

tips & tools

MEAT STANDARDS AUSTRALIA

MSA15

Selling cattle through an MSA saleyard

The MSA program is a valuable asset for the Australian beef industry as it provides opportunities to differentiate product in the domestic market. The work undertaken by MSA has seen increased competitive advantage in beef production, processing and retailing sectors of the industry.

The standards have recently been expanded to include the Saleyards pathway for eligible cattle. This detail has produced the *MSA standards manual for saleyard consignment*, which is available on the MSA website for MSA licensed saleyards.

Preparing cattle for sale

Cattle are exposed to stress during the selling procedure, caused by movement from the farm to the sale and the abattoir, unfamiliar sights, sounds and smells, and the actual auction process itself. These factors cause the animals to use their energy to deal with the surrounding stress resulting in energy levels being depleted. It is important that cattle have sufficient energy to cope with this and maintain reserves of energy (see *MSA Tips & Tools: The effect of pH on beef eating quality*.)

Cattle carrying a lot of fat or in finished condition can still be energy deficient and can be draining their energy reserves well before they appear to be losing condition. The only way to ensure cattle have high energy reserves is to feed high energy feed for a period of 30 days prior to consignment.

Low energy feed such as poor quality feed or pastures are not adequate to maintain the energy reserves of cattle. Low energy levels in cattle will result in a high pH carcase, dark meat colour and reduced eating quality.

Cattle are not to be drafted or mixed with new mobs. When cattle are mixed with new mobs they go through a period of adjustment to the social group pecking order. While this period of adjustment is occurring the mob is subjected to increased stress. This is also the reason behind the MSA requirement for there to be no mixing of lots at either the saleyard or the abattoir (see *MSA Tips & Tools: MSA requirements for handling cattle*).

Key points

- MSA eligible cattle can be sold through MSA licensed saleyards or livestock exchanges.
- Producers must be registered to supply cattle to licensed saleyards.
- Agents must be registered to handle cattle through the pathways.
- Training requirement for agents and saleyard operators.
- Requirements detailed in *MSA standards manual for saleyard consignment*.

At the sale

Upon arrival of consignments at the saleyard MSA vendor declarations are verified as being correct and eligible in accordance with the standards. Cattle are penned in appropriate yards, importantly mobs must not be mixed or inter-lotted. Pens of eligible cattle are labelled with their eligibility under the standard, dispatch time from farm and maximum time till slaughter.

After the sale

The MSA vendor declaration (or a copy) must continue with the consignments where they are destined for MSA grading. The licensed saleyard will monitor the adherence of the standards at each sale and ensure ineligible cattle are excluded from the sale. The saleyard will maintain documentation to ensure the standards are controlled.

On-farm responsibilities: all cattle production systems

- producers must be registered with MSA to supply cattle for grading
- no secondary sexual characteristics
- no cattle that have been severely sick or injured
- no cattle of poor temperament
- all cattle must reside on the property of dispatch for a minimum of 30 days prior to dispatch
- cattle are to be managed as a single mob for a minimum of 14 days prior to dispatch for slaughter
- MSA vendor declaration must be delivered with the cattle (*as supplementation to other state-based requirements*)



Agents responsibilities

- agents must be registered
- adhere to the *MSA standards manual for saleyard consignment*

Saleyard responsibilities

- Livestock exchange and saleyard to be licensed and have completed training as defined by the authorised authority.
- The livestock exchange or saleyard must have systems in place that will be monitored from time to time to verify compliance against the *MSA standards manual for saleyard consignment* as determined by the authorised authority.
- MSA vendor declaration to accompany cattle to and from livestock exchange and saleyard.
- MSA eligible cattle to be clearly identified at all times.
- Cattle groups are not to be mixed at any point from farm to slaughter, excluding split mobs.
- No cattle that have been severely sick or injured at the time of sale.
- Cattle shall be held on soft standing, within the livestock exchange or saleyard facility other than the minimum period of time required for the actual sale.
- Cattle within the livestock exchange or saleyard will have access to water at all times.

Processor responsibilities

- Cattle shall be slaughtered within 36 hours after dispatch from the farm or property.
- Five CMQ4 score point deduction for saleyard pathways.

For more information

Visit www.mla.com.au/msa or contact MSA 1800 111 672.



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