

Feedback

Mixing it up

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International match making for Australian beef and lamb



A note from the MD...

The price you receive for your livestock is an important component in the health of your business. Lately those prices have been lower than those received during 2011 and this time last year.

There are other key indicators, however, that impact on the health of both your business and the industry as a whole, and MLA's market information team has produced a 'dashboard' of five major indicators that can help us take stock of the bigger picture of industry performance. These are outlined in more detail on pages 4-6 of this month's *Feedback*.

While they aren't the be-all and end-all, examining the relationship between the Australian dollar, export values, domestic expenditure, cost of production and producer share of the retail dollar allows us to get a fuller picture of industry health.

In this issue you'll also find several stories on strategies for 'climate savvy grazing' in the northern cattle industry (pages 10-14). This research provides some valuable insights for managing production in Australia's harsh climate.

As we've sweltered through one of the fiercest summers in living memory, our thoughts turn to the many thousands of producers whose livelihoods have suffered as a result of the extreme heat and bushfires.



Scott Hansen
MLA Managing Director
managingdirector@mla.com.au



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Feedback Reply Paid 906, Locked Bag 991, North Sydney NSW 2059
E: info@mla.com.au
T: 1800 023 100 // F: 02 9463 9393
www.mla.com.au

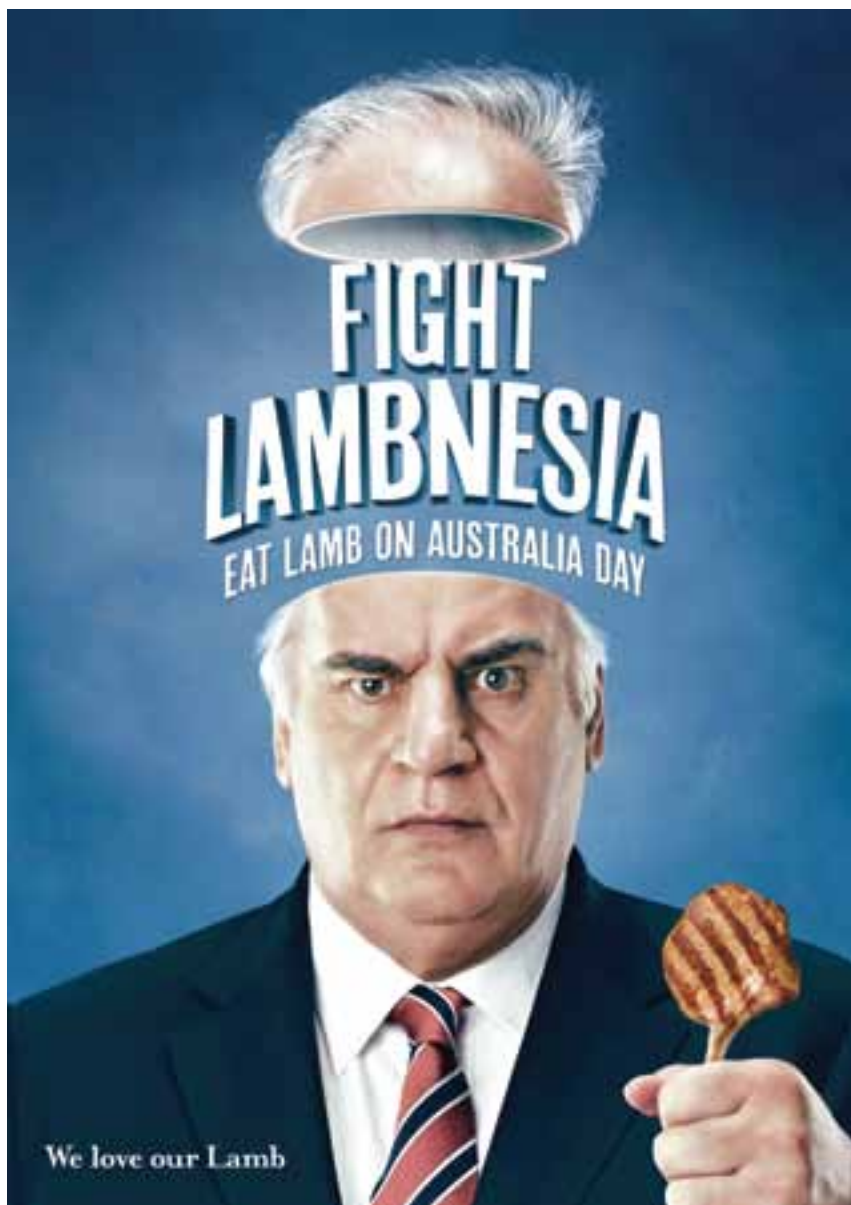
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Australia Day campaign

Lamb is Sam's antidote to 'Lambnesia'

Sam Kekovich has returned for the ninth year to front MLA's 2013 Australia Day marketing campaign, encouraging Australians to eat more lamb to counter 'Lambnesia'*.



*'Lambnesia' is a condition that makes you forget your Australian identity and allows unAustralian thoughts to enter your brain, like choosing a tofu curry over a lamb chop.

According to Sam, Lambnesia "...makes you forget about what makes this country great and fills your head with a load of unAustralian bulldust."

A tongue-in-cheek television commercial was launched on 10 January, showing Sam suffering from the condition after a knock to the head.

"I dream about watching The Voice and clapping for a bloke named Seal when I should be giving lamb a standing ovation," Sam said in the ad.

"Wake up Australia. Let's not go off our chops. Let's keep them where they belong - on our barbies and in our hands on Australia Day!"

MLA's Group Marketing Manager - Consumer Andrew Cox said a strong association between lamb and the Australia Day period had developed after consistent Australia Day promotion.

A national online 'Lambnesia test', developed to measure consumers' level of unAustralianism, generated additional coverage by highlighting unAustralianism levels across the states.

Posters and other marketing collateral were distributed to retailers to support the campaign at the point-of-sale.

The latest Australia Day marketing initiative follows a successful 2012 Australia Day campaign which saw the value of lamb sales increase 32% in the week leading up to and including Australia Day. Lamb chops are the most popular cut during the weeks surrounding Australia Day (mid-January to mid-February) with 7.8% more lamb chops consumed than an average month.

View the commercial online at www.themainmeal.com/Lambnesia

Follow the lamb campaign on facebook www.facebook.com/SamKekovich

Take the Lambnesia test www.lambnesia.com.au

7.8%

more lamb chops consumed during the Australia Day period than the average month

Fast facts

Only three days after the launch of the campaign:

- there were 170,000 views of the commercial on YouTube
- the Lambnesia test was taken 338,451 times
- the average time on www.lambnesia.com.au was 4 minutes and 18 seconds



Andrew Cox, MLA // T: 02 9463 9158
E: acox@mla.com.au



Curing the northern bellyache

Researchers are working to discover a biocontrol agent for the highly invasive rangelands weed, bellyache bush.

The leader of the MLA-funded project is Queensland Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Principal Entomologist Dr Kunjithapatham Dhileepan.

"Effective bellyache bush management involves minimising the risk of new infestations and reducing the impact of current weed problems through ongoing management," Dhileepan said.

"If effective biocontrol agents can be found to complement existing chemical, mechanical and fire control options it would go a long way to providing even more economically viable and longer-term solutions for the control of bellyache bush."

The 12-month project will involve officers travelling to Paraguay, Bolivia and Peru in search of potential biocontrol agents.

Dhileepan said bellyache bush forms dense thickets, excluding pasture, reducing biodiversity and restricting access to land.

"The weed is widespread across northern Australia, especially along watercourses and associated floodplains. It is estimated that

40,000_{ha}
in Queensland's Burdekin region
infested with bellyache bush

more than 40,000ha are infested in Queensland's Burdekin catchment alone," Dhileepan said.

"The weed is toxic to both animals and humans and has been attributed to cattle, horse and goat deaths."

Bellyache bush is native to Central America and was introduced to northern Australia in the late 1800s.

Biocontrol agents have previously been sought in the Caribbean Islands, Mexico and northern South America.

A CSIRO research project, partly funded by MLA, has uncovered a leaf rust that, if successful, will eventually form part of a suite of biocontrol agents for various weeds.



Dr K Dhileepan

T: 07 3255 4449

E: k.dhileepan@daff.qld.gov.au



For more information on bellyache bush T: 13 25 23 or go to www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au

ESCAS Tranche 3

All Australia's livestock export trade is now covered by the government-regulated Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS).

Tranche 3 of the regulatory framework, introduced in December, covers Brunei, Mauritius, Russia, Vietnam and other small importers of live animals from Australia by sea or air.

Under ESCAS, exporters must provide evidence of ESCAS compliance right through the supply chain before being issued with export approvals by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF).

When requested, MLA supports exporters and importers to meet the requirements of the new regulations, including conducting gap analyses and training programs overseas.



www.daff.gov.au/aqis/export/live-animals/livestock/escas



Tribute to Aaron Iori

Aaron Iori is a name familiar to readers of *Feedback*. Firstly as a market analyst for the National Livestock Reporting Service from 2001 and then as head of the National Livestock Identification System from 2006. From 2009 he was MLA's regional manager for South-East Asia/Greater China.

Sadly Aaron died on January 1, 2013, after a 20-month battle with cancer.

MLA's Managing Director Scott Hansen paid tribute to Aaron saying MLA had lost one of its most talented senior managers.

"The industry has also lost one of its brightest and most dedicated professionals," he said.

Aaron is survived by his wife, Kate, and three young children, Sergio, Charlotte and Hugo.



Seeing it (and sharing it) for themselves

Back row: Kate Pollard, *The Countryman*; Gemma Lomax, *Wellard Rural Exports*; Barbara Camp, *Kalyeeda Station*; Kirsty Forshaw, *Nita Downs Station*; Jane Sale, *Yougawalla Station*; Helen Stoate, *Anna Plains Station*; Jane De Long, *Dampier Downs Station*; Pip McConachie, *MLA*.

Front row: Lisa Wood from *Agro Giri Perkasa, Indonesia* and Pak Din Satriawan, *Santori Feedlot Jabung*.

When 10 Western Australian livestock producers toured Indonesian beef handling and processing facilities last year, the idea was to follow the export process and then share what they learnt.

The women, including five pastoral cattle producers, visited abattoirs, feedlots, wet markets and restaurants in Lampung and Jakarta to get a better understanding of how the supply chain operates.

One of the participants was Jane Sale (right) who, with her husband Haydn, runs 20,000 head of Brahman and Droughtmaster cattle on Yougawalla and Bulka stations in south-east Kimberley.

She said producers needed to tell their personal stories and become better advocates for their businesses and industries. This would help bridge the country-city divide and ensure informed debate about issues such as livestock exports.



"If we are going to face hard questions and conflicts, such as about the livestock export trade, we need first-hand knowledge of the whole process and the journey our animals are going on," Jane said.

"Part of going to Indonesia was also to reassure our own consciences about how our animals were treated after leaving Australia. I've been happy to send my animals to Indonesia in the past but now, having been there, I am confident and proud to sell them there."

Jane said the study tour group was impressed by the prompt implementation of staff training and pre-slaughter cattle stunning at the Indonesian abattoirs they visited.

On their return, Jane and her fellow tour participants spread the story of the trip through mainstream and social media including Landline, ABC, AgChatOz, the Influential Women network and in various facebook forums.

"The idea is to keep the momentum going to tell the livestock export story from our perspective," she said.



Jane Sale // T: 08 9168 8295
E: jane.sale@bigpond.com



To learn more about the trip, visit Influential Women on Facebook or website: www.influentialwomen.com.au

Lifting the lid on ill-thrift



Tasmanian researchers and producers are attempting to solve the mystery of ill-thrift in cattle during summer and autumn, despite an abundance of feed.

MLA is funding a seven-month project developed after numerous reports by southern producers that animals appear to underperform during summer and autumn.

Project leader Basil Doonan, from Macquarie Franklin consultancy, said ill-thrift was expressed as lower-than-expected weight gains given the apparent quality and quantity of feed on offer.

"A reduction in performance has showed up on many farms (measuring liveweight gain and feed intake) in the order of 0.25–0.5kg/head/day," Basil said.

"That equates to about \$25,000 for producers finishing around 300 animals."

The observations have been supported by data from recent on-farm trials in Tasmania, with

Calves being monitored as part of an investigation into summer and autumn ill-thrift in Tasmanian beef cattle.

further investigations suggesting the phenomenon may be found throughout the Southern Temperate beef production zone.

Beef producers have also noted elevated levels of embryo mortality in Tasmania at the same time of year.

An initial investigation found some improvement could be made through applying best practice management, such as the correct grazing rotation and use of supplements such as silage, but liveweight gains were still below the expected level when compared to other times during the season.

Researchers are continuing to survey producers and examine management practices and existing data. If they can identify evidence of the phenomenon, they will aim to assess its economic impact.



Producers who have had first hand experience of ill-thrift are encouraged to share their observations with the researchers and can contact Basil Doonan.

Basil Doonan // T: 03 6427 5300
E: bdoonan@macfrank.com.au



Dashboard indicates industry health

A few well-chosen indicators can assess the well-being of the Australian cattle and sheep industry, much as a car's dashboard gauges its mechanical condition.

The size, scope, complexity and constantly evolving nature of the livestock industry means you can't zero in on a single key indicator to gauge its overall condition.

MLA economist, Tim McRae, explained that a 'dashboard approach' considers a range of indicators, including some external factors over which the Australian industry has no influence.

Tim and his team of analysts have identified the five indicators that collectively provide producers with a reasonable gauge: the strength of the A\$, export values, domestic expenditure, cost of production and the producer share of the retail dollar (see table).

"There is a relationship between these five gauges and when they are used together, an overall assessment of the industry can be reached, albeit still not fully representative of a very complex industry," he said.

"When I'm compiling the cattle and sheep industry projections, these are the first indicators I look to.

"Zeroing in on just one is not recommended, as it can skew your perceptions of the overall industry's performance."

Overall assessment for 2012

"By taking all the indicators into account, the industry fared relatively well in 2012. Considering the high A\$, export values have

held up remarkably and the producer share of the retail dollar has posted a good result.



Tim McRae, MLA // T: 02 9463 9112
E: tmcrae@mla.com.au



MLA's *fridayfeedback* e-news provides the latest data on these and other indicators. To subscribe call 1800 675 717 or E: publications@mla.com.au

The *Australian cattle industry projections* and *Australian sheep industry projections* also highlight these and other indicators and provide an overall assessment of the health of the cattle industry in 2013 and projections out to 2017. Visit www.mla.com.au/industryprojections

Table 1 Five dashboard indicators of the Australian cattle and sheep industry

Indicator	Explanation	Latest statistics
A\$	With the Australian cattle and sheep industry exporting a large proportion of its production, the A\$ has a massive impact on the final returns paid for Australian product, and thus the price paid for Australian cattle and sheep.	In 2012, the A\$ averaged 103.5US¢, 0.4% above 2011 and 17% higher than the five-year average. Source: ASX
Export values	Given the industry's export orientation, a useful indicator is the value received for Australian beef and lamb in overseas markets. However, this measure relies heavily on the value of the A\$.	In 2012, beef export values are estimated to reach \$4.75 billion, steady on 2011. Lamb export values are estimated to reach \$1.1 billion in 2012, also steady on 2011. Source: Global Trade Atlas
Domestic beef expenditure	The volume and value of beef and lamb on the domestic market is a big determinant of the market value. Consumption alone is not a definitive indicator. History indicates a period of high Australian beef consumption (on a per head basis) in the 1970s as a period of poor overall cattle prices and reduced export demand.	In 2012, domestic beef expenditure reached \$6.4 billion, 1% higher than 2011. Lamb expenditure totalled \$2.4 billion, 9% higher than 2011. Source: MLA estimates, ABS, DAFF
Cost of production	Looking at the other side of the profit equation, the cost of production in cattle and sheep enterprises provides a gauge of the various input costs faced by producers.	In 2011-12, the average cost of production was \$238,000, 11% lower than 2010-11 for southern beef producers, 10% lower for northern beef producers (averaging \$285,700) and steady with the previous year for slaughter lamb producers (averaging \$394,100). Source: ABARES
Producer share of the retail dollar	The producer share of the retail dollar is a new indicator to be published by MLA, often measured in other countries. It is cited as a gauge of the major players in the supply chain, including retail, transport and processing, as well as the level of cattle and lamb prices. Over the long term, the trend can be useful in indicating changes in efficiencies and indicating where investments along the supply chain can be made.	The Australian producer's share of the retail beef dollar was estimated at 36.6% for 2011-12, up from 30% in 2003. In 2010-11, the lamb producer share of the retail dollar was 51% and in 2011-12, 44% - falling in line with the correction in livestock prices during the period. Source: MLA estimates, ABS, DAFF

Using market information

Taking a dashboard approach: a northern perspective

Ross and Natalie Olive use tools ranging from local weather forecasts to global market projections to make business decisions on their two Queensland cattle properties.



Snapshot

Ross and Natalie Olive, Gogango and Marlborough, Qld.



Properties:
Total of 21,245ha

Enterprise:
Olive Brahman

Livestock:
2,400 Brahman breeders

Pasture:
Gogango - buffel/
softwood scrub.
Marlborough -
forest country with
softwood scrub

Rainfall:
625mm

Natalie and Ross Olive, of Olive Brahman, Gogango, use information as a key business tool.

The Olives run 2,400 Brahman breeders on 20,234 hectares at Marlborough and finish steers on their 1,011ha Gogango property and adjust sale bulls nearby.

In the past three years, in response to seasonal and economic indicators, they have refocused to produce younger cattle that suit a range of markets.

Calves used to be weaned in May-June, but a dry summer in 2009 prompted the Olives to bring it forward. To their surprise, the breeders retained condition and the young cattle performed well.

They now wean from February, a strategy that has lifted pregnancies from 75% to 85% and increased carrying capacity. It has also allowed them to manage risk by turning off cattle earlier, a decision reached by following forecasts from MLA and feedback from the local processor.

"By weaning earlier we can direct cattle into markets based on seasonal and economic indicators. If MLA's projections forecast a shortage of boxed beef we aim to turn off 350-400kg trade steers, but if there is an oversupply we can hold or redirect stock."

Global market data is important, as the Olives have northern bull clients who rely on export markets.

"We monitor export projections and can redirect male calves into the trade steer market instead of growing them out to bulls," Ross said.

The Olives use Bureau of Meteorology 10-day forecasts for short-term planning and monitor long-term weather forecasts for supplementation budgets.

"If the Southern Oscillation Index (SOI) is declining and our feed budgets are tight, we sell stock; if the SOI rises and we have sufficient feed we will hold on as rain can mean an extra 20¢/kg."

Ross believes any tool is useful, as long as it is not used in isolation.

He keeps an open mind, asks plenty of questions, and incorporates advice from nutrition and health consultants to maximise productivity gains. He sees Meat Standards Australia (MSA), gene marking and artificial insemination as powerful tools to help produce the most appropriate animal for a range of markets.



Ross and Natalie Olive // T: 07 4934 7786
E: olivebrahmans@bigpond.com



See the Olives explain their approach in MLA's *feedbackTV* Episode 17 or go to www.youtube.com and search 'Industry projections - helping you make informed choices'.

Using market information

And... a southern perspective



Long-term industry projections and market signals have underpinned business decisions in the Bond family's continually evolving Tasmanian enterprise.

Andrew and Janie Bond, and their children and business partners Sam and Georgie, grow poppies (for morphine), vegetables, grain, seed crops and pasture on 600ha of irrigation. They run 6,500 composite ewes for prime lamb production and 250 Red Angus composite breeders, and fatten an additional 10,000 trade lambs annually.

It's a long way from the traditional Merino sheep wool-focused business they started with.

Long-term industry projections prompted the Bonds to build an on-farm feedlot in 2011, a carefully researched decision to deliver market flexibility and seasonal security.

"In an intensive farming system, nothing can stand alone," Georgie explained. "The feedlot integrates into our cropping and livestock business models and removes some seasonal risk so we can hit all our markets, all the time, and at a sufficient scale to be a preferred supplier."

The Bonds finish lambs in response to industry projections. Each lamb must meet weight targets within 40 days in the feedlot, regardless of market, to optimise gross margins. If the export market is stronger, the Bonds induct heavier lambs that will reach 26kg carcass weight within the 40 days or select lighter lambs to finish at 22kg for the domestic market.

The Bonds aim to be in the top 10% of producers and information is a critical business tool.

"Taking time to source the right information is invaluable," Georgie said.

"We benchmark our performance and make decisions based on a combination of sources, including MLA projections and price indicators, crop demand forecasts, industry networks, field days, R&D and rural publications."

The Bonds rely on nutritionists, veterinarians, agronomists and agricultural business consultants to maintain industry best practice, continue learning and improve efficiencies.

They embrace technology, using smart phones to monitor the weather, maintain farm records and source information, using apps such as AgVantage and Agrowdata.

The family holds a formal annual budget meeting and weekly business meetings to establish contingency plans and take calculated risks in response to market or seasonal changes. Their two employees are regularly involved in decision making.

Sam, Janie, Andrew and Georgie Bond at their Cressy property.

Snapshot

Andrew, Janie, Sam and Georgie Bond, Cressy, Tas.



Property:
2,200ha

Enterprise:
Prime lambs, beef, irrigated crops

Livestock:
6,500 Coopworth-Corriedale ewes, 250 Red Angus/Composite breeders

Pasture:
Perennial ryegrass and clover (some phalaris, cocksfoot and fescue)

Soil:
Loam/clay

Rainfall:
700mm



Georgie Bond // T: 0409 166 321
E: georgie-bond@hotmail.com



Access MLA market information at
www.mla.com.au/marketinformation and
www.mla.com.au/industryprojections



In profile Building capability

Renata Paliskis

Rural leader and Western Australian Meat Industry Authority Chief Executive

A series of impromptu team-building exercises over 13 days in WA's rugged Kimberley region kick-started the annual Australian Rural Leadership Program (ARLP).

The course is designed to extend the capabilities and effectiveness of the nation's rural and agribusiness leaders. One of the 2012 participants was MLA-sponsored Renata Paliskis, who is the Chief Executive Officer of the WA Meat Industry Authority.

What have you gained from your participation in the ARLP?

The biggest challenge in the Kimberley stint was the uncertainty of facing tasks without warning. These tasks were sometimes between 8pm and 3am and with a group of people - with varied strengths and weaknesses - who I was only beginning to know and understand. This pushed most people out of their comfort zone and was designed to enable

us to get a better understanding of ourselves, how open we are to change and what we can achieve when challenged.

It was very unsettling, but exhilarating when you realise you have achieved something you never thought you could do.

In the program's second phase, at workshops in Adelaide, we were exposed to leaders from a wide cross section of agricultural industries.

Feedback from your ARLP peers about your personal style and leadership approach is another major benefit of the program. While this can be confronting, it is done in a safe way that encourages you to be receptive.

Why is leadership important in the red meat industry?

In the past 20-30 years, we have become very trusting of so-called 'experts'. I think we need a more strategic and pluralistic approach by our industry leaders that is driven by a need to satisfy our global

customers. We need thinkers who are willing to stick their necks out and drive the implementation of their strategic ideas.

Has the ARLP course inspired you to make changes?

The 29 participants in my course have a vision to 'Inspire Regional Australia'.

This has become the motto of each individual when dealing in our own rural sector. I aim to bring that vision to all of my dealings along WA's production, processing and livestock export supply chains.



Renata Paliskis // T: 08 9274 7533
E: Renata@wamia.wa.gov.au



Interested in applying for an ARLP course? Visit:
www.rural-leaders.com.au/programs or T: 02 6281 0680

Applications for the next ARLP intake will open in May 2013.

Building capability

Nicole Batten // Woman of influence



The emerging Influential Women (IW) network aims to help Australian women involved in agriculture raise the sector's profile and create positive media attention.

The driving force behind the MLA supported initiative is beef industry consultant Catherine Marriott, runner-up in the 2012 national Rural Industries R&D Corporation Rural Women's Award.

Catherine will conduct IW forums across Australia during 2013, focusing on building media and public speaking skills, confidence and strategies for women to become more-effective producer advocates.

Mid-west WA prime lamb producer, Dorper breeder and grain grower, Nicole Batten joined the expanding IW network when she attended a forum in Geraldton in 2012.

What did you take home from the IW forum?

I am more aware of the potential power of primary producers becoming advocates who are able to promote ourselves before we are promoted by other groups in a negative way.

How can you make a difference to the way agriculture is portrayed in the public space?

Often, meat producers are slammed by people with uninformed opinions about the

treatment of animals, such as mulesing or livestock export, and grain producers for changing crops to boost production, such as the genetically modified debate.

What is not understood well is the way we care for our animals, the health aspects of the crops we produce and our land sustainability.

It is vital we are on the front foot in telling the public that we are proud of what we produce - whether it is meat or grain - and how we produce it.

How will you implement advocacy ideas?

As a first step, I changed our Dorper stud website to include photos and information explaining our own story of production, with the aim of better engaging with the public.

I am also planning to help the Geraldton IW forum participants coordinate specific farmer training in technology and marketing.



Nicole Batten // T: 0429 311 040
E: jjnbatten@bigpond.com

Catherine Marriott, Influential Women // T: 0400 129 279
E: roseycatherine@gmail.com



www.influentialwomen.com.au

Survey to examine labour issues

Employers and employees working in cattle and lamb production are being asked to have their say on what it takes to attract and retain staff.

MLA is conducting an Australia-wide survey to gather evidence about the attractors, motivators and de-motivators associated with working on farms.

Alice Redman-Wenham, Senior Consultant with human resources consultancy and research organisation Locher Human Resources, who will oversee the survey, said the results will be collated into a free reference guide containing practical strategies for attracting and retaining great staff.

"MLA conducted a similar survey in 2007, which attracted 803 responses," Alice said.

"This time we hope to receive at least that many responses from employers, employees and property owners."

Employees can participate in the confidential survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/propertyemployeesurvey>

The survey for property owners and managers can be accessed at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/propertyownersandmanagers>

Participants will be entered in a prize draw.



Alice Redman-Wenham
T: 08 8201 1133
E: alicer@locher.com.au



Satisfied staff are better for business: AACo

Australian Agricultural Company (AACo) is looking forward to seeing the results of MLA's upcoming attracting and retaining staff survey to help inform the human resources policy at the 189-year old company.

AACo Chief Operating Officer Troy Setter said that since releasing the company's new strategic plan in 2010, the company had put a lot of energy into improving and refocusing the business, including its human resources.

"We use the data that came out of the 2007 survey and combined it with our own staff surveys and feedback to determine how we can improve our business."

As Australia's largest beef producer, AACo employs about 450 people across a range of divisions, including branded beef, feedlotting, cattle stations and cropping.

As with the broader agricultural industry, AACo has been challenged by competition from the mining sector and high labour costs.

While these pressures have created a 'revolving door' of staff for many agribusinesses, Troy believes some of the blame can be laid at the feet of employers.

"Some companies have a revolving door which has a limiting impact on their business," he said. "Others put a lot more energy and resources into staff recruitment and development and offering career paths."

The company has implemented a number of initiatives to improve the stability of its workforce (see top five tips). This has reduced staff

AACo's top five tips for attracting and retaining staff

1. Set clear expectations for the role from the outset.
2. Focus on building effective, positive manager/employee relationships.
3. Provide a clear career path to encourage engagement, progression and loyalty.
4. Encourage work/life choices through flexible working arrangements and positive morale through social events, leisure activities and team building.
5. Provide a safe and rewarding working environment.

*AACo employee Teagan Brown pictured at Camfield Station, NT.
Photo courtesy of AACo.*

turnover, increased female employees to almost half of the company's staff base, and created a surge in Indigenous employees and contractors.

The high cost of labour has encouraged AACo to focus on getting increased productivity from existing staff.

"We need to be constantly attuned to what staff are looking for in a career and how we can fully develop and utilise their skills," Troy said.



Troy Setter // T: 07 3368 4453 // www.aaco.com.au

Research at work

The latest on-farm strategies emerging from industry's investment in research

**In this
issue**
Northern grazing systems

Full analysis on the impact of climate variability has lead to recommendations on stocking and grazing strategies to manage future weather scenarios.

15// Growing your business

Gaining a handle on his costs provided one NSW producer the insight to grow his business, not his herd, and make more by doing it.

17// Growing demand for lamb

Opportunities for lamb in WA's high rainfall zone.

20// Evergraze

New tools and research findings are emerging from this large scale research program for southern livestock systems.

Stocking rate a *burning* issue in north

More than 780 northern Australian beef producers are feeling more 'savvy' after learning the latest in best practice grazing land management from a recently concluded project. →

5,500

producers participated in Climate Clever Beef and Climate Savvy Grazing managing

146.9 million ha

of land and

8.6 million

head of cattle.

The Climate Savvy Grazing project found the combined effects of stocking rate management and pasture spelling created increased opportunities for using fire as a land management tool. Photo by Caroline Pettit.

Adaptation

Climate savvy solutions

Northern beef producers could find there's an upside to future climate variability.

Increasing carbon dioxide (CO²) levels are expected to encourage more pasture growth per millimetre of rainfall. However, the management of that pasture will be crucial to a producer's ability to survive future climate scenarios.

The MLA and Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF)-funded Climate Savvy Grazing project, part of the Northern Grazing Systems Initiative, has found that a number of industry best-management practices had the potential to reduce the adverse impacts - or capture potential benefits - of likely changes in climate.

Project leader Dr David Phelps said fundamental to profitable and resilient grazing systems now and into the future for northern Australia is the flexible management of stocking rate around the appropriate long-term carrying capacity.

"Where pastures have declined in condition, employing regular wet-season spelling can accelerate the rate of recovery. However, wet-season spelling only works well when stocking rate is managed carefully," David explained.

"In addition, the combined effects of stocking rate management and pasture spelling create conditions that increase opportunities for, and effectiveness of, prescribed fires."

David said that the already dramatic impact of poor land condition on business resilience

would increase if seasons became more variable.

A changing climate

Researchers modelled the impacts of climate change, ranging from best to worst-case scenarios, on nine northern cattle production regions and overlaid this with a range of management strategies.

What they found was that while climate science is unclear about future rainfall trends, all regions would likely benefit from increasing CO² levels due to more-efficient pasture growth.

The best current predictions are that rainfall will remain generally similar to current levels across far northern Australia but will tend to decrease towards the arid interior and in southern Queensland.

Northern Australia is predicted to become hotter, which means evaporation is likely to increase, regardless of rainfall trends. These higher temperatures will also have implications for increased animal requirements for shade and access to water.

The Climate Savvy Grazing initiative - a partnership between MLA, CSIRO and state and territory governments - began in November 2011, targeting six regions: Alice Springs, Kimberley, Gulf Savanna, Victoria River District (VRD), Fitzroy catchment and Maranoa-Balonne.

It ran alongside the Climate Clever Beef project and, together, the initiatives directly targeted nearly 5,500 producers managing 146,932,787ha of land and 8,670,793 head of cattle. →

Adaptation

Best grazing practice guidelines

The Climate Savvy Grazing project created 'best-bet' management practices for northern Australian beef producers to improve the productivity and the health of their grazing land.

The best-bet practices focused on four key areas:

- stocking rate management
- pasture spelling
- prescribed burning
- infrastructure development

Past R&D and producer experience helped formulate the best-bet options for improving productivity and health of native pastures. Variations of these management practices were tested in computer-simulated models against a range of climatic conditions for the six regions studied. This identified the optimal ways to combine different practices for profitability and improved land condition.

This information has been used to develop region-specific technical guides, fact sheets and case studies.

Producers can access this information at www.futurebeef.com.au

→ Climate savvy solutions

So with these predictions in mind what are the best grazing management options to deal with future uncertainty?

1. Stocking rate

Ensuring stocking rates match the carrying capacity of the pastures, soils and rainfall was the most important option to ensure sustained production into the future, as it has been in the past. Under an uncertain rainfall outlook, however, being flexible and stocking according to the feed on offer becomes increasingly important.

A moderately flexible stocking rate strategy (allowing stocking rates to increase by up to 10-20% and decrease by up to 30-40%) was the best-performing strategy in the Gulf, Kimberley, Maranoa-Balonne and VRD regions under all future climate scenarios. A key to the success of moderate flexibility appears to be the rapid and relatively high reduction in stock numbers in response to periods of below-average pasture growth and more gradual increases when rainfall returns to average or above average.

A fully flexible strategy (where animals are traded according to feed supply, including full destocking in the driest years) was the best-performing strategy in Alice Springs for more pessimistic climate scenarios (ie those with significantly reduced rainfall).

2. Pasture spelling

While a moderately flexible stocking rate strategy is capable of increasing the perennial grass composition of pastures, it is likely that pasture spelling will be needed to prevent patch grazing and increase the abundance of more palatable grasses.

A rotational spelling regime of a six-month summer-season spell, every four years, is capable of improving pasture that is in poor 'C' condition, as well as carrying capacity, animal productivity and overall property profitability under both current climate and future climates, providing stocking rates are appropriate to each climate. This pasture-spelling strategy lifted the percentage of perennials, more than doubled liveweight gain (LWG)/ha, and increased average annual profit by more than 50% under both current and future climate scenarios.

In the Alice Springs region, recovery of pasture condition, livestock productivity and property profit required longer and more frequent spells, such as a full 12-month spell every two years.

3. Prescribed burning

Modelling with future climate scenarios suggested that, with

appropriate management of stocking rates, fire can be used to manage woody cover, while maintaining or improving LWG/ha and profits.

The ability to use fire may decline under lower rainfall scenarios, but active stock management such as reducing stocking rates, matching stocking rates to available forage and spelling can be used to facilitate fire use.

There will likely be a greater need to burn more frequently as woody plant cover could have a competitive edge under higher CO₂.

While the project confirmed the value of fire in wooded country, the incidence of planned fire management in many areas of northern Australia appears to be in decline.



Dr David Phelps, DAFF

T: 07 4650 1244

E: david.phelps@daff.qld.gov.au



Regional rainfall predictions are constantly being updated and are available from the CSIRO website www.csiro.au/ozclim/presets.do

Region	Management strategies to improve resilience to climate variability
Kimberley, Victoria River District, Queensland Mitchell Grasslands, Barkly Tableland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stocking around long-term carrying capacity¹ • Assessing adequacy of pasture at end of wet for getting cattle through the dry season while maintaining pasture • Wet season spelling to recover pasture in poor condition • Reducing risk of hot uncontrolled fires
Queensland Gulf, Burdekin, Fitzroy woodlands, Maranoa-Balonne woodlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stocking around long-term carrying capacity • Assessing adequacy of pasture at end of wet for getting cattle through the dry season while maintaining pasture • Wet season spelling to recover pasture in poor condition • In woodland areas, employing controlled fires every 3-5 years to maintain balance of woody plants and pasture
Alice Springs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stocking around long-term carrying capacity • Spelling during periods of above-average rainfall to recover pasture in poor condition • Reducing risk of hot uncontrolled fires following periods of above-average rainfall

¹ Long-term carrying capacity as estimated in the Grazing Land Management workshop and dependent on climate, land type, land condition, and paddock design (especially location and number of water points).

A spelling lesson at Arakoola

A property management plan with a strong emphasis on spelling pastures to improve land condition is seen as key to the North family's long-term business viability.

Snapshot

Peter, Diana (Tiki) and George North, Bollon, Qld.



Property:

12,860ha

Enterprise:

Breeder operation turning off yearling steers for restocker and feedlot markets

Livestock: 600 breeders

Pasture: Mulga Mitchell, mulga oats and buffel grasses

Soil: Mix of poplar box and mulga; poplar box and false sandalwood; cypress pine on deep sands; yellowjacket and poplar box; coolibah flood plains

Rainfall: 460mm

The latest report card on paddock condition on the North family's Bollon property contained mainly A ratings – a turnaround from when C was the average.

Peter, Diana (Tiki) and George North operate a cattle breeding enterprise on 'Arakoola' and have used rotational summer spelling to transform drought-hit degraded pasture into healthy stands of mulga Mitchell, mulga oats and buffel grasses following three good seasons.

"We have focused on maintaining a safe carrying capacity in combination with pasture spelling to improve land condition and rebuild our stock numbers post-drought," Peter said.

"Paddock spelling is now viewed as a necessity on Arakoola and paddocks carrying the greatest number of cattle over the dry season are the first to be locked up in early summer."

Arakoola's paddocks have been assessed under the ABCD land condition framework, where A is good, B is fair, C is poor and D is very poor.

The front paddock, used to grow out steers, looked like a dust bowl in 2007 and was deemed to be in C condition. Features included a general decline in productive grasses, increased density of less-palatable species, exposed bare ground and an increase in the density of woody regrowth.

The paddock's carrying capacity, which had been about 200 weaners before the drought, was halved until the paddock was eventually de-stocked midway through 2007.

Following rain in late 2007, 90 weaners were put back into the paddock, with numbers growing to 130 by mid-2008.

Thanks to the rigorous spelling regime, combined with a run of good seasons, the front paddock is now in A condition, with a good cover of productive grass species.

"We have had abnormally good seasons since being involved in the Climate Savvy Grazing project, so the real test is yet to come," Peter said.

"But I believe the improved land condition means that, even if we were to record just 150mm of rain during the summer wet season, the established pasture would have the capacity to respond and provide sufficient high-quality feed for stock to keep growing."

The stocking rate in the front paddock, now used as a 'transition' paddock for weaner cattle, far exceeds pre-drought numbers.



Peter North

T: 07 4625 6182

E: northpd@bigpond.com

Roger Sneath, DAFF

T: 07 4669 0808

E: roger.sneath@daff.qld.gov.au

Adaptation

Firing up production

For 100 years, the Williams family have relied on burning to make the most of the grazing on their properties 'Mount Mica' and 'Florence Vale', at Rubyvale, south of Clermont in Queensland. However, the burning methods today are not what they used to be.

Snapshot

Glynn Williams,
Mt Mica and
Florence Vale,
Rubyvale, Qld.



Property:
About 20,000ha

Enterprise:
Self-replacing
Brahman-
Charolais herd
turning off steers
and heifers to
Japan Ox and local
trade markets

Livestock:
3,000 breeders

Pasture:
Native pastures
with some buffel
grass

Soil:
Granite-based
sandy loam

Rainfall:
530mm

The basis for consistent use of burning, according to cattle producer Glynn Williams, is simple. "If we don't burn, the grass gets old and rank and the cattle do poorly - there is no nutritional value in it at all."

About half the two properties' total area is cleared, with good stands of buffel and native grasses. The treed areas are well-grassed with healthy stands of desert bluegrass, black speargrass and kangaroo grass.

"Patch burning with cool fires is used in the forest country, while hotter fires are used for regrowth control on the cleared country," Glynn said.

Land condition is good over the two properties, with

well-developed infrastructure. Most paddocks carry 100 to 300 head of cattle. In the early days, a lack of infrastructure and resources meant the burns were frequent and uncontrolled.

To prevent wildfires, hazard reduction burns were implemented, usually involving burning with cool fires for strategic firebreaks and also patch burning across paddocks.

When combined with conservative stocking rates, the benefits included enhanced animal production, altered grazing distribution across paddocks and the prevention of tree and shrub thickening.

As the properties became more developed in the 1970s, burning

management became more efficient. The paddocks were burnt about every three years and burning was delayed until there was adequate soil moisture for the grass to regrow straight after the fire.

Today, about one-quarter of a paddock is burned to ensure a safety margin of feed is retained, and cattle remain in the paddock to obtain the benefit from fresh growth. In subsequent years, a separate section of the paddock is burnt. Cattle patch graze the newly burnt section while the previously burnt area receives a rest.

Kim Williams, Glynn's son, in Mount Mica's back paddock two months after it was patch burnt in February 2011. Good land condition, light stocking and good summer rain resulted in good regrowth of bluegrass and black speargrass.



Paul Jones, DAFF
T: 07 4983 7415
E: paul.jones@daff.qld.gov.au

Cost of production

Growing more meat not the herd

By gaining a handle on costs, this Yarrowitch producer identified the best way to grow his business was to grow more meat not his herd.

Snapshot

Tony and Jan Gaudron,
Yarrowitch, NSW.



Property:
1,000ha

Enterprise:
Breeding and finishing cattle for the EU and heavy domestic market

Livestock:
500 Angus breeders with some Gelbvieh and South Devon bloodlines

Pasture:
Improved pastures - cocksfoot, ryegrass, fescue

Soil: Basalt

Rainfall:
960-1,300mm

After four years with the Yarrowitch Beef Profit Group, Tony Gaudron found he had two ways of increasing his profits - run more cattle or put more weight on his existing herd. The end result would be the same: increased kilograms per hectare.

"The Beef Profit Group allowed access to each other's figures. This illustrated that while my cost of production (CoP) was quite good, averaging around \$1/kg, my kilograms of beef per hectare (255), given our rainfall and pastures, was not as good as it could be," Tony said.

The analysis became a driving force for improving productivity, with Tony setting a target of producing 300kg/ha. He initially took a path to reduce the turnoff age of his cattle through better weaner management - a tactic requiring more cows. Two good seasons saw Tony change course and simply try to put as much weight as possible onto his steers.

"In the last 12 months our steer turn-off weight has increased from 340kg to about 380kg dressed weight. Our long term aim is still to reduce turnoff age and run more cows. We are retaining more heifers but the breeding process takes time," he said.

"Buying EU accredited weaners is not profitable for us, so the solution is to find the most profitable balance between turnoff weight and age."

Other business drivers

Always conscious of his input costs, Tony aspires to maintain a low cost enterprise, which is strongly reflected in his approach to breeding and genetics. Calving difficulty in the heifers has led Tony to invest most of his bull buying budget in low birth weight, short gestation length bulls. A third of the bulls used for the cow herd are bred by Tony.

"To buy an Angus bull with great traits across the board could cost up to \$10,000. I can get the growth into my herd using other breeds (South Devon and Gelbvieh) cheaply, and then focus on introducing the traits the Angus breed is renowned for," Tony said.

Being involved in the Yarrowitch group has been a catalyst for change and Tony values the diversity and interaction that the group offers.

"Calculating the CoP is a quick and painless process involving little effort. The biggest value comes from sharing the results, looking at the diversity across the group and sharing information about what drives on farm profitability," Tony said.

Table 1 Yarrowitch Beef Profit Group

Year	Mean cost of production and range (\$/kg)	Mean kilograms of beef per hectare and range
08-09	1.35 (0.85-2.37)	256 (173-480)
09-10	1.32 (0.87-2.01)	233 (250-353)
10-11	1.19 (0.85-1.69)	288 (166-609)



Tony Gaudron // T: 02 6777 7415
E: awjygaudron@bigpond.com



Calculate your cost of production with the help of MLA's online calculator:
www.mla.com.au/CoPbeef

MSA puts weight behind productivity push

Snapshot

Tom Amey, Mummulgum and Dyraaba, NSW.



Property:
470ha

Enterprise:
Beef cattle targeting MSA yearling market

Livestock:
530 cattle

Pastures:
An ongoing improvement program is targeting species and management to microclimates and land capability

Soil:
Ranging from sandy to clay loams of alluvial and basalt origins

Rainfall:
1,025mm

Northern NSW beef producer Tom Amey has spent 12 years refining his herd based on feedback from Meat Standards Australia (MSA).

By adopting a policy of using MSA feedback figures to guide breeding decisions, Tom made calculated changes - like moving from Charolais to Murray Grey sires over his composite cows, which are half Brahman and a quarter each Murray Grey and Fresian.

The move gave him the extra carcass fat cover he needed to

more reliably hit MSA grading, without significantly denting weight gains.

For Tom, hitting MSA criteria means a premium of about 20¢/kg compared to delivering his cattle into a non-MSA system - or about \$40 extra per calf. With a relatively small herd, every extra dollar counts.

In this way, Tom's whole beef operation has evolved around meeting MSA, so misses are rare. Of the last mob of 180 weaners he trucked, only one didn't make the MSA grade - a heifer who started cycling in the slaughter yards, lifting her meat pH levels above acceptable limits.

Now Tom has a productive genetics program giving reliable results, he's looking at other ways of using MSA to boost productivity from the 230 ha and 240 ha farms he owns with wife Cathy north-west of Casino. Building a herd's management around MSA grading is a "no-brainer", Tom remarked.

"People look at it as being really hard. It's just not. Whatever the challenges of producing a good carcass are, they are the challenges you have to address to work with MSA," he said.

Understanding the drivers

To push productivity, Tom's focused on the one figure on the MSA feedback sheet that has little to do with the way the animal grades: eye muscle area (EMA).

That's because while MSA measures a lot of things, those measurements are mostly aimed at consumer satisfaction, not at producer profitability. The single biggest predictor of return to the producer is beef yield.

"The whole yield thing doesn't come into play in MSA," Tom said.

"You need to take into account muscularity yourself. That's why EMA is so important - it's an indicator of the total muscularity of the carcass, and also retail beef yield."

Tom tracks EMA performance back to his Murray Grey bulls -

bought in on the basis of their performance figures, balanced against the stud breeder's knowledge of how different sire lines perform in the real world.

He also places a strong emphasis on temperament, which can influence pH levels at the time of slaughter.

By building EMA in his herd, based on continuous feedback from the MSA feedback sheets, he aims to continue to steadily grow its profitability, as he has done since he adopted MSA in 2000.

"Weaners are turned off at 9.5-10 months, at weights of about 200 kilograms (carcass weight). Calves are given access to grain on a creep-feed basis, a relatively minor cost that is well repaid in extra weight gain and finish," Tom said.

Tom Amey first shared his MSA experiences with readers in the spring 2009 edition of *Prograzier*. Read it at www.mla.com.au/tom-amey. Now, four years on, he gives us an update on the further refining to his production system based on MSA feedback.



Tom Amey
T: 02 6664 7347
E: ameyag@nor.com.au



www.mla.com.au/msa

Lamb opportunities in WA's high rainfall zone

Drought destocking in 2010 has left WA's sheep flock at a critically low level, where it may fail to meet demand from processors, exporters and breeders.

Figures showing lamb production can be profitable in the high rainfall zone (HRZ) are being used to drive a campaign to increase sheep production.

The area has traditionally been only a small contributor to Western Australia's sheep production but with a climate similar to major prime lamb production regions in South Australia, Victoria and NSW, WA's HRZ has been earmarked for its production potential by the Department of Agriculture and Food WA (DAFWA).

Murdoch University (MU) Associate Professor Dr Andrew Thompson said modelling for the MLA-supported Scoping Study for the WA High Rainfall Zone Lamb Initiative had found profit from a lamb enterprise in the south west HRZ could be up to \$246/ha.

The analysis incorporates information from WA's Red Sky beef benchmarking project and will include potential returns from beef enterprises versus early or late lamb systems turning off finished lambs.

Andrew said preliminary Red Sky benchmarking data showed sheep enterprises created about \$220/ha more profit than beef on properties running sheep and cattle in this region.

A self-replacing sheep flock system, based on a maternal composite genotype, was found to have similar profitability to buying in a dual purpose merino ewe and mating to a terminal sire to produce a first-cross finished lamb.

Pluses and minuses

Research across the HRZ found the main barriers to running sheep were unsuitable infrastructure, perceived high labour requirements relative to returns and

concerns sheep that were too susceptible to worms, footrot, fleece rot and lice.

DAFWA Livestock Industries Research Officer Kimbal Curtis said many beef producers indicated they ran cattle because of ease of management and better suitability to infrastructure and the region's long wet growing season.

"However, they also expressed frustration with poor beef prices, lack of buyer competition for cattle and high costs of production," he said.

Kimbal said producers who did run sheep in the region said the main benefit was diversified income from lambs and wool.

"They also said sheep were a better grazing tool for weed control and it was easier to match sheep nutritional requirements to pasture supply than it was for cattle," he said. →

Figure 1 Sheep population across Western Australia with the HRZ marked out in the bottom left hand corner.



→

"Those farmers who were considering lamb production were attracted by the higher profitability of the sheep enterprise."

Harnessing the potential

To assist the development of a prime lamb industry in the south west HRZ, producers said they wanted confidence of sustained market opportunities and case studies of successful local sheep enterprises.

Kimbal said there was potential to have 510,000 more ewes producing an extra 430,000 lambs from new sheep entrants to this region and an extra 210,000 lambs from improved reproductive performance of established flocks.

"This will help to boost WA sheep numbers to some degree and contribute to more efficient and sustainable sheep processing and export sectors in this state," he said.

The next steps of the project are to finalise the profitability analysis and develop case studies to highlight successful sheep systems already operating in the high rainfall zone.

13.7 million

sheep in WA in 2011-12, the lowest since 1957

38 million

sheep in WA in 1990, the peak

5.6 million

sheep and lamb annual turn-off needed to sustain export and processor requirements

4.1 million head

is the estimated 2011-12 turn-off which will not sustain processing and export

785 businesses in

WA's south west HRZ run sheep, 2,268 have beef cattle and 279 run dairy cattle



Kimbal Curtis, DAFWA

T: 08 9368 3847

E: kimbal.curtis@agric.wa.gov.au

Dr Andrew Thompson, Murdoch

University // T: 08 9360 7394

E: andrew.thompson@agric.wa.gov.au



Tools producers can use to help run more sheep in WA:

Lifetime Ewe Management -

www.rist.com.au/lifetime_ewe_management

Making More From Sheep - www.makingmorefromsheep.com.au

Sheep - The Simple Guide to Making More Money with Less Work can be found at www.makingmorefromsheep.com.au in the Hot Topics Module of the MMFS manual.

The Sheep's Back program - www.wool.com

For WA's high rainfall zone (HRZ) producers wanting to focus on lamb production, the critical control factors that will have the biggest impact on whole farm profitability are:

1. High pasture utilisation (\$40-\$80/ha for a 10% increase in pasture utilised)
2. Good lamb marketing program (\$50/ha for a 10% increase in value of lambs)
3. High reproductive rates (\$42/ha for a 10% increase in lambs produced)
4. High winter pasture growth rates (\$40/ha for a 10% increase in winter pasture growth)
5. Mating ewe lambs (\$37/ha from mating ewe lambs)

Mixing it up

A high rainfall zone (HRZ) sheep producing family is finding good production results from breeding sheep that are compatible with the environment.

Switching from Merinos to the Kelso composite breed to suit local conditions has been the key for the Ipsen family to boosting sheep flock numbers, productivity and labour efficiency in WA's south west high rainfall zone.

Brad and Sarah Ipsen, Brad's parents Eric and Louise, and full-time employee John Jenks juggle the management of a 9,500 head ewe flock with year-round intensive broccoli production.

Their sheep are run across properties in a 50km radius from Manjimup, 350km south of Perth, and further south to Pemberton in a rainfall range of 800mm to 1,200mm.

Brad said local producers, historically, had problems running types prone to fleece rot and footrot, causing real impediments to the expansion of the local sheep population.

To address footrot issues and lift sheep profits per hectare to levels more comparable with encroaching bluegum



Snapshot

Eric and Louise;
Brad and Sarah
Ipsen, Manjimup,
WA.



Property:
708ha plus
769ha leased

Enterprises:
Sheep, broccoli,
cattle, packing shed,
hay, cereal seeds

Livestock:
9,500 breeding
ewes, 100 head
of cattle

Pasture:
Clover and
ryegrass

Soil:
Gravels and loams

Rainfall:
800mm

*Brad and Sarah
Ipsen with their
children, Evie (12)
and Chris (7).*

plantations that offered returns of \$600/ plantable hectare, the Ipsens introduced the New Zealand Kelso breed in 2007-08.

Brad said these sheep offered productive traits, including high fertility, and had good genetic resistance to footrot coupled with quality 22-24 micron wool.

"We needed sheep that would produce more lambs able to be grown out to heavier weights," he said.

"To stay in sheep production in this zone, running Merinos with 110% weaning rates is no longer sustainable."

Brad, a third generation sheep producer, joked changing breeds meant he no longer got out of bed for a weaning rate less than 140%.

From this year, the Ipsen's flock will comprise all second and third-cross Kelso-Merinos.

On the rise

The family's flock numbers have been rapidly built from about 2,000 breeding

ewes in 2002 to a 2012 flock of 8,300 mature breeding ewes and 1,200 mated ewe lambs.

The aim is to have sustained 140-150% weaning.

Last year almost 6,500 lambs were turned off after weaning in spring at an average carcase weight of 23kg.

Brad said having so many lambs on the ground necessitated high-quality and quantity feed in winter and pasture was the cheapest option.

The Ipsens sow 200-250ha of Italian ryegrass annually at a density of 20-30kg/ha with a specialised pasture air seeder bought by their local pasture group.

For ease of management and to maintain ewes in top condition, the stocking rate is set at about 13DSE/ha.

"Unlike other rainfall zones in WA, we don't have cereal crop stubbles for sheep feed during summer," Brad said.

"This means we need strong emphasis on animal growth rates and maximising use of green feed - by running higher stocking rates or finishing 80-90% of lambs at higher weights."

The Ipsens scan the ewes to identify wet and dry animals and run small mobs with a natural mix of single, twin and triplet lambs.

Animal health practices incorporate a slow-release worm capsule that eliminates the need for labour-intensive drenching during winter.

The Ipsens are confident about the future opportunities stemming from sheep production in their region using modern technology and infrastructure.

Brad said there were signs that flock numbers were starting to grow. "This will provide a major boost for the local sheep industry and markets."



Brad Ipsen // T: 0427 831 236
E: bsipsen@bigpond.com

Pasture improvement

EverGraze is a national, collaborative project aimed at increasing the profitability and natural resource management of sheep and cattle enterprises across the high rainfall zones of southern Australia.



Getting grazing right

Hinged on the principle of growing the 'right plant, in the right place, for the right purpose with the right management', EverGraze has equipped producers with cutting edge resources including scientific information and practical tools to help with everyday decisions.

EverGraze project leader Kate Sargeant, of Victoria's Department of Primary Industries, said the program has had an enormous impact. It has involved 14,000 producers in group training, produced 200 knowledge products including scientific publications, decision-support tools and information brochures, and effected management changes to 200,000ha.

The project has included six research teams across Victoria, NSW and Western Australia who tested new farming systems and measured and modelled soil, water, pasture and livestock inputs to produce regionally relevant advice for producers.

Kate said these regional information packages combined the recommendations

from EverGraze whole-farm system experiments with modelling, and case studies show the big picture in a local context. They will become available on the EverGraze website by mid this year.

The program, established in 2005, is a Future Farm Industries (FFI) CRC research and delivery partnership. It is delivered by agricultural and natural resource organisations across Australia including: Department of Primary Industries in Victoria and NSW; the Department of Agriculture and Food WA; Charles Sturt University; MLA and Australian Wool Innovation as well as numerous catchment management authorities.



EverGraze Communications
Kathryn Manago // T: 03 9296 4745
 E: kathryn.manago@dpi.vic.gov.au; or
Bindi Hunter, DPI // T: 03 5561 9909
 E: bindi.hunter@dpi.vic.gov.au



www.evergraze.com.au

14,000

producers in EverGraze group training

200

products released from EverGraze

200,000_{ha}

of land affected by management changes as a result of EverGraze learnings

Pasture improvement

Making money from native pastures

EverGraze research has found native pastures, grazed in rotation, can provide a strategic opportunity to increase production.

Native pastures can play a profitable role in grazing systems, according to EverGraze research team leader Jim Virgona.

Reporting on findings from a three-year field trial at Holbrook, NSW, Jim said there were several strategies producers could combine to improve profits from native pastures including:

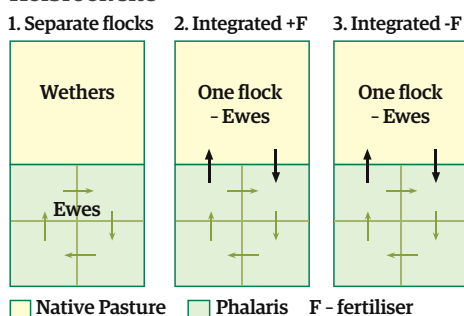
- adding fertiliser to increase the legume component, thereby increasing pasture growth and quality
- grazing the fertilised pastures with higher-value livestock (eg ewes instead of wethers)
- increasing utilisation at critical times to stay on top of the annual component, while being careful to remove stock at critical ground cover and overstocking points.

"Seasons have a greater influence on the pasture composition than grazing management. As long as we are careful to look after our native pasture species, they will be resilient and respond quickly when conditions improve," Jim said.

Jim and his EverGraze team found that the key was to integrate the management of native and introduced pastures across the farm. They designed the Holbrook experiment to determine if the strategies listed below could be combined to increase profitability while maintaining the ground cover and perennial component of the native pastures.

Three production systems were compared (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 Treatment systems at Holbrook site



1. Separate flocks

This represented the traditional approach of running higher-value breeding stock (for example, Merino ewes joined to terminal sires) on improved pastures (a blend of phalaris, cocksfoot and sub clover) with lower-value animals - Merino wethers - set-stocked on native country.

2. Integrated with fertiliser

A single breeding flock (Merino ewes joined to terminal sires) grazed across both pasture types with fertiliser applied to the native pastures made up of spear, wallaby, weeping (*Microlaena*), red and common wheat grasses with annual species such as sub clover, vulpia, barley grass, Paterson's curse and capeweed.

3. Integrated no fertiliser

A single breeding flock, as above, grazed across both pasture types with native pastures not fertilised.

Grazing rotations

Jim said the phalaris pastures were subdivided into four and grazed on a two-week on, six-week-off basis and the wethers were set-stocked on the native pastures at 3-5 DSE/ha.

As with any production system, grazing movements were influenced by seasonal conditions but were made to ensure native pastures were rested frequently during summer.

During most of the experiment, ewes and lambs in the integrated production systems (ie 2 and 3) were moved onto the native pastures during October to increase grazing pressure on annual species and then returned to the phalaris pastures.

Having a single mob of ewes and lambs meant the spring grazing pressure in the integrated system was significantly higher than could be achieved in the separate system, where the stocking rate from the wethers did not vary throughout the year.

The native pastures were also utilised in early autumn to take advantage of any green feed and for a short spell mid-winter.



Handy hints

- Perennial species thrive when rested - timing and frequency will depend on species.
- Native species rely on a seed bank for persistence, so ensure pastures are rested adequately to give seeds the opportunity to establish.
- Maximum growth of annuals occurs during early spring and, if left unchecked, could dominate the native grasses. Timely grazing can ensure a good balance between the two.

Only during 2010 were conditions favourable enough for ewes (post-weaning) to be left on native pasture until early February.

Results

"We performed a traditional statistical analysis on the gross margins using a range of price combinations for lamb and wool from the past 30 years," Jim said.

"In almost all cases there was a significant advantage to integrated grazing systems compared to the separate flock system. It was only when the ratio of wool:lamb price was high did the advantage disappear."

Jim said lambs grazing native pasture in spring grew as well as those grazing the improved phalaris pasture. This was because the native pastures had been sufficiently rested over winter to accumulate a quality feed base and because annual species were prevalent.

"Interestingly, in contrast to much of our historical data, we found the two grazing regimes did not affect the composition or ground cover of the native pastures," he said. "We expected that set-stocking wethers in the separate flocks' production system would favour annual species but this didn't happen."



Jim Virgona

T: 02 6933 4174

E: jvirgona@csu.edu.au

Pasture improvement

New Feed Budget Rotation Planner

A new tool to compare the relative productivity of different paddocks and establish fertiliser needs to replace what has been lost in livestock production is now available on the MLA and EverGraze websites.

The Feed Budget Rotation Planner, developed by EverGraze, has just finished a two-year trial period. It offers new functions to help producers make more informed and timely decisions around grazing management, feed requirements, buying and selling livestock and fertiliser inputs.

EverGraze project leader Kate Sargeant, of Victoria's Department of Primary Industries, said the tool now includes a grazing days recorder.

The rotation planner can help establish appropriate stocking rates, calculate pasture growth rates and gauge how long paddocks will last. It will also determine an economical feed ration, record grazing days, and calculate and record maintenance fertiliser requirements for individual paddocks.

This easy to use tool comes with plenty of support, including downloadable instructions on the EverGraze website, a YouTube clip and, for those who prefer personal interaction, face-to-face workshops.



To register interest in attending a workshop, contact EverGraze Communications **Kathryn Manago** // T: 03 9296 4745
E: Kathryn.manago@dpi.vic.gov.au; or **Bindi Hunter, DPI** // T: 03 5561 9909
E: bindi.hunter@dpi.vic.gov.au



To download the tool visit
www.evergraze.com.au/tools.htm or
www.mla.com.au/feedbudgetplanner

Not all production gains involve spending money. Sometimes, as Ian Locke found, they are about working with what you already have.

Ian Locke's grazing system embraces native pastures on his difficult-to-manage country. It may look textbook perfect on paper, but what it doesn't show is the long journey it took to get there.

The Wirruna Poll Hereford stud master has spent the past 20 years researching and planning how best to utilise 'Spring Valley', the family's property at Holbrook, and its diverse landscape and soil types.

"My philosophy has always been to get the most bang for my buck, so when it came to pastures, for a long time I was on the high-input band wagon," Ian said. "I'd made huge productivity gains by improving some of our more fertile country, so it made sense to apply the same approach to our hills."

In hindsight, it was the wrong approach. Twenty years ago, Spring Valley was a typical eastern Riverina farm with its less-fertile zones - particularly the rocky, decomposed granite hills - dedicated to wool production. This often resulted in bare hills vulnerable to erosion and broadleaf weeds. With the country too steep to even ride a quad bike on, Ian was locked into an expensive, no-win cycle of aerial fertiliser application and weed control that barely met his costs of production.

"On the hills in drier years, I was making \$12/DSE and spending \$13/DSE to maintain them. Something had to change," he said.

After talking to cell grazers and producers with a more holistic approach, Ian came up with a whole-farm grazing plan that better matched his livestock production system with the environment. The property has

Going native

"Nature is too expensive to fight, so you must design a system to work with it!"
Ian Locke

also hosted EverGraze trials to test out the productivity of a range of species.

"It became clear that since we grow about 80% of our pasture in spring, it made sense to move our calving and lambing times and growing out periods to match our pasture production curve," Ian said.

Matching pasture to production

Today, the Lockes' 500 stud cows and 3,700 composite ewes move in a symbiotic rotation around their 1,520ha. Of this, 50% is perennial pastures (phalaris and sub-clover); 20% is annual pastures; 7% is cropping and 15% is native pastures. The small remaining area, which includes tree lanes, is not available for grazing.

By applying a strategic grazing approach to his hill country, Ian has not only cut costs but also boosted profitability by running higher-value animals. Keeping it de-stocked,



Snapshot

Ian and Dianna Locke, Holbrook, NSW.



Property:
1,520ha in total,
1,400ha grazing area

Enterprise:
Poll Hereford stud cattle; composite ewes for prime lamb production

Livestock:
500 breeders;
3,700 ewes

Pasture:
50% perennial (phalaris, subclover); 20% annual (lucerne, ryegrass, forage rape); 7% crops (oats, triticale); 15% native (red grass, wallaby grass, *Microlaena*)

Soil:
Heavy clays and alluvial soils to rocky decomposed granite hills

Rainfall:
708mm



Helpful hints

- Fence your property to land classes, taking water into consideration
- Invest money in pastures where you'll get the biggest bang for your buck
- Appreciate that native pastures have value as a low-input pasture system. They are resilient and thrive in low phosphorous environments
- Look at your livestock production system and consider what classes of animals can utilise native grasses while maintaining production targets, eg dry pregnant cows during winter
- For optimum weight gain from native pastures, graze during spring when the best quality feed is present.

Ian Locke, with daughter Annabel, 16, in native pastures which create a winter haystack for the family's 500-cow Poll Hereford stud herd.

particularly through summer, allows the red grass and wallaby grass to set seed and regenerate, improving ground cover, soil moisture retention and biodiversity.

"From mid-May to July, 500 spring-calving cows and heifers graze the hills to chew back the mature, mostly low-quality standing feed," Ian said.

"They are moved out around mid-July, a month before calving. About three months later sheep or backgrounding cattle are introduced to utilise the higher-quality native grasses (such as *Microlaena*) and heavily graze the exotic annuals such as clovers, broadleaf weeds and grasses."

By changing his production system to best utilise native pastures, Ian has saved \$13/DSE (by cutting fertiliser and weed-control costs) and, by running higher gross margin returning enterprises, has improved

production from the hill country from \$12/DSE to \$30/DSE.

"The best lesson I've learnt is the value of working with the environment - not against it - appreciating country for what it is, and matching your production systems to suit," he said.



Ian Locke // T: 02 6036 2877
E: locke.ian@bigpond.com
www.wirruna.com



A case study on Ian's enterprise was featured in the June 2012 Evergraze newsletter, which can be downloaded at www.evergraze.com.au/evergraze-update-newsletter.htm

Old system:

\$13/DSE

to maintain grazing on hills

\$12/DSE

return from that grazing

New system:

\$0/DSE

cost for maintenance

\$30/DSE return

Reproductive efficiency



The weighing game

A Victorian prime lamb producer is seeing a correlation between ewe weight at joining and conception rates by using an innovative approach to increasing production.

Snapshot
Jock and Maree McGregor, Callawadda, Vic.



Property:
2,400ha

Enterprise:
Dual purpose meat and wool Merino flock and broadacre cropping

Livestock:
2,000 Merino ewes

Pasture:
Medic clover and ryegrass and dryland lucerne

Soil:
Varies from friable black to gravelly soils

Rainfall:
425mm

Participating in a MLA-funded producer demonstration site (PDS) program into joining ewe lambs has shown Victorian producer Jock McGregor the potential benefits of having Merino ewes in full production a year earlier than usual.

His three years of data, however, has also given him an insight into how challenging it can be to achieve good conception in Merino ewe-lambs, especially in tough seasons.

"You can certainly pick up income, with the main benefit coming in the second year when we have been able to mark over 120% of lambs out of ewes that, if they hadn't been joined as lambs themselves, would still have been coming into production as maidens," Jock said.

"But from my experience joining ewe lambs wouldn't be

for everyone as it requires a reasonable amount of time and work."

Gathering data

The McGregors are one of 15 Victorian enterprises participating in the three-year PDS which has collected information on nearly 20,000 ewe lambs to create best practice guidelines for the industry.

"A lot seems to hinge on body weight, and if you are not close to the mark on body weight you are not going to do any good with conception - our figures from 2011 tell you that," he said.

The McGregors begin lambing each year on 1 September, meaning spring and summer feed conditions play a big role before joining the ewe-lambs in April at eight months of age.

In 2010, when summer rains kept feed green, 256 ewe lambs were joined and at pregnancy

scanning had a 90% conception rate. The ewe lambs had weighed an average of 40kg and were condition score 3 plus.

In 2011, when the season was much drier, the ewe-lambs lacked maturity and averaged less than 38kg at joining and conception rates fell to 56%.

This year the McGregors opted to put their ewe-lambs into a feedlot, generally used each year to finish their Merino wether lamb portion.

Jock said the 739 ewe lambs were fed for 10-weeks over the joining period on an 80/20 mix of barley and lentils at a cost of about \$30 a head. At joining, the lambs averaged 39kg and condition score 3 to 3.2, and returned a conception rate of 78%.

Jock said he wouldn't necessarily join ewe lambs every year, but rather would let seasons and economics dictate.

38kg joining weight

58%
conception rate

39kg joining weight

78%
conception rate

40kg joining weight

90%
conception rate



Jock McGregor
T: 03 5359 8245



Download // *Wean More Lambs* module of Making More from Sheep
www.mla.com.au/makingmorefromsheep

Download // *Tips&Tools: 47x7 - Joining ewe-lambs for more profit* from
www.mla.com.au/joining-ewe-lambs

Phosphorus

Snapshot

Lux and Linley, Russell and Donna Lethbridge, Hughenden/Alpha, Qld.



Property:
19,500ha at Werrington Station and 28,000ha at Rainmore

Enterprise:
Werrington Station runs breeding cattle, with animals fattened at Rainmore. Markets include 450–550kg steers into grainfed market, heifers and steers into domestic feeder trade, grassfed steers to Japan Ox and livestock export market, cull cows to processors for the US market and aged cows PTIC or with calf at foot are sold at southern sales.

Livestock:
10,000 head

Pasture:
Werrington Station: Seca and Verano stylo and Wynn Cassia sown into native pastures. Rainmore: buffel grass in brigalow country and native eucalypt forest with native pastures.

Soil:
Werrington Station: varying soils including sand, decomposed granite, black and goldfield soils with P levels of 2–3mg/kg up to 7–8mg/kg. Rainmore: heavy black soil scrub country to lighter alluvial loams.

Rainfall:
Werrington Station: 700mm, Rainmore: 550mm

P supplementation measures up

A North Queensland family featured in the recently published manual, *Phosphorus management of beef cattle in northern Australia*, provides working examples of the gains from investment in phosphorus.

The Lethbridge family has a number of ways to measure the results of getting serious about year-round phosphorus (P) supplementation to their herd.

For a start, P supplementation has increased the breeder herd gross margin by \$111,150 and Russell Lethbridge uses numerous markers to understand the factors affecting the gain.

“Once we concentrated on getting recipes and intakes right, we soon noticed a 15–20kg advantage in the dressed weight of cull cows and up to a 15% branding advantage (cows surviving and calves weaned) across the Werrington cows,” he said.

Another gain was fertility. By maximising weight gains in breeders over the wet, the Lethbridges have found all cows have achieved condition score 3 or above at calving. The weaning rate has lifted by an average of 10% to 72% and the breeder death rate has dropped from an average of 3% to 1.5%.

“The financial gain is estimated just on increased weaner numbers, more breeder cows surviving and increased weight gains in cattle sold,” Russell said. “We are not counting the ease of mustering and the benefits of quieter cattle.”

Delivering the P

In earlier days, P supplementation was haphazard. Now it’s a planned intake of 7–8g of P/head/day for breeders and heifers and 4g/head/day for steers, using a commercially mixed recipe during the wet season.

The wet season supplement (9.1% P) comprises 44% Kynofos™, 35% salt, 8% urea, 7% limestone, 4% GranAm™, 2% sulphur including 0.5% Rumigro™ vitamin and mineral mix. In 2012, it cost \$865/tonne delivered.

For the six months of the dry season, breeders are fed a 35% urea and 30% protein meal dry lick with 8% Kynofos™ (with assorted minerals and vitamins making up the balance) while the heifers are fed a M8U (molasses urea mix) supplement plus 1% P and 8% copra meal.

All supplements on Werrington Station are distributed prior to the wet in half tonne fertiliser bags placed away from permanent waters.

\$111,150

additional profit from P



Russell Lethbridge
T: 07 4062 5252
E: russellanddonna@bigpond.com



New manual provides ‘How to’ of P

A new producer manual, *Phosphorus management of beef cattle in northern Australia* pulls together research from northern Australia on phosphorus (P) to explain how to determine if it is needed, how much to use, how to deliver it, when to use it and the economics of supplementation.

The benefits of P are illustrated in case studies covering diverse locations, systems and enterprise goals.

Contributors to the MLA-funded manual included the NT Department of Resources, Department of Agriculture and Food WA, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Queensland and the Queensland Alliance for Agriculture and Food Innovation at the University of Queensland.



Download or order the manual at
www.mla.com.au/phosphorus-management

Genetics

Heading to the polls

The transition to a polled cattle herd could soon be even faster with a new, more accurate poll gene marker test that is due to become available this year.

Using visual selection it could take 30 years to achieve an all polled cattle herd and the already available poll gene marker test has reduced that to four to eight years. But now it looks to be further fast tracked.

The improved test, which uses additional markers will be up to 99% accurate across all breeds, and will replace the present

\$30 million
annual cost of bruising to
beef industry

99%
accuracy of new poll
gene test

Beef CRC-developed gene marker test which is already achieving better than 90% accuracy in Brahmans and 72-74% accuracy in Charolais, Droughtmaster, Hereford, Santa Gertrudis and tropical composites.

CSIRO's Dr John Henshall, who is leading the MLA-funded project to refine the test, said the other good news is that research shows that being horned is a stand-alone trait.

"Being horned or not is similar to eye colour in humans, it has no influence on any other traits," he said. "As long as people are considering all traits that are important in their herd when selecting bulls, in addition to polledness, there should be no negative effects."

According to the FutureBeef program, bruising is estimated to cost the Australian beef industry \$30 million a year or about \$4/animal at the point of slaughter, with horns identified as the major contributor.

John said this, combined with animal welfare concerns and significant production cost savings, are the major drivers for change.

Industry take-up

"Producer interest in the gene marker test, which has been commercially available from two providers for two years, has grown significantly in the past 12 months," he said.

"Particularly in the northern beef industry, anecdotally we're seeing a strong shift in attitude and increased demand for

polled bulls, particularly those that are homozygous (carry two poll alleles as opposed to one poll and one horned, known as heterozygous).

"We can discriminate between animals with one polled allele or two polled alleles 90% of the time in some breeds, but only 50% of the time in others (such as Limousin).

"Even then, there is some uncertainty, there might be a one in 10 chance the test is wrong - similar to a progeny test with five calves."



Dr John Henshall
T: 02 6776 1302
E: john.henshall@csiro.au



[www.beefcrc.com.au/
PolledGeneMarkerTest](http://www.beefcrc.com.au/PolledGeneMarkerTest)

Three producers talk about the value of using the current BeefCRC gene marker test

Louise and Burnett Joyce, Gyranda Santa Gertrudis Stud, Theodore, Qld

A horn free future

Santa Gertrudis breeder Burnett Joyce is not one to do things by halves so when he and wife Louise decided to transform their herd to polls it was full steam ahead.

The couple, who run a 1,000-cow, performance-recorded stud herd at Theodore in Queensland, had been visually selecting for polledness for eight years, however, despite their best efforts, had only managed to achieve about 20% polls in their herd.

"It was very difficult to fast-track progress because we found the cull rates in the polled cattle were much higher," Burnett said.

"Historically, breeders have selected polls for that one trait and not applied the selection pressure that's been on horned cattle. We've refused to lower our standards so if it was polled and didn't withstand our other selection criteria, we didn't keep it."

Burnett and Louise produce about 300 bulls for sale each year and, since adopting the poll

"Our clients are demanding this information so they, too, can fast-track their conversion to polls," Burnett said. "We should soon be able to achieve an 85 to 90% poll calf drop from bulls selected using the poll gene marker test."

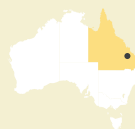
gene marker test during its validation process about four years ago, now offer every bull for sale with performance figures and its polled status.

The Joyces believe concern for animal welfare combined with a shortage of skilled labour are the major drivers behind increased demand for polled bulls.

"We need to be proactive and have industry-created solutions to dehorning, rather than waiting for pressure to be applied," Burnett said.



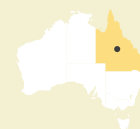
Burnett Joyce
T: 07 4993 7144 or
0429 133 562
E: gyranda@bigpond.com





CSIRO's Dr John Henshall is leading an MLA-funded project aiming to improve the accuracy of the polled gene marker test across all breeds to 99%.

**Libby Harriman,
Muttaborra
veterinarian, Qld**



Marker makes sense

Queensland veterinarian Libby Harriman, of Muttaborra, uses the poll gene marker test regularly on both her clients' herds and her family's GI Brahman stud and believes the investment pays dividends.

"Breeding for polls is the way of the future. Anecdotally, I've heard the setback from dehorning a weaner is estimated at \$47/head; it makes sense to do it genetically," she said

Presently the Harrimans, similar to other Queensland Brahman breeders, are using the poll gene marker test more as a marketing tool, particularly for animals entered in multi-breed sales.

"If you can show an animal is PP (homozygous) and all his other traits are good, it's possible to realise a significant premium at auction. I think everyone is looking for that marketing edge," Libby said.

Andrew Wrigley, Kidman Park, Condobolin, NSW

Genetic test take-off

For Andrew Wrigley, of Kidman Park at Condobolin, adopting the poll gene marker test on a broad scale is akin to boarding a very fast train to genetic progress.

A contract bull breeder, to S. Kidman and Co., Andrew hopes to achieve a totally homozygous polled Santa Gertrudis herd within three or four generations.

Kidman Park is one of the world's few fully performance recorded Santa Gertrudis herds so with extensive data collection already part of Andrew's working day, there is no extra labour input to run the poll test.

"For us, selecting for homozygous poll is just another selection criterion such as soundness, moderate birth weight or retail beef yield," he said.

"The poll test is done at weaning when their 200-day weight is measured and hair samples are taken for sire verification."

Andrew has a lot of faith in the future of polled *Bos indicus* cattle.

"I think there is enormous potential there to not only address animal welfare concerns and production losses due to dehorning, but also to produce a *Bos indicus* animal that will compete well across all traits with *Bos taurus* breeds," he said.

"We started using the test when it first came out on about 25 sires a year but this year we plan to test about 200 males and 200 females," he said. "It will give us a wider net from which to select homozygous offspring that better satisfy all other selection criteria as well."



Andrew Wrigley
T: 0427 962 902
E: anwrigley@bigpond.com



Libby Harriman
T: 07 4658 5666
E: libbylynch@hotmail.com

Match making in the meat industry

MLA Global Marketing General Manager Michael Edmonds likens MLA's presence at trade shows around the world to 'speed dating'.

Trade shows provide a place for exporters to 'speed date' prospective customers, then it's over to the exporters to build rapport with the most promising leads and establish what is hopefully a meaningful, long-term, productive relationship.

Michael said trade shows were a critical mechanism MLA used to connect exporters with importers and end-users in international markets.

"They play a pivotal role in facilitating trade between suppliers and buyers from across the globe and provide exclusive access to highly lucrative regional markets.

"A significant example of this is Dubai's Gulfood trade show, which is billed as the world's largest food and hospitality show, where MLA arranges an industry stand for a number of exporters. Exhibitors at the latest show experienced a flurry of new business enquiries and a number gained new business as a direct result of the event."

Trade shows reach different market channels and allow industry partnerships to promote Australian beef and lamb to new and emerging markets. Investing in trade shows builds awareness of Australian beef and lamb, and fosters relationships between Australian exporters, importers, and retail and foodservice contacts.

Here's a snapshot of the trade shows around the world at which MLA has a presence.

500

leads from US trade shows in 2012, resulting in

20

new US accounts using beef or lamb in their operations for the first time



Michael Edmonds, MLA

E: medmonds@mla.com.au

Stephen Edwards, MLA US

E: sedwards@mla.com.au

Melanie Brock, MLA Japan

E: mbrock@mla.com.au

Michael Crowley, MLA Europe and Russia

E: mcrowley@mla.com.au

Jamie Ferguson, MLA MENA

E: jferguson@mla.com.au

Japan



Regional Manager Melanie Brock said trade shows provided information and trend updates and were a great way to introduce MLA Japan's campaigns and strategies to retailers.

MLA sets up booths with cooking and cutting demonstrations in Tokyo for three high-visitor trade shows - the Supermarket Trade Show (80,000 visitors), Meat Industry Show (100,000) and Meat BBQ (Yakiniku) Business Show (10,000). This year, it will add the Osaka Meat BBQ Business Show to the list.

100,000

visitors attend the Meat Industry Show in Japan

North America



MLA's Regional Manager Stephen Edwards said MLA's trade show presence promotes beef, lamb and goatmeat, with a focus on Australia's clean and green image.

"Audience, location, product and whether Australian exporters can see a benefit determine the events we attend," Stephen said.

"Cooking demonstrations and sampling play a big part. Because there are misconceptions about grassfed beef and lamb, we want people to taste and learn about it."

MLA participates in 10 trade shows a year in this region and sponsors up to 15 targeted foodservice or retail events, with specific audiences. Last year, this generated more than 500 leads, resulting in 20 new accounts using beef or lamb in their operations for the first time.

The largest event MLA participates in is the National Restaurant Association trade show in Chicago, where 1,900 exhibitors attract more than 60,000 foodservice executives, owners and chefs from more than 100 countries.

15 commercial players co-funded with MLA at Anuga, in Cologne Germany

Europe and Russia

In this large and diverse region, Australia only provides a small percentage of products to the market, but trade shows provide an opportunity to engage with large numbers of trade contacts and potential customers.

Regional Manager Michael Crowley said MLA invests in four annual or bi-annual trade shows (three in Russia and one in Europe) chosen for large visitor numbers.

"All sites now have kitchens and restaurant areas for product demonstration and sampling," Michael said. "Last year, 15 commercial players co-funded with MLA at Anuga, in Cologne Germany, six at SIAL in Paris and 10 at Prodexpo in Moscow."

More than **100** leads are typically generated at larger trade shows in the MENA region

Middle East and North Africa (MENA)



MLA's MENA Regional Manager Jamie Ferguson said shows provided the chance to introduce those in the supply chain to new brands, leads and business opportunities.

"They are a great way to meet face-to-face and see competing country activities and innovations," Jamie said.

He believed pre-show advertising, email invitations to key customers, cooking demonstrations and lots of sampling helped draw people to MLA's stand.

"At the larger events, we usually generate more than 100 leads and at the smaller ones, about 40."

Around 20 commercial players co-fund with MLA at the large shows, such as Gulfood in Dubai, and between one and four at the smaller exhibitions.

Shows serve up customers for Nippon

Beef processor Nippon Meat Packers Australia (NMPA) attends up to four international trade shows a year and considers the events a vital component of its marketing strategy.

NMPA sees plenty of value in sending representatives to some of the world's biggest trade shows, including ANUGA in Cologne, SIAL in Paris, Shanghai's FHC, Dubai's mega-show Gulfood, and HOFEX in Hong Kong.

NMPA, which exports to more than 34 countries, is among a number of exporters who set up shop in the MLA stand, taking advantage of valuable opportunities to meet potential new customers.

"Attending trade shows is a fantastic way to connect with our existing customers, while also hopefully generating a few new customers," NMPA trader Paul Wallace said.

"You never know who is going to end up being a valuable customer; some of our best customers have come from meetings at trade shows where we thought the possibility of doing business was very low.



"It is very important to follow up with all of the contacts met at the show once you return home, to decide who has potential and who doesn't."

Paul said a good show was one where you had a welcoming stand with market-specific products on show that generated interest from passing foot traffic.

"Having plenty of seating/meeting space, along with the option to offer customers something to drink and a sample of our product, is also very important," he said.



Paul Wallace // T: 02 8918 0043
E: pwallace@nmpa.com.au

South-East Asia



Trade shows feature heavily within this region and MLA typically participates in two key shows each year - one in China and one in South Asia, often Singapore.

MLA's major draw card at trade shows in the region was sample tasting.

Another key feature is usually sponsorship of a culinary competition at events enabling the promotion of Australian beef, lamb or goatmeat and exposing Australian product to leading chefs seeking new products and innovation. Food and Hotel Asia (FHA) 2012 attracted more than 62,000 visitors and more than 600 chefs took part in the prestigious Culinary Cup Challenge.

Giving the gift of beef



Chuseok is the traditional Korean celebration of a good harvest and Australian beef helped make the 2012 holiday even more special.

Like Thanksgiving in the US, Chuseok is about getting together with the whole family to share a hearty meal and catch up. One of the traditions is giving gifts of food.

MLA supported major Korean hypermarket retailers with Chuseok promotions by supplying 6,400 *Hoju Chungjung Woo* (HCW) gift boxes. These gift boxes hold about 4kg of beef and were labelled with the Australian Clean and Safe (HCW) and Kids love Beef logos. The HCW gift boxes promoted the sale of chilled short ribs and chuck eye roll gift packs, moving the equivalent of 25 tonnes of chilled beef.

Celebrating Chuseok

The day before Chuseok, the whole family gathers to make special rice cakes called

6,400

Hoju Chungjung Woo gift boxes, holding about 4kg of Aussie beef, supplied for Chuseok

25 tonnes

of chilled beef sold during gift box promotion

Aussie beef gift sets range from about \$85 for 3.6kg of brisket or chuck eye roll to

\$130

for 3.6kg of barbecue short ribs.

Songpyun. In the early morning of Chuseok, Koreans perform ancestral worship rituals and often visit ancestral graves.

Traditional home-cooked dishes are displayed on memorial service tables dedicated to ancestors. Short-rib stew is usually on the table, along with fresh ingredients such as taro cooked as soup, apples and pears. Korean traditional pancake or 'Jeon' makes an appearance, alongside sanjeok (a kind of pan fried or grilled kebab of seasoned meat and vegetables), which may be made of beef, especially eye round.

Gifts for Chuseok

Beef is one of the most popular and expensive gifts in Korea. Koreans often give beef gift sets to their parents, teachers and important clients to extend their gratitude for support for the past year.

Gift sets from the local Hanwoo cattle are a premium gift and sell from \$120 to more than \$300 for 3.6 kg of beef cuts. Australian beef gift sets range from about \$85 for 3.6kg of brisket or chuck eye roll to \$130 for 3.6kg of barbecue short ribs. The gift packs come in many different sizes and with a variety of cuts to cater for differing Chuseok dishes.

In 2012, Chuseok was celebrated on 30 September. This year it will be celebrated on 19 September.



MLA's Korea office
E: korea@mla.com.au

Going beyond

MLA's Beyond the Gate tours aim to help producers understand what happens to their produce after it leaves the farm.

To date 300 producers have participated in the tours. After joining one of MLA's Beyond the Gate tours, West Australia producer Rob Bell said the tour highlighted the importance of building relationships, particularly with the purchasers of red meat, to help grow demand for red meat.

"Without innovative new cuts, clever marketing and strong industry relationships our market share will surely fall to other proteins," the Boyunup producer said.

MLA's Producer Engagement Officer, Angus Street, said some producers who had taken the tour, held in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and Albany, had not realised the range of activities MLA undertook to build demand.

"These tours provide an in-depth and hands-on insight into the numerous processes that livestock travel through to end up on the consumer's plate," he said.

The day provides the opportunity to talk to processing staff, wholesalers, butchers and chefs about the product qualities they need and how they keep up with changing consumer demands.

MLA chefs and butchers give cooking demonstrations and taste testings at the end of the day.

The tours finish with a dinner, allowing participants to network and share their thoughts on the day.

Interested? The next Beyond the Gate tours will be held in Brisbane on 18 March and Sydney on 16 April with further tours planned in different cities throughout the year.



Register for the Brisbane tour at
www.mla.com.au/BTG-Brisbane
Register for the Sydney tour at
www.mla.com.au/BTG-Sydney

Recipe

Epic burgers

Beef burgers are blockbusters when it comes to economical ways to entertain. Whether you're cooking a classic or a thriller, follow these simple scripts and you'll have your guests lining up for the sequel!

A touch of class

Serves: 4

Preparation and cooking time: 55 minutes

Ingredients

400g beef mince
2 garlic cloves, crushed
1 tsp ginger, finely grated
1 tbsp lemongrass, finely chopped
3 spring onions, finely sliced
1 tbsp soy sauce
2 tbsp sweet chilli sauce
1 egg, lightly beaten
4 hamburger buns

Salsa

1 cup sweet pineapple, finely diced
1 large red chilli, seeded and finely diced
1 tbsp red onion, finely diced
1 tbsp fresh mint leaves, finely chopped
½ lime, juiced

Method

1. To make the salsa, combine the pineapple, chilli, red onion, lime juice and mint leaves in a small bowl. Lightly stir to combine then set to one side.
2. Combine the remaining ingredients.
3. Shape into small patties. Barbecue until cooked through.
4. Serve on a bun with the pineapple salsa and snow pea sprouts.

Manly burger

Serves: 4

Preparation and cooking time: 55 minutes

Ingredients

500g beef mince
1 onion, finely diced
1 cup fresh breadcrumbs
1 egg, lightly beaten
2 tbsp worcestershire sauce
2 tbsp tomato paste
4 hamburger buns

Relish

1 garlic clove, crushed
1 red onion, finely sliced
3 red capsicums, diced
1 tbsp brown sugar
2 tbsp balsamic vinegar

Method

1. To make the relish, combine all the ingredients in a small saucepan and cook over a low heat until soft and slightly caramelised. Allow to cool before serving.
2. Combine the remaining ingredients.
3. Shape into man-sized patties. Barbecue until cooked through.
4. Serve on a bun with red capsicum relish, butter lettuce and sliced tomato.

One for the kids

Serves: 4

Preparation and cooking time: 45 minutes

Ingredients

400g beef mince
2 tbsp tomato paste
½ cup rolled oats
½ cup carrot, grated
1 egg, lightly beaten
4 hamburger buns

Tomato sauce

½ onion, finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, crushed
2 tbsp tomato sauce
3 tbsp honey
2 tbsp sweet chilli sauce
200g tinned diced tomatoes
3 tbsp soy sauce
1 tbsp balsamic vinegar

Method

1. To make the sauce, put the onion, garlic, tomato sauce, honey, sweet chilli sauce, tomatoes, soy sauce and balsamic vinegar into a small saucepan. Simmer for 15 minutes then set aside to cool.
2. Combine the remaining ingredients.
3. Shape into small patties. Barbecue until cooked through.
4. Serve on a bun with tomato sauce and sliced cucumber.

Tips

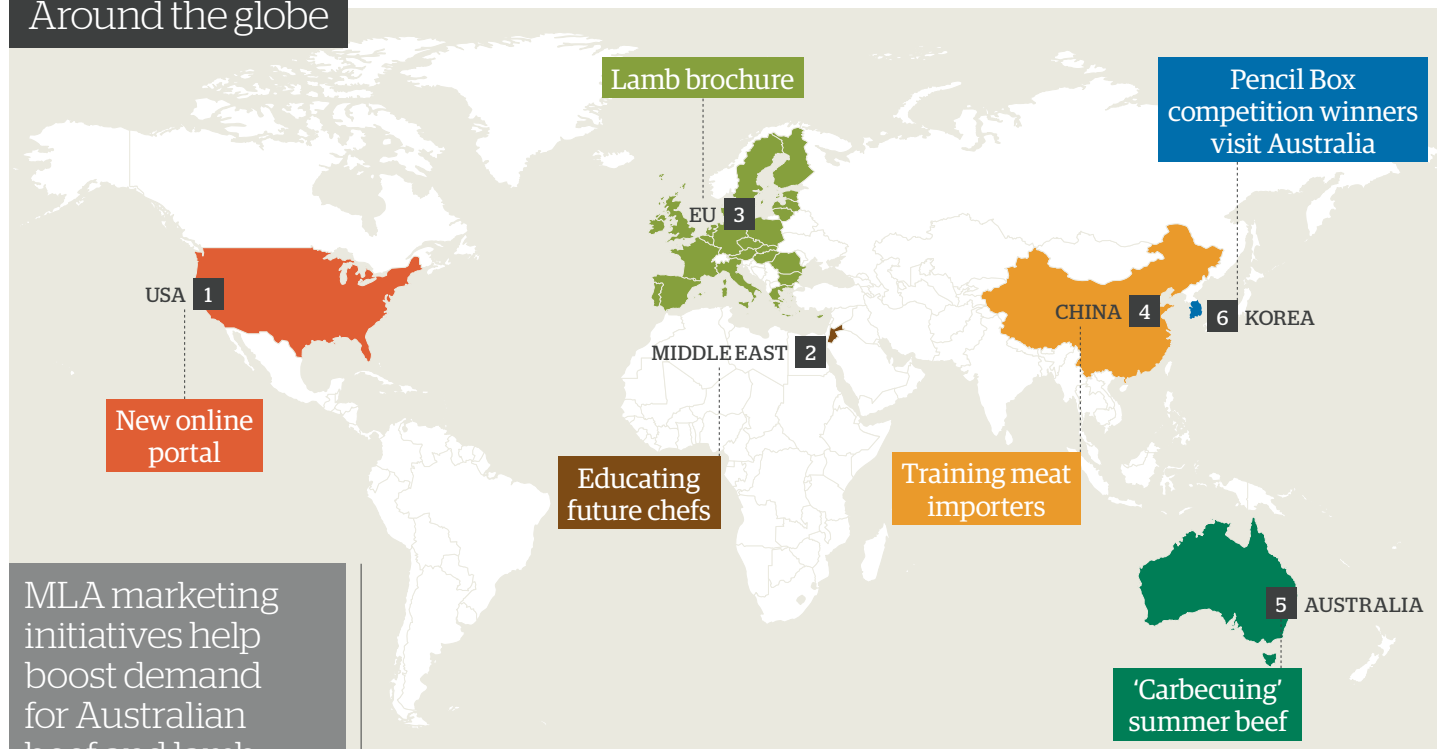
- Spray your burgers with oil before barbecuing.
- Preheat the BBQ and cook the burgers on a moderately high heat for the first

- few minutes. Then, lower the heat so they can cook through properly.
- Turn the burgers once during cooking. Burgers are ready to eat when the juices that ooze out are clear, not pinkish.

- A large burger will take about 6–7 minutes on each side to cook through. Smaller kid-sized portions will take about four minutes each side. Make sure the burgers are cooked thoroughly before serving.



Around the globe



MLA marketing initiatives help boost demand for Australian beef and lamb both at home and in our global marketplace.

1 **USA****A portal partnership**

A new online 'Partner Portal' is providing North American exporters, importers and distributors with the latest Australian beef, sheepmeat and goat market trends and programs. Launched by MLA in November 2012, the portal ultimately aims to boost sales and keep Australian beef and lamb on the menu in North America. The portal ensures customers can access relevant information on markets, nutrition, cuts and recipes all tailored to meet their individual needs at www.australian-meat.com

2 **MIDDLE EAST****Schooling future chefs**

The Middle East's chefs of tomorrow were introduced to the benefits of using Australian red meat by MLA chef and Business Development Manager, Tarek Ibrahim. A two-day class in November took final-year students at the Royal Academy of Culinary Arts in Amman, Jordan, on a tour of Australian beef and lamb production. Topics included ageing, muscle structure, marbling, vacuum packing, frozen and chilled meat storage, shelf life, and beef and sheep breeds and categories. The class will run every three months as part of the curriculum.

3 **EU****No language barrier for lamb**

European importers now have access to a simple resource that details Australian lamb production and traceability systems as well as a comprehensive description of the 27 lamb cuts available. This MLA developed brochure for the high value European market champions the positive attributes of Australian lamb in nine languages to expand the market's knowledge and potential purchase patterns beyond their favoured premium cuts such as lamb legs. These brochures are a critical educational tool in the market and are used at the numerous trade shows attended by MLA.



40

Chinese supermarkets to join ranks of those selling Australian beef.

4 CHINA

Training for Chinese importers

Two Chinese meat import companies in Weihai and Beijing are now better equipped to sell Australian beef in their 40 supermarkets following the training of 45 of their employees by MLA. Participants were shown a variety of cut attributes, product usage, selling skills and how to portion products to meet customer requirements. The Weihai-based company imports Australian beef and distributes to both retail and foodservice outlets in China. It plans to open retail butchers in Weihai and Jinan, and a restaurant in Weihai. The Beijing-based importing company is a state-owned enterprise with 18 food brands in the Chinese domestic market and 10 meat processing plants. The company imports Australian beef and distributes product to key manufacturers. It has expanded its Beijing retail business with three retail outlets selling frozen Australian beef and intends to sell Australian beef in 40 supermarkets.

5 AUSTRALIA

'Carbecue' spreads beef barbie message



As part of the "throw a steak on the barbie" campaign, MLA has worked with radio station Triple M to create the Carbecue, taking to the streets the message that it is BEEF, not shrimp, we barbecue.

Designed by beef campaign ambassador Merrick Watts, the Carbecue is half car, half barbecue, housed in a converted 1973 Ford Landau Coupe 351 V8 auto which was made to replicate the original Mad Max car. The Carbecue was unveiled during a live radio broadcast of *Merrick & The Highway Patrol* drive show and has made international headlines, including coverage on US television and on news sites in Brazil, Argentina and the Czech Republic. It continued driving around, grilling beef steaks and sausages and telling Aussies to "throw another steak on the barbie" through to February.

6 KOREA

Young chef's Aussie foodservice experience



After winning MLA Korea's sixth Pencil Box Culinary Challenge in early 2012, six Korean culinary students visited Australia in November to experience the foodservice industry first-hand. The students learned about Australia's red meat industry and met a number of executive chefs. They learned about the kitchen operations and management of the Sydney Convention Centre, attended classes at the William Blue College of Hospitality and worked with MLA's David Carew (pictured above with students). The MLA Pencil Box Culinary Challenge is aimed at students under the age of 23 years to stimulate and develop their creativity with Australian red meat, in particular non-loin cuts, and develop a familiarity with Australian product that they will take into their professional culinary careers. Korean media reported on the visit with three online articles and around 900,000 readers.

Market observations

Beef volumes to expand

The momentum created by more than two years of above-average rainfall across eastern Australia is expected to be reflected in turn-off rates throughout 2013, boosting beef production and export volumes, according to MLA's recent *Australian cattle industry projections*.

Tim McRae
MLA Economist



The forecast increase in 2013 slaughter and production numbers reflect an Australian cattle herd pushing 30 million head and a return to drier conditions in the second half of 2012. The latter may lead to earlier turn-off or dispersal for some enterprises.

Given the comparatively slow rebuilding in the beef industry, especially compared to the pork and chicken industries, the impact of almost 30 months of rebuilding (Jan 2010 - June 2012) will become apparent in subsequent years, starting this year. However, the increase in throughput for 2013 should be kept in context with 2011 and 2012 seeing a significant tightening in cattle supplies the industry is now playing catch up.

In 2013, national production is forecast to increase 3%, to around 2.2 million tonnes cwt. However, the continued international demand for Australian beef will see almost all this increased production heading overseas. The main

market forecast to expand in 2013 will be the US, with shipments attracted by record high imported beef prices fuelled by a historically low US cattle herd and falling local beef production.

Other markets expected to take larger volumes of Australian beef this year include the Middle East, South-East Asia and the EU. The extra product into the EU will be largely grainfed beef under the expanded global grainfed quota.

Trading conditions are expected to remain tough for Australian exporters into North Asia, as the combination of low economic growth, increased competition from the US and high A\$ will continue to affect demand for Australian beef. This outlook is symptomatic of the greater trend for advanced economies globally, with very weak consumer confidence continuing its preference for cheaper cuts of beef.



Tim McRae, MLA
T: 02 9463 9112
E: tmcrae@mla.com.au



Read MLA's *Australian cattle industry projections* at www.mla.com.au/industryprojections

On the ground

United States

**Stephen Edwards**

MLA Regional Manager
North America

E: sedwards@mla.com.au



Americans spend an estimated 48% of their food dollar in the foodservice sector - whether it's at a burger and taco chain; a new trendy burrito and sandwich outlet; a casual and high-end casual restaurant or a white tablecloth establishment.

Foodservice is such a diverse sector that a wide variety of beef and lamb products will fit in somewhere. But it doesn't come without its challenges. Take last year's economic slowdown. Lamb rack prices accelerated due to tight supply. The result was that we tested the end users' willingness to pay for the rack and we hit the price ceiling...hard. Foodservice operators started taking lamb racks off their menus, but weren't replacing it with cheaper cuts of lamb. It's important to remember that even in the absence of an economic slowdown, selling lamb in the US is a challenge. US lamb consumption is low at 0.5kg/head each year, and lamb is usually the most expensive item on the menu.

Given the price resistance to lamb racks, we focused on promoting and raising demand for other cuts of lamb.

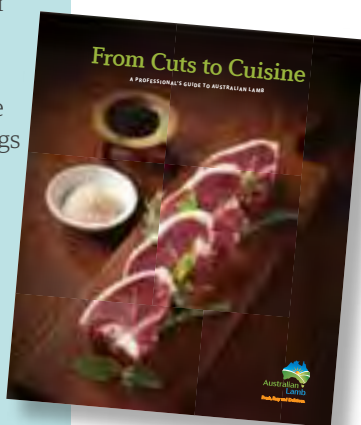
Recently MLA created the Australian lamb resource manual, *From Cuts to Cuisine*, a guide designed to teach chefs how to break down legs and shoulders into individual muscles to be used in varying applications.

Activities have included leveraging existing sponsorship arrangements to partner MLA's master butcher Doug Piper with famous US chefs such as David Burke, to present lamb carcase utilisation techniques at chef events.

MLA has also partnered with the Culinary Institute of America (CIA) to create an online educational tool incorporating recipes and video demonstrations on Australian lamb as part of their Professional Chef E-Learning series

www.ciaprochef.com/australian-lamb/

The foodservice industry in the US really is exciting and dynamic and it's great to be part of this busy and bustling industry. American casual chains are making global inroads in the Middle East and Asia (some of the leading chains' biggest growth is outside of the US).



Market insight



US: A nation of diners

With more than 300 million residents and an estimated 66.5 million international visitors this year, the United States' US\$632 billion foodservice industry operates on a mega scale, employing 12.9 million Americans in 970,000 locations.

From McDonald's, Burger King and Starbucks chains to celebrity chefs in the high-end dining sector, to the growing casual dining segment and the casual fast food truck phenomenon, the US foodservice industry has a diverse range of segments to appeal to the taste buds of the most fussy consumer and the wallet of the most price-conscious diner.

While the foodservice industry continues to grow and diversify, it has had its share of downturn and volatility. The global financial crisis toward the end of 2008 significantly affected its performance. Real (inflation-adjusted) sales growth dropped 0.9% in 2008, while restaurant traffic declined 3% over the same period.

The foodservice segments which felt the pinch most were high-end, the family dining and the casual family dining establishments, with about 83%, 70% and 66% respectively of restaurant operators reporting lower same store sales by December 2008. With unemployment moving beyond 10% and consumers cautious about spending money eating out, selling higher-priced food items, particularly lamb, has been challenging.

But during the GFC, most casual restaurants were nearly full most nights. They traded down their menus to 'comfort' home cooked style foods such as pot roasts, meatloaf and braised short ribs as well as the ubiquitous burger in many forms. This made people feel comforted in the gloom of recession, and the dishes were cheaper than usual and used more affordable 'secondary cuts'.

Now that the economy is picking up, albeit slowly, casual restaurants are turning to better-quality menu items, using the global flavours trend to differentiate themselves from their competitors. The casual dining segment in particular is characterised with immense product innovation with trends and ideas often

filtered down from fine dining and celebrity chefs. It is an enormous industry within itself as restaurant chains search for the next big concept that will distance them from their competitors.

A new breed of savvy, food-focused consumers (largely of the 'millennial' generation) is seeking new and exciting dining experiences, but at lower price points.

These consumers are more adventurous in flavour profiles and trying new products; it is not uncommon to see items such as kimchee tacos, pickled beef tongue or bison burgers on the menus. While the obscure is being explored and experimented with, comfort and classic foods are also being taken to another level. New burger chains such as Five Guys, Smashburger and Elevation Burger are growing in popularity, while others such as Mexican cuisine chain, Chipotle, are among the fastest-growing quick service restaurants in the US.

The attraction? These chains are offering consumers added value on classic items, for example, the protein sources for Chipotle's burritos and tacos are naturally raised, free of hormones and antibiotics and some are 100% grassfed.

The Aussie connection

Australia has long been an important exporter of beef to the US, supplying a large quantity of lean manufacturing beef for hamburgers.

About 62% of Australia's beef sent to the US is manufacturing grade. Our lean grinding beef (90CL) is important to complement the fatty US grinding product. When blended correctly, it gives the right meat-to-fat ratio for juicy burgers.

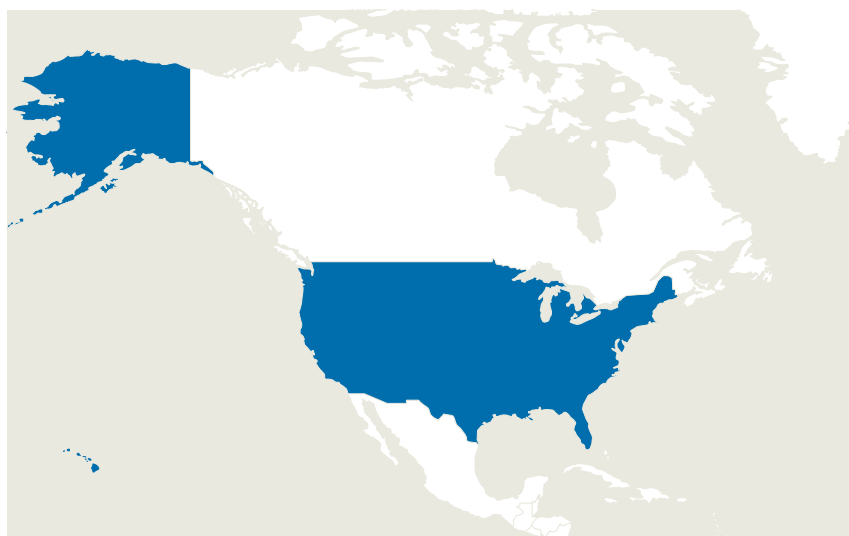
Aside from manufacturing product, beef cuts such as outsides and tenderloins are used by foodservice operations. Most of Australian beef exports is destined for the foodservice sector. A significant quantity of Australian lamb legs, racks, shoulders and shortloins are also used in the foodservice sector.

MLA's marketing to the foodservice sector

Generating quality leads for Australian red meat products is central to most MLA marketing activities in the North American market.

The National Restaurant Association (NRA) annual trade show in Chicago is one of the largest trade events for MLA. Last year, the Australian red meat booth showcased five importer and exporter participants.

MLA also participates in and sponsors MeatingPlace and *Plate* magazine's Protein Innovation Summit, Star Chefs' International Chefs Congress and Rising Star Chef Galas, the International Corporate Chefs Association (ICCA) Annual Summit and regional conferences, the Restaurant Association of Metropolitan Washington and the Culinary Institute of America.



300 million residents

66.5 million international visitors in 2012

US\$632 billion - value of the US foodservice industry

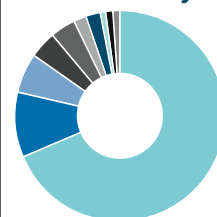
12.9 million people employed in foodservice

91% of US consumers report eating a burger at least monthly

44% of US consumers report eating a burger at least weekly

45 food trucks operating in New York city in 2012

Australian beef exports to the US on 2011-12 by cut



Manufacturing: 68%

Thin flank: 10%

Topside: 6%

Shin shank: 4%

Silverside: 4%

Thick flank: 3%

Other: 2%

Tenderloin: 1%

Rump: 1%

Striploin: 1%

Australian lamb exports to the US on 2011-12 by cut



Leg: 35%

Shoulder: 17%

Rack: 15%

Shortloin: 14%

Shank: 12%

Other: 8%

Source: Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



Persistent perennials pay off

Results from the Euroa, Victoria, Producer Demonstration Site continue to show the value of productive perennials in whole farm grazing strategies, with the plots producing an average of 400kg of beef annually per hectare in the past three years.

More than 80 people attended a field day at the site on John Kelly's property.

The site, funded by MLA and Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Victoria, was established to provide local farmers with information on the most productive and persistent perennials for their environment; management of each species; and the profitability and payback of establishing perennials.

Alison Desmond, the event's coordinator, said the biggest area of interest was the dramatic increase in clover percentage this year, with a 6% increase in late winter 2011 to 22% in late winter 2012.

"There was also consistently high performance of the tall fescue over the course of the demonstration site, especially in the number of grazing days and kilograms of beef/ha it was able to produce," she said.

More information, contact Alison Desmond, DPI
E: Alison.Desmond@dpi.vic.gov.au, T: 0409 424 274

Beefing it up in southern Queensland

Successful BeefUp forums were held at Injune and Surat in southern Queensland on 28 and 29 November.

About 40 producers attended each forum and heard presentations related to business management, improving reproduction, outcomes from the Beef CRC, the impact of grazing systems, and new R&D that is tackling rundown of sown grass pastures.

MLA Stakeholder Relations Manager (MLA) Samantha Jamieson gave an overview of challenges and opportunities for the red meat industry, while MLA Program Coordinator (Queensland/Northern Territory) Gary McPherson demonstrated how the MSA eating quality program added value to beef.

For information on BeefUp forums, contact Liz Allen, MLA
E: lallen@mla.com.au // T: 07 3620 5237
www.mla.com.au/beefup



Trevor Hall presenting on grazing systems at the BeefUp forum.

Upcoming events

BusinessEDGE workshops

A two-day financial and business management training workshop for northern beef producers to improve beef business efficiency and profitability.

When and where:

28 Feb – 1 March, Katherine NT
 7–8 March, Hughenden Qld
 11–12 March, Mount Isa Qld
 14–15 March, Roma Qld
 17–18 April, Blackall Qld

Bookings: 07 5482 4368
 jackie@jackiekyte.com.au

More information:
 www.mla.com.au/events

Practical beef marketing course

This practical on-farm beef marketing course for Victorian producers develops participants' marketing and live animal assessment skills during eight, one-day sessions.

When and where:

Courses start on 21 February, Hamilton/Edenhope region

Bookings: 03 5573 0749
 maria.crawford@dpi.vic.gov.au

More information:
 www.rist.com.au

EU cattle accreditation and NLIS training

This workshop is for cattle breeders looking to increase their market access. Learn how to become a supplier of EU-accredited beef cattle.

When and where:

12 February, Seymour Vic
 13 February, Castlemaine Vic
 14 February, Ballarat Vic
 20 February, Dookie Vic
 21 February, Wangaratta Vic
 26 February, Horsham Vic
 27 February, Charlton Vic
 28 February, Boort Vic

Bookings: 0408 922 712

More information:
 sam.ellis@dpi.vic.gov.au
 www.dpi.vic.gov.au/betterbeef



Find more events and information
 at www.mla.com.au/events



Catherine and Will Roberts from 'Victoria Downs', Morven, with Desiree Jackson, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) Queensland.

Making more from pasture

After attending Making More from Pasture field days in Queensland, 70% of participants reported they planned to make a change on their properties.

The changes included spelling paddocks over the wet season, using NIRS, and fencing the property into smaller paddocks so they can rotate stock and spell paddocks.

During October, 38 people attended two Making More from Pasture field days at 'Laguna', Augathella, and 'Victoria Downs', Morven. Discussions included managing Mitchell grass using grazing, spelling and fire; plant identification; pasture quality; and the use of faecal NIRS.

Participants rated these days highly, scoring them nine out of 10 for satisfaction and value.

More information: Nicole Sallur, DAFF
T: 07 4654 4220 E: nicole.sallur@daff.qld.gov.au

To order a hard copy or download the MLA/AWI publication *Making More From Sheep* manual go to www.mla.com.au/makingmorefromsheep

Future building

The annual Young Beef Producer Forum attracted more than 100 people to Roma, Queensland, from as far as the Northern Territory.

The participants wanted to make a difference in aspects of their lives, including on-farm, off-farm, family, personal and business.

This year's theme was 'Building Beef for the Future' with a particular focus on equipping producers with the various options to initiate an investment in the beef industry and make it profitable.

MLA's Beef Analyst Ben Thomas provided a global market overview that highlighted the different markets and the cuts of beef they purchase.

More information: www.futurefarmers.com.au



MSA Retail Training Facilitator, Kelly Payne, takes the event participants through a seaming demonstration.

Reef Rescue grazing forum

Attend a one-day forum about increasing grazing productivity and profits while improving stream water quality. A follow-up workshop on 14 March will focus on cattle nutrition and feed budgeting.

When and where:

13 March, Mackay Qld

Bookings: 07 9658 4200

More information:

www.reefcatchments.com.au

Pastures and Grazing Management Skills Course

Supported by Making More From Sheep, this workshop series includes pasture and animal assessment and management skills, grazing management and feed budgeting. Participants will gain more efficient, profitable and sustainable grazing strategies for their business.

When and where:

The four-part course begins 26 February at Wudinna SA

Bookings:

0438 088 220
ashtonba@gmail.com

National Rural Women's Conference

Expand your networks, make new business connections, improve your skills and be motivated and inspired by women! Speakers include Liz Davenport, Australian fashion designer and businesswoman, and Elizabeth Broderick, Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner since 2007.

When and where:

18 February, Canberra ACT

Bookings and for more information:

Register at www.nrwc.com.au
conference@nrwc.com.au
02 6927 2866

Doing it better - dirt cheap!

This field day aims to create a better understanding of soil health and implications for a profitable enterprise. Some of the topics include: the role of dung beetles in nutrient recycling and fly reduction; understanding soil tests; compost production and application, and the benefits of property planning.

When and where:

2 March, Casino NSW

Bookings:

02 6632 3722
tara@nlss.com.au

More information:

www.nlss.com.au

Beyond the gate

The red meat supply chain tour for MLA members

**EACH TOUR
LIMITED TO
40 MEMBERS
- BE QUICK TO
REGISTER FOR
THIS EXCLUSIVE
OPPORTUNITY**

Brisbane

BRISBANE: MONDAY 18 MARCH
SYDNEY: TUESDAY 16 APRIL

Beyond the gate gives MLA members the chance to follow their products through the supply chain to consumers' plates – meeting with processors, feedlotters, wholesalers, butchers and executive chefs. Take part in an exclusive beef and lamb MasterClass, get a behind the scenes look at restaurant and foodservice operations and dine at one of the city's best restaurants.

* The tour will be subsidised by MLA but there will be a charge of \$95 per person.

The Rockhampton tour has been postponed due to insufficient registrations. If you are interested in participating in this tour in the future please contact Angus Street, MLA
astreet@mla.com.au

For more information:
Angus Street, MLA // E: astreet@mla.com.au
Bookings: www.mla.com.au/BTG-Brisbane
www.mla.com.au/BTG-Sydney

mla
MEAT & LIVESTOCK AUSTRALIA