
New Zealand

RED DEVON

Cattle Breeders Association

Newsletter  April 2021

The latest from Rockview Red Devons...

Weather and Weaning...

As we settle into Autumn and have a change in overnight temperatures, we are still desperately waiting for some much needed rain to arrive, as are most of us. It has been a hot, dry summer and we have little grass ahead of us leading into winter. This is having a compounding effect after the long drought last year in which the water table has still not recovered from. Despite this, the cows have raised some of the heaviest weaner heifers ever before and the weaner bulls are not far behind previous seasons. The 2 year old heifers have raised excellent first calves this season considering the lack of grass (220-240kg bull calves) and we are delighted with them. These heifers are in very good order and they have all got back in calf within the 50 days they had with the bull. We have not supplementary fed the cows or the heifers this season so it is a credit to the herd to be producing such good calves with the poor pasture they have had available this season. Just prior to weaning this year, we did feed a few conventional haylage bales to the cows and the calves, purely to have the cows 'teach' the calves to eat it! Last year, the calves took a week before they would eat any haylage as they weren't familiar with it. This year we really needed the calves on haylage at weaning time as we had very little grass saved. All of them have weaned particularly well this season and everyone has settled really quickly.



Bulls enjoying their haylage 'breakfast' at weaning time.

Farm visit to Tapuwae and Thelmara Studs...

In early February, Ross and I travelled up to Whangaroa to visit Arthur Beazley's long-established Tapuwae Stud. We had a very interesting tour of the farm and had the pleasure of Tuppy Jones' company throughout the day. The cattle were in excellent condition despite the lack of grass which was obvious from the extremely low rainfall, again this year. The cows showed true Devon longevity, some with ages into the late teens. Cows with great length in the body, good size and obviously capable of handling whatever the conditions are - it was truly an inspirational visit. The old herd sire Tapuwae 635 was retiring in the front paddock at the grand old age of 15 years - he looked great! Thank you to Arthur for taking the time to show us around, we will be back!

We all ventured down to Tuppy's place for lunch. On the menu was Arthur's toasted sandwiches and he sure knows how to make a good toastie!

After lunch, we had a quick look around the remaining Thelmara herd. I did not realise Tuppy still had breeding cows! I remember back around 2002 at Maungakaramaea, feeding hay to a bull bred by Tuppy, 'TJ' we called him. TJ left fabulous progeny and had a real personality, I will always remember him.

Sadly, Tuppy, who was recently awarded an Honorary Life Membership, explained that she was finally retiring from breeding her Devons and the 10 year old cows were raising their last calves before their departure. There were some very nice heifer calves there and the temptation was too much for me! I said we would buy all the heifer calves after they were weaned. But, as we drove home, I had an idea... The cows had not been run with a bull and there was a very nice 2 year old Gowan Ross Gentleman AB bull in the next paddock. After a quick discussion with Ross and then, Tuppy that night, I drove back up the next day and selected the very best, soundest cows in the paddock and we moved the 4 of them in with the

2 yr old bull. Then a couple more, quick trips north and we had cleared Tuppy's paddocks of all the quality breeding stock available. 21 x head in total! 8 x weaner heifers, 2 x weaner bulls, 6 x R2 heifers, 4 x cows and 1 x herd sire. They are to come down in two lots, the R2 heifers and herd sire have arrived and the cows/weaners are still to come. Thank you to Arthur, for delivering these cattle, it is very much appreciated! With these all being very distantly related to the Rockview herd, the new genetics will be welcomed as we move forward. We will autumn calve the R2 yr heifers next year and then slip them back into spring calving with the Rockview herd in the future. It is both a pleasure and a privilege to be continuing on with these cattle and we are really looking forward to it.

One never knows the outcome of a farm visit or what it will bring... but I think Ross will 'hide the cheque book' on any future visits!



The Thelmara R2 heifers settling into their new home at Rockview Red Devons.

Northland Fielddays.

The Northland Fielddays was due to be held at the beginning of March and we had booked a site for Rockview Red Devons. This event is held at Dargaville which is 15 minutes from the farm so it was the perfect place for Ross and I to advertise the cattle we have for sale and to promote the Red Devon breed. I had our display complete and everything ready to go, but on the week of set-up, sadly the Fielddays were

cancelled. Such a disappointment for the organisers to have to make the call, but they had no choice with the Alert level changes at the time. Covid-19 won that round! We are able to hold our Site and have credited our payment to the 2022 event so we look forward to attending this next year.

New experiences at Council meetings.

I have been enjoying my time on Council and it has prompted us to update our old computer. The new laptop was hooked up on the Wednesday just in time for my first ZOOM meeting on the Thursday. This new technology is amazing and meetings like this are made so easy for the council members to meet without the prior long road trips to meet, I imagine. I had a bit of excitement though when the power blipped off and then back on again whilst cutting my connection to the meeting momentarily. Fortunately, I was able to re-join quickly and continue on. The power cut cause was discovered in the morning - a big swan had flown into the lines, was electrocuted and was still hanging on one wire - poor thing.



Unbelievably bad luck for this big guy!

Northland Red Devon Club is starting up again.

After having been asked by a couple of members whether I would be interested in re-activating the Northland Red Devon Club, I had to give it some serious consideration. Then I saw how many Northland members came down to the Ahuroa Red Devon day and I thought it is definitely time to get this old Club active again! This will be focused on Northland Red Devon breeders and ANYONE up here interested in Devons – whether you have registered or un-registered cattle – everyone is welcome! The club is to be informally run and it is just a great opportunity to group visit 3-4 Northland farms in the warmer months. We will view some Red Devons, talk to other interested breeders and enjoy a shared lunch at the hosting farm – see how others farm and TALK Devons! You never know, you may end up going home with a new bull, some new heifers or a unit load haha. I will be working on this over winter and making contact with a number of already interested contacts we have and I will have the ‘wheels in motion’ in Spring. My hope is that we will be able to sign some new members up to the NZRDCBA in the process. If you live on the North side of the Auckland Harbour Bridge and would like to be kept informed, please ring me 0210 479 471 or email me reddevonbeef@hotmail.com. Remember it doesn’t matter how many Red Devons you have, everyone is welcome!

Yay – RAIN!

As I put the final touches to this newsletter, it is encouraging to report we received 42 mls of beautiful rain yesterday , what a relief! The picturesque setting at Rockview will be restored and we will have grass for winter after all... hopefully there is a follow up rain next week as they have forecast.

Cheers, Colleen Hunter.

PS Don’t forget the AGM which will be held at Ohuka Stud in Whitianga on May 15, you should receive a Notice of Meeting later this week. There will be a stud visit in the morning followed by the AGM to be held on the beach side farm. Accommodation is available just a couple of minutes walk along the beach.