

Droving days over

AG 00013

NIGEL AUSTIN
RURAL EDITOR

AFTER a lifetime in the saddle, Stuart Nunn, one of the nation's best-known stockmen, is hanging up his whip.

Mr Nunn, 55, pastoral manager with S. Kidman and Co, has played a key role in bringing better beef to the nation's consumers for the past 39 years.

Promoted to the role at the company's North Adelaide base in 1993, Mr Nunn has been integral to the daily management of the firm's 12 stations.

They cover 11.19 million hectares, one of the largest rural land-holdings in the nation.

That has involved overseeing one of the nation's largest beef herds of 174,000.

S. Kidman and Co sells 50,000 cattle a year, enough to feed more than one million people, based on the average consumption of 38kg per person.

Mr Nunn said the Australian cattle industry has been transformed since his early days on Anna Creek station, near William Creek, in the Far North.

He lived there for close to 40 years, including his early years growing up on the property managed by his father, Dick Nunn, more than 10 years working on it as a stockman and, finally, 12 years managing it.

In his early days, all stockwork was done on horseback and cattlemen spent weeks at a time droving cattle long dis-

NATIONAL

tances to just three sets of yards in the 1960s and 70s. "It was a lot of hard riding to try and get results and we had a chuck wagon that was drawn by a team of four camels," he said.

Running Anna Creek - about 275km from top to bottom and up to 200km wide - is much different these days with planes, modern fencing, better roads and 24 sets of trucking yards.

Mr Nunn said the beef industry's evolution has included a switch from selling big, fat, five-year-old bullocks to turning off two and three-year-old steers.

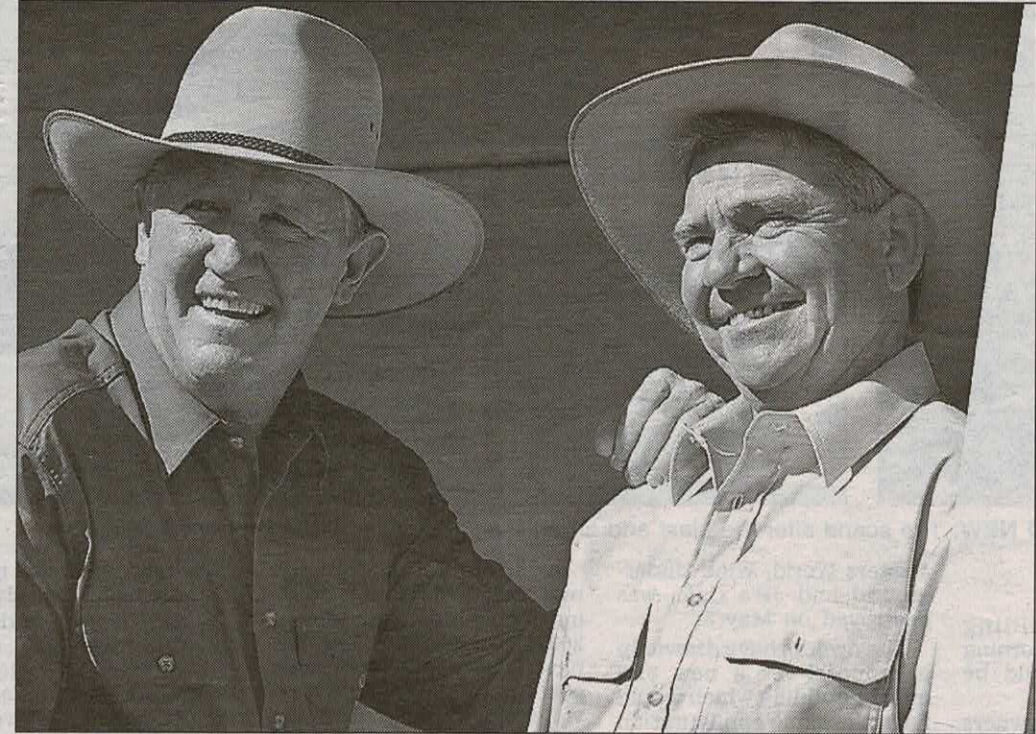
“ We had a chuck wagon that was drawn by a team of four camels

Productivity of cattle also has improved greatly with its herds based on a santa gertrudis-shorthorn cross.

"I thought the national Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Scheme in the 1980s was one of the great achievements," he said.

In "retirement", Mr Nunn plans to run his property in the Hills, consult to the cattle industry and help his sons in their Adelaide business.

Kidman's new pastoral manager will be Paul Quigley, who runs the bull-breeding unit.



NEW REINS: Stuart Nunn, retiring after 39 years with S. Kidman and Co, with his successor, respected stockman Paul Quigley. Picture: DEAN MARTIN