

Southern Focus

It has been a mixed season for the Victorian breeders, weather wise. We've had a long hot dry spell with little or no rain. The rain is falling as I write this, for the first time in weeks. Glenn and I took a holiday to Queensland over Christmas, only to find that it was hotter back home than it was in North Queensland.

Despite the weather it has been a busy time for Square Meaters breeders, with some starting their Autumn calving, promotional activities and of course shows. Lyn and Peter Brown again had a great display at Seymour Alternative Farming Expo in February. It was another hot weekend and Lyn and Peter were outstanding in their efforts to promote Square Meaters. Here is Peter's account of the weekend.

SEYMOUR ALTERNATIVE FARMING EXPO

We took cattle – Bertie our junior bull and Chloe an 11 month old heifer – to the Seymour Expo again this year, our 7th year in succession. The Expo seems to have changed a bit over the years; this year it seemed to have moved a little away from a focus firmly on the “alternative lifestyle” to including more “farming alternatives”. For example there were more and bigger tractors on show.

There was a slightly wider range of cattle on display also. As well as the more typical lifestyle breeds - Highland, Lowline and Dexter – there were Red Angus, Pinzgauer, Blonde d'Aquitaine, Braunveh, British White and, of course, Square Meaters.

It was a busy 3 days as usual and we were kept busy talking to a range of people; from the simply curious to the genuinely interested. It's always difficult to tell how much of the apparent interest is genuine and will eventually lead to new members and someone selling cattle. Even real interest can take years to actually come to fruition. There are a few people who stop and talk each year and keep us up to date on how their dream is progressing – still convinced Square Meaters are for them and getting closer to having a place with secure fences and reliable water so that a dream can become reality.

We managed to give away all the promotional material, collect details of half a dozen people wanting more information to be sent to them, as well as pointing some interested parties to studs in their area where they could see Square Meaters at home in the paddock.

I would say the number of enquiries from people who already had cattle was up on previous years. People looking for a bull to put over heifers, to give the heifers an easier time from conception to calving, then an easier time during calving, and still have progeny that were viable in the commercial world. The word is getting out!

POST SCRIPT – A PRODUCT THAT SELLS ITSELF

Shortly after we got back home we had a phone call from someone who had seen us at Seymour. We hadn't spoken with him, he had just picked up a card. He runs a small herd of cross breeds which he processes through his own butchery business, and had gone to the Expo looking for a bull for a line of heifers. He felt the Square Meaters looked to be just the job and, since he was in town dropping some cattle off at the local abattoir, could he have another look at our bull. To make a short story shorter, Bertie has a new owner and we'll have to re-think the show team for this year!

Peter Brown

Square Meaters have also been performing well through the yards, with breeders receiving good prices for quality cattle. Sales of breeding animals has been a little slower with many farmers still a bit hesitant to purchase before the Autumn rain.

Most of those that have been sold have gone to farmers who can see the benefit of using Square Meaters in their breeding/cross breeding programs.

Here at Highbury we have been pretty lucky with the pastures, only having to start feeding out in the last few weeks. With the sale of some commercial stock to both farmers and at the sale yards, the feed situation is looking OK for winter for us. We have just weaned our spring calves, which made for a noisy day or two. We wean now so that the cows go into winter in good condition and the calves have a chance to adjust before the cold hits. If any of you have been down this way in winter (10 minutes from Wilson's Promontory National Park), you'll know how cold and windy it can be.

On the home front, things are about to get a little more hectic for Glenn and I, we're expecting our first child in June. It is a very exciting time for us and we are looking forward to the challenge (not so much the sleepless nights).

Emma Joy