

2015 Red Angus Annual



Images of El Questro Station developed by Will & Celia Burrell in the Kimberleys



Heifers retained in the Mollitacca Red Angus herd

Purebred Perfection

Will and Celia Burrell's property, "Molliacca" just north of Melbourne is a world away from their previous property located in the Kimberly region of Western Australia. Located an hour drive from Melbourne and just north of Lancefield the Burrell property is 5km west of the village of Pyalong. The 400 hectare property is the amalgamation of three smaller holdings and now supports an impressive herd of pure Red Angus females.

Will can trace his farming ancestors back 700 years of continuous family ownership in Sussex, England. Will's father owns the estate next door to the family estate. Fuelled with imagery and stories of Australia from his Australian mother, and grandparents, Will came to Australia and purchased the then undeveloped El Questro Station in the Kimberly's. Will's great grandfather, Lord Thomas Denman was the Governor General of Australia from 1911 to 1914.

Will and Celia purchased El Questro Station in 1991 as a rundown property and developed the property into a world class resort. When you look at the imagery of this property the only word that comes to mind is "spectacular". The pastoral lease consisted of over 1,000,000 acres and Will took the original Shorthorn herd and introduced Brahman genetics from Queensland.

In 2005 with four young children, Will and Celia relocated to Melbourne. With a strong interest in hunting he became familiar with the area around Pyalong and purchased the property. Celia also has family in the area. Currently the Molliacca Red Angus herd consists of 150 breeders plus heifers and Will is extremely impressed with the fertility of the Red Angus breed.

With a philosophy of keeping things simple Will runs the main breeding herd in one mob and does the stock work himself. Will has the build of a Kimberley stockman and is hands on with the property management.

Will has developed lane ways and redirected some fence lines when renewing to assist in keeping livestock management simple. There is a small holding paddock that connects to a laneway to the cattle yards that can be accessed from five paddocks and this is very useful in the property management.

Will installed a new set of cattle yards on Molliacca and the "Red River" off the shelf design yards can hold 200 head. The yards incorporate a curved race and calf cradle. Will is very impressed with the workability of the yard design describing them as "brilliant". He has laid road base throughout the yard and truck area to provide all weather access. Well established trees provide shade over the yards.

In the last seven years 68 hectares including the watercourses have been planted in conjunction with Landcare into tree lots. Will has direct drilled a mixture of natives and has achieved great success. In addition to the new fencing and tree planting Will is upgrading the pastures and has had good success with establishment of phalaris. Rock phosphate on the advice of an agronomist is spread with the country phosphorus deficient. The Rock phosphate gives an immediate hit to the pasture and also provides residual value. As you tour this property with Will, the condition and growth of the cattle attest to the success of the pasture improvement program.

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The spectacular scenery at El Questro Station.



Will Burrell with his replacement heifers.



Will has developed the Molliacca property including a new set of yards.

Purebred Perfection

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The Molliacca Red Angus herd is based on Paringa females and Will has been using Yonda Grange sires. Recently some females have been added from GRA herd in Gippsland. The 2013 drop calves included progeny of an AI program Will ran using Paringa Iron Ore and Te mania Red Label P41. The very best of these heifers have been retained and these are due to calve next spring. Some of the best young bulls are retained and used in the herd. Will thinks that running an AI program every four to five years will assist in injecting new genetics and improve the overall quality of the herd.

Will believes that it is important to present even consistent lines when marketing and the female herd is very even on inspection. Four sires run with the breeders and calving is programmed to commence late August for three cycles. Heifers are joined to calve at two years of age at the same time as the cow herd. Sire selection is based on temperament and early maturity pattern.

Herd health consists of 5 in 1 vaccination twice and a drench rotation of Ivermectin and injectable Dectomax. With his pastoral experience Will believes in the simple approach and letting the cattle perform naturally. He talked about the value of "hefted stock", the Scottish term for stock with knowledge of their environment for shelter and water.

Management of the Molliacca herd is vastly different to the ancestral estate in Sussex where all livestock are shedded for winter. Will talked about having 1,000 head under cover and the workload involved.

Weaning occurs around March as Will prefer to leave calves on as long as possible and then marketed between 12 to 14 months depending on feed availability. Due to the resources of the property and the 650mm rainfall, Will does not seek to finish cattle himself. This year Will marketed his Molliacca calves through Auctionplus and was very happy with the outcome. The steers averaged just over 400kg and met with good demand. The heavy steers averaged 407.5kg and sold for \$800 per head. Will's heifers averaged 358kg and averaged \$715 per head on farm.

With emerging interest in the Red Angus breed from China, Will see's his investment in the breed fortuitous and believes his Red Angus are very profitable. From the 150 breeders calving out in 2014 Will did not assist a single female. Will also likes the salvage value of the Red Angus cull females quoting a return of \$1,300 recently for cull cows.

Looking over the boundary fence and into the hills studded with rock much of the area is well suited to merino wethers however this functional herd of Red Angus is thriving. Will has plans of expansion with his Red Angus herd and appreciates the temperament and easy doing ability of the stock.

The homestead is set in very pleasant gardens overlooking the farm and when the newly planted trees mature, Molliacca will truly be a little piece of paradise on Melbourne's doorstep. Best of all it showcases a very fertile functional herd of Red Angus.



Replacement heifers and joining sire on Molliacca.



The Red Angus breeding herd in beautiful undulating country, the sown tree lines along the creek can be seen in the background.



Long bodied females with super udders in the main breeding herd on Molliacca.