



• Continues from p48.

runs from the loading ramp around to the weighing system.

"I wanted a fully enclosed race so the cattle couldn't see out, and couldn't get their legs caught in between the rails."

It's a V-shape, which means calves can't turn around in it. Most cattle races are straight sided.

"It was a complicated race to build because of all the angles, but was no problem for Joe, although he did say he hoped it wouldn't work out because everyone would want one."

These yards have made life a lot easier, and there are no second thoughts about bringing bulls in for monitoring.

Joe built everything in the yards, including the gates, catches and hinges.

"Everything except the bolts."

Safety is another important aspect, with plenty of stepped catwalks built along the races at the front end of the yards meaning nobody has to get in with the bulls.

There are small safety gates built into the design so people can easily move out of the way of animals. And some gates swing completely around to make the yards more

flexible.

"Things work smoothly."

At the business end of the yards where all the weighing is done there are a few more ideas stolen from the Aussies.

The Donalds' weigh crate hangs on the loadbars, with the weigh bars on top of the crush rather than below it. This keeps them clean and out of the way, and there are fewer problems as a result, Jamie says.

As the cattle come out of the crush, which has a Technipharm cattle handler head bail on it, they can be drafted in one of four ways.

"You can get really expensive cattle handling systems now with air-operated gates, but ours still has gates on ropes."

Jamie says a lot of these were their ideas which Joe made work. For example there's one gate hinged in the middle so it can be moved out of the way safely.

The yards have one spotlight, which illuminates the entire area.

"A lot of cattle arrive in the middle of the night."

And there's a high pressure hose for keeping it clean.

It was a more expensive set-up than what most people need, but it works very well for them since they finish 3200 bulls a year.

With the second smaller set of yards - built on a property Jamie and Bel lease from Jamie's brother - they corrected the only mistake Jamie could find in the design.

One of the man gates was in the wrong place, and it was moved a couple of metres along the fence instead. They also changed the loading ramp design to timber poles because it was cheaper than the concrete block version.



Bull farmer Jamie Gunson wanted yards that were safe and made for easy handling.

These yards have made life a lot easier, and there are no second thoughts about bringing bulls in for monitoring.

"We tend to do more monitoring, and are more finely tuned because it is a good setup."

Meanwhile Joe, who is coming up 68, says retirement is not in the plan.

He and his worker Matt Turfrey, a qualified cabinetmaker, are busy

building all kinds of farm buildings. It was Matt's uncle Mike Turfrey who helped Joe build both sets of Gunson yards and a shed on the farm too.

"I can't work in town because you can't build a house with a chainsaw," he jokes.

Joe started off in the industry as a shepherd in the Patoka district, learnt how to fence and progressed

to manager's jobs in Gisborne and Hawke's Bay.

Later he and his wife Elaine had their own farm for a short time, and in 1982 he began building deer sheds.

Joe never had formal training in building but says his father was a pretty handy sort of a bloke. "And working on the land we learned to do everything."