

Stock & Land

Blonde muscle attracting dollars

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PYRAMID Hill producers Ivan and Helen Hill have run a number of different breeds on their irrigated beef property throughout the years, but think they have found the winning formula with Blonde d'Aquitaine bulls.

For the past three years, the Hills have been using Blonde d'Aquitaine bulls over Friesian-Murray Grey or Friesian-Angus cows.

Mr Hill said they now have three Blonde bulls, and the calves on the ground speak for themselves.

"They have been selling consistently at top-end prices, with the agents keen to highlight to buyers that they are Blonde d'Aquitaine calves," he said.

"Last years top priced calves sold for 264 cents a kilogram, with the entire line averaging about 240c/kg.

"Heifers in particular sell well, about the same prices as the steers because they muscle so well, which gains you about an extra \$100 a calf.

The Hills purchase their first-cross breeders as calves, about 50 a year, and rear them on property before they are joined.

They then have an early spring and late spring calving, to utilise the spring flush of feed.



With calves being marketed as vealers, Mr Hill said they use the first-cross cows for their high volume of milk.

"Our calves are sold at 9-10-months-of-age as vealers, between 350-400kg, so it is important to have high milk production in the mother to get the high weights and sappiness," he said.

"They are producing medium size calves and you can see them growing muscle within a couple of weeks.

"This said, we haven't had any real trouble with the heifers calving, with the heavier muscle not making any difference to calving ease."

The Hills don't have any trouble finding buyers for their vealers, with the domestic restaurant and supermarket trade, as well as butchers, always keen to secure their stock at the saleyards.

Ivan Hill with his crossbred herd at Pyramid Hill