steers for direct sale to the meatworks.

The home country is mainly spotted gum ridges interspersed with gum topped box, blue gum and grey

ironbark flats. As the underlying formation is sandstone the soils are shallow with dispersive sodic clays prone to gully erosion requiring good local knowledge and land management skills to prevent severe degradation.

Mr Thompson said Goorah is locally regarded as second class grazing and first-class timber growing country.

"Goorah has been an agro-forestry operation since long before that term became fashionable with managed native forest production running parallel to grazing for the last 100 years. Much of the lease area is low carrying capacity in the order of a beast to 20 to 25ha and is used strategically to spell the more developed freehold land," he said.

He said running an active breeder herd of 150 head plus replacement heifers and cast for age cows rearing their last calf on their country requires a cow that doesn't lay down and die easily.

"We supplementary feed all year round particularly for phosphorous but they still

need to be good foragers on some pretty average tucker while rearing a calf."

Mr Thompson said 80 per cent of the herd are third to sixth generation Droughtmasters and in two years that rate will be above 95pc.

"I don't have breed hang-ups, but for many years I've found bulls with the characteristics I need for my country in the Droughtmasters.

"I have owned and bred cattle for nearly 50 years and I believe if you breed the right cattle they should perform both in the paddock and on the hook. I appreciate nice cattle as much as anyone but I'm not into show ponies. In a small operation, they have to earn their keep."

The family sells cull heifers and cows mostly via the Gympie saleyards with fat cows going direct to works with the Thompsons bullocks.

"We try to grow out all male calves to target two to four tooth, grassfed, HGP free, 300kg plus carcass weights. It doesn't always go to plan but I must be getting something right as the last



**GREAT GENETICS:** A heifer and calf by High Country Elwood on the Thompsons property Goorah. The family has been purchasing from the stud since 2015.

mob had four tooth doing 340 to 370kg off grass after two years of drought."

He said achieving these results, in adverse conditions, is due to buying the right bulls.

"The first High Country bull I saw was one bought by an old family friend, Herb Perkins, and he really caught my eye so I spoke to High Country's Paul and Lisa Laycock about their operation and quickly came to the conclusion that their philosophy about cattle and what is important, aligned closely with mine. These shared breeding priorities include structure, survivability, productivity, and crucially, temperament.

The Thompsons pur-

chased their first High Country bull, High Country Decode, in 2015, which was lost to an accident after two seasons, but by then Mr Thompson had seen his progeny, and now all their bulls are from the Laycocks.

"Paul, Lisa and their daughter Steph's no-nonsense approach and strict standards they set for structure and fertility, along with the personal interest they take in outcomes for people who buy their bulls is for me a breath of fresh air. Backed by good herd records and EBV's makes buying bulls from the stud what it should be, a confident experience."

Mr Thompson said the Laycocks uncompromising

approach to temperament is vital for their operation.

"A quiet bull is one thing, good handling and education can do that, but when the progeny is running in bush country unacceptable temperament will soon be found out.

"We have progeny of Decode, Elwood and George that will come up to you in the paddock at random for a scratch. None of them receive any special treatment.

"Last year we purchased High Country High Road (by Glenlands Quarry). He's a good package and I'm looking forward to August to see his calves out of some cracker heifers for Elwood."

— MATT SHERRINGTON

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**NATURALLY DROUGHTMASTERS 2020** ADVERTISING FEATURE

# Commercial focus is pivotal for Glenavon

PRODUCING commercially orientated Droughtmaster bulls has been the primary objective in John Atkinsons' Glenavon Droughtmasters program since he introduced the breed into his Yaamba-based operation close to 40 years ago.

Mr Atkinson runs his program on 12,000 ha at Glenavon, west of Yaamba on the Fitzroy River, which is run in conjunction with Hillview, a 3200ha breeding block that joins the Shoalwater Training Area, north of Yaamba. Glenavon has been in the family since 1954, while Hillview was purchased in 1994 as a breeding block, and has since been developed to pondage pastures and pangola/legume pastures.

The Atkinsons have been breeding bulls since the mid 1960's, initially as a Santa Gertrudis stud in which bulls were produced for their own use. The decision was made to change to Droughtmaster genetics in the early 1980's.

"Having a commercial herd that produces steers for a contract with Teys' Lakes

Creek meatworks keeps us focussed on producing an article which fits the requirements of commercial producers," Mr Atkinson said.

"Mostly Glenavon bulls are used in the program and they need to display high growth and muscle development to take advantage of the premiums offered for this end market," he said.

"To this end, Droughtmasters offer the advantage of being able to finish at a young age, and with attention to muscle patterns, can mix it with any cross breeds for weight for age."

As testament to this, 452 Glenavon blood No.8 Droughtmaster steers were sold to Teys' Lakes Creek between September 2019 and January 2020. They averaged 335kg with over 80 per cent having milk teeth and just starting to cut their two teeth towards the end.

Glenavon has been exhibiting prime cattle at Rockhampton since the early 1970's in on hoof and carcass competitions ever since.

"Over the years we've taken

out championships at Rockhampton, Mackay, Grace mere and at the CQ Carcass Classic. We've also exhibited at every Beef Australia.

The 34th annual Cap Droughtmaster Bull Sale, being held at CQLX Grace mere from 10am on Thursday, September 24, features a strong draft of young bulls that Mr Atkinson said will go out and get the job done.

This year 80 bulls comprising of 50 registered and 30 specially selected herd bulls will be offered at the sale. Glenavon will offer 70 lots while Duncan and Karen Geddes, CMC Droughtmasters, Springsure, will offer 10 top quality bulls.

"The bulls selected for the sale must display natural docility, they must also be structurally correct, have good growth rates under paddock conditions and have excellent muscle patterns. This catalogue of bulls will mix it with any bulls at any sale for EMA without having been fed to the same extent.

"We had a 890kg 30-month-old bull that



**VICTOR-IOUS:** Long term Cap Sale supporter Ken Rutherford, Redbank, Mornish with John Atkinson, Glenavon, Yaamba and the \$16,000 2019 top price bull Glenavon Victor.

probably had the largest EMA (155 sq cm) of any Droughtmaster bull offered in Australia last year."

Mr Atkinson said Glenavon and CMC jointly own four bulls which are rotated yearly to give access to superior genetics for each stud.

"This year's bulls will be sired by Redskin Eagle Hawk, Garthowen Wrangler, and Yaralla Mint which are owned by the Glenavon and CMC studs. These bulls were bought at the Droughtmaster National Sale for in excess of \$20,000. There will also be 15 sons of the \$42,500 Christmas Creek 1521, which display outstanding growth and style and 15 sons of the \$30,000 Garthowen Velocity,

which is jointly owned by Mike Thompson, Munda Reds stud, WA."

He said the bulls are prepared in the paddock and only brought in at the end for sale preparation as both studs believe most bulls are heavily overfed for most sales these days.

"The Glenavon bulls are on a silage based ration and the CMC bulls are on a hay/pellet ration, both for close to 100 days. We have buyers, who attend and purchase at this sale (some for every year since it first started) because they tell us that these bulls grow on and don't crash when they're put to work because they aren't over-prepared for the sale."

All bulls catalogued come with vendor guarantees for fertility and temperament, will be semen and morphology tested and carcass scanned by leading technician David Reid.

The sale teams are available for inspection on-property at any time via appointment prior to the sale. Online catalogues and bidding will be available through [www.stocklive.com.au](http://www.stocklive.com.au)

■ Call Elders' Robert Murray 0419 644 813, Brian Wedemeyer 0409 694 696 and Anthony Ball 0428 275 499. To arrange inspections call John Atkinson 0409 343 824 or Duncan Geddes 0408 268 731

— MATT SHERRINGTON

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# Droughtmasters key to Maranoa Beef op

A DESIRE to better connect with consumers, to have more control over the welfare of their animals, and to set their own prices is what led the Roma-based Beissel family to create their paddock to plate enterprise, Maranoa Beef, four years ago.

Craig and Rebecca Beissel run the business, with help from their children Beau and Maggie, on 747ha at Pine Tree, 15km east of Roma. The property has been in Mrs Beissel's family for 100 years and she represents the fifth generation on the land.

When they got married the Beissels started out with a Brahman stud, but when they decided to get a commercial herd going they went with Droughtmasters.

"We now have a nearly purebred Droughtmaster herd though due to the drought conditions, we're currently running at a quarter of our usual herd size," Mrs Beissel said.

The dry on Pine Tree reached a low in 2019 when they received just 101mm, the worst total recorded in

the century the Beissel family has been on the property.

"Thankfully we've had good rain this year and the country has come back very well. We have a great body of pasture here now that will see us through until the end of the year," she said.

To suit their paddock to plate business the family joins their bulls with the breeders all year round.

"We supply beef all year so we always have progeny coming through to meet the demand."

She said in the Maranoa beef program, for conception, they ensure only premium quality females and top-notch bulls are used for breeding purposes to maximise eating quality.

"Depending on seasonal conditions we wean the progeny at between six to eight months of age. All weaners are entered into a low-stress stock handling program we've developed. We then background and fatten them naturally on grass.

"At close to 450kg, we send the animals for processing,

with the amount sent determined by the orders we have at the time. We deal with a very small processor to ensure the welfare of the animals, and we've created our own system to make sure our customers enjoy a premium eating experience.

"Carcases are then sent our butcher who breaks it up, slices portions, vacuum packs them, and labels them ready for distribution. Every week have product going to Brisbane to supply customers in the Brisbane, Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast regions. Craig and I personally handle deliveries for our customers in the west."

Mrs Beissel said when they established Maranoa Beef, they made inroads into the market by selling meat hampers direct to the door.

"People can now order the hampers through our website. We also sell to Uncle Bob's Bakery in Brisbane, at which slow cook cuts are used in their savoury pastries, and the Roma Explorers Inn buys our prime cuts to use on the restaurant menu."



**THE FAMILY:** Craig and Rebecca Beissel and their children Beau and Maggie, with Droughtmaster cattle used in the Maranoa Beef program. **Photo:** Trina Ayers Photography.

The family purchased their first mob of Droughtmaster females 10 years ago from Roger and Jenny Underwood, Eversleigh and Wallace Vale Stud, at the Diamantina Sale at Winton. They've bought a number of bulls from Cameron and Cheryl Salter, Glen Fosslyn Stud since.

"We bought Glen Fosslyn Kingpin two years ago for \$7500 at the Salters' last sale in Roma. We saw him as a weaner and followed him through. He was always the best doing bull in the mob. We're killing the first of his progeny now and we couldn't be happier their yield and eating quality is fantastic," Mr Beissel said.

"We look for a moderate framed, fertile, easy doing animals with softness, a good temperament, and the ability to lay fat down on grass. We also have a high percentage of poll genetics through the herd, which has been quite easy to achieve by utilising Droughtmasters," he said.

"The Droughtmaster has served us very well as far as eating quality and consistency in the Maranoa Beef end product for consumers goes. We just need to increase our numbers, look at catching more domestic market opportunities, and find even better ways to connect with consumers as our business is all about starting with the consumer and working

back to the paddock with their feedback to meet their needs."

Mrs Beissel said to aid with this they're now gently moving into the agritourism space.

"We'll be offering tours for people interested in the whole paddock to plate experience. Our motto is to 'Deliver the Ultimate Eating Experience Every Time', so the tours will be about delivering the 'sizzle' along with the 'steak' to customers. We feel this will be an important step for us in better connecting with consumers while being able to help them gain knowledge on where their food comes from."

— MATT SHERRINGTON

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# Elevating the herd on Cluen

BY MATT SHERRINGTON

THE durability, docility and marketability of Droughtmasters have been elevating the Hollier families' commercial breeding program for close to a decade.

Garnett and Linley Hollier run close to 800 mainly Droughtmaster breeders and 1700 head all up on Cluen Station, northeast of Clermont, along the edge of the Peake Range with their son-in-law Clinton, daughter Katherine, and with assistance from son Michael.

The family purchased the property 12 years ago and run their cattle on 9500ha of semi-rugged undulating land with a mix of red soil and high-quality black soil flats and all-natural pastures.

Mr Hollier said when they bought Cluen they started with a mixed herd and low-grade Brahman breeders.

"To improve the herd we introduced Droughtmaster bulls, mainly from the Perry family, Strathfield Droughtmasters, 10 years ago. We chose the breed for their suitability for all markets, toughness and adaptability



**INSPECTION:** Droughtmaster progeny on Cluen checking out Garnett and Linley Holliers' son-in-law Clinton. The Holliers sell feeder cattle direct to the feedlots, into live export markets and through the Emerald Saleyards.

to our conditions. We select bulls with an emphasis on temperament, good frame and muscling," he said.

"We run three breeder groups in a year-round mating program. This allows us to

assess the progeny and separate out heifers so we can produce replacement heifers and rotate them through the breeder groups so we don't end up interbreeding.

"We're moving towards a

seasonal mating program as we believe our profitability will be higher through improved reproductive performance of the herd."

He said the progeny are grown out to feeder size

cattle, steers between 400 to 440kg and cull heifers at close to 360kg, which are sold direct to the feedlots, into live export markets and through the Emerald Saleyards.

"Some of the progeny

swing more towards higher Brahman content and some more towards the Droughtmaster side so we market accordingly. The feedlots, in particular, seem to love the higher Droughtmaster content article we're producing."

The family is now at the stage of replacing the original Brahman cows with pure Droughtmaster replacement heifers produced on Cluen.

"Through the process of selecting our replacement heifers, we've leaned heavily towards the breeder group containing the Strathfield bulls as they're producing the product we target. Currently, we average third quarter pricing, and by improving the genetic quality we feel we can lift this further.

"The Strathfield heifers all have a great temperament. When we wean their progeny they're all calm and easy to handle, which is important when considering future performance. In my experience, calm cattle perform ones that run around don't.

"The Perry family are great to deal with, and helped provide us with a good foundation to improve our herd."

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# Trotts hitting their targets on Thooruna

AFTER initially introducing Droughtmaster bulls into their operation to iron out the kinks in their then Brahman breeding herd, the Trotts family has forged ahead with the breed with which they continue to meet their market specifications with solid results.

Jeff and Sue Trott along with their sons Ryan and Kurt, run what is now a predominantly Droughtmaster herd, on 4600ha at Thooruna, 80km west of Mundubbera.

When the Trotts purchased Thooruna in 2010 they were getting about 20 per cent MSA compliance.

"We thought this was due to HGP's being used, and we also had a lot of cattle with hump measurements above 100mm and a number of dark cutters due to poor temperament," Jeff Trott said.

To rectify these issues the Trotts utilised the Droughtmaster bulls to reduce hump height and improve temperament in the herd.

"Combined with other changes we've made to the operation since 2010, we're

now achieving an 80pc MSA compliance figure."

Mr Trott said they received more rain in February this year (290mm) than they had across all of 2019.

"The February rainfall in addition to the further 88mm we received in March has produced a heap of beautiful grass and it filled all the dams. We had another 21mm in June which, all up, has put us in a good position for the rest of the year."

"We put the bulls in the paddock from January 1 this year, for 13 weeks, to catch the late-arriving rain."

The country on Thooruna consists of spotted gum and wattle ridges through to brigalow and softwood vine scrub, and everything in between. Steers are finished on scrub country consisting mainly of buffel, while cull heifers are finished on bluegum flats and heavy ironbark country.

"While we primarily sell to Teys, we did sell weaners and feeders steers through the Biggenden Saleyards when we were trying to re-

duce numbers in the dry last year. We may continue selling heifers at Biggenden, but we'll see how our grass pans out."

They Trotts have more recently added Senepol bulls into the operation to put over a portion of their Droughtmaster breeders. Their sire breed composition is now two-thirds Droughtmaster and one-third Senepol.

"We pulled off the first of our Senepol x Droughtmaster weaners in early May 2018, and we were very happy with the results."

He said F1 heifers have now been mated but are yet to calve, though crossbred weaner steers have been sold through the Biggenden Saleyards for good money.

"We hope both breeds continue to complement each other resulting in progeny that hit our targets, though due to our location we will always maintain a greater percentage of Droughtmaster genetics because of their tropical attributes."

Through a holistic management plan the Trotts im-



**REPEAT BUYERS:** To source bulls that suit their needs and that don't have too much tropical content, the Trotts have regularly bought at the Bunya Bull Sale.



**PROGENY:** Sue Trott introducing a Droughtmaster-cross calf on Thooruna.

plemented several years ago, an intensive rotational grazing system was established.

"This led to the quality of our pastures improving out of sight. We've also starting to get the majority of the

property broken up so we can control graze most of our country."

While they destocked to 700 head on Thooruna last year, they're now running 1050 head in total after

the weaners recently hit the books.

"We ideally like to run close to 1250 head in total, which is a figure we'll gradually get back up too."

To source quality Droughtmaster bulls for their program, the Trotts have been regular buyers at the Bunya Bull Sale since they purchased Thooruna.

"The bulls available at the sale suit our needs and don't have too much tropical content. They've always performed well in our country."

"We tend to chase polled bulls, with good temperament, muscling right through, with frame and good data backing them up."

—MATT SHERRINGTON

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# Fertility counts at Clonlara

BY ALAN WELBURN

FOUR properties covering 13,500 hectares south-west of Glenmorgan, run by a family of five and home to a herd of more than 1000 breeders denotes a busy operation.

But that's how it is for Clonlara Cattle's Gus and Jen McCormack, who with sons Tom, Jock and Harry, oversee activities on family blocks Dilga and Clonlara and the more recent acquisitions of Talbragar (2001) and Golden Grove (2018).

Established in 1969 by Mr McCormack's parents Ed and Carol with stock from his grandfather John Stewart Moore's foundation stud Telemon, Clonlara's assorted properties feature gently undulating brigalow, belah, bauhinia country running to box sandalwood flats interspersed with ironstone ridges.

According to Mr McCormack, Clonlara runs a herd comprising of 30 sires, 400 Droughtmaster cows and 600 Composite cows with its breeding philosophies largely dictated by commercial demands. Heifers are



**FINE ARTICLES:** The McCormack family, Clonlara Cattle, breed for quality at their various properties Dilga, Clonlara, Talbragar and Golden Grove Picture: McCormack family.

yearling mated and calved at two-years-old and required to calve annually thereafter. Cows are pregnancy tested and so-called empties are sent to the meatworks.

"Fertility continues to be

first and foremost in all selection criteria," Mr McCormack said.

"This continued selection pressure has led to an efficient breeding herd which carries no passengers."

The commercial turn off at Clonlara is targeted towards the feeder market. Steers and cull heifers find their way to feedlots where Clonlara articles are prized because of noted weight gain, feed

conversion efficiencies and market acceptance.

The ability to do a full genomic evaluation incorporating DNA profiling also appeals to the McCormacks as they progress the quality

and integrity of data collated on their cattle through Droughtmaster Breedplan.

"We're happy to align users of Clonlara Genetics with supply chains wanting to buy cattle specifically sired by Clonlara bulls," Mr McCormack said.

"These buyers are wanting to source Clonlara Genetics and build long term relationships with breeders to supply them with feed on cattle."

Clonlara will offer 50 Droughtmaster bulls and 10 Composite bulls at its sale on September 23 at Dilga, Glenmorgan.

Each bull is ready for work having been fully vaccinated including Vibriosis, morphology tested and vet checked. They are horn/poll tested and negative for Pempes and Pestivirus.

Clonlara will provide full dam histories.

Bulls will also be offered for sale at the Artesian Bull Sale in Blackall in October, giving buyers strategic access to Clonlara Genetics much closer to home. As well, 40 Droughtmaster and 80 Composite bulls are available for private sale.

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# Droughties bred to thrive in all conditions

HAVING been a cattle vet for more than 40 years Valera Vale Droughtmasters' Michael Flynn believes good cattle can be produced by the best of any breed; they chose Droughtmasters for their environmental suitability, temperament and high fertility.

The family business is run by Michael and Tracey Flynn, on 23,000ha at Valera Vale (purchased in 1981) just south of Augathella. Valera Vale is a highly developed mixed scrub property with well established Buffel grass pastures and some flood out country on the Warrego and Nive Rivers and can run close to 5000 cattle in a normal season now that they have an exclusion fence.

Mr Flynn said they also run close to 1000 cattle on four family-owned properties (1600ha combined) near Boonah, and 120 cattle are run on Rob and Libby Murphy's historic Tamrookum property Logan Park.

"Our daughters Jessi Flynn, a fellow vet based at Valera Vale, and Nikki Cleary who lives on Avilion, Grey-mare, (where 110 stud cows are based) with her husband John, are also involved in the business. John runs the

Valera Vale machinery plant as well as Avilion," he said.

"The extended Valera Vale family includes Darryll Weber and Lucy McGuire (the South East Qld team); Robert Haigh, Dominic Deleo and Moira Leonard (on Valera Vale), and our semi-resident contractors the Donohoes.

The family has been breeding Droughtmasters since 1969, when Michael's grandfather bought him a small herd of cows and an Alcheringa bull. The stud was originally registered as Normanby in the early '70s but reverted to a commercial registration. The pedigrees continued to be recorded and the herd was re-registered as Valera Vale in 2004.

"We aim to breed quiet, efficient, environmentally adapted cattle that will produce profitable animals for our commercial clients. Our cattle have higher than average Brahman content which is the result of selecting cattle that thrive in all conditions.

"With the increasing emphasis on animal welfare and the two per cent extra mortality in dehorned calves measured in The Cash Cow project, our clients are demanding polled cattle so



**ESTABLISHED:** Cows and calves on Valera Vale. The Flynnns have been breeding Droughtmasters since 1969.

that's what we aim to breed, through the use of tested homozygous polled bulls."

Mr Flynn said they collect a lot of data on their cattle.

"We did a large scale embryo transfer program last year and are progressing to do IVF to make more use of our proven performers and speed up our genetic gain. To this end, we're converting our Equine ET base at Rosevale in SEQ to a cattle IVF donor centre (in partnership with Inventia Genetic Technologies (IGT)) to cater for our own and outside cows."

He said in the past 12 months a partnership of AJ Bush and Sons and David

Kassulke has bought close to 700 mature breeders from Valera Vale.

"We've entered into an agreement to supply stud bulls and management oversight and to buy all the weaners back. We did this as a response to our seven years of failed wet seasons at Valera Vale and a historic drought in the Scenic Rim which left us with the prospect of losing a lot of the genetic base that had taken a lifetime to establish.

"While the AJ Bush and Sons Bromelton properties were also impacted by drought the rendering plant they operate on that site

produces over 500 tonnes of water daily from the process which is irrigated onto the Kikuyu and native grasses.

"The plan is to stock this country with older cows with a demonstrated reproductive history on Valera Vale so that these proven genetics are protected from drought-induced catastrophe. The calves are weaned onto trucks to be tested extensively at Valera Vale."

Mr Flynn said including the cattle run by the Bush/Kassulke partnership they join more than 2500 pure Droughtmaster breeders from which they select replacements and sale bulls.

"All the younger breeders and the sires in use have been DNA recorded and the calves are DNA sire verified as well as poll tested and Brahman blood percentage analysed.

He said they're very into DNA testing and genomics.

"We've facilitated research on the genetic control of scurs in Bos Indicus cattle, and we've participated in two projects identifying the genetic basis for important reproductive traits."

This year, the Flynnns will offer 11 bulls at the Fitzroy Crossing Bos indicus bull

sale on August 21.

They'll also conduct an on-property bull sale at Valera Vale on September 11 where all bulls are: carcase scanned; growth performance data recorded on silage and on Buffel grass; from dams with reproductive performance data supplied; DNA tested for Pompes Disease, Poll and Brahman content; DNA sire verified; Independently BBSE certified to Australian Cattle Vets standard; and sperm morphology tested.

"We offer free delivery to the nearest major centre in Qld and freight rebates to other states. We'll also have 20 to 22-month-old paddock bulls available from August."

The Flynnns clients are mainly commercial breeders seeking reliable profit-driving bulls for their herds.

"We have a very large market in Western Australia with several major operators now using our bulls almost exclusively. We also enjoy great support from many significant operators throughout Qld and have a particularly good name across commercial herds in the SWQ region."

—MATT SHERRINGTON

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# Cross success on Mt Sunlight

BY MATT SHERRINGTON

AFTER introducing Droughtmaster bulls into their operation to put over their Santa Gertrudis breeders close to three years ago the Copping family believe they made the right choice in utilising the breed.

Ken and Deidre Copping run their commercial breeding program on Mt Sunlight, 50km northeast of Rolleston, with their sons Peter and Darcy. The land on the 8300ha property, which the family bought in December, 2001, is comprised of Brigalow, Box and Wilga with forest country leading up to the Shotover Range.

Mrs Copping said within their breeding program they're joining their

Droughtmaster bulls with close to 50 per cent of their Santa Gertrudis females.

"We decided on the Droughtmaster as a first cross option as they're good beefy looking cattle, they reliably perform in poor seasons and they help keep the herd red," she said.

The family runs a fixed mating program from March or April to October depending on climatic conditions.

"We keep the best of the heifers as breeders and produce early maturing feeder steers and cull heifers which are sold to the feedlots at 320kg or more."

To bolster the Droughtmaster genetics in their herd the Coppings have bought 12 bulls, between 2017 and 2019 from the Mostyndale,



**PROGENY:** Deidre Copping with Santa Gertrudis heifers which were in calf at the time to Droughtmasters bulls purchased from the Central Reds Sale.

Wolfgang and Fernleigh studs at the Central Reds Droughtmaster Sale held in Emerald.

"We've been impressed by the temperaments of the bulls from these studs, as well as the condition they've managed to keep through the dry conditions of recent

years. The Central Reds Sale vendors consistently have good quality bulls available, and when we get them home they've performed very well for us. They've obviously been well handled with horses and dogs prior to the sale."

She said when we're se-



Deidre Copping.

lecting bulls to buy at the sale temperament is a big factor.

"We feel that if they stir up easily when we're doing our inspections, they'll behave the same way if we take them home.

"Fertility, length and their sheath are also important

considerations for us. All of these factors are crucial in our production of early maturing quality weaners."

Mrs Copping said some of the first cross heifers from the bulls purchased at the 2017 Central Reds Sale will be ready to calve towards the end of the year.

"We're looking forward to seeing the progeny they produce. We've also sold some of the first cross steers to the feedlots."

She said in the next 12 months they'll be aiming to put Santa Gertrudis bulls back over the Droughtmaster-cross heifers.

"We've been really pleased with the ways in which the Droughtmasters have improved the overall quality of our herd."



Selling at DN Sale, Gracemere  
15/16 September



Selling at Artesian Droughtmaster Sale  
Blackall Saleyards  
12 October

[yaralladroughtmasters.com.au](http://yaralladroughtmasters.com.au)

# Big plans afoot for Pitt Vale

BY MATT SHERRINGTON

THE Kandanga-based Wheeler family has enjoyed solid results breeding pure Droughtmasters in both stud and commercial capacities for 45 years.

In the operation, Garry Wheeler manages a 450 head Droughtmaster herd, and a 200 head dairy operation on 367ha at Pitt Vale and on additional leased land.

Garry's parents Kevin and Glenda successfully ran the Pitt Vale Droughtmaster stud for decades, though for the last six years the herd has been run commercially.

"We've always run Droughtmaster commercially, even before the stud was established in the late 1980's. They're good all-round quiet cattle, which are easy doing, fit our target market well, and are well suited to our country," Garry said.

They primarily sell weaner steers and cull heifers at 550 to 600kg to the JBS Dinmore plant.

"We also sold 40 steers at feeder weight for \$1600 each recently. The prices have been really good lately."



**THE WHEELERS:** Zachary, Thomas, Garry, James and Amy Wheeler on Pitt Vale, Kandanga, with one of the young heifers they'll be registering to reform the Pitt Vale Droughtmaster stud operation.

While the bulls are in the paddock with the females year-round, Garry said they aim for a spring calve in August to September within a six to eight week period for 80 per cent of the breeders.

"We only keep the best of the heifers. Anything lacking the traits we need are sold, we also don't keep any cows past 11 years-old."

Garry said while he will continue to manage the

commercial Droughtmaster herd and the dairy side of the business, his children James, Amy and Zachary and his nephew Tom Wheeler are now in the midst of reestablishing the Pitt Vale stud.

"Our business officially received commercial status through the Droughtmaster society last year, but the former stud cows in the herd are still fully registered, which is what has sparked the idea of

getting the stud going again."

Tom Wheeler said he has produced a nice line of young heifers that'll be registered and merged with the preexisting registered cows in the herd.

"I'll be attending the Droughtmaster National Sale in September with the aim of purchasing a good bull to put with the heifers," Tom said.

He said they like to keep the genetics in the herd fresh which is why they purchase bulls from a variety of studs.

"When buying, we look for polled bulls with excellent rump conformation, underline and head set, which aren't too tight or loose, with a long tail and good length."

To improve their herds the Wheelers have been buying heifers and cows from Nick and Sarah Hughes, Farogan Valley Droughtmasters.

"We love the big roomy cows Farogan Valley produces, they have great temperaments and are very fertile. All the females that we've purchased from the Nick and Sarah have preg tested in-calf, and we'll likely be using the progeny within the stud operation," Garry said.



**NINDETHANA PASTORAL**  
ESTD 1975

Droughtmaster Stud (No.315)

*Naturally Docile ...*

*Naturally Droughtmaster ...*

*Naturally Nindethana*



## Selling Annually

<b>Bunya Bull Sale</b>	September
<b>DN Bull Sale</b>	September
<b>Cream of the Crop Female Sale</b>	November
<b>National Female Sale</b>	March

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# The Northern Genomics Project's delivering

COW fertility is a major driver of profitability in Northern beef herds.

A project funded by the MLA Donor Company and coordinated by The University of Queensland research institute QAAFI's Dr Shannon Landmark Speight, is creating genomic breeding values (GBVs) for fertility traits in Northern cattle, making the difficult task of selecting for fertility more readily available allowing more rapid genetic gains.

"The Northern Genomics Project involves 54 properties from Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia and has genotyped over 30,000 heifers," Dr Landmark Speight said.

"The heifers have been ovarian scanned for puberty, pregnancy tested to their second calf and have had a

number of additional measures tabulated, including: hip height, weight and body condition score," she said.

The cattle included in the project comprise a high proportion of *Bos indicus* breeds (e.g. Brahman), stabilised composites (e.g. Droughtmaster and Santa Gertrudis), adapted *Bos taurus* breeds, and many composites.

"As part of the analysis, *Bos indicus* content and breed composition of all heifers has been determined and given back to all collaborators for their interest."

One such collaborator is Michael Flynn, Valera Vale Droughtmasters, Charleville.

Mr Flynn said reproductive efficiency is a trait recognised as a feature of the overall Droughtmaster breed.

■ TO PAGE 21

— MATT SHERRINGTON



Data: A mob of Michael Flynn's Valera Vale No 8 heifers being yarded for the Northern Genomics Project, which is creating genomic breeding values (GBVs) for fertility traits in Northern cattle

# 74 BULLS



Mark Duthie  
0448 016 950



Midge Thompson  
0427 710 018

 The logo for the Bunya Bull Sale is displayed, featuring a stylized green tree and the text 'BUNYA BULL SALE' in a bold, green, sans-serif font.
 

## BUNYA BULL SALE

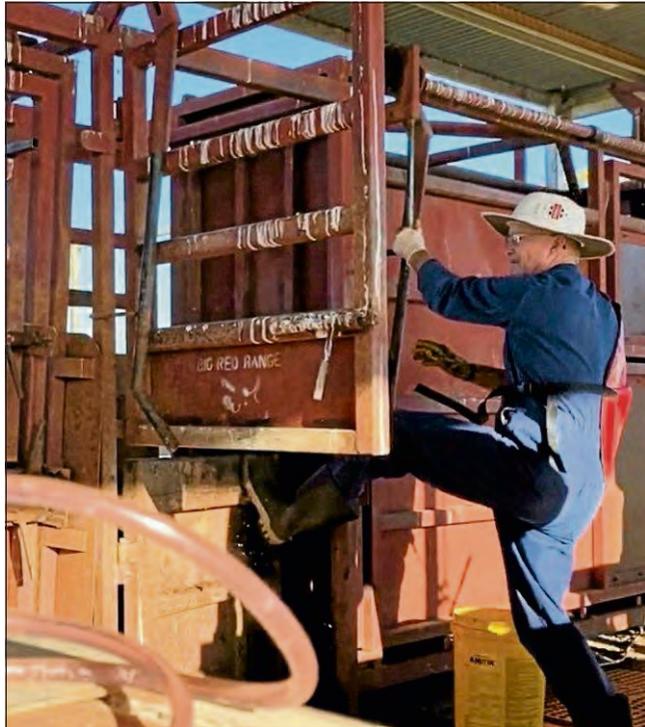
**Saturday 5th September 2020, 11 am start  
Coolabunia Sale Complex, KINGARROY**



[www.bunyasales.com.au](http://www.bunyasales.com.au)



# a plethora of Droughtie fertility information



**EXPERTISE:** QAAFI's Dr Geoffrey Fordyce conducting pregnancy testing activities for the Northern genomics Project at Buchanans Yards on Valera Vale.



**COORDINATOR:** QAAFI is coordinating the project, which is being funded by the MLA Donor Company. QAAFI's Dr Shannon Landmark Speight is the project lead.

■ FROM PAGE 20

"Some animals in the Droughtmaster population are more efficient than others and the project will allow stud and commercial breeders to intensify selection for this and other important traits that are impossible to directly assess early in an animals life," he said.

"The research will inform selection decisions for very young cattle well before direct data is available even supplying indications of whether a male calf is more or less likely to throw heifers that have traits such as the ability to go back in calf promptly while rearing a calf."

Mr Flynn said an extremely simplistic illustration of the value of project is in another Droughtmaster strength: the high incidence

of polled animals.

"Genetic testing now allows direct identification of the poll gene rather than phenotypic selection where a visually polled animal may be either homozygous or heterozygous for the gene. Heterozygous animals can be described as genetically polled or genetically horned with equal accuracy as they have the same number of genes for either trait. Therefore, selection without the DNA information is much less powerful."

"The genomics research being undertaken through the project is examining much more complex interactions and much harder to measure traits but will further inform selection decisions thus increasing the value of the Droughtmaster breed to the commercial industry."



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# Your one stop quality Droughtmaster shop

FROM humble beginnings in 1995 with the purchase of Mundabullangana Station (Munda), the Thompson family has transformed a once-struggling cattle herd into a reputable source of Droughtmaster genetics for Western Australian beef producers and beyond.

The Thompsons bought the 207,199ha property, 60km south of Port Hedland in WA, with a predominant Shorthorn cross breeder herd with mixed bred bulls included in the purchase.

Michael Thompson said they initially purchased 105 Brahman bulls out of Queensland, and crossed them over the Shorthorn cross breeders, and started with the Droughtmasters in December of 1996.

"From 1998 we purchased more pure Droughtmasters from Qld studs, but by 2005 we'd run into a lot of problems with the herd. We'd kept the Brahmans too long. We were running the Brahman bulls over high content cows which were producing too high or low content progeny," he said.

In 2005, then Landmark export manager Kim Goad and Mr Thompson saw eight

varieties of weaners from Munda being unloaded - at the Thompsons, then newly acquired, 3238ha Gingin property, Glencoe - and knew changes were required.

"I went to Munda and sold everything that wasn't red. To fix the weight, bone and muscle, the most affordable option was to simply buy a better class of bull.

"In 2007 Kim and I went to the Droughtmaster National Sale and purchased 55 bulls, and another 15 bulls from stud breeders we'd identified as being at the top of their game. We returned to the National in 2009 and bought 55 bulls at the sale, and 70 from top breeders."

By 2010 they started seeing a major improvement in the weaners and a better selection to breed on from. The sale of stock became easier with far better prices achieved across all types.

"We were actually improving the herd and in a way getting paid to do it."

From then on 50 stud bulls were purchased yearly from up to 15 studs or from the National.

In 2012 Mr Thompson started selling bulls out of the paddock to other pastoralists



**BEAUTIES:** 1500 head of top Droughtmaster heifers will be available to purchase from Munda Station in August.

in the Goldfields, Pilbara, and Kimberley regions.

"We sold 85 bulls in 2011, 200 in 2012, and 400 in 2013, which really helped to build our reputation."

In 2014 the opportunity arose to purchase the Qld based Comanche stud from Steve and Claire Farmer.

"Kim and I bought all of their poll females and everything else that had a bull and was under eight years of age. This equated to about 300 females in total. All were sent to Glencoe."

Mr Thompson said the next part of the puzzle was to set about buying stud sires to go with the Comanche herd.

"We paid the top money at most Droughtmaster sales in 2015 and 2016 and came home with 50 stud bulls.

"We then set about finding which of all our bulls bred true to type, while maintaining the characteristics all breeders strive for. From this process, we narrowed down our sire battery to 15 sires which fitted that criteria and ran three AI programs with the females over three cycles. Females which didn't get pregnant were culled to improve overall herd fertility."

He said these programs resulted in fast-tracking the type they were striving to breed.

"New sires are selected from our own herd and we still buy in genetics on a yearly budget of close to \$200,000. Trials with new genetics to identify special traits will never stop. DNA sire trace, weights from day of birth, 200,400,600 day weights (for performance figures), Pompes tests, horn poll (PP, PH, HH) bull and female identifying are some of the key ingredients that just keeps the pot boiling."

Mr Thompson said proof of how the stud is performing can be seen in its performance in the auctions at the Fitzroy Crossing Bull Sale.

"In 2018 our bulls averaged \$9100 with one topping the sale at \$13,000 and last year our bulls averaged \$7200 and again we hit a sale high of \$13,000 and also sold the second top-priced bull of the sale for \$11,000."

"Through private sales, we've sold three for more than \$25,000 and many between \$10,000 and \$20,000.

The stud is now producing 300 to 400 bulls a year.

Stud manager Ben Wright is currently redeveloping the Munda Reds website, with a focus on creating a database that will allow buyers to ana-

lyse all Munda Red bulls.

"This system will help buyers identify specific traits they're chasing in a bull. The intention is to have every bull listed so that people can explore a bulls' growth from birth through to the point of selling. They will then be able to compare bulls within the herd to see what they like," Mr Wright said.

"Window shop online! Then buy online or pay a visit to the Munda Reds operation at Glencoe," he said.

Breeders chasing big numbers at rates that suit their budgets still have the Munda Station option.

"Our 6000 head accredited Droughtmaster breeding herd based there is backed up by 250 stud bulls which continue to breed better bulls than ever before."

He said Munda Reds ongoing goal is to produce an animal that is genetically comparable to what can be found in Qld at an affordable price.

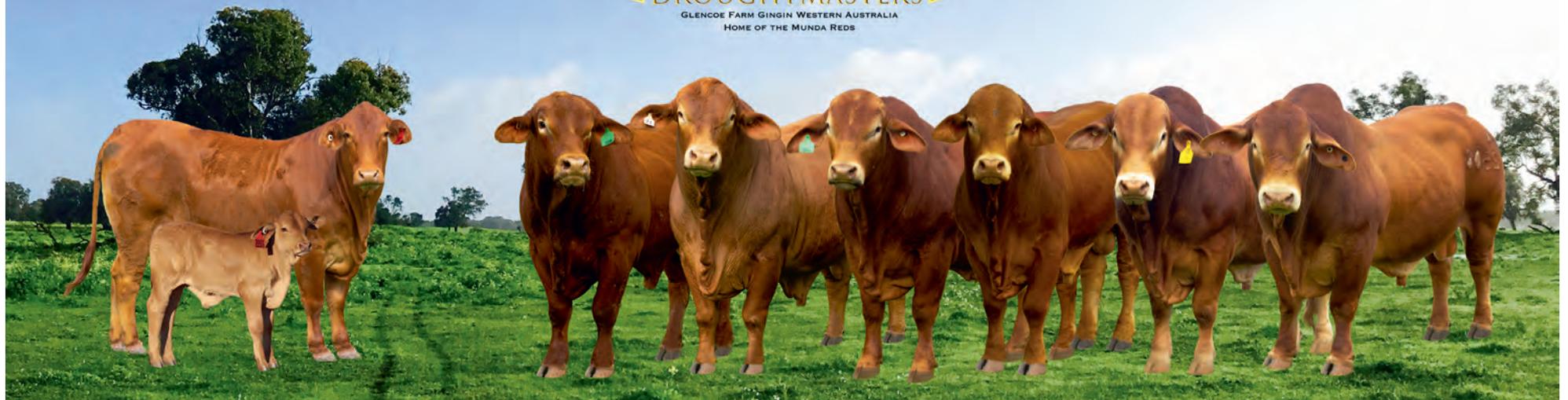
"We're creating bulls with great fertility, survivability and double polled genetics with no loss of the characteristics Droughtmasters are renowned for."

— MATT SHERRINGTON

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**MUNDA REDS**  
**DROUGHTMASTERS**

GLENCOE FARM GINGIN WESTERN AUSTRALIA  
HOME OF THE MUNDA REDS



**Pictured above MUNDA DJANGO**  
**Sire : Kapalee Game Changer**  
**Dam: Comanche 4146**

**FOR SALE IN 2020**  
**50 Station bred bulls available now**  
**150 Stud bulls available in August at 18months-old**  
**200 Stud bulls available in December at 18months-old**  
**400 Station Bred bulls available in August**  
**1500 quality station bred heifers available in August**

# SALES

## AUGUST

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- 21 Fitzroy Crossing Invitational Sale  
Western Australia
- 22 High Country Droughtmaster Sale  
Toogoolawah

## SEPTEMBER

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- 05 Bunya Bull Sale  
Coolabunia
- 08 Central Reds Invitational Bull Sale  
Emerald
- 09 Piggott Sale  
Springsure
- 11 Valera Vale Sale  
Augathella
- 15-16 National Droughtmaster Bull Sale  
Rockhampton
- 23 Clonlara Sale  
Glenmorgan
- 24 The Cap Droughtmaster Bull Sale  
Rockhampton
- 25 Glenlands Sale  
Bouldercombe

## OCTOBER

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- TBC Diamantina Sale  
Winton
- 12 Artesian Sale  
Blackall
- 16 Bullzeye Droughtmaster Bull Sale  
Capella
- 23 Roma Droughtmaster Bull Sale  
Roma

## NOVEMBER

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- TBC Monty Atkinson Genetics Sale  
Charters Towers
- 28 Cream of the Crop Female Sale  
Kingaroy

## FEBRUARY

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- TBC February All Breeds Sale  
Rockhampton

## MARCH

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- 13 National Female Sale  
Gympie

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