



January 1st saw the start of good things to come for "Oaklands". 135mls of rain and hail fell out of what looked like blue sky in a strip no wider than 4km! It filled nearly every dam, stripped our sacrifice paddocks of top soil considerably and left us wondering if it was real or just a dream! Over the next three days we received another 115mls and had passed the 250mls received in 2019.

We were amazed how the stock recovered. Within 4 to 5 weeks the cattle and sheep were fat with the cows shiny and dappled. Pre-Christmas the calves were weaned early, when the youngest were 8 weeks old. I didn't realise at the time but when the feed came they had no idea of how to graze and what the good and bad grasses were. They slipped in condition for 3 weeks but eventually figured it out and are on the do now.

The decision was made to sell rising yearling steers back in early September. At the end of the day we're breeders and figured if we can keep our core females there'll be plenty more steers to come eventually. They went down to Victoria for not much money (Victoria took thousands of cattle from our area) and I'm informed they're going well and are still being grown out. We would have had to spend about \$90,000 getting them heavy enough for the feedlots. Another case of damned if you do/damned if you don't.

Thankfully we grade our cows/heifers every year at weaning so although we sold a lot of cows the top females are still with us. The main criteria being that they hold body condition as well as bring in a good calf and have sound udder and teats. This year was the ultimate test but

interestingly, how the cows graded in previous years was consistent with how they graded this year. It's good to know we've got a good base to bounce off again. One female line got particularly found out, needless to say that line is out the gate. Nothing like a good drought to give the system a good clean out! All our heifers were retained and so the cycle continues.

Just to add a bit more of a challenge we bought another property "Claremont" in May 2019, it hardly rained from that time on! It helped us keep our numbers up and it ran 110 heifers and 30 cows through the drought and the water held up even with helicopters sucking out of the dams to fight fires next door. It is a great place and we look forward to managing it in the future.

As a result of the drought our children are all fully qualified station hands, can all load/unload tonne bags with the tractor into feedout bins, load big bales onto utes /hayfeeders, drive utes and tractors through mobs of cows and calves or 1000 ewes with lambs and can tell you all the different types of hay/grains and their uses. One thing is for sure we couldn't have done it without them and are very proud of their help throughout the drought.

The first proper bore was put down in December in over 100 years of ownership in country that hasn't let us down previously. We are fortunate that it's all plumbed up and working efficiently.

Plenty of money was thrown at this drought and hindsight will decide if the right decisions were made or not. After all is said and done, we learnt a lot about

ourselves and a hell of a lot more about droughts and how to handle them. Jo started work full time at Guyra Vet Clinic in May 2019 and I also started off farm work in January 2020 driving dump trucks at Mt Arthur Coal Muswellbrook. We had agistment at Mullaley via Gunnedah leading into this drought and the owner of the property, Dan Andrews, who also works at Mount Arthur, let me know about an initiative of BHP to help farmers through the drought. It has been a huge learning curve but a hell of a ride! We know this drought has been solid for everyone and hope that fellow breeders have been under some good rain. What can you do but make the best decisions at the time and soldier on. Will be good to catch up with you all down the track.

Benoak has 6 rising 2 year old bulls for sale this season. The drought has reinforced our commitment to low maintenance productive cattle. The decision was made to have a grass only preparation with access to mineral lick. Many of our clients know our previous sale bulls receive minimal grain preparation so the decision to cut it out completely was an easy one. Just another tool to let the good ones come to the top, no false preparation. We won't have an Open Day this year, arrangements to see the bulls can be made at any time. Please phone us 02 67321148 and we can organise an inspection.



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 ~ Established 1964 ~
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6 Rising 2 Year Old Devon Bulls for Sale
Sires – Benoak, Vix and Gowan Ross Bulls



Call to arrange an Inspection

