

Sim-Angus calves reap top dollar

By BRETT TINDAL

ALL beef operations have been extremely profitable in the past six months, with prices hitting all time highs in saleyards and demand outstripping supply with extra feed and finishing potential across the country.

But if you were able to finish milk-tooth steers and sell them at 400 to 450 kilograms through your local saleyards and return tops of \$1175 and average above \$1000 for a semi-trailer load, you would be a very happy beef producer, even in the current climate.

That's the state of play for Geurie beef and lamb producers, Colin and Cameron Tomkins, "Lynwood", who sold a truckload of steers in February for this exact result, prior to the big market moves.

Colin Tomkins said they always commanded close to the tops for their steers and surplus heifers, which were sold through the Dubbo saleyards and regularly snapped up by JBS Swift buyers as well as local butchers.

"We have topped the sale regularly at Dubbo and buyers are now given the heads up from our agent when our cattle are coming in," he said.

The Tomkin family are no strangers to producing a top article, with crossbred lambs produced from their 2000-strong ewe base also achieving top prices of \$209 for export lambs.

"Lynwood" and two other properties make up the Tomkins' 1417-hectare operation which supports 260 breeders, 2000 crossbred and Merino ewes and a large scale dryland lucerne operation of 809ha to feed their stock.

Mr Tomkin only produces export



Colin and Cameron Tomkins, "Lynwood", Geurie, with Sim-Angus hybrid steer calves, sired by Circle 8 Sim-Angus bulls.

weight lambs and targets the top end of that market, which he hits several times a year, with crop-finished Poll Dorset-cross lambs out of a first-cross ewe.

"The lamb and cattle operations are not dissimilar – first-cross ewes create hybrid vigour and pass it onto their progeny in the same way the Sim-Angus hybrids put extra growth and carcass into our calves," he said.

Mr Tomkin said he loved lucerne and thought it was the best feed for his lambs and cattle, and after such

great results over the years would not consider other options.

He said their cattle numbers were down due to the drought and they were trying to breed back up, but still wanted extra growth and finishing ability through hybrid vigour in a self-replacing female.

Mr Tomkin started with a purebred Hereford herd and a traditional Simmental bull over the cows, and when the black coat colour demand in cattle hit its peak, they looked for the same growth and carcass, but with a black coat and fertile females.

"We always wanted a black product, but with the mixed breed opportunity, and when we used Angus bulls, we found the calves too small, so we ventured into a Sim-Angus hybrid bull from Circle 8 and haven't looked back, buying a further five since then," he said.

Mr Tomkin said the Cooper family at Circle 8 gave them impeccable service, was very attentive and always willing to follow up on the progress of their bulls and clients – "and that's the type of service we

want from our bull producer".

"We keep 40 heifers every year to rebuild our herd and the Sim-Angus hybrids allow us to retain hybrid vigour, while at the same time produce a female that we can breed on with," he said.

The Tomkins' tag all their calves by the various bulls and don't over use the bulls, selecting 40 to 50 specific females for each bull and its characteristics.

"By selecting and monitoring our bulls for specific cow groups, we have eliminated calving problems to basically nothing and at the same time found a dramatic increase in milk production in our females," he said.

They yard weaned 40 to 50 calves at a time.

"We get them hungry to forget mum and then whack them straight onto one of the various lucerne drilled paddocks, to get them up and away as quick as possible," he said.

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"We also run self-feeders in most paddocks if it turns dry or to jam surplus grain into them to keep their growth curve on the up at all times."

Colin's son, Cameron, helps run the farm and said he was very receptive to the idea of genetic gain and extra growth potential in his cattle.

"We chose the Sim-Angus hybrids for their Simmental content and the extra size they gave our calves.

"They are quiet and sometimes need a good boot up the backside to get them moving in the yards, which makes it very easy to work with them in the yards," he said.



Sim-Angus steers on "Lynwood", Geurie.

BULL & FEMALE SALE 18th AUGUST 2011. 90 HEAD.

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