

# SYDNEY GROUP MOSS VALE 2019

2nd and 3rd February 2019

Sydney Group put on a very good display for Dexter cattle at Moss Vale on the weekend of 2nd and 3rd of February. A little rain on Saturday and Sunday the heat was back. Moss Vale is a good place to promote Dexter cattle as people seem to want a sea change.

Ray Carless Birrong Stud



Rob Allen had all the promotion material put together with lots of information for the members to hand out. Ray and Merv have put together a lovely story on their experience with Dexter Cattle that will be of use to other members selling Dexter cattle. I won't say any more on who was there as it is covered.

Thanks to Robyn and Gary Herring and Don and Jacquie Williams for the effort in also coming to Moss Vale the support is just great. Thanks to Sydney Group for Promotion of Dexter cattle. Chris Clark



## My First Field Day Experience—Merv Lawrence

The Sydney Dexter Cattle Promotion Group spent an enjoyable time at the recent Moss Vale Small Farm Field Day. The 2 day event was held at the Moss Vale Showground which was packed with a great array of exhibits and companies displaying and demonstrating their small farm products.

The organiser of the Dexter stand was Rob Allen from Oaklea Stud, Bathurst. He was joined by Ray Carless from Birrong Stud, Exeter, Merv Lawrence from Wherzat Farm, Werombi, Robyn and Garry Herring from Mt Pleasant, Maraylya and Chris Clark DCAI Council Member from Curroo, Lanitza, Don and Jacquie Williams – Myall Stud from Congewai.

Arriving early on Saturday we set up our marque shelter, promotional material and the DCAI signs. Ray Carless provided a black cow with a 4 month old black calf and 2 steers at 6 months old (one black & one red ) which provided a good sample of Dexter cattle for our visitors.

The stock was placed in an open stall area next to the Galloway stall. This had an advantage as it provided a real visual example of the size difference between full-sized cattle with that of a Dexter. Many visitors were surprised at the difference and could see why they are an excellent choice for small farms.

Our focus was to promote the Dexter Cattle Breed throughout the Southern Highlands Region. It was clear that those interested in the Dexter Breed were keen to know more and by the end of the Field Days, a number of them expressed interest in using Dexter cattle on their properties.

As a relatively new member it was great listening to our experienced members explain the best options for the various uses expressed by our visitors. All of our visitors to the stand went away with a much better understanding of the Dexter Cattle Breed. This was supported by appropriate DCAI and other promotional material and in many cases a member's contact details to further explore their options.

For me it was a positive experience to enjoy time with the Members of the Sydney Promotion Group and to give my experience at owning Dexter cattle and being a part of the DCAI. Can't wait for the next field day.

Merv Lawrence Wherzat Farm Dexters , Werombi

## EXETER DEXTER –Ray Carless

We purchased a 20 acre property in June 2010 in the small village of Exeter, about midway between Sydney and Canberra, in the Southern Highlands region of NSW.

The vendor kindly sold us his small herd of Hereford cows to help keep the grass under control, but we quickly realised that such large animals were not ideal for our land or our fences, so we moved them on.

What to do next – courtesy of a story in the Small Farm magazine we discovered the Dexter breed and we tracked down Louise Ball, at the time just south of Nowra. What a find she and Don were, knowledgeable, helpful, and they had a few DCAI registered cows they were happy to sell to us. We bought 6 or 8 cows/calves from Louise, we rented one of her bulls (Justin Case), and off we went growing the herd.

In January 2011 we purchased our own bull (Mt Pleasant “Rafael”) from Robyn Herring and also decided to join DCAI so we could learn more about the breed, and have access to people with much more knowledge than us (almost anyone).

The herd started to grow beyond the capability of our acres, so we started having our 12/18 month old steers slaughtered and butchered and then on-sold the produce to local businesses and also our Sydney and Highlands friends. Dexter meat was very popular indeed, we could have easily sold twice as much as we could produce.

Whilst we enjoyed eating and selling the Dexter beef it was quite a lot of work for ultimately a modest financial return, so we turned our focus to selling weaned calves. To enable us to make this worthwhile we also purchased an adjoining 20 acre property and sales began to take off.

In the Southern Highlands there are a considerable number of lifestyle blocks, 5 to 20 acres, often owned by Sydney people who want the weekend country lifestyle. The generally calm nature of the Dexter, their low maintenance, and their modest size makes them an ideal breed for such owners and so we have enjoyed considerable success in the surrounding area. But courtesy of our website we have also sold far and wide in southern NSW, down as far as Bega on the coast and also down to Cooma in the Monaro.

Most buyers are looking for their Dexters to keep the grass under control and to give their property a truly rural feel, but we have an increasing number of clients who want to know where their meat comes from and so they buy steers from us to replenish their freezers.

Over the 8 years since joining DCAI we have become quite passionate about the breed, and in 2016 we made the tree-change from Sydney to a 140 acre property also at Exeter with the intention of increasing our herd and thus our calf and cattle sales. The drought hasn't helped over the last 18 months and so we had no option but to reduce our herd from around 60 to 25 head.

Every year we either sell all of the calves or we keep a few good heifers to increase the herd size when conditions permit. Over the last 4 years we have produced and sold over 80 Dexters, 47 just in 2017/18.

With the initiative and support of the Sydney Group, especially Rob Allen, we have attended the Moss Vale Small Farms Field Day in February of each of 2018 and 2019, supplying our cows and calves for demonstration purposes. This year we had added support over the weekend from Chris Clark and Merv Lawrence and we collectively fielded quite a few enquiries on the breed.

As a breeder our membership of DCAI gives us credibility with our clients even though most of them only want a well behaved grass eater. They like to know that they are properly bred and reared, and that they will get good "after sales service" if the need arises.

Ray Carless Birrong Dexter Stud

