



Price draws cattle out as producers wait for season break



VLE store market steer numbers increased almost 60 per cent in March compared to February underpinning the return to above average yardings. This comes as cattle numbers across the entire store market lifted 51 per cent to 11,329 month-on-month. Everitt, Seeley & Bennetts Agent Jarrod Bennetts said producers took the chance to offload.

“The job has gotten dearer for everyone, and the market lift drew cattle out to be sold,” he said. “It is still tight, seasonal conditions wise, throughout most of Gippsland and with the price improvement, people saw a good margin and moved cattle.”

Store heifer prices increased almost 2 per cent to an average of \$986 in March, while store steer values crept up nearly 3 per cent from February to average \$1453.

Mr Bennetts said the season continues to dictate producer decisions. “The season overall is pretty ordinary,” he said. “In some areas it's very, very dry and in others there have been good rains.

But for a large portion of the Gippsland region, we are well behind the eightball for normal rain.

There are still areas in South Gippsland with surface water - or dam - issues.” Considering the tough year, there has been a bit of a “tail” to the cattle sold in recent weeks, but Mr Bennetts said most were in “exceptional condition” and he credited the work of vendors.

Orders from northern states have continued alongside locals looking to secure younger, quality animals ahead of the season break.

“There’s a lot of confidence in local producers, even though it is tough and there’s a lack of feed and water, there’s still plenty of confidence it is going to rain,” Mr Bennetts said.

“They are tucking these little cattle away in preparation for the break. The feedlot sector has underpinned demand for heavier cattle.”



Cattle from Wider Catchment Flow into VLE

VLE Leongatha is continuing to draw cattle from new areas for both prime and store sales following the closure of the Pakenham saleyards last year.

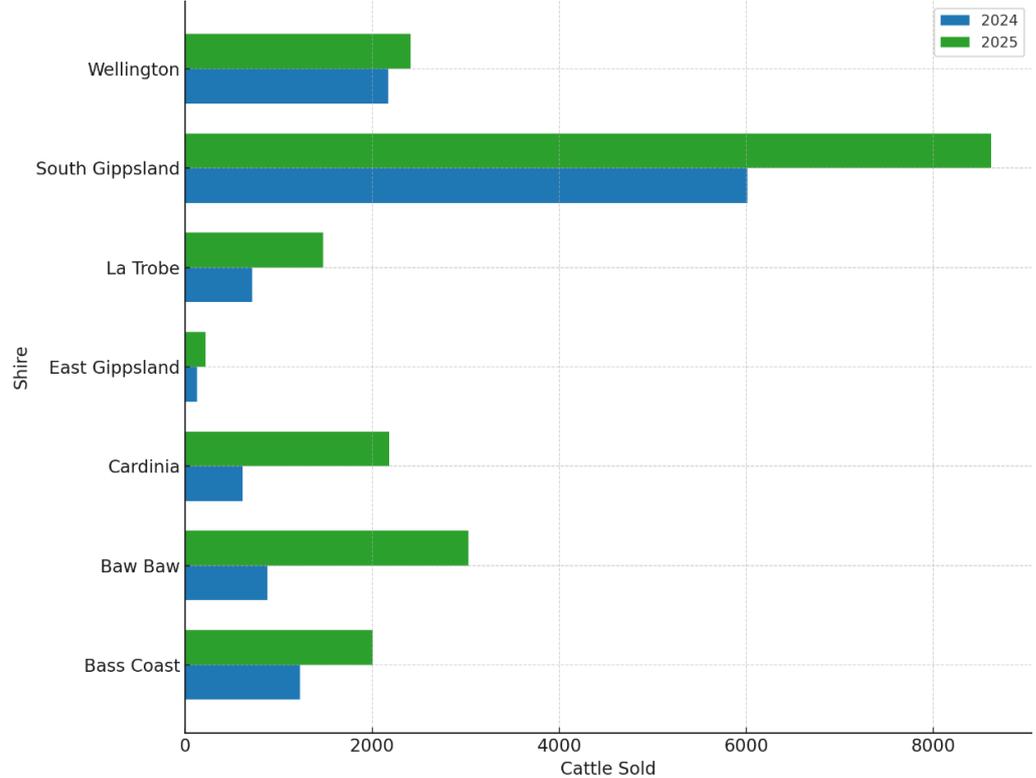
This comes as the number of cattle sold at VLE from South Gippsland has increased substantially.

March data shows a notable rise in cattle coming from regions that would have traditionally sold at Pakenham, such as the Cardinia and Baw Baw Shires.

The number of cattle sourced from areas surrounding Melbourne has also remained steady at VLE Leongatha. In March, 249 head travelled from the Macedon Ranges — up to 70 kilometres northwest of Melbourne — along with 512 head from the Yarra Ranges and 661 from the Mornington Peninsula. It's understood that these cattle would have previously gone through Pakenham.

Cattle from South Gippsland accounted for 38.5 per cent of the 22,379 total head

A Snapshot of Where Some VLE Cattle Are Coming From



yarded at VLE in March. While it's not unusual for South Gippsland cattle to make up the lion's share of the Leongatha saleyards, this year has seen a higher-than-usual turn-off due to seasonal conditions.

In contrast, in March 2024, South Gippsland cattle represented about 50 per cent of the larger VLE yarding of 11,956. VLE representatives noted that it won't be fully clear how many cattle that would have traditionally gone to Pakenham have transitioned to Leongatha until the end of the financial year.