

Monday July 1, 2024

## **Does VLE Leongatha have the capacity to handle all the cattle sold through the closed Pakenham saleyards?**

Yes. VLE Leongatha can sell more than 9000 cattle each week with its two sales and hold 6000 cattle at any one time.

In July, VLE Leongatha will open its new holding yards which will add a further 2500 head capacity to the saleyards complex.

## **How does this compare to other saleyards?**

In the past financial year, VLE Leongatha sold 160,000 cattle. Following the closure of the Pakenham saleyards and upgrades to VLE Leongatha, this could increase to 230,000- 250,000 a year.

If 80% of the cattle sold during 2023-24 at Pakenham moves across for sale at VLE Leongatha, this could make VLE Leongatha equal with Roma in Queensland for the most saleyard throughput in Australia.

An annual total of 250,000 cattle sold at VLE Leongatha would include an average of 2000 a week at prime markets and an average of 3000 a week at store markets, across 50 weeks of the year.

## **What does big sale numbers mean for the farmers, buyers and livestock agents?**

Larger regional saleyards are underpinning market competition in Australia. Bigger saleyards have the capacity to deliver increased value for farmers and more choice for buyers. Larger volumes of cattle attract more buyers and promote competition. There's also transport efficiencies with scale.

## **What infrastructure at VLE Leongatha has already been upgraded?**

VLE Leongatha added two rows of selling pens to its existing undercover, wood chip floor facility in early 2024. These rows have added another 52 pens to the facility which can hold up to 1250 extra store cattle.

## **VLE Leongatha is set for an overhaul - what's next for saleyards?**

VLE Leongatha has developed a master plan that would almost double the covered cattle area at the existing facility.

VLE Leongatha has 17,000 square metres undercover and with extra infrastructure earmarked in the master plan this would be boosted by 14,000 square metres to a total of 31,000 square metres of covered cattle area.

Extra undercover yards add more holding space to the facility, enabling faster transitions between sales and easier loading and transport. It could also provide extra space for selling.

The master plan includes:

- A 9000 square metre holding/lairage facility with a roof and soft floor.
- 5000 square metres of holding pens.
- New four-bay truck wash.
- 1500 metre square undercover sheep selling centre.
- New truck driver amenities and tea rooms.
- Truck fuel depot.
- New livestock agent offices with a board room.
- New maintenance shed and workshop.

## **What role will direct and online sales play in the future of VLE Leongatha?**

Farmers selling livestock directly to an abattoir or feedlot has been a part of our industry and the selling strategies of businesses for many years. Online sales have increased in popularity in recent years. There are many ways to sell livestock, and this is good for farmers. Saleyards have, and will continue, to play a major role in setting livestock prices as well as selling and buying strategies.

## **How will farmers from West Gippsland transport cattle to VLE Leongatha?**

VLE has been contacted by some agents and transporters seeking to purchase equipment from the Pakenham saleyards with the view to setting up a central transport depot. This depot would hold cattle for transport via b-double truck to VLE Leongatha. VLE Leongatha is not involved in this proposed depot or the transport of livestock.

## **Will Gippsland farmers look to sell cattle in other Victorian regions?**

Each individual business and their agent will decide what best suits their cattle operation. VLE Leongatha is a strong market with cattle volume and quality, and this attracts buyers.

## **How many agents will sell cattle at VLE Leongatha?**

Seven agents will sell at VLE Leongatha.

## **What is happening at VLE Leongatha during July 2024?**

VLE Leongatha will hold a prime market on July 2 beginning at 8.30am.

The first store market for the month will be held on July 11 from 9am.

At this stage, all seven agents will sell cattle on July 11.

The second store market for the month will be held on July 18.

Not all stock agents are choosing to sell cattle at the store market each week.

## **How will sales be managed into the future?**

VLE Leongatha, livestock agents, transporters and all saleyards stakeholders have discussed how to manage increased cattle numbers into spring and summer.

Some of the options talked about include:

- Half the agents selling cattle one week and the other half selling cattle the following week.
- Holding separate steer and heifer sales.
- Conducting separate straight-bred and cross-bred sales.

VLE has decided the best way to manage the increased cattle numbers, while new infrastructure is developed, is to split the store sales between agents.

Starting in August the store sales will be split, with Nutrien and SEJ selling cattle one week and Elders/Alex Scott & Staff/Baw Baw Livestock /Phelan & Henderson & Co and ESB selling cattle another week.

The group of five agents will start on the first store sale in August on August 1.

The following week, August 8, Nutrien and SEJ will sell cattle. Sales will continue to rotate.

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