

Bumper prices paid for bulls

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A demand for bulls with "short gestation times" has led to a bumper spring sale for Shrimpton's Hill Herefords at Cave.

Vendor John McKerchar said the 145 bulls sold yesterday for an average sale price of \$2332 a head.

This was about \$350 a head higher than last year's sale, while the top price of \$3600 was more than \$1000 up on peak prices last year, he said.

"Our market are the dairy farmers, our herefords are short gestation specialists," Mr McKerchar said.

"Fonterra's payout is upwards of \$8 per kilo of milk solid. Every extra day is seriously money in the bank. If you run a large dairy farm with thousands of cows, this is a major multiplier."

The average gestation period for a bull is 273 days, but the top price bull at yesterday's sale had an average gestation period of 265 days.

Mr McKerchar said the practice of "induced calving" was no longer common



Big day: Dairy farmers were willing to pay a premium at the Shrimpton's Hill Herefords sale day.

Photo: CARO ANDERSON/FAIRFAX NZ

because of animal welfare concerns.

"We have a special performance breeding programme; so we know which bloodlines breed earlier.

"We've been picking up the best bulls and top cows and positioned ourselves as

a leader in this market," he said.

"Farmers are willing to pay a significant premium. We've started to reap the rewards, particularly with the boom of the dairy industry, where timing is everything."