



Girls R Traders

A Facebook group brings together country women who share an addiction to trading cattle – and helps hone their skills.

By Amy Lawson

Former nurse and mother-of-two, Mel Kiel, is, by her own admission, addicted to trading cattle – and she’s a regular buyer among the sea of men at Central West NSW saleyards.

The male-dominated saleyard environment can be hostile, and is certainly no place for the faint-hearted.

But for Mel and a group of 25 other women across the country, the saleyards is their playground – a place where they revel in their livestock trading skills, learn more with every bid, and then come together to share their experiences with each other.

Well, sort of.

The community of women form part of an exclusive Facebook group called Girls R Traders, which was

formed in mid-2012 as a place for women livestock breeders and traders to share their stories and support each other in their endeavours.

All members form part of the KLR Marketing Mastermind Group, having completed the renowned two-day KLR Marketing School and learnt its unique system for selling and buying livestock.

A common bond. All group members talk the same language, often share the same challenges, and unite to inspire each other as they carry out what is often so much more than a means for making a living.

Mel and her husband, Dave, embarked on their first major cattle trade in 2008, placing 200 cows and calves on agistment at Bourke, in the NSW Far West.

“We had a lack of knowledge and insight into borrowing money, and putting cattle on agistment without knowing the country and without enough infrastructure,” Mel says.

“We couldn’t truck them in, had trouble trucking them out, and it all went pear-shaped, really.

► **ABOVE:** Mel Kiel says “If I could trade cattle every day, I would.”

“It was only a few months after that I saw an ad for the KLR Marketing School and it all went from there.”

They started applying their newfound system for trading cattle from their 4 ha block – six steers, to be precise.

“We started with essentially no land, one thing led to another, and we’ve gradually built up over time with the help of some agistment blocks, and we bought a 60 ha block in May 2010,” Mel says.

“We run up to 70 cattle on our block, ‘Mione’ and up to 60 ha of agistment country.”

For the past four years, Mel has come to know and love the saleyard atmosphere, and has no troubles holding her own among the other regulars.

“At first it was difficult but I just went in and figured I needed to get the hang of it,” she says.

“In my first year, the buyers could

definitely intimidate you because you're coming in on their territory.

"Later in that same year, they started to let me in, and by the end of the first year they were playing fair."

Mel ramped up her trading operation in the past two years, selling and buying cattle every month.

She says practice makes perfect and her sheer dedication has helped sharpen her cattle weight estimations to within 10 kg – a handy skill at a store sale.

"I just follow the MLA (Meat and Livestock Australia) guys around at Forbes, Carcoar and Dubbo, and ask them to let me guess the weights, and then they tell me their suggestion," Mel says.

"For a sell and a buy in one month, I might have to go to three sales, but I really enjoy it.

"It's my day out – I really like browsing through the cattle, and I work into my Cost of Carry that I pay myself to go to the sale."

Further north in the New England region of northern NSW, Kristy Hunt of 'Moonganna', Walcha, has been trading cattle since 2002. She and

husband, Dan, intend to turn over between 1,100 and 1,200 head this year.

"We trade everything from pregnant cows to heifers, steers, cows and calves – there's not much here that we don't have," Kristy says.

The mother of three buys stock mainly from saleyards and direct out of the paddock, and they have a livestock agent who buys on their behalf.

A saleyard regular. "I attend the Tamworth sale every week and also go to Armidale, Walcha, and Inverell," Kristy says.

"I was pretty lucky when we first started because Dan would come with me all the time, which helped me build my confidence and learn about weights."

Kristy completed the KLR Marketing School in 2009 – once her children had started school.

"I've got a good support network of people who have helped me along the way.

"Probably the most intimidating part for me is walking into a set of yards that I've never been to before where I've got no real contacts.

"But you soon forget about what other people think and just concentrate on your job."

Kristy says being a member of Girls R Traders, has proven a great support network.

"I think it's really good that it's almost instantaneous, where you ask a question and someone will get back to you with their thoughts almost straight away," she says.

Livestock trading for Kristy is fresh, exciting and busy – all attributes that she says suit her personality. "I like the handling of the livestock but I also get a lot of satisfaction from taking something from one place to another," she says.

"I never know what's going to happen, what we're going to buy, and what's going to hop off the truck.

"I also enjoy the numbers game – it's very satisfying to know you've done a profitable trade, which is generating cashflow and profit into our business." ■

► **BELOW:** Kristy Hunt – "Quite often we're finding that we can improve animals, buying store cows that no one particularly wants and taking them through to a fat animal."

