



VALUE: Terry Pierce can make more per head from his belted Galloways, and they eat a quarter less than other stock. — Picture by Glen McCurtayne

## Big dry steers cattlemen towards new breed

By **FRANCES THOMPSON**  
Upper Hunter Reporter

HUNTER bulls that are not performing are being bumped off the breeding cycle in favour of stronger and younger specimens as beef producers throughout the Hunter select the best genetics for their next lot of calves.

It is sale time throughout the region and the drought is fuelling high prices, with com-

petition keen for quality stock. Upper Hunter producers have fetched top prices recently. A Scone Limosin bull went for \$8000 at the Royal Queensland Show and a Singleton Charolais steer achieved what could be record kilo price at the same venue.

It was bought by a butcher for serving at a new Brisbane restaurant.

Singleton Beef and Land Management Association sec-

retary Greg Ball said buyers were looking for new bloodlines to put into their herds.

Most Hunter breeders normally join their cows in late September or early October, with calving the next winter.

"People are getting rid of the older bulls that aren't performing," Mr Ball said.

"There is a shortage of quality cattle because of culling during the drought."

Eurocross cattle, such as Charolais and Limosin were in strong demand, as were Angus, Mr Ball said.

In the Gloucester area, Terry and Karen Pierce are going against the grain.

They breed belted Galloways, or belties, a small breed that other hard-nosed cattlemen and women do not rate highly as meat producers.

Mr Ball described belties as "pretty".

Mr Pierce said the breed was popular for their looks, especially among the "lifestyle farmers" but they ate 25 per cent less than other cattle, which gave them an advantage in drought.

"I can make more per animal than out of other breeds," Mr Pierce said.

He estimated a steer he has at the moment could make \$3000; \$500 to a \$1000 for the skin and \$2000 for the meat.