

Keen Teen Wins Supreme

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It has been almost 3 years since my now 17 year old nephew, Matt Cooney, made the big move to live with me.

My story of his wonderful growth and progress never ceases to amaze me and I would like to share this lovely story with everyone who has come to know and love

Matt. Also for those who are new to our amazing Australian Lowline breed, I hope you enjoy reading this article.

For those who do not know the story so far: briefly, Matt came to live with me (his aunt) here at **Rotherwood Lowline Stud** from the hectic Melbourne life to the remote country town of Cann River in far East Gippsland, Victoria. Matt had never shown much of an interest in farming as a young child, unlike his four siblings who would often visit and play around the farm amongst the menagerie we had at the time. It's ironical really how things have done a 360! Matt is the one who has a natural ability and extremely strong passion for farming and cattle – particularly Australian Lowlines.

His first show was Royal Canberra in 2014 where he very proudly won Junior Champion Female with his beloved heifer, **Rotherwood Hula Girl** – the first stud animal he purchased from me to start his stud, **Cann Valley Lowlines**. Matt learnt that disappointment is part of life when Hula Girl was injured and had to be withdrawn from the Sydney Show a few weeks later. Matt still put on a brave face and came along to Sydney with the Rotherwood Team where he continued to soak up the many facets of showing.

Looking back throughout 2015, Matt has continued to blossom and develop more skills and knowledge. A fabulous two page article was published in The Weekly Times, who sent the very talented photographer, Zoe Philips, all the way to Cann River. Pretty inspirational, I think, for a 17 year old young man, enforcing that if you follow a passion and dreams help will come your way.

Matt has experienced the highs and lows of embryo transplant, enjoying the success of pregnancies but having a pregnant recipient cow calve six weeks early with a stillborn calf. He has now purchased his own recipient cow and had further embryos implanted, which we are hoping will result in some very special calves.

Matt has also carefully selected semen from other studs to suit his precious herd. I know how much research he has put into his selection and I am confident that his future progeny will be of the very highest standards.

Matt's school life, coming from a school of 1500 students to approximately 40 at Cann River College, is also continuing to thrive. He is completing Year 11 this year and just finished two Year 12 exams in Biology and Business Management, which he is confident he did well. Matt's school reports throughout the year have been excellent and I am very proud of him as are his family and friends.

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Matt was awarded 'The Long Tan Youth Leadership and Teamwork Award' sponsored by the Australian Defence Force for initiative. It was not really a surprise to me as Matt is always trying to help his friends at school to be positive and responsible and is a great team player in all aspects of his life.

The school has voted Matt to be Vice President on the Student Representative Council for the past two years. Matt continues to work after school and on weekends whenever possible to support his much loved **Cann Valley Lowline Stud**.

We purchased Relics Café and Restaurant in Cann River in mid 2015, where Matt had started working part-time two and a half years ago. He is such a big part of the management and managerial decisions with his knowledge, work ethics and dedication. He is responsible for the hiring and training of the younger staff members and does this in a very professional manner. He has also invested in a third share of the Relics 'Old Wares and Antiques' Shop that we purchased with the Café, further increasing his knowledge and experience.



2015 Canberra Show – Rotherwood Glamour Girl



Matt with his winning heifer

Now I have saved the best for last – especially in Matt's world. After just two Royal Shows, Matt won Supreme Exhibit at the 2015 Royal Canberra Show with the stunning **Rotherwood Glamour Girl**, who Matt had been trying to convince me to sell to him for over a year. Glamour Girl had previously won Supreme Exhibit as a 14 month old heifer at the 2012 Royal Melbourne Show.

The judge, Diana Woods' comment at Canberra was "WOW. WHAT A COW!" This gave me a wonderful feeling to think that I had bred such a lovely animal & many people were genuinely pleased to see Matt take out this highly prestigious award at such a young age, so early in his career. I was proud that he knew from the year before that she was a very special cow and he had fought hard to convince me to sell her to him.

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This will be the last article I will be writing about Matt. He is now 17 and more than capable and willing to have his own articles published in the future. I have no doubt they will be just as interesting and filled with the joys and heartache of farming and showing. I will be handing over the reins to him in this department as I have done in many other areas on the farm and at the Café, with no doubts at all.

I would like to sincerely thank many Lowline breeders, handlers, fitters and other cattle owners who have opened their arms and shared advice and knowledge so willingly with Matt. I am sure some interesting conversations with Matt would have taken place with many of you. You would all know Matt's keen passion and knowledge of his own animals and yours!

Well done Matt and good luck. Never forget I am always here for you!



Matt with his heifer Wanamara Strictly Ballroom