



Welcome to the first VLE “On the rails”

This regular newsletter will provide insights into market trends and developments at Victoria’s largest cattle selling centre, while highlighting many of the regulars “on the rails” at the yards.

VLE Leongatha is undergoing a huge transformation with both a surge in cattle numbers and big development plans to improve and expand the facility.

Up to 174 per cent more cattle sold through VLE Leongatha in August 2024 compared to the same month last year.

The total for the month was 20,854 cattle and has been attributed to a combination of the closure of Pakenham saleyards in June and, towards the end of the month, livestock price improvements.

Below are some market insights from VLE.

- Steer sales made up 35 per cent of the cattle sold at VLE Leongatha during August 2024, with 7225 head, averaging \$1443.
- In August 2023, 5597 steers were sold for an average of \$1013.
- Up to 5,524 heifers averaged \$1105 last month compared to an average of \$646 in August 2023.
- Heifers accounted for 26 per cent of the total August 2024 yarding.
- Bullocks averaged \$2095 in August 2024 and, with 2882 head sold, they made up 14 per cent of the yarding.
- Just less than 10 per cent of the cattle sold at VLE Leongatha during August went interstate.

South Gippsland has fared reasonably well throughout winter and many vendors capitalised on these improved prices with finished cattle.

Spring is looking good, and in early August, timely rain boosted pasture growth after a mild winter.



Efficient: VLE staff George Hill, Georgia Thompson and Ashelee Capizzi.

At the yards, VLE is adapting to bigger volumes of cattle by changing infrastructure, yard cleaning management and sale days - just to name a few.

It’s early days, but a rotating roster for Thursday store sales is proving beneficial for vendors and buyers.

A story in this newsletter talks about the new twin-deck loading ramp and how it is making cattle movement more efficient, while improving animal welfare.

The closure of Pakenham yards and the expansion of VLE Leongatha marks a significant change in the way cattle are sold in Gippsland.

Like any change, it takes time to adjust and there’s always room for improvement.

VLE wants to ensure the selling centre runs smoothly and delivers the best outcome for all and feedback is always welcome.

This newsletter is just a taste of the communication, to come from VLE as the saleyard builds the profile of Gippsland livestock and associated services, while working towards delivering the best market insights for buyers and sellers.

I’ll see you “on the rails” – Brian Paynter.



“Perfect” season draws buyers and sellers

Favourable seasonal conditions and big numbers of stock have helped draw buyers and vendors to the VLE Leongatha.

Elders Leongatha Branch Manager Rohan McRae said August stock numbers were higher this year, compared to other years, and buyers have taken advantage of the better-conditioned cattle coming out of South Gippsland, compared to other parts of Victoria.



Quality season delivers: Rohan McRae

“The price has been rising, which has probably been bringing the cattle forward,” Rohan said.

“And there have been other areas which are probably not as well off as us, season-wise, so the cattle have probably been coming to us a little bit. The Western District has been dry, East Gippsland has been a little slow, but South Gippsland has been very good, and the cattle have been selling very well here and our numbers have been consistent.”

Buyers have also benefited from the better season.

“I’m hearing that our cattle are presenting a lot better, and of course, they’re (meat processors) are getting a better kill out of the cattle, from a fat sale point of view,” Rohan said.

“They’re getting a better result out of the cattle that are here and, I think this means they can participate a little bit harder on these cattle because they get a better result out of the cattle because they’re in better condition.”

Apart from some recent wind damage, Rohan said the South Gippsland season has been “absolutely perfect”.

“We had an early autumn break, grass has grown all the way through the winter and our cattle are coming out as good as you could ever hope for through August and into September,” he said.

“The season has advanced with this last bit of rain (early September) and it’s assured the season.”

Transitioning across to VLE Leongatha, after the closure of the Pakenham yards, is still a work in progress, according to Rohan, however, he’s confident systems and processes will continue to improve as everyone adjusts to the change.

“It’s been a challenge, you know, and it probably was always going to be,” he said.

“Pakenham handles a lot of cattle, 120,000 head, so they’ve had to go somewhere. How many of these cattle have we captured? We aren’t 100 per cent sure yet and it is probably going to take over two years to find out, but - for now - it is part of the reason why our numbers have been up.”

New loading gets tick of approval

A new double-deck loading ramp is saving truck drivers time and improving animal welfare.



On the Rails



Saving time: Lucas Bramfit

VLE Leongatha has recently installed the new ramp to improve the safety and efficiency of loading cattle, both in and out, of the saleyards.

Fish Creek Livestock Transporter, Lucas Bramfit - working for Hams - said the new ramp makes it easier and safer to load two decks of livestock onto a truck.

“On a good day now, we could load a truck in 15 minutes,” he said.

“If I was trying to put a full load on, up my own ramp, it would take 25 to 30 minutes, so it does save time and over the day - carting numerous loads - it adds up.”

The new ramp is set up by pushing a button, while a lever is pulled and the button pushed again to return it to the ground level.

Lucas said two sliding gates at the top of the ramp help with occupational health and safety (OHS).

“With the gates, you can shut your own back door, and the cattle can’t come back at you,” he said.

“And the door further back, you can block-up the cattle and walk in front of them, you can still go through the spring-loaded man-door and pull the flaps out (on the back of the truck) but the cattle can’t get you.”

Lucas explained that having the ramps, pointing downhill, meant cattle could load faster and easier, with less stress and minimal human intervention.

“They are less stressed, and we are less stressed,” he said.

VLE Leongatha Agents – Get in touch



03 5655 1133



03 5658 1894 (Korumburra)



03 5662 2291



0429 050 349



03 5662 4033



03 5941 4666



03 5996 6113