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HD Chance made in China for couple

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LP THIS time next year a boat of about 1500 dairy heifers will leave Portland destined for one of China's largest dairy operations.

Sending heifers to China is not unusual — it has received the bulk of Australia's dairy heifer exports for the past decade with the trade worth \$170 billion in 2013-14.

TD But there will be plenty riding on these Holsteins, which will be mostly joined to sexed semen.

A successful and cost-effective delivery to 20,000-plus cow dairies in China could mean Tianjin Bright & MengDe Dairy might consider expanding their 364ha land ownership at Branhholme which it settled in June.

The company will run about 700 heifers on the grazing land it bought for about \$2.5 million.

Bought as yearlings (about 180kg), the heifers will be grown-out, joined and shipped to China about 400kg.

It is the first time the Chinese dairy giant — which produces more than 1.2 billion tubs of yoghurt a year and is a subsidiary of China's [Bright Food Group](#) — has bought land in Australia to rear heifers.

It will continue to agist heifers, but owning part of the supply chain enables it to control costs and also provides access to "good" genetics.

At the heart of the operation is James and Nicole McCarroll. The couple, with children Hamish, 10, and Kylla, 7, most recently worked on local dairy farms — James was an assistant manager at one of the large farms owned by asset management company Warakirri.

Looking for "the next step" in their career, he said he jumped at the chance to manage the farm for the Chinese owners.

"It is not a lot different to running young stock on a dairy farm. It's a good lifestyle, there's more family time and less stress," he said.

"We still get the best of dairy, but really, really good hours." The farm has a predominantly perennial ryegrass base, with some annuals, and lots of clover. Plans are in place for custom-built stock yards.

Stock has started to arrive and James said the paddocks were in good condition, and there was plenty of feed, as nothing had been stocked on the farm for a while.

He is hoping to cut a minimum of 1200 tonnes of silage as well as hay which will be fed during summer. The owners have taken local advice about the stocking rate and plan to keep numbers about 700 to ensure the farm remains self-sufficient.

Let's Go Australia, a Chinese agribusiness and marketing company, was commissioned to help secure the land deal.

Let's Go Australia sales and marketing director Jason Hellyer was not able to provide the cost of landing a heifer in China from Australia, including buying the heifer, growing it out, mating synchronisation and sexed semen straws.

But Mr Hellyer said it was "a lot of money" and the heifers were bought at market rate. The Weekly Times understands the market rate for yearling Holstein heifers is up to \$900 now.

Mr Hellyer said the success of a shipment of heifers to China for Tianjin Bright & MengDe Dairy group would be judged by its profitability. If the project was deemed a success, the Branhholme operation could form the basis of a template which would be rolled out to other properties for rearing replacement heifers for the Chinese dairy business.

Nicole and James said they were excited to work with Tianjin Bright & MengDe Dairy and they used the acquisition of new equipment, including a ute, gator and tractor as evidence the Chinese business was spending money in the community.

"They (Tianjin Bright & MengDe Dairy) are taking an opportunity (and) they have chosen to take local advice, employ local people and support local business and that is not a bad thing," Nicole said. James said: "We would have loved to afford \$2 million plus to buy it, that would be the dream, so the next best thing is to run it."

CO brgfdc : Bright Food (Group) Co Ltd

IN i41 : Food/Beverages/Tobacco | icnp : Consumer Goods | ifood : Food Products

RE china : China | austr : Australia | tianji : Tianjin | apacz : Asia Pacific | asiaz : Asia | ausnz : Australia/Oceania | bric : BRICS Countries | chinaz : Greater China | devgcoz : Emerging Market Countries | dypcoz : Developing Economies | easiaz : Eastern Asia

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