

Feedback



Change brings rewards

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A note from the MD...



As 2015 draws to a close I think about the tremendous changes that have occurred in our industry: record production, exports and cattle and retail prices; the signing of the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement; and the release of new Meat Industry Strategic Plan 2020 (see page 3).

MLA, too, has changed.

We've become more **efficient**. Following MLA's restructure, more than \$6.5 million in fixed cost savings have been achieved in 2014-15 to be channelled back into

research, development and marketing in future years.

We've changed the way we **engage** with levy payers - I've enjoyed meeting with thousands of levy payers at more than 40 forums across the country. The common themes at these forums have included MLA's role, an overview of some of our most exciting research and marketing projects, emerging technologies and the bright future of the industry. You'll also see senior staff on the road more speaking with levy payers.

We're providing greater **transparency**. MLA's renewed commitment to transparency extended to the digital world this year with our new-look website providing a clear breakdown of levy streams and key investments across MLA's work programs. Another way to ensure greater transparency was to change MLA's Constitution, adding an additional grassfed producer representative to the Board Selection Committee. MLA members voted for the new representative - Mick Hewitt - at MLA's recent AGM. Three new directors were also elected to the Board (see page 5).

This is proof industry working together can effect change. It is a fact that a group of the largest 10, 50, 100 or even 200 members would not have enough votes to outvote the remaining 49,645 members of the company, if they all took up their voting entitlement and processors do not have a voting block.

We're also **consulting** more. One of the steps towards greater consultation and transparency this year has been the creation of a regional consultation model to encourage more producers to have their say on the direction of research and development investment (see page 4). Please get involved to have your say.

In the recent member survey 3.5 out of 5 people surveyed said they were either satisfied or happy with MLA's performance over the past 12 months. This indicates to me that you, as producers, are proud of what you have achieved for your industry.

Richard Norton
MLA Managing Director

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E: info@mla.com.au
T: 1800 023 100 // F: 02 9463 9393
www.mla.com.au

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Red meat's roadmap

In the next five years more than \$1 billion in producer levies and industry and government funding will be channelled into the red meat industry. But how do we ensure that investment gets the greatest bang for its buck, and results in a robust and resilient world-leading industry? Enter the *Meat Industry Strategic Plan (MISP) 2020*.

Endorsed by industry, *MISP 2020* was developed by the Red Meat Advisory Council (RMAC) after engaging with more than 550 industry and community leaders, levy payers, co-investors and service providers (including MLA). This was supported by 12 regional workshops engaging producers, processors and exporters and the development of nine teams of technical experts (comprising more than 120 subject specialists).

"The potential value of this plan to our industry speaks for itself: if we are successful in addressing the opportunities, we could add almost \$7 billion to our industry's bottom line by 2030; if we don't effectively address the risks, we stand to lose just over \$6 billion," RMAC chairman Ross Keane said.

He said *MISP 2020* provides the overarching framework for activities across the supply chain and specific sectors.

"Implemented effectively *MISP 2020* will provide a roadmap to see the industry (figure 1) navigate the challenges, and realise the opportunities, of the future," he said.

MISP 2020 has five core pillars:

→ **Consumer and community support:**

Animal welfare, the impact of endemic and emergency diseases, stewardship of

environmental resources (including adaptation to climate change) and nutrition.

→ **Market growth and diversification:** Trade and market access and marketing and promoting Australian red meat and livestock.

→ **Supply chain integrity and efficiency:** Optimising product quality and cost efficiency and guaranteeing product and system integrity (such as through SAFEMEAT and the National Livestock Identification System).

→ **Productivity and profitability:** Production efficiency on farms and in feedlots and driving greater farm profitability.

→ **Leadership and collaborative culture:** How industry embraces the potential outlined in the *MISP 2020*.

"Our industry must embrace the economic efficiencies associated with integration, transparency and communication through our supply chains.

"*MISP 2020* frames the potential - translating it into real gains is wholly within our control."

MLA takes its strategic direction from the *MISP*.

Fast facts about Australia:

- produces 4% of the world's beef supply
- has about 6% of the world's sheep, with China having the most
- produces approximately 8% of the world's lamb and mutton
- employs about 200,000 people in the red meat industry, including on-farm production, processing and retail with:
 - 53,200 employed in meat processing
 - 76,800 employed in farm enterprises with cattle
 - 43,000 employed in farm enterprises with sheep and lambs

Sources: ABS Agricultural Commodities 2012-13, MLA Beef and Sheep Fast Facts, MINTRAC Employment Profile of the Australian Meat Industry

 *MISP 2020* can be downloaded at: www.rmac.com.au

Figure 1 Key industry roles and responsibilities within the red meat and livestock industry



Your say on MLA's research direction

The implementation of MLA's new producer consultation strategy is underway with the Southern Australia Meat Research Council (SAMRC), Western Australian Livestock Research Council (WALRC) and the Northern Beef Research Council (NABRC) all established and functioning under the new model.

The members of each of these councils and their contact details can be found at www.mla.com.au/About-MLA/RD-Consultation

As part of the strategy, MLA is implementing a new annual call-out process for research, development and adoption projects that benefit sheepmeat and grassfed beef producers. In January 2016, MLA will invite preliminary proposals for new one to five year projects for funding from 1 July 2016.

Key dates for MLA's annual call-out for projects that address national sheepmeat and grassfed beef research, development and adoption (RD&A) priorities

Stage	Opening date	Closing date
National sheepmeat and grassfed beef priorities published on the MLA website	21 December 2015	N/A
Annual call-out for preliminary project proposals in response to terms of reference for priority sheepmeat and grassfed beef RD&A published on the MLA website and advertised nationally	18 January 2016	14 February 2016
Unsuccessful preliminary proposals notified	7 March 2016	11 March 2016
MLA invites full proposals for RD&A projects that address national RD&A priorities for sheepmeat and grassfed beef	2 March 2016	3 April 2016
Unsuccessful proposals notified	9 May 2016	13 May 2016
New sheepmeat and grassfed beef RD&A projects start	1 July 2016	

While goats, feedlots and live export are important components of red meat production, each has its own, established process for setting priorities for research, development and adoption through their peak industry councils. Learn more at: www.mla.com.au



Mary Goodacre, MLA
T: 02 9463 9225 // E: mgoodacre@mla.com.au

Keeping red meat on the plate



80%

of media reports included support for red meat consumption

As the marketing body for Australian red meat, MLA's role is to protect consumer and community support for Australian red meat, and this was the most important element of MLA's strategy in responding to the World Health Organisation's (WHO) report in late October into cancer risk in red meat and processed meat.

MLA's primary focus was to reassure consumers that they should continue to eat red meat, and to give them the reason why. Beef and lamb are a critical, natural source of iron and zinc, vitamin B12 and omega-3 - essential nutrients to keep the body and brain functioning well.

This was a health story, so red meat required endorsement and clear explanation from health professionals. Third party endorsement is always essential as industry commentary can often be viewed with scepticism. MLA's strategy was to use credible, healthcare experts and media spokespeople to deliver messages that would reassure consumers. Over one third of all health spokespeople reported in the Australian media had been pre-briefed by MLA and not one healthcare professional or expert in Australia instructed consumers to stop eating fresh red meat.

MLA also delivered the same messages in speaking directly to over 50 media outlets.

MLA's longer-term nutrition strategy, endorsed by the Peak Industry Councils, is to keep red meat on the plate. This is principally achieved by working with, not against, policy makers. The Australian Dietary Guidelines are one of the few in the world which recognise the benefits of red meat consumption (and balance this against the risks). Even the WHO report directed consumers back to their country dietary guidelines.

In order to continue having Australian government support for red meat consumption, it is essential when issues arise that MLA takes a balanced and common sense approach and always points back to the Australian Dietary Guidelines.



www.mla.com.au/Research-and-development/Human-nutrition
www.beefandlamb.com.au

Meet your new grassfed cattle producer representative and Board members

Cattle producers now have a greater say over the selection of MLA Board Directors after MLA members elected an additional grassfed cattle representative to the Board Selection Committee, along with the election of three new Board Directors.

At MLA's recent Annual General Meeting in Brisbane, Queensland cattle producer **Mick Hewitt** was elected to the Selection Committee for a three year term.

Mick now joins cattle producer representative Ian McCamley, sheep producer representative Jane Kellock, lotfeeder representative Therese Herbert, three representatives appointed by peak industry councils, and two non-voting MLA Directors, on the Selection Committee.

MLA members also voted on the election of three new Directors to the MLA Board: West Australian livestock producer, business management adviser, events planner and Western Australian Livestock Research Council coordinator **Erin Gorter**; industry business builder, technology specialist and post farm gate value-add expert **Robert**

Fitzpatrick and global brand marketing expert and strategist **Steven Chaur**.

MLA Chair Dr Michele Allan welcomed the new board and selection committee members acknowledging the importance of levy payer input into the process.

"Voting at the AGM is a very important way for levy payers to have their say in the way MLA is governed, in order to build a prosperous and sustainable future for Australia's beef, sheep and goat producers," Michele said.

"The MLA Board is a skills-based Board. Directors have complementary skills in order to make sound decisions for the long-term benefit of the livestock industry. The MLA Board remains committed to adding value to our industry through strategic direction and oversight of MLA."

At last year's AGM, members voted to make amendments to MLA's constitution to increase the number of cattle producer representatives on the Committee from one to two - giving grassfed producers greater representation and influence over the selection of MLA Board members.



Erin Gorter.



Steven Chaur.



Robert Fitzpatrick.



Mick Hewitt.



Watch recordings of videos from the MLA Producer Forum and AGM addresses of the MLA Chair and Managing Director: www.mla.com.au/agm2015



Read about the MLA Producer Forum on page 38.

Pain relief with NumNuts

Its name might cause a grin, but the 'NumNuts' castration and tail docking tool will play a serious role in providing pain relief during animal husbandry practices.

The hand-held tool, which is currently being commercialised and is expected to be on sale in about 18 months' time, features a single-action castration/tail docking ring applicator and injection mechanism that administers the local anaesthetic lignocaine (used by the dental industry) for rapid pain relief.

NumNuts is the result of a partnership between MLA and Scottish engineering firm 4cDesigns, which was established during the MLA-funded development of a barber's pole worm vaccine, BarberVax, by Moredun Research Institute in Scotland.

Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) also contributed to the project, with research by Moredun and CSIRO.

"Our goal was to develop a pain relief tool that could be used on-farm by producers,

without the need for a veterinarian's skills," MLA's Program Manager for Animal Health, Welfare and Biosecurity, Jim Rothwell, said.

"It gives producers a practical and economic solution in response to community concerns about the necessary husbandry practices of castration and tail docking and demonstrates the industry is embracing best practice."

The anaesthetic acts about 30 to 60 seconds after injection and lasts for around four hours, by which time the tissue in the testes and tail are dead, eliminating residual pain.

In proof-of-concept trials, there was a significant decrease in pain behaviour such as 'tucked up' posture, bleating and lying down.

The tool is designed for lambs aged two to 12 weeks, which is the recommended age



for marking lambs in the new Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for sheep. The Guidelines state that pain relief is desirable if practical and cost effective for lambs at marking and required for animals over six months of age. It is expected to cost about 20¢/treatment.

Proof-of-concept trials are now underway for a cattle castration version of NumNuts, and MLA is also funding research to set the minimum residue levels of lignocaine, which will determine any meat withholding periods.

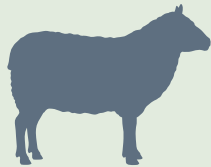


Jim Rothwell, MLA
E: jrothwell@mla.com.au

Levy investment

MLA's year in review

MLA's *Annual Report 2014-15* showcases MLA's programs, outcomes and financial performance during the year. It reports back to producers how we're investing their levies. Here are some of the highlights.



World first

Sheep vaccine, Barbevax, the world's first vaccine for a gut-dwelling parasite of livestock, was commercially released.

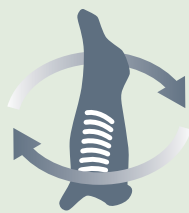


More open trade

Free trade agreements were signed with China, Japan and Korea, delivering both immediate and ongoing tariff reduction benefits in these key export markets.

MSA growth continues

Uptake of Meat Standards Australia across the supply chain continues to grow, with record price premiums and numbers of cattle and sheep presented for grading.



Supply chain feedback

The first commercial supply chain rollout of Livestock Data Link – supplying information and feedback from the processor to the producer – commenced.

Less methane

The federally funded and MLA-managed National Livestock Methane Program found leucaena plantations in northern cattle systems can lift productivity by up to 22 per cent and lower methane emissions by up to 20 per cent.



New customers

12 new beef and 11 new lamb customer accounts (retail and foodservice) were secured in global markets.

Global branding

MLA's new international 'True Aussie' brand was rolled out across global markets.



Pest control

Two parkinsonia biological control projects offer potential solutions to a rampant weed problem in northern Australia and a new biological control has been discovered to manage rabbits.

Campaign cut through

MLA's Australia Day lamb campaign was named 'TV Ad of the Year' and lamb sales rose 35 per cent in the week preceding



Australia Day – one of our best results ever. MLA's *Better on Beef* campaign saw claimed consumption by mums increase 0.17 meals to 1.73 meals per week. The campaigns saw MLA win the 'Effective advertiser of the year' award at the Australian Effie Awards.



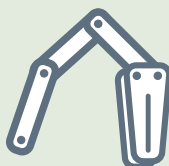
Pain relief

Buccalgesic pain relief gel for calves was launched and NumNuts, a fast-acting pain-relieving local anaesthetic for lambs, was ready for commercialisation.



Robotics adoption

Lamb carcass cutting automation technology is continuing to be developed and adopted and beef automation technology is being trialled.



Open communication

The new regional consultation model was established and MLA's website was revamped with greater transparency about levy income and spend.

Better genetics

A new Brahman days-to-calving estimated breeding value has been developed to improve the reproductive performance of northern herds.

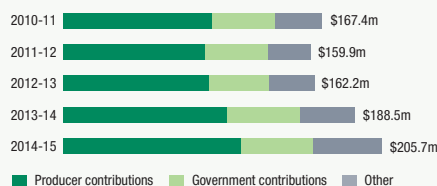


Financial performance

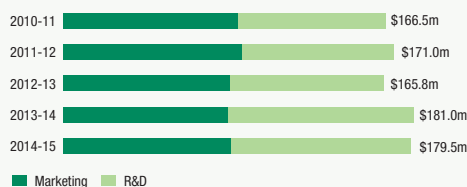
At 30 June 2015 MLA reported a total revenue of \$205.7 million against expenditure of \$179.5 million. This resulted in the retained surplus growing to \$75.4 million. This is against a backdrop of high cattle turnoff in the past year.

This year's higher levy income and retained earnings have been committed against key activities and programs over the next five years, in line with the *Meat Industry Strategic Plan 2020*, allowing programs to continue when turnoff is expected to drop significantly in the next two years and therefore the levy revenue to correspondingly drop.

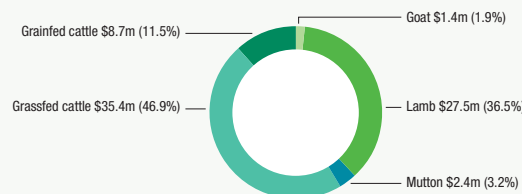
Revenue



Expenditure



Retained earnings by levy stream



Read MLA's *Annual Report 2014-15* at:
www.mla.com.au/annualreport

Community engagement



Speaking up is one way to tell the story of Australia's sustainable, well-managed cattle and sheep industries. And we need you to tell your stories.

Forestry in the US may seem a bit distant from Australian agriculture but, from a public perspective, both industries need to secure and maintain community support.

This was the message from third-generation Montana logger Bruce Vincent, who spoke at Beef Australia in Rockhampton earlier this year, with support from MLA.

Bruce tackled the issue of social licence, which is the public's approval for an industry to operate. He warned producers that the wider community's unawareness of the realities of how agriculture operates is perhaps their biggest enemy.

The good news is that the public want to hear from 'real people', so the time has never been better for producers to take the lead in

public discussions about environmental stewardship and animal welfare.

Social credentials

Community concerns about animal welfare, the environment and the sustainability of different production systems can affect the trust of consumers both domestically and in export markets.

Those concerned about these issues remain a minority of the population, with more than 60% of Australian consumers (according to MLA consumer research) having no concerns about the industry and 10% having minor concerns.

The research shows a small increase in the percentage of people eating less red meat for perceived environment or animal welfare reasons in the past five years (5.9%

of respondents in 2015, up from 5% in 2014 and 5.6% in 2013).

MLA Community Engagement Manager Jax Baptista said social licence relied on the community's belief that producers carried out their business in an ethical, trustworthy and transparent way. The concept is not static - it evolves in response to community concerns about the environmental or animal welfare credentials of food production.

"The need for social licence is especially highlighted when events in Australia or overseas prompt the community to question the responsibility of industries and their commitment to best practice," Jax said.

"This creates an environment where producers are expected to 'prove' that they are fit to farm."

Community concerns strongly influence the way agricultural industries operate and how they are regulated by governments and industry leaders, so today's producers must not only fulfil their formal regulatory conditions - they also take these community concerns into consideration.

MLA contributes to securing the social licence for beef and lamb production by supporting producers to implement best practice on-farm, so they can improve their business and proactively respond to community concerns about production.

MLA's social media campaign

For the past three years, the MLA-backed Target 100 program has provided a vehicle for producers to tell their stories directly to the community, to promote the progressive nature of their businesses and to demonstrate their commitment to farming sustainably.

More than 230 producers are telling their story on www.target100.com.au and, in the past 12 months, the program has seen:

- Facebook 'likes' increase by 314%
- Twitter followers increase by 35%
- farmer profiles on the Target 100 website increase by 8%
- Target 100 website visits increase by 32%.



Jax said producers were becoming increasingly savvy in using tools such as social media to connect to the community, but the industry needed to remain on the front foot.

Want to HELP?

Bruce Vincent uses the acronym HELP to guide producers to engage objectively and proactively with consumers:

- **H**umanise the discussion: Tell your own stories.
- **E**mpathise with the public: Try putting yourself in their shoes.
- **L**isten/**L**ocal: What is the real question being asked? Focus on what is happening in your local area first and share your message with your networks (family, friends, colleagues).
- **P**articipate: Find time each week for a little advocacy.

“Social licence is a dynamic and ever-changing ideal that will need to adapt as the expectations and understandings of society evolve,” she said.

“Factors such as community affluence, unemployment, adherence to best practice and government regulation will all impact on the development of social licence, and the red meat industry needs to be prepared to respond to new questions about production.”

Leading change

Target 100 supported a sustainable agriculture workshop in South Australia earlier this year, which explored how producers can secure social licence and lead positive change in community perception towards production.

Workshop presenters - country girls turned ‘agvocates’ Catherine Marriott and Julia Telford (see article at right) - said securing public trust doesn’t need to be complicated.

It comes down to finding common ground to create empathy, avoiding technical jargon the wider community may not fully understand and embracing transparency.

For example, a producer could replace a ‘do not enter’ sign on their farm gate with one that explains ‘To protect the health of our animals, visitors must report to the office’. This replaces the perception of secrecy with one of openness, integrity and best practice.

What can you do?

When it comes to responding to public debates around topics such as environment and animal welfare, Jax said producers could:

- continue to adopt best practice on farm
- reassure the community of socially responsible management practices through platforms such as Target 100, social media and personal blogs
- share their experiences and ingenuity with each other through industry networks
- harness local media to share the story of sustainability
- advocate for continued investment in best practice research, development and adoption.

In profile Community engagement

Julia Telford // Agvocate

If one thing is guaranteed to make ‘agvocate’ Julia Telford fire up, it’s when women down-play their role in their family farming business as “just the bookkeeper”.



Julia, who operates Goondiwindi-based Engage & Create Consulting, points out that many family farming businesses have multi-million dollar turnovers.

“In any other sector, the bookkeeping role would be called chief financial officer,” she told rural women at a Target 100-supported sustainable agriculture workshop in South Australia earlier this year.

This belief reflects Julia’s approach of applying sound business principles to all aspects of farming - from the office to the paddock and the marketplace.

She works predominantly with regional community groups, such as Landcare and local councils, to develop the interface between natural resource management and agriculture, and has seen the results of building positive relationships.

She said effective communication was essential to influence change within businesses and industry, and to generate community trust in agriculture, which underpins the concept of social licence to operate.

Communicating, especially to consumers, is not limited to social media. Julia has 10 business-focused tips for producers to have effective conversations:

1. Know your product: Ask yourself - are you selling a commodity, an experience or a story? What sets your product apart? How would you explain how you produce beef or lamb in a 30-second ‘elevator pitch’?

2. Develop a marketing strategy: It could include using traditional or social media as tools to connect with consumers, or building stronger relationships with processors to access feedback. Whatever the vehicle, marketing is important to tell the story of your product in your own words.

3. Use social media wisely: If you do decide social media is the right communication tool for your business, it’s important to use it appropriately. Plan what you want to say. Know your audience and stay on message to engage with them. Build relevant networks. Drop the technical jargon. Create empathy with consumers by finding common ground (e.g. as a mother, or as someone who cares about animals). Avoid making statements that could be perceived as arrogant, such as ‘people need farmers’. Embrace transparency.

4. Build a business team: Who do you need to build relationships with, as a producer, to move your business forward? Is it with your accountant, bank manager or solicitor? Communication is important so these partners know who you are and what your business is. Engage with them during the good times, so they are on board in the bad times. →



Jax Baptista

E: jbaptista@mla.com.au



Target 100: www.target100.com.au
www.facebook.com/target100AUS,
 @Target100AUS



5. Partner with the right people: Who are your allies and advocates, and are you talking to them? The wider community wants producers to succeed, not fail. Build a support network of business partners, neighbours, customers and industry groups. Effective and sustainable change is not possible without engaging the people involved - we must bring our partners along on the journey.

6. Network: Industry and community groups are only as strong as the people who actively engage with them. Talk to neighbours, community groups at catchment and regional level and industry organisations.

7. Allocate resources: Identify how much time and what financial and human resources your business can dedicate to communication and building relationships.

8. Manage risk: Are there issues that affect your business? Which ones do you need to focus energy on and which ones can just be a 'watching brief'? Can you align with other people or groups (such as MLA, Landcare or other industry bodies) to monitor and manage any issues more effectively?

9. Collect data: Sound business decisions rely on data. Consumers want credible information about the welfare and environmental credentials of beef and lamb production; the supply chain needs information about product quality and consistency; agricultural researchers need on-farm data. Producers who can tell their success stories and back them up with data contribute to the industry's social licence to operate.

10. Be professional: Effective communication as a business professional requires a values-based approach. This means acknowledging the values at stake and finding common ground to build trust. When communicating, be present and listen to understand - not to judge. Keep it objective, not personal. Ask questions to invite dialogue. Use strategies such as voting to encourage people to be present at family business or committee meetings. Control your emotions. Finally, define the outcome: can you make progress on what you want to achieve? A 1% change may be enough.



Target 100: www.target100.com.au
Julia Telford
<http://engageandcreateconsulting.com.au>

Leadership training opportunity

The future of the Australian grassfed beef industry relies on effective producer representation within industry structures, where strong corporate governance and leadership skills are crucial.



The Cattle Council of Australia, in conjunction with MLA, is providing the opportunity for 15 grassfed beef producers to develop their skills in these areas.

Successful candidates will attend an Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) course. To ensure the scholarship effectively represents the grassfed industry, one candidate will be selected from each of the 15 regions identified in the new structure for grassfed beef representation.

The AICD course is a five-day program covering board governance and directorship.

Participants will gain an understanding of:

- the role of directors and issues involved in board participation
- the need to measure risk and risk management strategies
- the importance of an organisation's financial performance and methods for monitoring it

→ business skills applicable to their own operations.

MLA non-executive director, MLA Donor Company director, and southern NSW livestock producer Lucinda Corrigan has completed the course.

"I completed the AICD residential company director's course about 15 years ago. At the time, I was serving on three national boards and for other not-for-profit and community organisations," she said.

"The training was invaluable, especially the work on financial indicators and strategic risk and the case studies used in the course."

The course will be held in April 2016.



Applications close 29 January 2016. Application forms are available from the Cattle Council: T: 02 6269 5600 or www.cattlecouncil.com.au

Catch up on all the latest

Looking for some holiday viewing? Or an interesting read? Check out some of the new resources developed for producers from MLA-funded research in 2015.

Videos - Go to www.youtube.com/user/meatandlivestock to see:

- presentations from MLA's Producer Forum and AGM
- presentations from Beef Australia
- producers explaining on farm changes from the Farm300 program (to increase productivity and reduce emissions)
- the quarterly beef projections
- the latest innovations in food processing and new meat products

Check out www.youtube.com/user/Target100AUS to see:

- the #GOODMEAT campaign, which covers animal welfare and environmental management

Webinars

- Pastoral Profit is designed to upskill producers in the pastoral zones of Australia and has hosted webinars on business management topics: www.pastoralprofit.com.au

- Webinars for goat producers or those intending to produce goats covered topics including biosecurity, wild dog control and genetics:

www.mla.com.au/goatwebinars

- More Beef From Pastures hosted webinars on pasture, labour efficiency, cattle nutrition and business profitability: www.mla.com.au/mbfp

Publications

- *CashCow technical synopsis - insights into the productivity and performance of northern breeding herds*
www.mla.com.au/cashcow
- *Beef CRC technical synopsis - insights about the genetic improvement of reproduction in tropical beef cattle*
www.mla.com.au/beefcrc
- *Improving the Performance of Northern beef enterprises* www.mla.com.au/northernperformance

Productivity

Growing more sheep in the west



The number of sheep in Western Australia declined steadily from its peak of 38 million in 1991 to 14.2 million last year. However, new opportunities have emerged - including the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to supply an additional half a million lambs a year to China - which are putting pressure on the existing sheep population.

The MLA Donor Company (MDC)

Private companies ask and trust MLA to manage their research projects for them. The MDC doesn't use producer levies but the outcomes must have benefits to producers.

The Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia has embarked on a four year project, part funded by the MLA Donor Company (MDC) (which doesn't use producer levies), to support the Western Australian sheep industry to increase its ability to capitalise on growing demand.

The \$10 million 'Sheep Industry Business Innovation' project is funded through the state government's Royalties for Regions program.

The strategy involves industry and government working together to transform and innovate through new value chains, increased productivity, profitability and increased knowledge, and helps deliver on the Sheep Industry Leadership Council's strategic plan to double the value of the industry by 2025.

The MDC is co-investing in several targeted initiatives within this project which are closely aligned with MLA strategies.

One of the first of these was July's 'Sheepmeat Insights Tour' to China to investigate retail and food service channels and where an MOU was signed for the export of half a million additional lambs a year to China.

The Sheep Industry Business Innovation project will assist industry to supply new markets for sheepmeat and live exports, particularly in nearby Asia and the Middle East - generating flow-on benefits to producers, industry, the regions, communities and the state economy.

It will achieve this via two key strategies:

1. Transforming the supply chain to develop customer-focused products for target markets. This will be done with new, dedicated value chains and by improving business and technical skills in the industry. A web portal to provide industry information is under development to support this.

2. Establishing a Sheep Business Centre at Katanning as a focus for sheep research, development and adoption, to assist the industry's capacity to satisfy customer requirements. This centre will be a hub for information, training and innovation and will link with other providers throughout the state.

The priority activities to produce a more profitable and resilient sheep industry aligned with customer needs are:

- support the **establishment of dedicated export supply chains** (lamb and hogget carcasses, breeding stock and slaughter ready stock) that offer the level and consistency of returns needed to lift producer confidence in the industry.
- **increase the on-farm productivity** through better genetic selection and higher stocking and reproductive rates.
- **improve business performance** by enhancing farm business and production skills.
- **increase access to investment**, both from within and outside of the industry, as a result of increased confidence among investors and more attractive business models.
- **establish the human and physical resources** needed to research, develop and demonstrate the elements required to achieve success in the industry and the means of sustaining those resources into the future.

Turn to page 23 to read how one West Australian producer family is lifting their production.



Supply chain

Lamb carcass measurement: the

Xbox cameras, medical technology and probes are the next frontier for the lamb supply chain.

MLA, through the Sheep CRC, is trialling new technologies to provide accurate real-time measurements of fat, meat and bone content, meat colour, intramuscular fat and eye muscle area in lamb carcasses. Most of these technologies will also have application in beef and goat processing.

Objectively measuring profitable carcass traits, such as lean meat yield and eating quality, could underpin value-based marketing and payment.

This represents a leap forward from the current practice of manually assessing carcasses, such as palpating the grade rule (GR) measurement site (11cm from the midline at the 12th rib) in lambs, which can be inconsistent and inaccurate and provide only an estimate of carcass fatness. At the other end of the spectrum is CT scanning. This provides an accurate measurement of fat, bone and muscle but the process is currently too slow for commercial chain speeds.

Murdoch University's Associate Professor Graham Gardner said the next frontier was somewhere in between these options, and would involve commercially relevant tools that were cost effective and accurate.

"When it comes to meat measurement technology, we have two aims - measuring lean meat yield and measuring eating quality - that are important to the whole value chain (producers, processors, retailers) and to consumers," Graham said.

"Both offer benefits back to producers through increased demand for product and the potential for premiums based on true carcass value."

The quest to develop a range of tools to suit all processors - from hand-held rapid devices to automated systems - has seen researchers put technologies to the 'real world test' at processing plants across Australia.

One of the biggest challenges facing researchers has been how to accurately assess the whole carcass based on information from one measurement site, such as the GR site or the C site.

"The distribution of fat and muscle around the body of a lamb is influenced genetically, so a single-point measurement is biased," Graham said.

"All this variability has a cost. From a lean meat yield perspective, it means more fat trimmed and inconsistent retail cut size,

and in terms of eating quality it means lost consumer confidence. A whole-carcass measurement system would provide more accurate assessments."

There are systems in place, such as the lamb MSA program, to predict traits like eating quality. Researchers have also developed a carcass value calculator that takes input values like GR tissue depth (measured accurately with a GR knife) and hot carcass weight to predict cut weight that, when multiplied by their value and summed, gives the carcass value.

"We have the pathway in place to act on variability in lean meat yield and eating quality, so all we need now are the measurement technologies to support these systems by accurately measuring traits such as intramuscular fat, eye muscle area and GR tissue depth; or - even better - true carcass composition," Graham said.

A priority is to take measurements as early as possible - ideally on the hot carcass straight off the slaughter floor - so variability can be managed by sorting carcass-based lean meat yield and cuts based on size and eating quality.

As this requires hot carcass measurement devices, researchers face the challenge of

The evolution of processing technologies

Manual assessment or GR knife

As seen in: Lamb processing.

How it works: Manual palpation at GR site or using a GR knife/ruler to measure tissue depth.

Accuracy: Lack of precision, open to operator variation.

Verdict: Inconsistent point measurement only loosely correlated to lean meat yield.



Impedance probes

(pictured below left)

As used by: Currently no commercial use.

How it works: Probes send electrical currents and test the impedance. More impedance means more fat so should be suitable for assessing intramuscular fat. The Danish-developed Carometec Fat'O'Meter has been modified to measure the GR site in lamb carcasses and also IMF at the C muscle site.

Accuracy: First version was not accurate but work is continuing to refine capability.

Verdict: Watch this space.



Near Infrared Spectroscopy (NIR)

As used by: Medical labs, pork and grains industry.

How it works: Using the near-infrared spectrum, it can measure a number of attributes (protein, fat, moisture); however, it requires rigorous calibration and standardised conditions that are difficult to achieve thus far in livestock processing.

Accuracy: Research to date has given encouraging results on also measuring meat colour, ultimate pH and marbling with potential measurement of other meat attributes.

Verdict: Improvements have been made to calibration and it shows potential.

next frontier

converting some of the tools - which are optimised for cold cutting - so processors can make earlier product sorting decisions and more timely payments to producers. However 'cold' grading technologies (i.e. just before the boning room) also offer value, given the greater flexibility of measurement options.

Resource Flock

Research and development for the sheep value chain needs sheep, and the 'sheep behind the research' are known as the Resource Flock.

With 150 new sires used each year, this flock provides a source of diverse genetic material, giving researchers a variety of animals to process. For example, across the whole flock the intramuscular fat in the loin varies from 2% to 9%, which is essential for testing the sensitivity of tools such as impedance probes.

This flock was formerly the Information Nucleus Flock (INF) under the first Sheep CRC. It was separated to become an industry asset - funded by MLA - to operate beyond the CRC. The Resource Flock is managed by the University of New England at Armidale and by the Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia, at Katanning.



Carcases pieces being CT scanned.

In the second half of 2015, 600 lambs from the Resource Flock were processed in 100-head lots to test prototype carcass measurement technologies such as Dual Emission X-ray Analysis (DEXA) as part of the existing Scott Technology primal cutting system, 3D and hyper-spectral cameras, and near-infrared and electrical impedance probes.

After processing, the lambs were sent to Murdoch University, where the carcasses were CT scanned and numerous muscle samples were collected to calibrate the other technologies.

"We compared the DEXA with the CT yield test, and it was the by far the most accurate technology so far," Graham said.

"Using DEXA, we can explain 85% of the variation in carcass fatness. This compares to 15-30% using GR measurement and hot standard carcass weight, while visual

scanning technology (VIAscan®) describes about 45%."

Each carcass was then boned into commercial cuts - generating 163 different weights and measures per animal. Researchers are using this data to calculate saleable meat yield and recalibrate the carcass calculator that will predict primal/cut and even muscle weights based on DEXA carcass composition and weight.

Graham said the next step will be to focus on creating industry-ready devices - ranging from automated technologies to hand-held devices to suit processors of all sizes - and paving the way for an MSA individual carcass system for sheep.



Dr Graham Gardner
T: 08 9360 2264
E: g.gardner@murdoch.edu.au

See page 36 for tips on how to read processor grids.



Hyperspectral camera (pictured below right)

As used by: NASA in the Hubble telescope and in pork research for intramuscular fat.

How it works: A high-resolution hyperspectral camera takes photos across the eye muscle capturing seven wavelengths across the visible and infrared range. This technology, which provides an accurate picture of the eye muscle composition, is being tested as a measure for intramuscular fat.

Accuracy: Works best on a cut surface (cold grading) so requires adaptation to be practical for current processing practices.

Verdict: Promising as a hand-held device, potential for automation.



3D imaging

As used by: Xbox.

How it works: University of Technology Sydney and NSW DPI researchers are using RGBD cameras to take 3D imaging of the carcass.

Accuracy: Unknown.

Verdict: Promising.



Dual Emission X-ray Analysis (DEXA)

As used by: The medical industry.

How it works: Working with commercial partner Scott Technology, researchers modified the 2D X-ray technology used in the Scott Technology lamb primal cutting system at the JBS Australia plant at Bordertown into a dual-energy system to more accurately predict carcass composition and fat distribution (see page 14).

Accuracy: Yield measurement using DEXA has high accuracy and could benefit both producers and processors. This technology can also be adapted to the hot stage of processing, enabling carcasses to be categorised according to yield. Hot application will have good prediction potential enabling pre-boning sorting, but will still need cold image to drive robotic cutting (as the carcass changes shape when chilled).

Verdict: Perfect match for automated processing systems.

Supply chain

Processor perspective

JBS Australia has already seen the benefits of automated technology, having installed Scott Technology's LEAP X-ray-guided automated lamb cutting systems in its Bordertown, SA, plant in 2013 and 2014.

The primal system has processed nearly 2.85 million lamb/mutton carcasses, while the middle cutting system has processed close to 2 million lamb middles (racks and loins).

"The accuracy of the cutting lines delivers a consistent product and the shelf life is outstanding," JBS Australia innovation manager Graham Treffone said.

"The technology has reduced labour by seven units per shift. We have also seen a reduction in injuries in the boning room since it was installed."

JBS Australia is working with MLA and researchers at Murdoch University, through the Sheep CRC, to trial a Dual Emission X-ray Analysis (DEXA) with the LEAP system. DEXA is being used to determine the cutting co-ordinates for the LEAP primal and middle processing system, and researchers are also assessing if DEXA can be used to accurately predict lean meat yield and saleable meat yield.

Graham said the research could determine whether processors were getting the best value out of raw product.

"We still have a lot of work to complete before we can be satisfied we have the ability to predict lean mean yield and saleable meat yield using the DEXA system," Graham said.

"The ability to accurately measure these traits is important. We can then understand whether we are making the correct decisions in our boning rooms, such as processing lambs into cutting plans that deliver the best yield and revenue, with less wastage and consistent eating quality."

Graham said his 'R&D wishlist' included automatic GR fat readings on hot lamb carcasses and forequarter processing using robotic technology.



Graham Treffone
E: graham.treffone@jbsa.com.au

Enhancing beef's safety

Australia's reputation for providing safe food is the foundation of our export industry. MLA, in collaboration with CSIRO and universities, is working hard to enhance this reputation by improving *E. coli* detection and control.



MLA is funding research into reducing incidences of Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* in beef.

This potentially lethal group of bacteria has relatively little impact on Australian public health; however, its control is essential to our key beef export markets, particularly the US.

In 1993, the US experienced a high-profile outbreak of *E. coli*, attributed to under-cooked hamburgers sold by a restaurant chain. The outbreak caused more than 700 cases of food poisoning, including four deaths.

Subsequently, all imported beef is tested and the US has nil tolerance for *E. coli*.

MLA's Market Access Science and Technology Manager, Ian Jenson, said MLA had funded several research projects with CSIRO, the University of Sydney, Charles Sturt University and the University of Tasmania to investigate *E. coli* strains and find the best methods for control during processing and on-farm.

"At this stage, processors bear the burden and employ various control methods including cleaning protocols, hot water and acid washes," he said.

"So far, the most promising research project involves controlling *E. coli* through the chilling process and it is ongoing with the University of Tasmania.

"Researchers found under commercial spray chilling conditions, using chlorine dioxide, *E. coli* cell numbers reduced 100-fold in 24 hours and a further 10-fold after 72 hours. Further research found certain chemicals could be applied using anti-bacterial wipes, a technique accepted widely in international markets due to minimal residue.

"It is hoped this process will be trialled commercially early next year."

With MLA support, CSIRO is continuing its work on detection and risk assessment of various *E. coli* strains found in Australian cattle.

Ian said the good news so far was that many Australian isolates of O157, one of the most severe but not common variants of *E. coli*, are in the lower risk category for human health.



Ian Jenson, MLA
T: 02 9463 9264
E: ijenson@mla.com.au

Research at work

The latest on-farm strategies emerging from MLA's investment in research, development and adoption.

In this issue**20// Learnings from Indonesia**

Two northern producers share their insights from a recent export study tour.

23// Meeting demand

Find out how WA sheep producers are gearing up to meet increased export orders.

25// On rotation

Find out how focusing on production systems has increased productivity for northern cattle producers Greg and Carol Ryan.

26// Practical pastures

How Producer Research Sites are working to answer local challenges.

The MLA Challengers - one year on



It has been more than 12 months since we last heard from the MLA Challengers. The MLA Challenge set out to up-skill six livestock producing families through education, mentorship and introduction to a range of tools for use in their enterprise.

At the end of the Challenge, which saw Tasmanian sheep producers John and Annie Ramsay named the overall winners (John is pictured above with sons Henry and Alex), the participants said they were empowered by the opportunity and were confident their new found knowledge and confidence would have massive benefit.

Here we catch up with them and hear how their learnings from the Challenge have been applied to their businesses. →



OUTCOME:
Expansion of beef brand and
increased production

Lachlan Hughes from Dulacca, Queensland.

Lachlan and Anna Hughes

What has been happening in your business since you finished the Challenge?

A lot! We enlisted the help of Sam Newsome as a business consultant and we've been down to our mentor Robert Gill's place three times to learn more about paddock feeding.

We're now killing 84 head a week through our own brand, Rangeland Quality Meats (RQM). When the Challenge started we were struggling to kill 28. Our prices are better and people are recognising our brand, so RQM is healthy now.

We've also employed two more people, converted our agistment block 'Crescendo' into a backgrounding block, and we've had a baby girl - Georgia Ann. It's been an amazing year.

What goals have been achieved and what are you working towards now?

Past goals:

We've synced up all our cows, we have better bulls and we have a bunch of nice progeny on the ground.

We took a hit in cattle numbers (due to lower calving) because we synced our herd quickly, but it's been dreadfully dry on our breeding block so we took the opportunity to isolate the cows that were in calf and sell the rest. This has proven to be the right decision because we are looking at another late summer.

New goals:

Our main goal is to get the weights we want

from paddock feeding, which is difficult because we don't have any cropping land, so pasture monitoring and budgeting is very important.

We got serious about it six months ago and now have two nutritionists and a pasture scientist working with us to try and nail down a system - in the past three months we've gotten some outstanding results considering the season.

By the end of the year we aim to have a composting system to improve our soils and we'll be sowing legumes by spring next year.

What was the greatest lesson from participating in the Challenge?

I realised it doesn't matter whether you have fattening country, breeding country, high rainfall or low, you have to learn to question yourself and challenge everything you do. I learnt not to be afraid of this questioning process and, as a result, we're now heading in a much different and exciting new direction.

We wouldn't have been able to achieve this without the continued support of Robert and Sam. I can't speak highly enough of the Challenge and the mentoring system. It has been a breath of fresh air through our business and I can honestly say that for the first time in the six years my wife and I have been home, we feel very much in control of our future. Thanks MLA.



Andrew and Megan Miller with their daughters Alice, Bridie and Grace, from Jundah, Queensland.

Andrew and Megan Miller

What has been happening in your business since you finished the Challenge?

When we entered the Challenge we were leasing 'Coniston'. We've always wanted to own our own place and the Challenge allowed us to see that, in terms of our business and personal goals, 'Coniston' was not going to get us there.

During the Challenge I had done a fair bit of contract work to pay the bills and one of my fencing clients was Peter Bowler, who lives in Western Australia but had recently purchased 'Braidwood' at Jundah, which is the property he grew up on.

I only met him briefly, but Peter had followed the Challenge closely. At the end of the competition he offered us a job managing 'Braidwood'. We accepted and moved to 'Braidwood' in late January this year. We were absentee lessees of 'Coniston' for about five months, closing up our enterprise there in mid-July.

In the future, the plan is to run about 15,000 sheep and 1,000 head of cattle on



Lachlan and Anna Hughes
E: lachlanhughes1@bigpond.com



OUTCOME:
A new career path

'Braidwood' and the neighbouring property 'Wuringle', which Peter has also bought. Together, they form about 84,000ha.

How do you plan to marry the goals you set during the Challenge with your current role?

Even though we have less control now because we're managers (and I'm slowly learning the art of diplomacy), we actually feel for the first time we are in complete control of our own future.

Peter knows that managing 'Braidwood' is a path to us purchasing a place of our own and he is entirely open to us running our property on the side, in addition to our responsibilities here.

We were lucky that Peter also agreed to buy our cow herd. During the Challenge, we lifted our pregnancy rates from 58% to 67%, and this year we hit 85.8%.

What were the most valuable lessons you learned from the Challenge?

To look at everything objectively, whether it's our herd, our enterprise mix or our work-life balance.



OUTCOME:
Business growth and control of their future

Matthew and Angela Pearce with their children Hunter, Minnie and Sted, from Cootomundra, NSW.

Matthew and Angela Pearce

What has been happening in your business since you finished the Challenge?

We purchased a nearby property and we've got our breeder numbers up to 400, which was the goal we worked out with our mentor Terrey Johnson.

We were going to build numbers just by retaining heifers, but we brought our program forward by 18 months by buying cows.

We've been very fortunate. We had two good seasons at the beginning of our business and, combined with high prices, this has allowed us to bring forward some plans.

What goals have been achieved and what are you working towards now?

We've achieved some infrastructure goals, including new cattle yards on the new block and more fencing on both blocks, and we've also finished the renovations on our house.

One of our goals was to join more females per year and then cull on fertility as our first point of culling, rather than culling prior to joining. Last year, we joined all our heifers and we'll do it again this year. We'll join 500 females in total and use the extras to give us options depending on the season. For example, we may retain more young females in the cow herd and tip out older

ones, sell PTIC (pregnancy tested in calf) females, or retain and calve more. We've also tightened our joining period again - four weeks for heifers and eight weeks for cows.

Through the Challenge we identified ways a consultant could help us work on addressing profit drivers in our business. We now have a consultant who has also provided input to our business plan.

We created the business plan with Terrey during the Challenge and it sets out what we want to achieve from both a financial and lifestyle point of view. We used it recently when we refinanced our business after putting it out to tender, and the banks all commented on it very favourably. It is a live document and we will continue to review it.

What was the greatest lesson from participating in the Challenge?

There were two things:

1. Have a plan and act to that plan, rather than just doing things.
2. Measure your performance. This is very new for us and our consultant is helping us examine the business's key performance indicators and find ways to improve on them every year.



Andrew and Megan Miller
E: milleramb@yahoo.com.au



Matthew and Angela Pearce
E: muronga@bigpond.com



OUTCOME:
New systems and greater
efficiency

John Ramsay with his sons, Henry and Alex, from Bothwell, Tasmania.

John and Annie Ramsay

What has been happening in your business since you won the Challenge in 2014?

We sold a farm, which has enabled us to further develop 'Ratho', our home farm. We built a 730m pivot and a dam, invested in automated sheep-handling equipment and have done a lot of fencing.

On a personal level, we're expecting a baby at the end of January.

What goals have been achieved and what are you working towards now?

Our auto drafter and sheep handler was something we identified through the Challenge as a way of improving labour efficiency. It has an electronic identification (EID) panel reader, which also led to a much better understanding of our lamb growth rates.

Some of the other goals were pre-Challenge, but the Challenge gave us the confidence and knowledge to be able to justify the investment decisions.

We now feel confident we can irrigate grass and turn it into meat much better than we could prior to the Challenge. This is largely due to a change in the type of

sheep we're running, but also to measuring feed on offer and better grazing management.

We lamb marked 136% last year and our target was 130%, so we hit that well and truly. We still haven't quite hit our lamb growth rate target of 300g/day. We're doing about 200g/day, which is much better than last year, but we want to push it.

A lot of the basics are going well but we now need to fine-tune. For example, we're still having trouble at lambing time with hypocalcaemia. We've fed a lot more calcium supplement this year so we're better off than last year, but we're still having issues, particularly with triplets.

What was the greatest lesson from participating in the Challenge?

You can change things around in your business pretty quickly - it's all about putting the right systems and processes around you.

We're also in a much better position emotionally and financially since the Challenge. We have more confidence as a result of doing research into our problems, getting people around who can help, and setting better plans and processes.



Marcus Sounness with farm management trainee Rebecca Waters, from Amelup, WA.

Marcus and Shannon Sounness

What has been happening in your business since you finished the Challenge?

We have been busy implementing changes we identified during the Challenge. We've modernised our office, human resources and industrial relations processes, and there has been a lot of administration work regarding farm succession.

What goals have been achieved and what are you working towards now?

1. Farm succession

We achieved more during the Challenge than we had in the previous 10 years. We now own the farm business and everyone has a role, including my retired parents.

The extra communication resulting from the Challenge really helped. We wrote 30 blogs in a year and it meant my whole family could see what we were thinking, which spurred the process on.

Plus, we were working on the business, which gave my parents confidence because they knew where we were heading.

2. Human resources (HR)

Staff management was one of the major issues we grappled with in the Challenge, so we've been learning a lot about HR management.



John and Annie Ramsay
E: ramsayag@bigpond.com



OUTCOME:
Succession sorted and a more robust business model

We've taken on a full-time farm management trainee - Rebecca Waters. We needed more help on the farm, and Shannon and I felt we would like to contribute to the industry by training someone up.

We've offered Rebecca more than a job. She's doing some TAFE courses now and will probably end up doing an external university course next year.

3. Production

This year we marked 103% lambs. Our goal was 100% and our long-term average is 85%.

We've achieved this by applying the principles of Lifetime Ewe Management and Making More from Sheep.

4. Personal

We're expanding the family - our second baby is due in November.

What was the greatest lesson from participating in the Challenge?

The need to keep learning. Our mentor Rob Warburton's advice was that we needed to set aside money in our budget each year for education. That may mean travelling to attend seminars or visit farms, depending on what we identify as the most important thing we need to learn for the business at the time.



OUTCOME:
Expansion and improved herd performance

Bill and Georgia Wilson, from Edi, Victoria.

Bill and Georgia Wilson

What has been happening in your business since you finished the Challenge?

We have doubled our landholding by buying the 200 hectares next door. It was something we always wanted to do but the Challenge encouraged us to think we had the nucleus of a successful business and we were able to approach the decision in a more business-like manner.

Our aim is to use our original property as a finishing block and the new country as a breeding block. We are still store-weaner producers but this gives us more options.

What goals have been achieved and what are you working towards now?

Our main goal was to increase fertility in our cow herd and shorten our joining.

Our mentor Bill Hoffman said we could sync up our cows in 12 months but it would cost a lot of money, so we set a three-year plan. We got our joining back to nine weeks last year.

During the Challenge, we aimed for a 95% conception rate in our cows and we wanted 65-70% of those in calf in the first two cycles. We've hit those goals.

This spring we'll join 150-odd heifers with the goal of reducing the age of our cow herd and also, instead of having only about half our heifers heavy enough to join, they'll all be heavy enough.

Our feed management is much better and we've switched to a more intensive rotational grazing system.

We're still working on cost of production - our current goal is to produce as much as we can for \$1.20/kg.

What was the greatest lesson from participating in the Challenge?

It's all very well to measure something, but you have to do something with the data once you have it.

We've set ourselves up with an electronic tag-reading system so when we weigh steers we can track them back to their mothers and form a better understanding of our genetics. We can focus on exactly what we need when it's time to purchase bulls.

We're also more comfortable with our decision making. We do the research, look at all the options, make a decision and move on.



Marcus and Shannon Sounness
E: thegully@papercollar.com.au



Bill and Georgia Wilson
E: georgiaandbill@bigpond.com

Market compliance

Insights from Indonesia

Diversification and flexibility to meet market demands are important principles at the family-run Warrawagine Cattle Company in Western Australia's Pilbara region.



Snapshot

Warrawagine
Cattle Company,
Pilbara, WA

**Property:**

'Warrawagine'
402,000ha;
'Wallal Downs'
256,000ha

Enterprise:

Beef, mainly for
live export

Livestock:

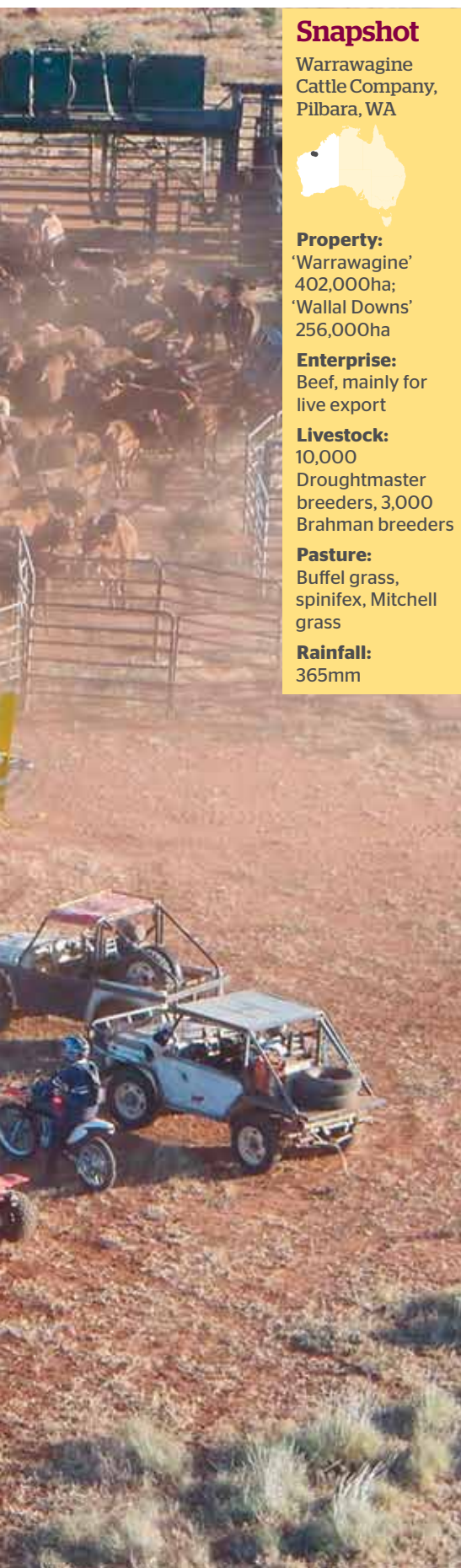
10,000
Droughtmaster
breeders, 3,000
Brahman breeders

Pasture:

Buffel grass,
spinifex, Mitchell
grass

Rainfall:

365mm



Warrawagine livestock manager and head stockman Ben Mills had an insight into a critical market for the business when he and his partner, Caitlin U'Ren, joined an MLA/LiveCorp tour to Indonesia in August.

"The live export market is pivotal for us as it is our closest market and can take volume," Ben said.

"This market also suits our business plan. Selling younger cattle into the live export feeder market means we can wean earlier for better re-conception and carry more stock than if we still produced bullocks - for a quicker turnover."

The company exports 6,000-7,000 head a year off two properties. 'Warrawagine', north-east of Marble Bar, runs 10,000 Droughtmaster breeders with some Brahman influence, while 'Wallal Downs', on the coastal plains, is home to 3,000 predominantly high-grade Brahman breeders.

This lets the company target a range of markets, including higher-grade Brahman cattle to Indonesia, Droughtmaster bulls to Israel and Droughtmaster heifers to Vietnam. Brahman steers and heifers are also directed to Malaysia. They also send 1,000-1,500 head to domestic processors.

In a normal year, Ben aims for all export cattle to be above 300kg to meet the optimum feeder weight. Any lighter stock are retained for the following year. However, this year - in response to the dry ('Warrawagine' has a 365mm annual rainfall but received less than 200mm in the last wet season) - Ben sent 500 head of cattle to be fed at Broome for a month before export to lift weights from around 250kg to a minimum of 270kg and lighten the load on-property.

Ben found the Indonesian tour interesting.

"I did expect a high standard of stock treatment in Indonesia, but the way feedlots

and abattoirs were run was better than I anticipated," he said.

"It was great to talk to Indonesian feedlot and abattoir managers first-hand, to see what they like and what they don't like. It confirmed that we are on the right track - for example, they want a high Brahman content in cattle and traits such as a clean head and clean coat."

Warrawagine Cattle Company prefers polled bulls so that stock will not fall out of export specifications. While it is easier to source lines of polled Droughtmasters than red Brahman bulls, Ben said the industry was moving in the right direction and 90% of the 80-90 bulls they buy a year are polled or poll scurred.

"We need to produce what suits our business and environment, so it was good to see there is diversity within the Indonesian market," he said.

"Abattoirs that target the high-end food service sector prefer lower-content cattle, such as Droughtmasters and Charbrays, because they yield better; whereas the wet market wants a higher Brahman content for their leaner meat."

Ben said consumer trends in Indonesia were enlightening.

"The biggest surprise was probably that 70% of beef in Indonesia is made into meatballs (bakso balls) and boiled," he said.

"Indonesians want a very different style of beef than Australian consumers. In the traditional wet market there is no demand for high-end product, as is driven by cooking and celebrity chef trends in Australia - they just want lean beef."

Lessons learned from the Indonesian trip

- There can be diversity within a single export market
- Consumer demands drive the market, so it is important to understand consumption trends
- A diverse herd composition opens the gate to markets and creates flexibility
- From my observations, Indonesia has a high standard for cattle handling, feeding and processing



Warrawagine Cattle Co. livestock manager and head stockman Ben Mills.



Ben Mills

E: beno_199@hotmail.com

Market compliance

Meeting the market



Wave Hill, 400km south of Katherine, Northern Territory.

The opportunity to step away from the business of producing beef and visit their international marketplace gave Greg Dakin (pictured above) and his wife Allison, a first-hand insight into the challenges and opportunities of live export.

The Dakins manage two Western Grazing Company breeding properties - 'Wave Hill', 400km south of Katherine in the Northern Territory, and 'Rocklands Station', which straddles the NT/Queensland border near Camooweal.

Greg said Wave Hill's Victoria River District location positioned it to target the live export trade.

"We send 90% of the annual turnoff of steers to live export," Greg said.

"It is a critical market for 'Wave Hill', but it also provides an opportunity for cattle with high Brahman content from 'Rocklands Station'."

About 30% of 'Rockland Station's' cattle are directed to live export, with the remaining crossbred component of steers finished on the company's Channel Country property, Tanbar.

In August, Greg and Allison joined producers from Queensland and WA on a week-long supply chain tour to Indonesia supported by MLA and LiveCorp.

Although it was Greg's third trip to Indonesia, it was the first time he had visited processing plants in this export market. He said the experience was an opportunity to meet those involved throughout the supply chain.

"We already focus on producing a product that our export market will love, and part of this is connecting with people in the supply chain so we produce an animal that meets their requirements," he said.

Management at 'Wave Hill' is fine-tuned to meet Indonesian market specifications - Brahman content, between 15 and 18-months old and ranging from 320-350kg. Any stock that falls out of these parameters is redirected to Vietnam.

The production cycle aims to turn off stock from January to October, with a break over the wet season. 'Wave Hill' breeders calve from October to November, with weaners from the first round muster in April to June trucked out the following year.

Strategies such as classing steers into weight range at weaning and managing them in different mobs allows Greg to easily identify cattle to fill forward contracts.

During the Indonesian tour, the producers visited two very different processing facilities, which Greg described as an 'eye-opening' experience.

"One was very traditional and processed meat for the wet market, which is still the main place beef is purchased for traditional cooking styles," he said.

"The other processor was a modern abattoir which processed its own frozen and chilled beef for the supermarket and restaurant sectors."

A trip to a high-end supermarket revealed another market for Australian beef.

"The big surprise for me, as a live export producer, was the large amount of Australian boxed beef sold in Indonesia," Greg said.

Snapshot

Western Grazing Company, Katherine, NT, and Camooweal, Qld.



Property:

'Wave Hill' - 1.35 million ha, 'Rocklands', - 647,500ha

Enterprise:

Beef, mainly for live export

Livestock:

'Wave Hill' - 67,000 head of predominantly grey Brahman 'Rocklands', - 40,000 head of Brahman and composite cattle

Pasture:

'Wave Hill' - Mitchell and Flinders grass and spinifex; 'Rocklands' - Mitchell and Flinders grass

Rainfall:

Both properties 650mm

"There are also an increasing number of steakhouse-style restaurants, aimed at Indonesia's growing middle class."

Greg said the recent 'ad hoc' nature of Indonesia's import permits is a challenge - meaning forward contracts can only be locked-in a quarter before - but he remains positive about the live export market.

"The opportunity in Indonesia is mind boggling - we saw many empty pens in feedlots where there is plenty of capacity. Indonesian consumers want Australian beef; we had a very welcome reception from people we met in the processing plants, wet markets and supermarkets," he said.

It reinforced to me that we are on the right track, we just need secure market access."

Lessons learned from the Indonesian trip

- Connecting with our supply chain ensures we provide a product that meets requirements
- The potential in Indonesia is characterised by rising demand for premium and lesser quality cuts
- The Indonesian market is changing, with an increasing number of steakhouse-style restaurants aimed at Indonesia's growing middle class
- Secure market access is critical to maintain export markets



Greg Dakin

E. gregallisondakina@gmail.com

Pasture management



Aim to sustain

The Wambiana grazing trial has a clear message for northern pastoralists – when it comes to stocking rates, flexibility is the key to profitable and sustainable management.

The 18-year-long, MLA-funded trial, conducted on the Lyons' cattle property 'Wambiana' 70km south of Charters Towers, was established to find out which stocking rate and pasture management strategies were most profitable and sustainable long term.

According to Project leader Dr Peter O'Reagain, flexible stocking rates around long-term carrying capacities with wet season spelling was the stand-out strategy for commercial beef operations.

Key learnings presented at a recent field day for producers were:

- Heavy stocking rates (HSR), at about twice the long-term carrying capacity, were more profitable initially in the first few good seasons of the project but made the least profit and caused pasture degradation in the long term.
- After 18 years the density of palatable, perennial and productive grasses such as desert bluegrass, black speargrass and Queensland bluegrass in the HSR paddocks was three to four times less than in paddocks stocked 'moderately' (about the long-term carrying capacity).
- Heavily stocked paddocks' resilience to drought was severely diminished making them vulnerable to even the mildest dry year.
- Moderate stocking rates generated far more profit in the longer term and, after 18 years, had by far the best pasture condition underpinning this profitability.
- Variable stocking, where stocking rates were adjusted up or down based on pasture availability at the end of the wet

season (May), made as much profit as moderate stocking but proved more risky and pasture condition was slightly poorer.

- Wet season spelling was also important to maintain and improve pasture condition, however, the response is sometimes slow.
- The optimal strategy is flexible stocking around long-term carrying capacity using forage budgeting to adjust stock numbers as conditions change between years. Wet season spelling is also important.
- Fire should be used judiciously to control woodland thickening. This and other similar strategies are currently being tested at the Wambiana trial.

To accurately assess a property's long-term carrying capacity, Peter recommended completing the MLA EDGE Network's Grazing Land Management course.

The Stocktake Plus program also provides training as well as an app to calculate forage budgets.



Dr Peter O'Reagain // T: 07 4761 5164
E: Peter.O'Reagain@daf.qld.gov.au

A full report on the Wambiana research findings will be featured in the January/February edition of *Feedback*.

Read more on the Wambiana trial at: <https://futurebeef.com.au/resources/projects/wambiana-grazing-trial/>

MLA Edge Network:
www.mla.com.au/Extension-training-and-tools/EDGEnetwork

Stocktake Plus:
www.stocktakeplus.com.au



Productivity

Better rather than bigger

Producer and sheep researcher Kelly Pearce believes Western Australia has the potential to improve its export capacity, as encouraged by the MLA-supported Sheep Industry Business Innovation project. Here is how she and husband, Alan, have set about lifting their sheep numbers.

The pair combined their skills in research, sheep breeding and cropping to experiment with pasture varieties, rotations and strategic grazing to fill feed gaps and lift their carrying capacity.

"It works well – between us we're managing to improve our profitability and reduce our risk, particularly in what's shaping up to be a fairly tough year," Kelly said.

So far (for 2015) their properties have received only half their average annual rainfall. However, the couple has lifted the carrying capacity from 4.5 to 5 ewes/ha.

Kelly and Alan measure the productivity of their sheep business in terms of lambs weaned/ha.

"I think it's a more accurate assessment of our efficiency. You can have 100% lambing but if you're only running 2.5 ewes/ha you're not very productive," she said.

Genetics are also an important part of the equation with Kelly and Alan recently establishing their own White Suffolk stud, Acadia, to produce terminal sires.

"We're meat-focused," Kelly said.

"When selecting rams we focus on Australian Sheep Breeding Values (ASBVs) for high post-weaning weights, which equate to fast growth, balanced with ASBV birth weights under 0.4kg for ease of lambing and as positive fat scores as we can get. It helps lambs thrive in our drier environment." →

Productivity

The couple is making productivity gains by improving their crop grazing management and optimising their crop/pasture rotations.

In the paddock

"We have gained a lot of knowledge from working with our local grower group, the Facey group, and from the Grain and Graze program," Kelly said.

"We've trialled crop grazing and a number of different pasture mixes, sowing times and methods. As a result, we've implemented a summer sowing regime for our pasture establishment.

"We seed a combination of hard-seeded yellow serradellas (Charano, Santorini and Margaritaa, medium-hard seed), soft-seeded pastures (the French serradellas Eliza and Cadiz) and Dalkeith subclover, along with Scope barley, in a mix in February when we're not as busy.

"The idea is that the hard-seed coat will break down in the warm soil in time to germinate with the opening rains. We include the soft-seeded varieties because they germinate earlier and give us early feed in April/May when it's needed.

"Pasture paddocks remain in pasture for two to three years, depending on weed burdens and cropping history, to allow the hard-seeded varieties to set seed and last through successive crop rotations.

The couple has experienced good results from grazing barley crops.

"Being able to graze barley for three weeks from 1 July, immediately following lamb marking this year, enabled us to run at five ewes/ha and lifted the condition score with clear benefits for our lambs during a period of no rain and without any reduction in yields," Kelly said.

"We place a cage in the crop to monitor the difference between the grazed and non-grazed areas and to help us decide when to remove stock."

Kelly and Alan aim to turn off lambs upwards of 22kg carcass weight and have a range of markets to choose from.

"At 18-22kg carcass weight there's the domestic trade, for 35-40kg liveweight the live boat trade and the light weight chilled carcass trade to the Middle East, and we have export processors that prefer larger lambs over 22kg carcass weight," Kelly said.

Below: Alan Manton and Kelly Pearce with their son, Alistair.



Kelly Pearce and Alan Manton
E: pearcekelly@bigpond.com

Snapshot

Alan Manton and Kelly Pearce, 'Hopewell' - Yealering; 'Springfield' - Kondinin, WA.



Property:

'Hopewell' - 1,822ha;
'Springfield' - 1,012ha

Enterprise:

60/40 cropping (wheat, barley, canola, oats, export hay) and prime lamb production; White Suffolk stud

Livestock:

3,000 Merino ewes; 150 White Suffolk stud ewes

Pasture:

Serradellas, Dalkeith clover

Soil:

'Hopewell' - sandy loam;
'Springfield' - red clay

Rainfall:

'Hopewell' - 325mm;
'Springfield' - 250mm, winter dominant



Business management

More pasture, less work with new rotation

Greg and Carol Ryan have lifted their carrying capacity by 250 animal equivalents in four years by investing in more watering points and single-strand electric fencing to enable rotational grazing.

Snapshot

Greg and Carol Ryan, Georgetown, Qld.



Property:
26,000ha

Enterprise:
Breeding Brahman steers for the live export trade at 330–340kg and heifers for southern backgrounders and finishers

Livestock:
1,200 breeders, 800 heifers and 900 steers

Pasture:
Giant spear grass, blue grass, plume sorghum and golden beard

Soil:
One third granite, one third slaty spinifex hills and the remainder red sand ridge, red duplex, grey box and some black soils

Rainfall:
800mm

Greg admitted it was ‘a huge paradigm shift’, but combined with controlled joining, feeding wet weather phosphorus and selecting bulls with high fertility, it has proven successful. The benefits of these initiatives were borne out by research undertaken for MLA’s *Improving the performance of northern beef enterprises manual*, which found maximising productivity was one tool employed by the top 25% of producers.

The previous continuous grazing system had resulted in patch grazing and a decline in desirable pasture species, despite a conservative stocking rate.

Cattle were walking up to four kilometres to access water, increasing the grazing pressure around water points and under-utilising pasture that was too far away.

The Ryans’ program is to first expand watering points then fence according to soil type, to spread the grazing pressure of their 3,000-head Brahman herd evenly.

Now with two thirds of Green Hills under the new system, cattle walk no further than two kilometres to water, and as a result of the more even grazing pressure, the more palatable, productive pastures have been rejuvenated despite three years of less than optimal wet seasons.

“It’ll be easier when we’ve got the whole property fenced but it’s allowed us to be much more efficient in our use of labour and fuel, because while we’re handling

bigger mobs of cattle, we’re mustering a smaller area,” Greg said.

“The beauty of the system is that by second round of mustering in August we still have a couple of paddocks that haven’t had a beast in them for six months, so we’ve saved a bit of grass for the end of the dry and we don’t have to spend time monitoring paddocks with no cattle in them.”

Since 2009, two new pumping stations have been set up, one from a new bore and the other from the Gilbert River, and 33km of poly pipe has been laid to carry water to a series of holding tanks that fill strategically placed troughs.

The Ryans are halfway through erecting 70km of single plain wire electric fencing on steel posts 30 metres apart to divide the country into smaller paddocks.

The new fencing cost approximately \$1,350/km, compared to \$3,000/km for the traditional fence of three barbed wires used on the property’s boundaries.

So far the fencing has resulted in five paddocks ranging in size from 1,000ha to 3,500ha, and the single strand has presented no problems with containing stock.

Breeders and heifers are run as a single mob in the rotation and cattle are moved twice a year, with the spelled paddocks having a six month rest period including the wet season.

The Ryans have been monitoring pastures at 14 sites for the past eight years. Ten of these are photo monitoring sites (one for each land type) that assess land condition

and pasture quality and include indicators such as groundcover, species composition, pasture yield, soil condition and the presence of weeds.

Four of the sites have a 10m section where the grass and species are measured every April. At the same time, the Ryans do an annual feed budget to give them a ‘ballpark figure’ that helps them to decide whether to carry cattle on or sell off.

Greg said the data has matched his observation that palatable and productive native varieties such as giant spear grass, blue grass, plume sorghum and golden beard have more opportunity to grow and set seed under the grazing rotation.

Controlled mating from mid-January to August has reduced cow and heifer mortality by up to 5%, largely through stopping dry weather calves. Greg prefers to join cows and heifers then cull for fertility after pregnancy testing, which usually works out to be a cull rate of 15%.

Getting cows back in calf is dependent on the season. At the same time calving rates have been lifted by 8% through supplementation with a phosphorus-based dry lick that’s put out from the start of the wet season.



Greg and Carol Ryan

E. greenhills@scattleco@harboursat.com.au

Download MLA’s *Improving the performance of northern beef enterprises manual*: www.mla.com.au/northernperformance

Pasture management

Producer-designed pasture research

In 2014 MLA launched a program to put pasture research back into the paddock and the hands of producers. Twenty-five Producer Research Sites were established as part of MLA's investment in the southern feedbase. The program partners producers with researchers to discover if and how pasture research fits into farming systems.

Producers are involved with the design and running of the trials. Here we find out about two of the Producer Research Sites managed by Southern Farming Systems and the early days of the trials.



Irene Sobotta,
MLA
 E: isobotta@mla.com.au

A tropical solution for wet southern summers

Pasture species that have helped producers fill the summer and autumn feed gap in Western Australia may provide a solution for producers in Victoria's Gippsland region.

Research underway through MLA's Producer Research Sites program has brought together tropical pasture specialist Paul Sanford from the Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia, and producers from the Gippsland branch of Southern Farming Systems and the local Better Beef groups.

Gippsland often receives as much rainfall in summer as it does in winter.

Producer Trevor Caithness said he and fellow producers were keen to utilise the summer rainfall currently going to waste.

"We run a cattle enterprise and having green feed and a source of protein over summer would be of great benefit," Trevor said.

"We have tried to grow lucerne but have lost it through waterlogging, so to have some other productive and persistent grasses and

legumes would add diversity and spread the risk."

Under Paul's guidance, the group has established three paddocks (at Seaspray, Bairnsdale and Bengworden) with tropical grasses and trying alternative legumes, which will also be used for other MLA-funded research.

The group is measuring dry matter and feed quality, and ranking which subtropical grasses the stock prefer grazing. Although establishment and persistence is also being monitored, the group really needs to know if the grasses provide a feed source worth the investment.

The group members were surprised by the production of Rhodes grass, kikuyu and panic grass. Some of the panic grass plots reached a metre in height at the start of

March. Premier digit grass and summer-active tall fescue (comparison species) didn't perform as well in the establishment phase due to having weak seedlings, but have not yet been dismissed.

Producers are considering other potential benefits of tropical grasses, including:

- a reduction in fodder conservation by creating 'living haystacks' rather than making silage
- as part of adapting to climate variability, the prospect of more summer rainfall could see some of the tropical grasses really shine
- Rhodes grass is short-lived, at five years, and might neatly fit into a crop pasture rotation.

The work is supported by the Victorian Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources, which is



Sheep grazing the Seaspray trial site.



Bambasti grass does well at the Bairnsdale trial site.

helping to run the trial sites and data collection. Its involvement has allowed the group to establish and collect data on a third site and take additional feed quality measurements.

Paul said having a site in Gippsland would strengthen the work being done in WA and northern NSW by providing information from a different environment.

"The information from this site will also help calibrate the GrassGro program so we can include subtropical grasses as another pasture choice for people to model," Paul said. GrassGro is a computer program developed by CSIRO Plant Industry to assist decision-making in sheep and beef enterprises. By quantifying the variability in pasture and animal production, producers and advisers can assess the risks that variable weather imposes on a grazing system. Users can test management options against a wide range of seasons to achieve more profitable and sustainable utilisation of grasslands.

The next phase of the project will apply more grazing pressure and look closely at animal production to see if the tropical species are better than currently used pasture species.



Researcher: **Paul Sanford**
T: 08 9892 8475
E: paul.sanford@agric.wa.gov.au

Project leader: **Janice Dowe**
T: 0488 600 209 // E: jdowe@sfs.org.au

MLA Producer Research Sites Victoria coordinator: **Lisa Miller**
T: 0488 600 226
E: lmiller@sfs.org.au



www.grazplan.csiro.au
www.sfs.org.au



Lifting the lid on run down

Ewan Price and Bindi Hunter assess the amount of perennial ryegrass, clover and silver grass in the trial paddock post-spraying.

Investing in new pastures can be one of the highest input costs for a livestock business, so how do producers get more value from their existing pastures? New research aims to shed light on how to best lift persistence.

Under the **MLA Producer Research Sites program, Victoria's South West Prime Lamb (SWPL) Group and University of Melbourne pasture researcher Professor Kevin Smith are researching the issue.**

The work is examining how many years a pasture persists and the productivity of that pasture in those years. Initial economic research by the group found there are big financial gains if pastures can be maintained near maximum productivity for as many years as possible after sowing.

"Typically, pastures begin to decline after a few years and therefore the potential return from them is also declining," Kevin said.

"However, if we can maintain near maximum productivity in the early years after sowing, the payback period is greatly reduced and we can think about introducing improved species more frequently."

Members of the SWPL Group near Heywood are road-testing weed control and seedling recruitment strategies to stop perennial ryegrass pastures from losing productivity and being invaded with weeds.

"We want to know what intervention strategies work in our high stocking rate systems and where we can easily fit them

into our farming system," producer member Ewan Price said.

"Already we are seeing we can revamp paddocks we thought we had to renovate just by spraying out silver grass. The intervention strategies need to be driven by understanding what is in the pasture and what's holding them back."

Victorian Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources officer Bindi Hunter, who is working with the MLA producer groups, said the ability to test the 'theory' with some of the best lamb producers in the state would ensure the research message is practical and achievable for other producers. "Involving leading producers will ensure the final messages have immediate and widespread application to farmers," Bindi said.



Kevin Smith // T: 5573 0951
E: kfsmith@unimelb.edu.au

Project leader: **Kate Joseph**
T: 0428 541 158
E: primeag@westvic.com.au

MLA Producer Research Sites Victoria coordinator: **Lisa Miller**
T: 0488 600 226
E: lmiller@sfs.org.au

Pasture management

Genetics and grass management for productivity



Victorian producer Paul Mibus (pictured) runs a cropping and sheep enterprise in partnership with his father, Noel. They are lifting production targets and introducing dual-purpose crops to lift productivity on their 800ha property, south-west of Dunkeld. Paul is on the committee of the Hamilton branch of Southern Farming Systems and here he explains his production goals and why real life trials, like the Producer Research Sites, are important to his enterprise.

Snapshot

Paul Mibus,
Dunkeld, Victoria.



Property:
800ha (350ha
cropping, 450ha
grazing)

Enterprise:
Sheep and
cropping

Livestock:
Join 2,000 ewes

Pasture:
Phalaris and
sub-clover
improved pastures

Soil:
Mainly basalt,
heavy clay loam

Rainfall:
650mm

Grazing the canola with a large mob (around 200 head) for 4-6 weeks works best for us, allowing even grazing over the paddock with minimal areas over-grazed. Allowing the canola to regrow for 4-6 weeks after stock are removed may provide a second and maybe even a third grazing period, provided there is sufficient moisture to allow for the required growth. We apply urea to the canola in July, desiccate with glyphosate in November and direct-head in December.

What other improved pastures do you have?

Most of our farm has been sown to phalaris and sub-clover improved pastures. We have a set stock grazing system and take care to not over-graze or under-graze pastures, to prevent phalaris from becoming stalky and rank. Due to the dry conditions, some paddocks that were going to be sown to a summer forage crop will be left as annual rye grass until we get substantial rain.

What strategies do you have for pasture establishment and persistence?

Pasture establishment is usually done after a cropping phase, when weeds are eradicated or at least thinned right out. Onion weed has been a big problem in the past, but with lime application and chemical control these weeds have been virtually eradicated.

Pasture persistence is important because of the expense involved in resowing new pastures and to create competition to keep weeds at bay. Lime application to lift soil pH is a big driver of pasture persistence due to the acidic soils we have to deal with.

What are your production targets?

We have our sights on 90% lambing from the Poll Merinos and well over 100% from the Dohne-cross, through genetic selection for fertility. We also plan to change the flock composition to 1,000 Poll Merino ewes and 1,000 Dohne-cross ewes. Our goal is to produce a dual-purpose sheep with nice wool, good mothering traits in the ewes and heavier wethers.

Changing our genetics will allow us to run an animal that will cut more wool, have increased fertility and faster growth rates, and be more resilient and easy-care. Underpinning this will be our ability to provide good nutrition through good quality pastures and well managed dual-purpose crops.

What role do dual-purpose crops play in your business?

We are trialling dual-purpose canola for an MLA Producer Research Sites project. We sowed Taurus canola in November then planted 15ha of Clearfield Edimax in autumn. We sowed the Taurus dry, but received 20mm rain in January, which enabled us to start grazing on 21 April.

We ran 225 head (175 lambs, 50 ewes) on the canola for six weeks, and they gained an average of 250g/head/day. We expect to harvest 2-2.5t/ha, so the dual-purpose canola allows us to finish lambs during a feed gap, without taking a yield hit at harvest.

Are there any management challenges with dual-purpose canola?

It's a hardy plant, but to maintain plant numbers we are careful to not over-graze.

What's on the cards for the next year?

I want to start pregnancy-scanning our ewes to identify twins/triplets/dry ewes and manage them accordingly.

What are some of the tools that guide your on-farm decision making?

→ Southern Farming Systems: I am on the Hamilton branch committee and we often host trials. www.sfs.org.au

→ Lifetime Ewe Management: We have been involved in a LTEM course for the past two years, which has really reinforced the science behind management decisions such as nutrition. www.lifetimewool.com.au



Paul Mibus
E: pjmibus@bigpond.com

CoMarketing

Build your brand



MLA's CoMarketing Program was launched in July 2014, replacing the Industry Collaborative Agreement (ICA) program with one introducing more rigorous assessment and reporting procedures.

The program is open to Australian beef, veal, sheepmeat and goatmeat brand owners and aims to help create customer loyalty and sustainable brand growth.

In its first year of operation, the program provided about \$2.2 million in marketing activity funding to 50 beef companies and 18 sheepmeat companies, supporting 186 beef brands and 32 sheepmeat brands.

MLA Global Insights and Strategy Manager Samantha Jamieson said the new program was designed to increase value along the supply chain - including to producers.

"On review, and after working with each applicant, we ensured that more than 90% had a clear marketing strategy, to ensure MLA's investment benefited not only the brand, but the industry as a whole," she said.

The CoMarketing Program website has the reference materials, guidelines and forms necessary to apply for funding, including links to the e-learning program, which is a prerequisite for all applicants.

"If anyone has questions about the program they can also contact us directly," Samantha said.

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beef and sheep brands supported by the CoMarketing Program



Majella Fernando, MLA
T: 02 9463 9241
E: mfernando@mla.com.au

MLA CoMarketing Program 2014-15

	Number of participants	Number of total brands	Number of MSA brands	Average volume of sales supported by the Program	MLA contribution to brand marketing activities
Beef	50	186	73	95,000 tonnes/month	\$1,945,603
Sheepmeat	19	32	5	23,000 tonnes/month	\$279,156

CoMarketing

Wagyu success story



Jason and Ann Lewis,
Bingara, NSW.



North-west NSW Wagyu producers Jason and Ann Lewis (above) market their own boneless, boxed Wagyu under the JAC Wagyu brand and consider themselves an MLA CoMarketing Program success story.

Since launching their brand in 2012, the Bingara couple has seen meat sales go from zero to more than \$1 million last year.

In 2013, JAC Wagyu became the sole supplier of Wagyu to Coles' Next Generation stores nationwide and they have doubled their processing numbers in the past 12 months. They've also been able to share a little of their success with other Wagyu producers, buying in cattle when necessary to fill production gaps.

Funding in action

Ann and Jason applied to MLA for collaborative marketing funding in 2012, using it to attend their first trade show, set up a website and develop packaging and branding.

"Without the funding, we may not have considered attending our first Good Food and Wine Show because it was very expensive - it cost about \$12,000 to attend," Jason said.

"But that show and others have resulted in us picking up some very substantial customers."

The first round of funding also helped pay for the development of the JAC Wagyu website, which cost about \$10,000 and helped promote the company's unique business proposition.

"Unlike most Wagyu producers, who export about 90% of their product, we only export about 10%," Jason said.

"We built the website and set up delivery systems to enable us to deliver weekly to retail and wholesale customers in the eastern states.

"Coles picked up on that and now we deliver direct to 12 stores."

Subsequent CoMarketing Program funds have helped develop packaging for new products, including JAC Wagyu rendered fat, which is now available in all Coles stores in the eastern states.

Keeping up with demand

Ann and Jason introduced Wagyu bulls to their Angus herd about 11 years ago. Now, with Jason's parents, John and Lynne, they run about 500 Angus cows, 50 full-blood Wagyu cows and 14 full-blood Wagyu bulls.

The cattle are paddock-raised, eating a mix of pastures, forage crops and grain, and are killed at 2½-3 years of age, at a carcass weight of 400kg.

JAC Wagyu Farms produces about 600 head a year of predominantly F1 Wagyu, with about 10% full-blood.

"At the moment, we're only processing around half those - 30 a month. Twelve months ago, we were only processing a quarter," Jason said.

"The remainder is sold directly to Japan in the live export trade or to local feedlots.

"Demand is high enough that we could process all our cattle if we could afford to feed them, but we need the cash flow. We have to grow at a sustainable rate."



Jason and Ann Lewis

T: 0428 672 941

E: info@jacwagyu.com.au

CoMarketing

Tim Burvill,
Adelaide Hills, SA.



Taking beef to the Danes

With backgrounds in winemaking, marketing and distribution, South Australian Hereford producers and A Hereford Beef brand owners Tim and Sarah Burvill know the value of a good marketing strategy.

The Burvills own two beef properties in south-east South Australia and the A Hereford Beefstouw restaurant in Adelaide, with their Danish business partner Lars Damgaard. They are currently building a second restaurant, in Melbourne.

Lars owns 15 A Hereford Beefstouw restaurants in Scandinavia, which serve about 750,000 customers a year and use only Australian beef.

Export opportunity

This year the business partners – who trade as the South Australian Cattle Company – have built a dry-ageing facility in the Adelaide Hills and will begin trial exports of their grassfed, dry-aged, branded beef product to Denmark in November–December.

They have been selling dry-aged Hereford beef through

their Adelaide restaurant since 2011 and launched it to the Australian public under the A Hereford Beef brand in 2013. They supply a number of Foodland supermarkets in South Australia as well as high-end restaurants in Adelaide and Darwin, and have just sealed a deal with a national food distributor.

According to Tim, dry ageing produces beef with superior texture and flavour, but it is an expensive exercise due to the space needed to hang carcasses for 30 days and losses through shrinkage.

“It’s an expensive, niche product, which is what I found attractive about it,” Tim said.

“The big companies don’t want to do it, so it was a space we could play in.”

Marketing strategy

The South Australian Cattle Company used funding from

MLA’s CoMarketing Program to help design their brand, develop packaging and create a social media marketing strategy for A Hereford Beef.

“We first applied for funding in 2014–15,” Tim said.

“We got some expert advice regarding brand design, public relations and launching the product, plus advice on how to make the most of Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and our website.

“Without the funding, I don’t think our branding strategy would have the same level of professionalism we have now.”

Tim said this year’s funding would be used to develop a mobile app for customers showing the primal cuts of meat, where they come from on the animal, how to cut them up, cooking advice, as well as information about the company and brand.

“I’ve also used MLA to set up appointments in Singapore with potential export customers and we accessed some funding through the MLA Donor Company to help with our export trials,” he said.

“For me, MLA is a great resource to help a small company like ours get to the next level and, from a producer’s point of view, the best way to achieve good prices is to have good competition in the market, particularly given the consolidation that has occurred in processing.”



Tim Burvill

T: 08 8232 6868

E: tim@a-h-b.com.au



<http://beefstouw.com/adelaide>

www.facebook.com/HerefordAdelaide



Move over MasterChef ... it's *DisasterChef*

Continuing the *You Never Lamb Alone* campaign, which is built on lamb bringing people together, the second phase of MLA's spring lamb campaign - *DisasterChef* - reinforced lamb as the meat of choice this season.

A digital campaign through Facebook was fronted by celebrity chef George Calombaris (pictured). As one of Australia's most renowned chefs and *MasterChef* judge, George's Greek heritage saw him grow up tucking into lamb, and his years in the kitchen have taught him that lamb is incredibly versatile, easy to cook, and a consistent crowd pleaser.

DisasterChef is centred on finding Australia's worst cook. The objectives of the campaign were to reinforce lamb's versatility, even if your cooking skills are non-existent.

Throughout the campaign, consumers were encouraged to share their, a friend or relative's *DisasterChef* moment on the 'We love our Lamb' Facebook page for a chance to win a lamb masterclass with George Calombaris. The masterclass demonstrated how anyone can cook lamb and that there is a cut to suit any occasion -

whether a quick mid-week meal or a Sunday lunch with all the family.

But it wasn't just the winner who benefitted from the cooking advice. All entrants were given lamb cooking hints and tips during the campaign period via the Facebook page.

Beth Schilling from Adelaide was the winner with her disastrous tale of burning boiled eggs.

Targeted at the 'independent single' and 'young transitional' demographics, the campaign was supported by a national partnership with NOVA radio network's Fitzzy & Wippa show, a comprehensive PR strategy, and a media plan through Facebook and YouTube.



To see more visit: www.weloveourlamb.com.au/disasterchef or www.facebook.com/weloveourlamb

***DisasterChef* attracted**

18,000

interactions on Facebook

2,097 entries

277,000

views of George's cooking tips

1.7 million views

of the online TV campaign

Recipes This summer take a trip around the globe with Australian beef. Here are three dishes with international influences to tempt your taste buds. Find more inspiration at www.beefandlamb.com.au



Vietnamese grilled beef salad

Serves: 4 // Preparation time: 15 minutes
Cooking time: 10 minutes

Ingredients

4 x 200g sirloin steaks, trimmed of fat
2 carrots, sliced into ribbons using a peeler
1 tbsp rice vinegar
125g vermicelli noodles
¼ wombok (Chinese cabbage), finely shredded
1 cucumber, sliced into ribbons using a peeler
150g snow peas, sliced diagonally
½ cup mint leaves
¼ cup peanuts (plain, unsalted), chopped, to serve

Dressing

1 small red chilli, finely chopped
3 tbsp lime juice
3 tbsp sugar
1 tbsp fish sauce
1 clove garlic, crushed
1 tsp finely grated ginger

Method

1. Brush steaks with oil and season with pepper. Place a chargill pan over high heat and cook steak for three minutes each side for medium rare or until cooked to your liking. Rest.
2. Peel carrot into ribbons with a vegetable peeler and toss with the rice vinegar. Leave to pickle for 10 minutes.
3. Cover vermicelli in boiling water for five minutes or until tender, drain and rinse with cold water, drain again. Combine the dressing ingredients.
4. Combine wombok, carrot plus pickling liquid, vermicelli, cucumber, snow peas and mint leaves and toss with dressing. Top salad with sliced beef and peanuts.



Chipotle beef, kale, red pepper and lime tortilla wraps

Serves: 4 (plus leftover beef) // Preparation time: 20 minutes // Cooking time: 1½-2 hours

Ingredients

1kg piece corned silverside
2 tbsp honey
1 tsp smoked paprika
½ tsp ground cumin
1 chipotle pepper in adobe sauce, finely chopped
100g kale or spinach leaves, trimmed, shredded
1 small red capsicum, seeded, thinly sliced
½ red onion, thinly sliced
2 tsp lime juice
1 tsp olive oil
Grilled tortillas, to serve
1 avocado, mashed
Natural yoghurt and sliced red chilli, to serve

Method

1. Preheat oven to 160°C or 140°C fan forced. Rinse the corned silverside in cold water to remove any surface brine. Place the corned silverside in a large heavy based pot, large enough for the meat to be completely submersed in water. Cover the silverside with cold water.
2. Place over a low heat and bring to just a simmer. Drain well. Transfer beef to a wire rack sitting over a large roasting dish, face silverside fat side up. Pour 3 cups (750ml) water into the base of the dish.
3. Combine the honey, paprika, cumin and chipotle. Brush half the glaze over the silverside. Cover entire dish with a layer of foil. Bake in preheated oven for 1½-2 hours, or until tender, a fork should easily penetrate the centre of the meat.
4. Preheat grill on high. Remove foil and brush remaining glaze over silverside. Grill for three minutes or until glaze is caramelised. Set aside to rest for five minutes before slicing.
5. Meanwhile, combine the kale, capsicum and onion. Add the lime juice and olive oil, gently toss to combine. Season with sea salt and freshly ground black pepper.
6. Thinly slice silverside. Serve in the grilled tortillas with the avocado, kale salad and a dollop of yoghurt and fresh chilli to taste.



Beef, chilli and potato empanadas

*Serves: 4-6 // Preparation time: 30 minutes
Cooking time: 30 minutes*

Ingredients

350g minced beef
1 Spanish onion, finely chopped
1 clove garlic, finely chopped
1 Desiree potato, peeled, cut into 1cm dice
1 tsp each of ground cumin, ground coriander and smoked paprika;
pinch each of ground cinnamon and finely grated nutmeg
80g frozen peas, defrosted
1 tbsp each of coarsely chopped flat-leaf parsley and oregano
3 sheets puff pastry, just thawed
1 egg, lightly beaten, for brushing

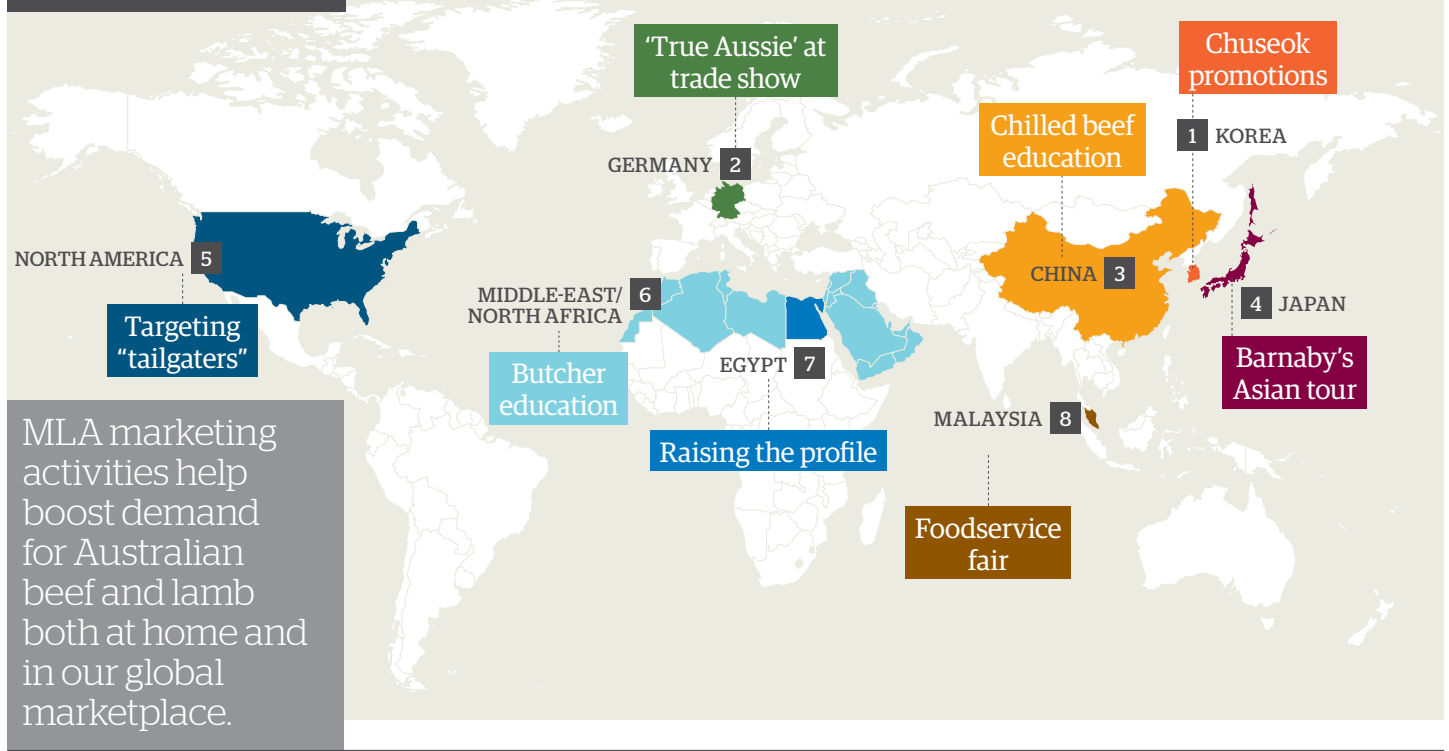
Method

1. Heat two tablespoons of olive oil in a saucepan over medium-high heat, add onion and garlic, cook stirring occasionally for about six minutes until golden, add mince and brown well, breaking up with a wooden spoon, transfer to a bowl. Add potato to pan, stir occasionally and cook until almost tender, stir in spices then return mince and peas to pan, season to taste with salt and freshly ground pepper. Refrigerate to chill completely, and then stir through herbs.
2. Preheat oven to 200°C. Cut out 10cm rounds from pastry and spoon a little beef filling in the centre of each (you can roll the pastry scraps if you like, just press scraps together, chill slightly and roll on a lightly floured surface). Brush edges of pastry with lightly beaten egg, fold pastry over to form a half-moon, press edges to seal, crimping pastry with your fingers as you go, seal with a fork.
3. Place on a baking tray lined with baking paper (empanadas can be refrigerated for a few hours at this stage or baked straight away), brush with extra egg wash, season to taste with salt and pepper and bake for about 15 minutes until golden brown and puffed and serve hot with tomato relish or your favourite sauce.

Tip:

For a recipe to make homemade tomato relish, go to: www.beefandlamb.com.au/tomatorelish

Around the globe



1 KOREA
A short rib celebration
Australian beef short ribs were on the menu for Chuseok, Korea's three-day Thanksgiving holiday period, following an MLA campaign targeting housewives through television, print and Facebook.

A 19-day Facebook promotion with short rib pack giveaways attracted significant attention with more than 90,000 likes and 10,000 shares. It was supported by television segments and magazine features promoting the health benefits of "True Aussie" beef, along with recipe ideas.

'Grassfed, wellbeing Australian short rib gift sets', were sold through food retailers during the period, when gifts of meat are often given as part of the Chuseok celebrations.

2 GERMANY
Taking "True Aussie" to the trade
Sixteen Australian exporters were hosted by MLA at this year's ANUGA tradeshow, with

early feedback indicating strong interest in high quality red meats - particularly the "True Aussie" branded products, showcased at the event for the first time.

The largest food show in Europe, the biennial event was held in Cologne and attracted more than 155,000 people from 200 countries.

3 CHINA
Upskilled on chilled
Improved supply chain efficiency was one of the expected outcomes from an MLA chilled red meat workshop, attended by 68 Chinese officials from 40 red meat entry ports.

With 10 Australian beef processing plants approved to export chilled beef to China, MLA organised the workshop with the China Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine.

68
Chinese officials attend workshop

It was well received, with several requests from attendees for further training.

4 JAPAN
Strengthening trade ties



Offering samples of "True Aussie" beef and lamb to shoppers at the Daiei Himonya supermarket in Tokyo was just one of the many activities Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources Barnaby Joyce packed into a recent five day visit to China, Korea and Japan.

The Minister and a swag of local media called in at the taste testing event (pictured), along with MLA's Andrew Cox, the Cattle Council of Australia's Marc Greening and the Sheepmeat Council of Australia's James Jackson.

The tour was held to strengthen ties with the three countries following the recent Free Trade Agreement breakthroughs.

In each country, the Minister hosted trade functions with MLA and industry representatives and importers attending.

5 NORTH AMERICA
Ute muster



Thousands of Australian beef and lamb samples were provided to consumers in partnership with the Stop & Shop retail chain in Massachusetts as part of a True Aussie beef and lamb "tailgating" promotion. Tailgating is the custom of barbecuing on the back of utes outside sporting events. Billboards were used in the same region promoting the nutritional benefits of the "Wonder from Down Under" - grassfed beef.

**6 MIDDLE EAST/
NORTH AFRICA****Teaching the trade**

More than 500 butchers and foodservice managers in the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Kuwait now know a lot more about beef and lamb cuts, including the best ways to use and cook them, after a one-month travelling roadshow organised by MLA.

Master butcher Greg Butler and meat scientist Dr Peter McGilchrist from Murdoch University (both pictured with MLA's Chef Tarek) provided the training, which also covered Australia's quality systems and specifications, including halal production.

500

received meat training

7 EGYPT**Glittering showcase**

MLA's Chef Tarek took to the stage for cooking demonstrations during a showcase dinner of Australian beef and lamb hosted with the Australian Embassy in Cairo.

Designed to raise the profile of Australian product, the event was attended by 145 guests including chefs, foodservice representatives and government officials.

One of the aims of the event was to engage with government officials in a country where trade barriers are often difficult to navigate. There was significant Arabic print and electronic media coverage of the event.

8 MALAYSIA**Moving meat in Malaysia**

MLA has been working steadily to raise the profile of Australian beef and lamb in Malaysia.

More than 2,000 spectators gathered to watch 17 butchers battle it out in the MLA Iron Butcher Challenge, held during Culinarie, a major foodservice event held every two years, at Food Hotel Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur.

MLA also hosted a sampling booth for tastings of 'True Aussie' beef and lamb, cut and cooked to match with local cuisines, and hosted a trade cocktail party attended by 200 industry representatives including importers, chefs, meat buyers and competitors in the Iron Chef and Red Majesty Chef competitions.

Beef D-rumps and lamb racks were supplied by MLA for the Tiger Cup, a competition for young chefs, and MLA supported the third Red Majesty Chef Cup, contested by seven teams from China, Malaysia and Taiwan working with non-join beef and lamb cuts to create modern Chinese dishes.

A highlight was when MLA's Country Manager for Malaysia, Rose Yong, was awarded special recognition from the Malaysian High Commission during Food Hotel Malaysia for her dedicated service to industry and raising the profile of Australia. Rose (pictured below right receiving her award from Australian Senior Trade Commissioner Susan Kawahti) has represented MLA in South-East Asia for almost 20 years.

**On the ground****North America**

David Pietsch
MLA Regional Manager
North America
E: dpietsch@mla.com.au



I never cease to be amazed at the sheer scale of everything in the US. Whether it's the \$25 million/year some Major League baseball players earn, the \$5 billion presidential election campaign, or that the "natural" food and beverage sector grew sales by \$2.9 billion at conventional retail last year.

Within this macro "natural" trend, niche proteins like lamb and grassfed beef are growing in popularity, and Australia is well positioned to capture the benefits. From Boston in the north east, Miami in the south of Florida, and round the San Francisco bay area in the west, you'll see growing examples of grassfed beef and lamb on menus and in retail stores.

So how does MLA, with a levy investment - US\$1 million for beef and US\$2 million for lamb - seek to help Australian producers gain from these growing trends, in a market of the sheer size of the US?

Domestic meat dominates shelves and menus (90% for beef, 50% for lamb), so gaining attention and support can be difficult.

The US has 11 cities plus nearby Toronto in Canada with higher, greater metropolitan area populations than Sydney (4.6 million+). To make most use of our funds we target some of these for focused, seasonal promotional activities to elevate Australian grassfed beef and lamb, to raise awareness and stimulate sales.

We also partner with importers and major accounts (retailers, restaurant chains and distributors) to run promotions and incentives. Examples include:

- An MLA-driven incentive program with a major distributor in Boston to raise awareness with sales staff, which saw year-on-year lamb sales increase by 322%.
- A large retail chain promotion which included in-store demonstrations and information provided to all store managers on the benefits of grassfed beef, which saw sales over two weekends up between 21 and 36%.
- MLA co-funded lamb tasting samples in many of the 560 North American Costco stores, to continue to help drive awareness and sales with arguably one of our biggest lamb customers outside Australia's shores.





'True Aussie' beef and lamb "tailgating" promotion in Massachusetts with MLA's butcher, Doug Piper.



And the targeted approach appears to be having an influence. Consumer survey results for 2014-15 showed that awareness figures of Australian red meat in regions where MLA focused its activity had better results than in those regions where MLA had limited or no marketing activity. Boston, site of our 'spring lamb' campaign, increased one percentage point in unprompted awareness while Miami declined 1 point in unprompted but increased six percentage points in prompted awareness. San Francisco (11 percentage point increase) and Washington DC (5 percentage point increase) were also markets with considerable MLA-supported promotions for Aussie lamb, whereas Chicago fell eight percentage points where there was limited promotional activity from MLA in 2014-15.

For the first time in 2014, consumer research suggested that awareness of Australian lamb had exceeded awareness of New Zealand lamb, a key competitor in the market. Australia now exports almost three times as much lamb to the US compared with New Zealand.

Australia ranks highest among preferred imported grassfed beef suppliers, but the competition is set to intensify in coming years as Uruguay, New Zealand potentially Brazil and Argentina (if granted access) target the segment.

Hitting the grid

There is a large amount of information and feedback contained in the payment grid and carcass reports producers receive from processors. But how do you make sense of it?

Here, Meat Standards Australia (MSA) Producer Engagement Officer Jarrod Lees shares his tips on making the most of grids and carcass feedback.

- 1. Educate yourself.** Each processor provides feedback in different formats, but all have similar parameters which may be measured and these include HSCW (hot standard carcass weight), bruise scoring, P8 fat, dentition, hormone growth promotants status, sex and MSA grading measurements, which could include MSA Index. AUS-MEAT and MLA have developed some great online resources explaining industry language and what processors are focusing on (see information box below).
- 2. Market information.** Understand the market you are targeting by talking to processors, buyers and agents. Understanding the processor specifications by asking for a payment grid can help establish if you are targeting the right market. This could be as simple as knowing the specified weights and dentition, as a starting point. Keep up to date with market news for an understanding of supply and demand and current price trends for different classes of livestock.
- 3. Seek feedback.** Examine the carcass feedback and identify any animals which fell short and find out why. Processors can provide further information on meeting particular specifications. MLA has also developed tools and information to help identify solutions for any areas of concern (see resources opposite).
- 4. Utilise industry tools.** MSA has developed the MyMSA online kit for producers to get comprehensive feedback on the MSA measurements collected on

each carcass. MyMSA also allows producers to see which animals met MSA and company specifications as well as identify their eating quality performance based on the MSA Index. Often the MSA Index can also be a company specification. Each animal is allocated an index number as a national standard measure of predicted eating quality and merit of the carcass. MyMSA also contains the index calculator to help producers understand the impact of various traits on the MSA Index. The BeefSpecs calculator is also available to help producers manage cattle to meet weight and fat specifications.

5. Management. By understanding what specifications a processor has in place on their payment grids, processor and MSA feedback and the impact of meeting specifications on profitability, producers then have the power to manage their enterprise to improve their chances of meeting specifications. Learn more about the outcomes from various on farm management scenarios via modules in More Beef from Pastures.

 MSA workshops on interpreting feedback and using MSA tools are free for beef and sheep producer groups and can be organised through MLA. Contact **Jarrod Lees** E: jlees@msla.com.au

 www.ausmeat.com.au
www.msla.com.au/Prices-markets/Market-news
www.mymsa.com.au
<http://solutiontofeedback.msla.com.au/Cattle>
www.msla.com.au/tools
www.msla.com.au/mbfp

Welcome to the “mega” future

Australia’s rural industries will be impacted by significant change at global, national and local scales over the coming decades. This will create opportunities and challenges for small and large farm businesses. But what will this change look like?

The Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) and CSIRO have completed a foresight study into the future of Australian agriculture. This has identified five “megatrends” impacting Australian agriculture in the coming two decades.

1. A hungrier world

This megatrend tells the story of a rising world population and increasing food consumption accompanied by a shrinking global agricultural land area, water scarcity and spiralling energy demand. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, the world must increase agricultural output by 70% to feed its growing population by 2050.

However, the world is estimated to be losing 12 million hectares of agricultural land each year to desertification and urbanisation. In addition to this are the challenges of climate change and water scarcity.

2. A wealthier world

In the developing Asia region alone some 1.02 billion people will cross an income threshold and move out of poverty and into the middle classes. Average annual incomes are forecast to rise from US\$12,000/person to US\$44,000/person by 2060 (in current dollars). Rising wealth is having impacts on commodity markets. People are increasing their average daily calorie intake which means more food will be demanded. People are moving out of subsistence production and are more reliant on markets for food. Diets are shifting from being solely based on staple foods (e.g. rice, grains) towards high protein foods such as dairy, fish, meat and eggs.

3. Fussier customers

The consumer of the future will be both increasingly empowered and motivated to



choose food and fibre products with specialised characteristics. Today’s consumer has different tastes, preferences and concerns to the consumer of 20 years ago. Organic certification, free range eggs, health labels and fair trade logos were much harder to find in the supermarket of 1985; farmers’ markets were rare events.

Health is likely to become a particularly prominent driver of food choice and consumption patterns.

Information technology will increasingly enable the consumer to selectively access, share and validate information about products along the whole farm-to-fork supply chain.

4. Transformative technologies

Advances in technology within the fields of digital, genetics and materials science will change the way food and fibre products are created and transported. Advanced sensory systems and data analytics will permit advanced and highly integrated farm-to-fork supply chains. Customers will be able to readily trace food and fibre products from their origins and supermarkets will have increased tools for quality assurance. Satellite and other remote monitoring technologies will allow governments and “the crowd” to access information about farm condition and management practices at low cost. Lastly, the world of synthetics is likely to advance rapidly as breakthroughs

occur in the field of advanced materials science and food manufacturing.

Advances in food manufacturing are likely to see the emergence of more synthetic substitutes for meat and dairy products. Lab-grown, or cultured, meat has already been demonstrated as technically feasible and scientists could improve the technology so it becomes commercially feasible.

5. A bumpier ride

Risk is an ever present characteristic of Australian agriculture. However, the coming decades will see changes in the global climate, environmental systems and world economy which create new and potentially deeper risks for producers. This is largely due to the interconnectedness of worldwide environmental and socio-economic systems. The risk profile is set to change. Climate change is elevating the frequency and severity of extreme weather (e.g. droughts, floods, bushfires). The globalisation of supply chains, which provide inputs (e.g. fertilisers, fuel, chemicals) critical for agriculture, increases the number of links in the production system, and therefore, the risk of supply chain breakdowns.



Download the full report at:
<https://rirdc.infoservices.com.au/items/15-065>

Brisbane//MLA Annual General Meeting and Producer Forum

MLA's Producer Forum and Annual General Meeting were held on 10 November in Brisbane, Queensland.

The Forum showcased areas of producer levy investment, with MLA General Managers presenting to levy payers in the audience and through live online streaming.

→ **Dr Alex Ball**, MLA General Manager - Red Meat Innovation, spoke on 'Red meat in the 21st century: modernising the beef and sheepmeat industries'. He explained emerging technologies to assist with objective carcass measurement and the eating quality expectations of Generation Z.



↑ **Dr Matt McDonagh**, MLA General Manager - On-farm Innovation and Adoption, presented on 'The path to productivity through on-farm R&D' and showcasing samples of the new species of psyllid-resistant leucaena.



← **Dr Jane Weatherley**, MLA General Manager - Livestock Productivity spoke on driving profit to the farm-gate through MSA.

→ **Lisa Sharp**, MLA General Manager - Central Marketing and Industry Insights and **Michael Finucan**, MLA General Manager - International Markets presented MLA's strategies for growing demand for red meat in Australian and around the world using consumer insights and data.



↑ **James Bjorksten**, cattle producer from Yeoval NSW, shared how he uses MSA to underpin his business and his beef brand, Hereford Red.



Watch video recordings of the presentations at the Producer Forum at: www.mla.com.au/agm2015



Read about the outcomes from the AGM on page 5.

Tasmania//Tackling tough seasons

Being prepared and acting early were the key messages delivered at the recent Tackling Tough Seasons events held in Tasmania. These sessions were delivered through MLA's More Beef from Pastures (MBfP) and Making More From Sheep (MMfS) programs.

These messages came from agricultural climate specialist Graeme Anderson, beef and sheep producer Ed Archer (pictured at right), agronomic adviser Terry Horan and agribusiness consultant Basil Doonan.

Their top tips on how to be prepared for any season were:

- up-skill in pasture management through locally run pasture management courses and the MBfP and MMfS online modules (pasture growth and utilisation) to maximise productivity from your pasture resource
- feed budgeting is a vital tool for planning ahead, with tools like MLA's Feed Demand Calculator being important for making decisions about stocking rates for the season ahead and if/when supplementary feeding will be required
- early decision making in regards to destocking and locking up pastures for fodder is crucial, not only in the season ahead but for the seasons that follow
- plan ahead with tools such as MLA's Rainfall to Pasture Growth Outlook Tool to assess your pastures now and understand the growth patterns in the next few months
- seasonal forecasting tools are becoming more reliable and are an important tool when planning your approach to the season ahead - get your information from reliable sources, such as the Bureau of Meteorology's Seasonal Outlook video.

Beef and sheep producer Clare Peltzer from Evandale in Tasmania's north, attended the Launceston event.

"I see farming as being primarily about growing grass and then converting the grass you grow into an animal product," she said.

"Effectively managing your pasture resource to optimise production is crucial, especially in a tough season."



Pasture management courses are being organised for Tasmanian producers through MBfP and MMfS programs. The course involves a two-day theory workshop in March, followed by six on-farm group coaching sessions in the months ahead to support participants in putting the theory into practice. Places are still available, with groups forming across the state.



Penny Hooper

E: pchooper@macfrank.com.au



Learn more about planning for tough seasons at:
www.mla.com.au/Extension-training-and-tools/More-beef-from-pastures

www.makingmorefromsheep.com.au

www.mla.com.au/tools



www.bom.gov.au/climate/outlooks/#/overview/video

Upcoming events



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

Plan your own event in 2016

Is there an area of livestock production you and your neighbours would like to better skilled in?

Seminars, workshops and guest speakers can be organised through the More Beef from Pastures, Making More from Sheep and Pastoral Profit programs on specific or a range of topics.

Contact a state or regional coordinator to discuss what you have in mind.

More information: www.mla.com.au/mbfp www.makingmorefromsheep.com.au www.pastoralprofit.com.au



Making More From Sheep

Pastoral Profit

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