

Early birds catch the worm

VENDORS who chose to sell stock early at Yea last week were rewarded with the best rates for spring weaners at Victorian saleyards so far this winter.

Rodwells auctioneer Adam Mountjoy said the stronger rates paid for cattle in southern selling centres in recent weeks had coaxed additional pens of good-quality cattle into the market from vendors unsure about the season ahead.

The top end of the August to September-drop steer weaners made from \$600 to \$645 or 200-220c/kg. Lighter spring-drop steers mostly made from \$460 to \$560 or 220 to 230c/kg, Mr Mountjoy said.

"Most vendors are happy to sell at these rates today rather than take a gamble," he said.

A quick survey of vendors confirmed most were one or two rainfalls away from a sound season.

Many said they had good pasture growth but no feed bank to build on.

A pen of 12 Angus, nine to 10 months, from the Canavan family achieved the top price of \$685 for weaners.

Slightly younger steers from Bill Parsons, Maingdample, also made near the top of the market. His top pen of 18 Angus, eight

YEA

to nine months, estimated at 320kg, Riga blood and weaned, made \$645 or about 200c/kg. Their lighter brothers sold to 230c/kg.

"The prices were quite a bit better than we expected; we would normally grow these out for the feedlots and are only selling due to seasonal conditions, but this is a most agreeable result," he said.

Mr Parsons said he had sold the older steers from the same drop three weeks earlier at Yea for 185c/kg.

Heavy steers made from \$650 to \$735 for a pen of 14 Angus, 14-15 months, from Sabre Pastoral.

Backgrounders from Corryong (buying through Costello Rural) and Gippsland (Pakenham, Leongatha and Korumburra) along with local buyers accounted for most of the steer offering.

The best of the heifer weaners sold to \$520 for a pen of 28 Angus, nine to 10 months, Barwidgee blood, from the Oliver Family Trust.

Another pen of 20 Angus, eight to nine months, from the Evans family, Bonnie Doon, made \$515.



Hands-on: commercial beef producer Barry Clarke, of Moyhu, paid \$860 for a stand-out pen of 15 Angus heifers at Yea.

The middle run of weaner heifers cleared from \$360 to \$440. Adam Mountjoy described rates for cows and calves as "acceptable".

"Most vendors here are facing an uncertain spring and

would rather sell now than risk carrying stock through another tough season," he said.

Cows with calves topped at \$1010 for four Angus cows with autumn calves and not rejoined, from the Ziebell family.

Joined heifers made to \$860 for a standout pen of 15 Angus due to calve from next month from Harold Seeley, Ashwood Park, Yea.

These were bought by Barry Clarke, Moyhu.

Mr Clarke said he would calve the heifers down with a view to lotfeeding the calves should market conditions allow.

"I'm surprised at how good their condition is," he said.

- GEMMA GADD