



Russell Wheeler, with farm manager, Adam Scoble looks over a group of cows about to be sent to Greenhams.

COMMUNITY CONNECTION MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

Russell Wheeler and his brother, Barry, known by the locals as 'Bull' and 'Snowy', run 850 Friesian cows in two herds on 1800 acres at Girgarre. They have been in partnership for 26 years as third generation dairyfarmers and currently have 6 employees.

The main spring/summer block handles the bulk of the cows with about 570 milked on a 50 stand rotary.

The smaller autumn/winter herd of 280 cows is designed to take advantage of peak milk prices at that time, when everybody else is shutting down. They are milked on a 20 swing-over herringbone.

The Wheelers usually sell about 150 culled cows to HW Greenhams right throughout the year.

Single-handed achievement

"We've been doing that for twelve years," says Bull. "Greenhams are very good for the local community and that is very important.

"When they put in the meatworks at Tongala, they single-handedly took unemployment out of the area, and since they started they've donated thousands of dollars to schools and clubs. The local economy has improved a lot.

"That's why we choose to sell to them.

"I have a lot to do with the local sports clubs so I can see the good it does. Lots of other agents don't put anything back into the area!"

Vital Support

Bull Wheeler says that the market support from Greenhams was probably the only reason they made it through the drought.

"If we hadn't have had Greenhams here we would have only got half the money for our cows, because the other agents just wanted to take advantage of the lower prices on offer. Peter put a good base in the market and it saved a lot of farms. And a lot of people remember that!"

The saleyards are always an option for the Wheelers, but it's more convenient for them to sell cows daily as they need to. Russell rings Greenhams for prices when he has some cows to sell, and says that it's pretty easy to calculate if the price is right.

"The worn-out cows with no excess fat are what Greenhams want and the prices come up pretty well. We usually take them over ourselves in lots of four or five."

"We sent 88 cows at one time in the drought because of the way the weather was going, hopefully that won't happen again."

Confidence for the future

Russell 'Bull' Wheeler is quietly confident about the way things are looking for the dairy industry; "This is going to be a bumper season if the rain comes when we expect it now.

"We're going along alright at the moment in the industry, but our area is shrinking because of the water situation.

Bull reckons that he and his wife, Robyn, are fortunate, and rare for dairyfarmers, because they have two sons who are keen to carry on the milking.

FAST BROADBAND INTERNET SERVICE NOW AVAILABLE

Mark Riddell from Agsmart Pty Ltd tells us that there is now fast broadband internet service no matter where you live. And a government subsidy is available to make this service very affordable.

Broadband Satellite is a high-speed Internet service that can connect you to the Internet via satellite. This will remove the frustration of a slow dial-up internet connection. The Commonwealth Government's Broadband Connect Program provides eligible customers in rural and regional Australia with a service subsidised by government grant up to \$3,300, leaving as little to pay as \$29.95 per month for a fast Internet service.

Their preferred provider of satellite broadband services is Australian Private Networks (APN), who offers a choice of plans under the "Activ8me" program.

Features of Activ8me:

- Free Hardware and Installation for customers who qualify for the government grant
- Affordable plans from as little as \$29.95 per month, including 500mb of data
- The base plan features a download speed of 256kbps
- Satellite broadband is constantly connected and is independent of the phone line, so it frees up the telephone
- Two email addresses - one email address for the business and one for personal

The following plans are correct as at 1 July, 2006. Installation and equipment are included in the plan price.

Activ8me Plans		Broadband Connect High Grant for non ADSL, non ISDN areas			
Plan	Speed	Data Allowance	Monthly Fee	Contract Term	Establishment Fee
ACTIV8me 500	256/64	500mb	\$29.95	36 Months	\$0
ACTIV8me 1000	384/128	1000mb	\$49.95	36 Months	\$0
ACTIV8me 3000	512/256	3000mb	\$110.95	36 Months	\$0
ACTIV8me 500	256/64	500mb	\$29.95	18 Months	\$200
ACTIV8me 1000	384/128	1000mb	\$49.95	18 Months	\$200
ACTIV8me 3000	512/256	3000mb	\$110.95	18 Months	\$200

* Excess data is charged at 8 cents per MB and billed when accumulated usage exceeds \$10 in any given billing period. Prices include GST.

For more information on this service call 1300 727 995 or visit the website at www.ruralbroadband.com.au



SEPTEMBER 2006

MEATWORKS MESSENGER

GREENHAM



Welcome to our first Greenham Meatworks Messenger.

We look forward to bringing you more information about Greenham operations and updates on the Australian meat industry via these regular newsletters.

The big dry

The year is turning out to be extremely dry, nowhere more so than in the northern part of the state. Eildon is the real worry and even heavy spring rains are unlikely to make much improvement.

Being honest we know that our area can't sustain its present cattle population. We have been inundated with phone calls and our attitude to all of our friends in the Goulburn Valley and surrounding areas is that we will handle whatever stock you choose to sell.

Don't rush

We can only suggest two things. Please don't rush in and sell stock we all know should be kept for good reasons. And please ring Graeme Pretty. He will book in all stock in such a way that you are looked after in the best possible manner.

Markets have seen big price drops, but I assure you we will endeavour to be as good an outlet as you can possibly have. We are being forced to reduce prices because of poor profitability but we certainly won't take advantage of the seasonal conditions.

Markets remain strong

Our best information is that US markets should remain relatively strong, although the hamburger season ended recently. We still believe the market will hold up.

In Japan it appears the re-entry of US meat isn't causing any problems. A supermarket chain we know tells us Japanese housewives aren't asking for American meat, which is good news.

And also, handling American meat has become very expensive because every carton has to be opened and searched for bone fragments. If any is found the box is rejected. Here's hoping for strong spring rains and our continued partnership.

Peter Greenham

WHAT DO WE PRODUCE AT TONGALA?

Many of our suppliers ask us "Why do you buy old dairy cows and what is the sort of product you sell?"

When they think about meatworks, most people think of the butcher shop or supermarkets, but we are not what's known as 'prime cut' suppliers for those sorts of customers. This type of meat forms just a small proportion of the produce from the Tongala meatworks.

Lean beef are keywords

The product we deal with at Tongala is predominantly for the grinding beef trade in the US. This influences the type of stock that we want, or can handle, to meet our customer requirements. The cast-for-age dairy cows are processed for export to the United States.

Our specialty is lean grinding meat, and our customers specify 90% chemical lean meat.

Chemical lean is the fat/meat ratio as determined by an approved method of chemical analysis.

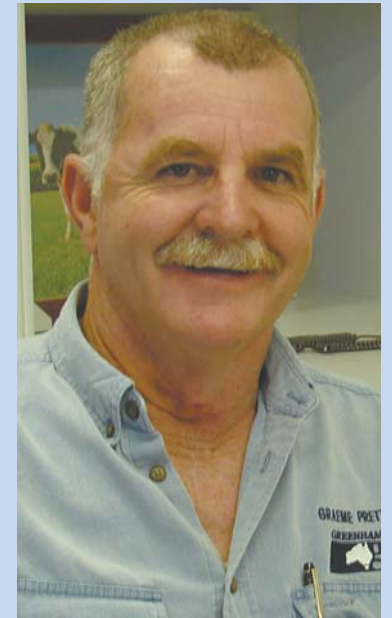
This is a very sophisticated system installed on the line at Tongala. Every individual carton of lean meat cuts passes through an electromagnetic scanner, which gives an instant readout of the lean content. The chemical lean results can vary depending on the location of the cuts on the cow; for instance, hindquarter cuts have less fat than forequarter cuts.

The results of the chemical lean measuring equipment at the meatworks are verified by regular independent laboratory tests of random samples of the finished product.

The rest of the cow is also important as not all of it goes to customers as '90% chemical lean grinding beef'.

Prime mixing value

The large hindquarter has all of the fat stripped from the outside surface and this is sold to US customers as 100% lean. It is generally used for



Graeme Pretty explains why we buy the types of cows we do.

the thin dried beef strips, known as beef jerky, or it is mixed by the processors in the US with fatter meat to achieve a higher lean content for their own products.

This is of prime mixing value to compensate for fatty trimmings.

Other primal cuts are the tenderloins and strip loins for table meat in Asia and the Australian domestic market.

This tastes offal!

It is an interesting facet of the export meat trade that Australia has always had a relative abundance of red meat, so we haven't needed to eat the offal and therefore we haven't acquired a real taste for it. Most Australians look askance at the offal offerings, or at best eat it under sufferance.

We can market the offal from our cows, and it is mainly destined for Asia, where it is used for exotic delicacies which probably wouldn't appeal to the traditional Australian palate.

Tel.5859 0912 After hours: Graeme Pretty 0418 505 347

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CURFEW WEIGHT LOSS CAN BE A PROBLEM

Weight loss during the overnight curfew at saleyards can be a much bigger problem than is commonly realised according to our livestock manager, Graeme Pretty.

"A well covered Friesian cow straight from the paddock and weighing 650 kg lightweight can lose as much as 60 to 70 kg during an overnight curfew.

"If she loses 60 kg at \$1.20 for example, that's \$72 off the price before you even get started. Then say \$15 for transport, plus levies, yard dues and commission, and another \$63.40 comes off.

"You'll end up with \$644.60 in your pocket.

"Selling liveweight to us is a totally different story. We would put that same cow over the scales straightaway. She would weigh 650 kg and you would be paid for 650 kg. "At that same price of \$1.20 you would walk away with \$780 because we don't have any deductions – it's a big difference," Graeme said.

That's why you have to be careful making price comparisons. To match our \$1.20 kg full weight in this example you would have to get around \$1.40 at the yards to be as well off.

LIVEWEIGHT COMPARED WITH OVER THE HOOK

Gordon Clements has been around cattle all his life. Even today as he approaches 78, he still owns a dairy farm near Wyuna where a share farmer is currently milking 100 cows, soon to increase to 200.

He's also turned off his fair share of beef cattle over the years, mainly from the family property at Doreen south of Whittlesea. But Melbourne's sprawl is catching up and he and his wife have just moved on to 100 acres north of Whittlesea where he plans to continue running a few cattle.

"I never thought Melbourne would spread out so far. We had a farm at Bundoora that had been in the family since the 1840's but it was compulsorily acquired for the new RMIT campus in 1969.

"We moved on to Doreen and continued dairying. There used to be dozens of dairy farms in this area but they started disappearing about 20 years ago.

"That's when I bought the place up north - I wanted to continue dairying. It had always been part of my life and I wanted to stick to it. Perhaps I am crazy?" He mused.

"It was a cropping and sheep operation that we've converted to dairy. We've built it up to 1000 acres now but it's a long way from capacity – we're not trying to break any records, just get a reasonable return for the share farmer."

Until recently Gordon had always sold his cattle over the hooks or through the yards.

"We normally take our culls over to Tongala with our own truck. I think Greenham is as good a market as you can get hold of. Recently, we had a few cows to get rid of and it was a bit awkward, so I asked Graeme (Pretty) if he could organise a pickup.

No problem in selling liveweight

"Their system is very, very good - they weigh them on to the truck and pay you on the spot. But I've never been too sure about liveweight so I asked him for the results after they were hung up.



"It was very close - I would have got virtually the same money either way. I really don't see any problem now in selling liveweight," Gordon added.

"And the yards aren't cheap. I sent a few vealers to Pakenham the other day and it costs \$60 or \$70 a head.

"Sometimes you might think the prices are a bit low but it averages out - I can't see how you can go wrong selling to Greenham year around."

Long connection

And Gordon should know because his connection with Greenham goes back a long way. He remembers carting both dairy cattle and bullocks to the Greenham abattoir at Newport and Altona some 30 or 40 years ago.

"We always sold them over the hooks. I knew Graeme in those days, so it was natural to deal with him again at Tongala when we moved up to Wyuna."

And while Gordon has been selling to Greenham for a long time his connection with the family goes back even further. As a youngster he worked for Quiney Mawbey & Co at Newmarket in the 1940's.

"Peter Greenham's (senior) grandfather, Harry, was a well-known character at the yards in those days. He chewed tobacco and I still remember him spitting it out in the laneways. His son was also called Harry - we called him young Harry. The old man was usually known as 'HW'. It's great to see the H.W. Greenham name continuing.

Pushbike to Newmarket

"He used to ride his push bike up to Newmarket Sale Yards from the City Abattoirs. They always bought their cattle standing down in the lanes - perhaps they could judge them better that way."

Fond memories of the Greenham's are not the only happy recollections from Gordon's Newmarket days.

"Working in a place like that really smartens up your footwork. I was a booking clerk and then ended up in the Bourke Street office. I used to help dad with the milking first and then catch the quarter to eight bus in from Bundoora getting to the office before nine.

"Quiney Mawbey continued operating at Mernda for a long time after Newmarket ended and only closed down finally a few years ago," Gordon said.

Gordon is enjoying the new property and has plans for pasture improvement. He describes it largely as a lifestyle farm but with his cattle history its reasonable to expect a continuing turn off of quality stock.

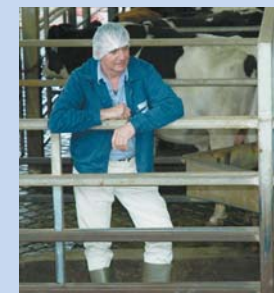


The local footy team is a critical pivot point of the community, and at Greenham's we're doing our bit to help keep country football alive and vibrant.

Picola United FC has been going for over a hundred years and Greenham is now a major sponsor of the club – just part of support that we give to clubs right across northern Victoria.



Last year Greenham's donated a trailer for the club's gear, one of six clubs to benefit in this way over the last few years. Picola United secretary, Penny Power, shows it off to Steve Lindsay, a dairy farmer who wears number 11 in the reserves, and sells his cows to Greenham's.



MEAT THE STAFF Paul Burchill

Paul Burchill wants to write the definitive book about the meat industry in Australia and he has the experience and knowledge to back it up. His enthusiasm for the subject really shines through when you talk to him.

As quality assurance manager at the Tongala meatworks, Paul started with Greenham's fourteen years ago while the plant was still under construction. He had been a meat inspector for twenty years and a slaughterman for about ten years prior to that.

Solo slaughtering

He started slaughtering at the tail-end of the tradesman era, and learnt how it was done the old way: "Each worker would deal with the complete carcass of an animal – it was known as solo slaughtering." Paul explains, "In the early days it had taken a three year apprenticeship to become a solo slaughterman. During the 1930s a chain system was introduced where the carcass moved along an overhead conveyor or chain, and each man was required to perform only one specialised task."

"The beef slaughtermen of the early days in Melbourne were known as 'The Princes of Footscray' (because that's where the abattoirs were), and it was a revered profession. The kids of the suburbs aspired to be one of the 'cream of the crop' when they grew up."

The connections of those days still resound with Peter Greenham's membership of - and deep affection for - the Western Bulldogs Football Club.

Pre-war start to export

Paul was born in England and came to Bourke in NSW as an 8 year old with his '£10 Pom' parents. His working life started in Echuca when he was fourteen.

"When the export meat trade first started in Australia, it really got off the ground through the pre-World War I sales of quartered bone-in-beef to the UK," says Paul as he winds up into his favourite subject "This was in the time of 'Old Harry', Peter Greenham's grandfather, who started the current business. At that stage the parts of the beast that were kept were the hide and the carcase with 'bone-in'. Virtually everything else went to be rendered down for tallow.

"When shipping with refrigeration became efficient, it revolutionised the industry and so large scale meat export to the UK became viable. Post-war, the trend moved to

forequarters going to the UK, with the hindquarters staying here for domestic consumption in Australia.

"As years went by more animal by-products were saved during the slaughtering process, and it is only in recent times that we are getting the value from almost the entire beast." When Paul first joined HW Greenham & Son, he was involved in recruiting for the new meatworks and says that there were a number of priorities for this: "Firstly we wanted to have local people without prior experience in meatworks. This was because we wanted to train them in our particular procedures, and to adopt the culture which we wanted in the plant.

"We wanted a workforce that was going to follow Peter Greenham's vision.

"I can still remember what he told me, 'These are the things that we are going to do properly: Production. Quality. People. They are all as important as each other.'"

The Tongala meatworks was the first 'hot boning' plant in Australia, which has a particular application to the lean grinding meat which is the main export product. On the killing line, Paul needs to know how everyone's job should be done. He needs to make sure that the company staff and all employees are properly trained, on and off site, to achieve the necessary skills and qualifications.

Changing challenges

Paul says that the challenges have changed over the years; "When I started here the biggest challenge was to educate people that cutting corners doesn't get you anywhere. "Now the issue is having enough skilled workers to consistently achieve the outcomes required.

"Public perceptions are working against us in this; a lot of people think that the meatworks is a last resort for a job. But what people may have thought of in the past is not the case now. This is a highly skilled profession, with subsequent high rewards.

"The work is more consistent than it is physically hard; the biggest challenge facing most workers is in being able to keep up, all the time, all the shift."

High quality produce

Paul says that his main role is to ensure that the standards required by the company, the customer and the regulatory authorities are achieved.

This includes product quality, labelling, work practices and, importantly, security compliance – an aspect which is often overlooked. Overseas customers need to be assured that a high level of security is maintained – the product is properly sealed, not interfered with, and that there is not unauthorised access to the finished product.

"The prime purpose is to produce high quality clean meat."