

nto beef production



■ Steve Brain and dog Hazel inspect a renovated pasture of Holdfast phalaris, Vision cocksfoot, plantain and sub clover established with the benefit of a summer fallow.

break is established. "Some farmers say to me 'how on earth do you manage 1150 weaners in a mob' but we've found it's worked really well - the cattle seem to be better socialised and trained to start looking for gates and they actually look forward to being moved instead of finding it stressful which should set them up well for the feedlot. And for us stock handling has become a lot more pleasurable."

Mr Brain said the weaners ran as a big mob until just before joining when the heifers were drafted out and the lighter end - still 260kg plus - sold.

About 80pc of the heifers were retained. These ran behind the steers in a rotation during joining in mid October and after joining followed the cows, calving down as two-year-olds.

Once the dryland pastures started to taper off, the steers went back onto the irrigated pasture and were sold off as they reached target weight.

The first of the steers started to hit their target weight of about 500kg in November and the last were gone by February.

This year about a third of the cows were rotated as a mob during calving instead of being set stocked - a portion Mr Brain intends to grow next year.

The Brains believe efficiency gains will come principally from how well they manage their grass and feel rotational grazing is the way they'll get there.

"For us it's going to come down to better yields, better utilisation, better persistence and how well we build up the water holding capacity and biology in our soil," Mr Brain said.

of feet and they're nutrients that have over the years. And all with the rotation-cause it does like a

the biggest challenge establishment. successful strategy spray the pasture out before it went to leave the paddock for summer.

then sow the paddock to oats or a fodder crop to generate good and typically achieved grazings before it was in August and a mix of phalaris and cocksfoot in its place.

graze it through that but we get really good establishment, a weed break and can store moisture." Mr

2006 when it's really exceeded. 4500 mil-are area, the

last few seasons have put test to that theory.

This year they've received only about 20pc of their typical spring rainfall which Mr Brain estimated had cost them about 2.5t/ha of feed.

• **The herd**

Breeder numbers have been reduced from a peak of 1400 cows to 1100 in the past few years with the property currently carrying the equivalent of 29DSE/ha (dropping to about 22DSE/ha as the steers were shipped off) and about 19DSE/ha through winter.

Most of the farm has been subdivided into about 20ha paddocks and rotationally grazed.

The cows calve over eight weeks and the heifers over six weeks, starting two weeks earlier in the third week of August.

"We seem to be bringing that forward every year since we've been getting these failed springs but the aim is definitely to have all the calves on the ground when the feed supply is increasing."

Calves were yard-weaned, around Christmas and New Year, at about 140-150kg, and received

high quality cereal or lucerne hay for four to five days.

The weaners were then moved onto their irrigated pastures which were rotationally grazed, with each mob shifted every two to three days.

This year their weaners were run in a mob of 1150 - the equivalent of about 4500-7000 DSE as they grow - and moved in a two-day shift. They switch from the irrigation to dryland once the autumn

Team Te Mania open day

READERS can see the Brains' operation at Boona, Mumbannar, for themselves at a special Team Te Mania field day next Friday, November 28.

Visitors will be able to inspect steers ready to leave for the feedlot, their pastures and centre pivot set-up.

Speakers will include Te Mania founder Andrew Gubbins, Steve Brain, Elders Mt Gambier agronomist Gary Allison who will talk about pasture establishment and renovation and Meat and Livestock Australia's Dr Rob Banks who will discuss latest genetic trends and what's in it for commercial producers.

Interested producers are asked to RSVP by November 24 to Amanda McFarlane, 5264 1606 or email Amanda@temania.com.au.

■ Visit www.teamtemania.com.au