

"I know Angus are the flavour of the month and a few cattlemen say to me why don't I use a Simmental or a Charolais bull over the Murray Greys to get a bit more weight into the calves but I like the temperament of these cattle," he said.

"They are so quiet.

"You never get kicked in the yards and they are the easiest cattle to handle and sometimes the agents say they are too quiet; that they can't move them."

Part of the temperament secret is the way Mal handles his cattle and it would surprise some people to know that he always uses a little postie bike and his old sheepdog Don.

"We always handle them the same way and they get to know," he said.

"You have to talk to them and be around them - cattle are only as quiet as you treat them and it is the same with all livestock and all breeds."

He also says on their sandy country they already produce a good carcass with plenty of meat and he questions how much extra production can come from the hybrid vigour of crossbreeding.

He acknowledges figures and estimated breeding values play a big part in genetic improvement but not for him - that is the realm of the stud breeder.

Mal uses old fashioned visual appraisal to select his ram and bull genetics saying he knows what he is looking for and whether he is right or



□ Good temperament is an important reason why Tenterden farmer Mal Cavanagh breeds pure bred Murray Grey cattle.

wrong it doesn't matter as long as he is happy.

Firstly he must like the look of a sire and then he judges his bulls by the progeny they leave and that tells him what direction he must go.

Mal also selects his own replacement heifers looking for size, structure and plenty of capacity through the pelvic area for easy calving.

Easy calving, along with good foot structure are two areas in which the Lyndale herd excels and ensures they rarely have to assist with difficult births and they rarely trim hooves despite the soft soil type.

They run a three-bull herd and the success of the Monterey breeding has been proven by some top young bulls, bred from the original Monterey stock, that have been good enough to use within their herd.

As small commercial breeders Mal says they don't



□ This 2014-drop Monterey blood heifer is likely to be retained as a future breeder in the Cavanagh's herd.

buy a bull every year but they are also aware, that as a result of using some of their home-bred bulls, they need to regularly introduce new genetics.

Mal says it is easy to pick the best bulls in the Monterey sale but it is difficult to compete against stud and big

commercial breeders who have the budgets to buy them.

The competition has encouraged him to look at the numerous good younger animals that are catalogued late in the Monterey sale and, as younger animals, they generally have the benefit of giving an extra year of service.

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