

HOW VYTELLE HELPED DRIVE PROFITABILITY THROUGH FEED EFFICIENCY AT MEDWAY DROUGHTMASTERS AND DONALDSON BEEFMASTERS



ABOUT MEDWAY DROUGHTMASTERS

Based in the heart of Central Queensland, Australia, the Donaldson family, now in its third generation of cattle operations led by Hamilton and Hannah, alongside Brenten and Alexandra, has long been a recognised name in the beef industry. With a legacy of over fifty years in breeding Droughtmasters and a newer foray into the USA breed of Beefmasters, the Donaldson family has committed to producing resilient and efficient cattle, focusing not only on traditional traits such as fertility and tick resistance but also on feed efficiency—a key driver of profitability in modern beef production.

THE PROBLEM

The Donaldsons needed a way to ensure their cattle were not only hardy but also economically viable, especially in terms of feed conversion. Feed represents about 70% of the input costs in cattle production, so increasing feed efficiency was essential to maintain profitability. Additionally, the family aimed to adopt new breeding techniques that could further enhance their herd's productivity without sacrificing other important traits like fertility and growth.

Medway Droughtmasters' challenge:

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How Vytelle helped: Medway Droughtmasters adopted Vytelle SENSE technology, allowing them to track individual feed intake and growth metrics and identify bulls with superior Residual Feed Intake (RFI), a critical measure of feed efficiency.

THE SOLUTION

To address the challenge, Medway Droughtmasters adopted Vytelle SENSE technology, allowing them to track individual feed intake and growth metrics. The system uses RFID ear tags to capture precise data on how much each animal consumes and correlates it with weight gain over a 49-day period. This enabled the Donaldsons to identify bulls with superior Residual Feed Intake (RFI), a critical measure of feed efficiency.

THE RESULTS

Medway Droughtmasters: By focusing on feed conversion efficiency, Medway Droughtmasters achieved standout results in their trials. For example, Lot 16—a top-performing Droughtmaster bull—began the trial at 593.67 kg and finished at 671.61 kg, with an Average Daily Gain (ADG) of 1.50 kg. Its adjusted Feed-to-Gain (F) ratio was an impressive 7.38, indicating it required significantly less feed to achieve its growth.

Donaldson Beefmasters: Similarly, their work with Beefmaster cattle saw exceptional outcomes. Lot 71, one of the highest performers, began at 619.38 kg and finished at 696.78 kg, with an ADG of 1.29 kg and an adjusted (F) ratio of 9.45. These results are a testament to the herd's ability to convert feed efficiently while maintaining optimal growth rates.

Feed Efficiency as a Core Strategy: Feed efficiency is more than just a breeding goal for the Donaldsons—it's a critical business strategy. By selecting bulls with favourable RFI and F ratios, Medway aims to build a herd that not only grows faster but does so in a way that's sustainable and cost-effective. According to Brenten Donaldson, "Improving feed conversion efficiency can substantially impact profitability."

Looking Forward: The Donaldsons have long been believers in balanced breeding—incorporating traits like fertility, growth, and temperament into their herd. Moving forward, they plan to continue their focus on feed efficiency, which they see as a crucial driver of long-term profitability. By harnessing precise data and making informed breeding decisions, Medway Droughtmasters and Donaldson Beefmasters are well-positioned to lead the way in sustainable beef production.

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