



David Miller, "Mt Rae", Taraiga.

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## Sale-topper swears by Angus advantage

By JACINTA CUMMINS

DAVID Miller believes Angus cattle are worth their weight in gold. But if you're looking for a better indicator of the breed's worth, then you need look no further than the price Mr Miller's Angus weaner steers achieve in the saleyards.

In 2011, 44 of his nine-month-old weaner steers topped the Landmark weaner Goulburn sale when they sold for \$910.

Mr Miller also sold 47 steers for \$855 and 29 steers for \$769 at the same sale.

Mr Miller and his wife Margaret run 300 Angus cows to breed steers and heifers across their 800-hectare property "Mount Rae" at Taraiga, which he sells through the annual Goulburn weaner sale.

Mr Miller established his herd with cows from Bongongo at Tamat when he first started out at Delegate after working on a sheep and cattle property after migrating from England.

"The Bongongo cows have been the foundation of our herd and when we bought them we were surrounded by the most wonderful studs in the Monaro including Delegate Station, Sparta (dispersed) and also Hazeldean," he said.

The Millers moved to Taraiga from the Monaro 20 years ago to be closer to their children in Sydney, but Mr Miller said his operation hadn't changed much as both the country and the property sizes are very similar.

"Some of the place was improved many years ago, with a lot of pasture improvement during the 1980s, and we still to some extent enjoy the benefits of this, but we haven't actively continued it," he said.

"We don't have a heavy carrying capacity as a lot of the country is still fairly natural, but we do have good cattle and we've used a lot of good bulls so this has paid off.

"We bought some marvellous bulls over the years from Kenny's Creek and Onslow and now we buy locally from Bassaby Angus at Taraiga.

"They are relatively new on the stud scene,

but are achieving some great things."

When it comes to selecting bulls, Mr Miller selects on both visuals and figures for bulls which will produce both good females and steers with a focus on low birthweight.

Cows and heifers are joined in early September for around eight to nine weeks at a two per cent rate for mature bulls and cows, but with the younger heifers, it is at a rate of one bull to 30 females.

Mr Miller is hoping to reduce the joining time to seven weeks for ease of management.

The bulls are taken out at the end of November and calving starts early June with an average drop of 300 calves annually.

All the steers and the majority of the heifers are sold just after they are weaned in April with about 60 to 65 heifers retained for Mr Miller's own herd.

"We muster the day before the sale; we don't yard wean so they are going straight off the mother.

"We cull at the same time, so we sell all the steers unless there is something wrong with them and we keep the biggest heifers for the herd as we know they will get in calf easily."

Mr Miller admits the culling is "not a very scientific process", saying that it's about getting the maximum number of cows in calf.

"Most people think I've got a certain approach, but I go on how they look in the yard; getting ready for the sale means we don't have the time to go through them with a fine tooth comb."

The cows are also pregnancy tested on the same day with any empties moved on and Mr Miller said he was "fairly ruthless" with any cow which doesn't deliver a calf every year being sold as well.

"We sold early this year with our steers weighing in at around 325 kilograms and making \$610 which was good for the market," he said.

"If people ask me about how I get them so big and what I do to make the prices, a large part of the secret is that my steers and heifers are often nine months old which means they are really at the upper end of the weaner category."