

# RED DEVON

## Newsletter 🌸 November 2021

Hello to the membership!

Some spring weather is finally breaking through, if only the rain would cease long enough for the baleage contractor to turn up and do his thing. Given all that is happening in the world at the moment, a bit of a moan about the weather doesn't really rank up there in terms of grievances. It is bliss to turn off devices and connections to the world and enjoy the peace sometimes.

We have just finished our 4<sup>th</sup> calving season. This year was completely uneventful with 12 calves on the ground and no interventions required at all, we were a tad nervous as last year there were three breech births. This year we used a bull from the Ohuka Polled Devon stud. "Harry" was excellent and picked up all of the cows within a reasonably small window, he was clearly a lights-off kinda guy as he paid absolutely no attention to the girls during the day – he obviously wanted to enjoy some peace and quiet.

Except for a couple of calves, all were 36kg or smaller. At one point with 7/8 calves being bulls we were running out of names, but the numbers evened up a bit towards the end. All calves are strong feeders and are piling on the weight.



Once again, we were amazed by the mothering abilities of this breed, we laugh every year how useless humans are by comparison. The first steps taken by some calves were straight to the teats for colostrum. All cows:

- 1) Had no trouble at all with delivery and birthed in under 30 minutes;
- 2) Were compliant when we did our annual comedy routine with a TV aerial hook and a set of bathroom scales; and
- 3) Cleaned up after themselves, meaning we didn't find the traditional placenta hung up in the deer fencing courtesy of the local hawk population.

Mental note for next year - "juicy" calves are easier to catch, "dry" calves can easily outrun a middle-aged couple wearing gumboots.



Concealed “special forces” bull calf

We are running a split mob this year and will trial autumn calving 11 heifers in what we hope is better weather; the longer daylight hours should allow us to keep a closer eye on them. This has meant more slightly more work as we have to move the hotwire daily, however we aren't wasting as much grass due to trampling and the animals are in excellent condition.

### **Settling on our Herd**

When we decided to start breeding Red Devon's we grabbed as many females as we could over a nine-month period. Finding a bull to cross our “fruit salad” was a challenge, but with a few years of calving and culling under our belts we have settled on select bloodlines that produce consistent calves. One of our ‘super-mums’ will be 11 years-old in January and is well and truly the matriarch of the herd. She has four daughters on the property and watched over two of them this year when they calved.

We are incredibly diligent on temperament. We do not ever want to be accused of “offloading” animals, so any with questionable moods are on the truck to the works or into the freezer. While the last four years has been a baptism of fire in some respects, we are now incredibly comfortable with our girls and have established good systems that work for us and our busy family life.

Ultimately we hope to settle in on a breeding herd of around 20, utilising neighbouring properties for finishing some of these.

Brendon Barnes  
Red Devon Association Council, Financials

### **The latest stud visit pulled off between COVID level changes!**

Against all odds, a stud visit was successfully pulled off at Rockview Stud in Northland on Saturday October 30. Almost half of those who expressed an interest could not make it due to the restrictions but there were still some 25 visitors. Colleen and Ross' Red Devon animals were in excellent condition and the viewing was made especially interesting as the Rockview herd includes the last remnants of Tuppy Jones' Thelmara stud. Council member Colleen Hunter was pleased to host arrivals from not only across Northland but also some who were able to attend from the Coromandel. Friendships were renewed and some members acquired a new sire for their herd.

## Dirk's Tips for beginners: Culling cows

One of the hardest decisions on farm is the selection of animals to cull and what to do with them. You may have some nice heifers coming in, but you don't want to expand the herd. Cows can keep producing calves until they are 16 years or older, but they have to go sooner or later.

There's that cow that always looks a bit skinny and off-colour but she rears the biggest calf because she puts her energy into producing milk. She's worth hanging on to if she gets in calf year after year, but make sure her calf keeps performing after weaning.

Then there's that great looking cow that rears a smallish calf. Her calf may start growing faster than its mates after weaning in which case she may be worth keeping as long as she keeps getting in calf year after year. If the calf is still in the bottom ranking at 400 days, get rid of the cow.

That cow that loves a cuddle and a scratch but doesn't get back in calf can be the hardest to part ways with, but letting it die in the paddock of old age can be quite cruel so the decision has to be made at some stage.

Primary selection criteria are: calving problems, repeated failure to get back in calf, aggression, prolapse, bad feet causing repeated lameness or ongoing trimming, not mothering up. Secondary criteria are: rearing a below average calf, EBV's if they are reliable, conformation, udder shape, excessive white on the body. Optional criteria are size, calf weight, horn/poll, coat colour, A2A2, getting in calf as yearlings. Refer to our standards of excellence.

Now that you have selected the animals that have to go, what to do with them. If it's a straight cull on primary criteria send the animal to the works, don't be tempted to sell them for breeding as you'll ruin both your own reputation and that of the breed! When selling animals for breeding be honest with prospective buyers, especially about hidden issues.

Finally you can sell animals as empty, run with bull (RWB), vetted in calf with proof (VIC) or guaranteed in calf. In the latter case the purchaser has a claim if the animal proves to be empty within a fortnight of arrival. Transfer fees are payable by the vendor, so take that into account when setting the price.

Speaking of which, we are encouraging our members to report sales figures so we can share those in future newsletters. Sales figures will be reported anonymously.

**Recent sales** are: Mixed age in calf cows \$1850, empty breeding cows \$ 1750, 6 month heifers \$1250, 18 month commercial bulls \$ 1850, 18 months stud bulls \$ 2250, well grown yearling commercial bulls \$ 1650. Council will take the sales data into account when setting its advertising strategy, so please send them in.

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## Members List

[\(click here\)](#)



## Important Dates to Remember

30 <sup>th</sup> April	Membership Subscriptions Invoiced
30 <sup>th</sup> June	ADL's sent out
30 <sup>th</sup> July	ADL's must be Returned (no Cow Credits for ADL's returned after the 15 <sup>th</sup> August)
10 <sup>th</sup> August	Calf Entries sent out
30 <sup>th</sup> September	Annual animal pre-list dam fees invoiced
<b>May 2022</b>	<b>AGM</b>
31 <sup>st</sup> December	Balance Date; end of financial year
31 <sup>st</sup> January	Calf entry sheets cut off
2 <sup>nd</sup> of every month	Group Run Cut off for the performance recording reports

**[www.reddevoncattle.co.nz](http://www.reddevoncattle.co.nz)**