**Amazing April for AuctionsPlus Cattle Market**

April 2021 may very well go down as the crest for the 15-month run up in cattle prices, with the 31% jump in supplies for the month matched by unprecedented demand. Underpinned by the continuation of the excellent seasonal conditions in eastern Australia, average prices for the month were up for more than half of the AuctionsPlus reported categories – with the largest monthly rises across the lightest steer and heifer lines.

With the very heavy and widespread rain late in March maintaining the seasonal momentum in the southern states, it was the much-needed rain through previously very dry regions of central and northern Queensland that gave the overall cattle market an additional boost. The long-awaited rain had Queensland producers withholding stock from the market, removing one of the limited net-selling regions of cattle in eastern Australia in 2021.

There were 88,037 head of cattle offered exclusively through AuctionsPlus in April, an increase of 31% on the previous month – which was impacted by logistical issues in late March due to the heavy rain and flooding in many regions. While the Easter period may have impacted sales in the early weeks of the months, this was more than offset by the steady flow of cattle in the second half of the month, many of which would have entered the market in late March if not for access issues. However, this influx of supply had very little impact on price, as buyers pushed the market higher.

Almost 38% of all cattle offered online through April were young steers, at 33,181 head, while heifers made up 30%, with 26,200 head. For the lightest category, steers less than 200kg, prices for April averaged 15% higher on the previous month, at $1,070 head – as many buyers looked long and hard for quality light lines. Similarly, the lightest heifer category averaged 18% higher on the previous month.

Steers 280-330kg was the largest single category for the month, with the 12,855 head offered recording an 81% clearance rate. The category averaged $1,628/head for the month – up 2% on the previous month and 32% on the corresponding period in 2020. Heifers at the same weight range averaged $1,502/head – up 3% on the previous month and 34% on last year.

Restockers maintained the demand for suitable breeding stock throughout the month, with the 12,599 head of PTIC heifers offered averaging $2,314/head – up 1% from March and 35% from April 2020. Indeed, all breeding categories were up year-on-year, ranging from 17-37% higher, with the largest annual increase registered by cows with CAF, at $3,192/unit.

