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# finalreport

Project code: B.MBP.0101  
Prepared by: Brett James Littler  
Industry and Investment New South Wales  
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## More Beef from Pastures

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## Abstract

The More Beef from Pastures project is a MLA Southern Beef Program Initiative which has been running for the past 6 years. The MLA More Beef from Pastures program is based around assisting producers to make better decisions. The program is supported by a whole farm management manual, tools and resources. Innovative delivery provides a pathway for southern beef producers wanting to move from simple "awareness" and "engagement" with the program to adoption of the key principles. The program is a complete package of information for producers committed to implementing long term changes to their business operations. Industry and Investment NSW (I&I NSW formerly NSW Department of Primary Industries) delivers the project on behalf of MLA in NSW. This is largely achieved through I&I NSW state coordinator who administers and manages the project and the MBfP team of I&I NSW District Livestock Officers (Beef Cattle) who coordinate, plan and deliver all activities.

## Executive Summary

For the period of 1 June 2007 to 31 March 2010 key performance indicators were surpassed in NSW for the More Beef from Pastures project. A total of 139 MBfP events were held with 5,772 beef industry participants involved. From feedback collected of those who attended events, 74.5% said they would change something in their business as a result of attending the activity. In addition, 97.9% said that they had learnt something of value and the overall rating of the activities conducted was 4.4 out of 5.

Reinforcing the value of the MBfP activities conducted in NSW, a survey of participants from the 'More Beef from Tropical Pastures' bus tour through Northern NSW was conducted. The purpose of the tour was to look at tropical perennial pastures and how producers manage these pastures to better meet market requirements. The survey was conducted 14 months after the tour. Of the 24 producers who had been on the 4 day tour, 19 had made some change to their business. Changes included planting or were planning to plant tropical pastures (19 participants), change of grazing management (5 participants) and supplementary feeding to better utilise the available pasture (14 participants). A number had noted an improvement in the weight gain and performance of their stock through these changes.

MBfP events ranged from breeding workshops, small group activities, major field days, new tool launch, conferences, training of agribusinesses/agri-companies and some bus tours. At all events one or more of the southern beef target management practices were a focus with support from the MBfP manual and tools. In addition, the use of producer advocates at events helped to reinforce how to apply these principles on farm.

There were a number of highlights from More Beef from Pastures in NSW in the contracted period. Some of these were:

1. Breeding and managing your cattle for meat quality and profit' conducted throughout NSW
2. Launch and development of BeefSpecs - P8 fat predictor model.
3. BeefSpecs to better meet your market producer groups
4. Exposure at a number of large events such as the Dubbo Beef Spectacular 2008-09-10, Livestock Updates WA, Mudgee Small Farm Field days 2007-08-09, AgQuip 2007-08-09, Orange National Field days 2007-08-09 and the Grasslands Conference (2008)
5. Bus tours – 'Understanding the Domestic Retail Beef Market' & 'More Beef from Tropical Pastures'
6. 'Getting the basics right' small group activities

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## 1 Background

Over the first three years, the MLA More Beef from Pastures (MBfP) program was positioned primarily as an awareness campaign. The aim of all the MBfP events in the 2007-2009 was to focus on practice change by moving producers from simple awareness to adoption of the programs principles. In NSW the state coordinator works as part of a state team, as well as the national team, to develop material and presentations suitable for delivery of the MLA MBfP program activities within their state.

MLA's More Beef from Pastures program will assist southern beef producers with the capacity to change, to improve their profitability and sustainability by influencing them to:

- a) Recognise the target management practices and MBfP principles and procedures as important for their farm business
- b) Be motivated and better equipped with knowledge and skills to implement the target management practices and,
- c) Implement into their management the target practices using the principles and procedures of the MBfP program

## 2 Project Objectives

### Objective 1

To create a partnership between MLA MBfP and NSW DPI Beef Program – to engage more beef officers, agronomists and technical specials in the program and to reach a common goal of technology adoption by NSW beef producers; reach the target audience and gain practice change in 20% of producers who are engaged.

The target for the period of July 2007 to March 2010 was 2,500 producers with 1,750 noting some change in their business by attending an MBfP event.

### Objective 2

To fulfil all obligations under the state coordinators role:

- Attendance at state co-coordinators quarterly meetings
- Monthly updates of activities
- Allocate the equivalent of 55 days of staff time to this project

### 3 Methodology

Delivery in NSW was through the MBfP coordination team, which comprised, team leader Juliet McConochie (Walgett) until December 2009, Brett Littler (Mudgee, Team Leader December 2009 to March 2010), Kate Parry (Wagga Wagga) and support from Bill Hoffman (Casino). Delivery was by the coordination team and regional beef officers around the state, as well as technical specialists in beef and pasture and some key agronomists.

The key activities delivered by NSW DPI in the MBfP program for the period of July 2007 to June 2009 and including the contract extensions to March 2010 were focused around 'kg of beef per hectare'. The aim was to drive adoption through using better descriptors of beef production and encourage producers to talk in kilograms of beef per hectare to drive profitability. This focus will flow through to small group discussions which will drive practice change by providing comfortable, information sharing forums for producers to engage in, and motivation to implement changes on farm. These small discussion groups will focus on of change through looking at 'getting the basics right' or 'lifting kg of beef by..'.

The events presented in NSW between July 2007 - March 2010 could be largely classified into the following grouping:

- 3.1 Capacity building workshops - Breeding and managing your cattle for meat quality and profit
- 3.2 "Getting the basics right" Small group work
- 3.3 "Now, where, how" sessions – Prograze revisits and Beef Profit Partnership Groups
- 3.4 Launch and Demonstrations of BeefSpecs Tool
- 3.5 Significant Industry Events

### 4 Results and Discussion

#### 4.1 Capacity building workshops

A total of ten "Breeding and managing your cattle for meat quality and profit" workshops were run in NSW in 07/08/09 – Delungra September 2007, Glen Innes November 2007, Quambone March 2008, Trangie March 2008, Rylstone April 2008, Holbrook May 2008, Braidwood May 2008, Yugalbar May 2008, Yanco September 2008 and Condobolin September 2008 . A total of 874 industry participants attended these events which showcased MBfP new tool, BeefSpecs and included recent Beef CRC research results. In addition, at some events, presentations by producer advocates were included to demonstrate how these tools can be successfully used to improve a beef business.

*Dougal Bucknell  
'Quambone Station' host  
of the Quambone day with  
NSW DPI Breeding  
Technical Specialist Bill  
Hoffman*





*Demo in the yards at the Trangie day on 'Waitara'.*

*Demonstration in the yards at the Ootha day, Condobolin September 2008.*



*Left: Steve Exton demonstrating the BeefSpecs Tool at Yanco September 2008  
Right: Stands at Lunch*



#### 4.2 "Getting the basics right" Small group work

Fourteen small group workshops were held with the focus on increasing kg beef/ha using the Cost of Production Tool and setting a breeding objective. Some comments from the feedback forms were:

'It is good to get other peoples views - you can always learn'

'A worthwhile day thank you'

'Very useful morning'

'Use of DNA technology, reinforcement of rotational cross, endeavour to use EBV's in bull selection, very good short and high impact'

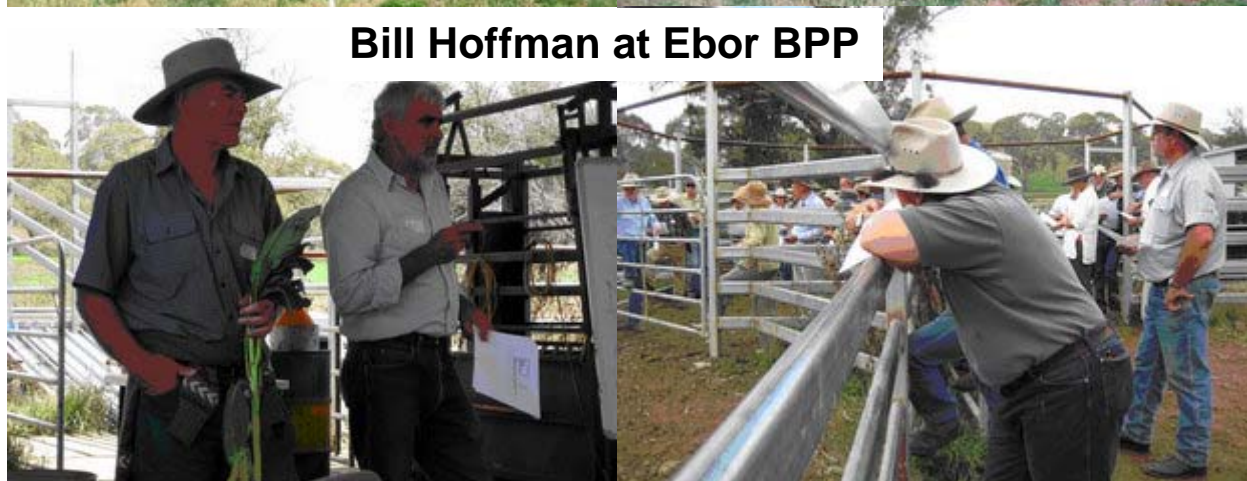


4.3 'Now, where, how' sessions – Prograze revisits and Beef Profit Partnership Groups  
Prograze revisits and BPP groups were used to show how to use the MBfP tools and to address topical issues such as protein supplementation, ryegrass varieties, reproductive performance and meeting market specifications. Twenty-three of these activities were run with a total of 457 participants. Participants were able to interact in a comfortable, familiar environment with a small group to be able to be confident in using the tools and concepts explained.

*Taradale ryegrass day  
November 2008*



**Bill Hoffman at Ebor BPP**



#### 4.4 Launch and Demonstrations of BeefSpecs Tool

MBfP tools are an integral part of the project which enable producers to get a handle on key performance indicators for their business, visually see how their feed demand fits their feed supply, and predict pasture growth under various climate outlooks. Development and refinement of these tools is a critical part of the MBfP project so that the tools are easy to use and produce realistic outputs. The NSW MBfP team has played a significant role in the development of the new BeefSpecs tool which was first shown to the public at the Glen Innes breeding day in November 2007 and launched on 14th October 2008 at Ebor in conjunction with the Beef CRC (see pictures over page).



There have been a number of BeefSpecs demonstrations run in NSW. The tool has been used widely at field days, and has been very useful in discussions on breeding to better meet market specifications and growth and development.



#### 4.5 Significant Industry Events

More Beef from Pastures tools, manual and events were showcased at numerous major field days, conferences and events. Displays included trade displays and short talks at Dubbo Beef Spectacular (2008/09/10), Mudgee Small Farm Field Days (July 2007/08/09), AgQuip (2007/08/09), and Orange National Field days (2007/08/09); and poster presentations at the Grasslands Conference, Tamworth (July 2008) and Livestock Updates, Perth (July 2007), to name just a few. The Feeder Steer School at Armidale (08/09/10) has been used to demonstrate the BeefSpecs tool and we have also used advocates to speak at this and other events.



## 5 Success in Achieving Objectives

### Objective 1

5,772 producers attended a MBfP event during the period of July 2007 to March 2010, which exceeded the targeted number by 130%. From feedback, the number of producers noting some change to their business by attending an MBfP event was 74.5% or 4,300 which also surpassed target numbers of 1,750.

### Objective 2

Juliet McConochie (NSW state coordinator), along with one representative from the MBfP NSW team attended all quarterly meetings in the contract period. The NSW state coordinator also participated in monthly teleconference by providing updates on activities and numbers at each teleconference.

I and I NSW dedicated 409.5 days of staff time to work on the MBfP project. This significantly exceeded the minimum 110 day requirement and equates to approximately \$161, 953 of in-kind contribution based on salary without on costs.

## 6 Impact on Meat and Livestock Industry – now & in five years time

A formal impact evaluation was not carried out by I & I NSW. It is critical for beef producers to adopt changes that improve their profitability and sustainability, especially when we consider the potential impact on input costs of if an emissions trading scheme or a tax on carbon emissions is introduced in the next five years. Responses from attendees recorded in event surveys reported that 4,300 producers said they would change something in their business as a result of what they learnt at the event. The I & I NSW MBfP project concentrated on the MBfP targeted management practices. Therefore it is highly likely that the 74.5% of MBfP event attendees in NSW who indicated that they planned to make management changes will achieve material productivity, profitability and sustainability gains.

## 7 Conclusions

The delivery of More Beef from Pastures in NSW has seen a large range of activities held during the contracted period. This range of activities has given NSW producers the opportunity to engage in a variety of supportive learning activities. The value placed on these events by producers can be seen in the feedback where producers scored their satisfaction with the events 4.4 out of 5. The delivery of these MBfP events has meant that in NSW, we have been able to engage a large number of beef producers, well above the target number detailed in the communications strategy. Also, it is clear from the feedback that the adoption targets have been met with well over 70% of producers intending to adopt some level of change as a result of attending MBfP events. The NSW State coordinator and extension team have been able to deliver the MBfP program objectives and have met or exceeded all requirements

## 8 Appendices - Activities for 2007/08/09/10

When	Where	Title	Presenter/Organiser	Pax	What
2007					
June	Bellingen	Prograze	Hoffman	15	Cost of Production (CoP)
June	Casino	Primex	Hoffman	30	CoP
June	Gulargambone	Breeding Field Day	McConochie	50	Breeding
June	Coolah	Breeding Field Day	Littler	70	Breeding
June	Orange	Ext officers conf	Hoffman	250	FDS poster display
June	Richmond	Rural journalist	Hoffman	20	MBfP
July	Armidale	Seminar	Jorgensen/Perkins	60	CoP
July	Liston	Prograze	Hoffman	15	CoP
July	Mudgee	Small Farm Field Days	Hoffman/McConochie	120	MBfP
July	Albury	BIA Conference	Hoffman	80	FDS poster presentation
July	Perth	Livestock Update	Hoffman	40	CoP
July	Bellingen	Prograze	Hoffman	15	FDS
August	Liston	Breeding Field Day	Hoffman	30	CoP & Breeding
September	Delungra	Field Day	Jorgensen/Hoffman	80	FDS & Breeding
October	Hernani	Workshop	Hoffman	8	CoP & BPP
October	Goulburn	Expo	McConochie/Mark Pearce	85	CoP
November	Glen Innes	Breeding and managing your cattle for meat quality and profit	Hoffman/Jorgenson/McConochie/Littler/McKiernan	65	CoP, Profit drivers, Growth Tool
December	Dubbo	Expo	McConochie/Johnson	120	CoP
December	Griffith	Southern Beef meeting	McConochie	10	Update on MBfP and expressions of interest
December	Tamworth	Northern Beef meeting	McConochie/Littler/McKiernan	6	Update on MBfP and expressions of interest
2008					
January	Casino/Dorrigo	Prograze revisit	Hoffman	20	FSD CoP
January	Armidale	Feeder steer School	Hoffman/Jorgenson	80	FSD Profit Drivers
January	Glen Innes	Glen Innes Show	McKiernan	80	Awareness/DVD

February	Armidale	BPP - Ebor	McKiernan	35	Kg beef
February	Armidale	Beefo Update	McKiernan/McConochie	15	MBfP tools
February	Guyra	BPP	McKiernan	15	Kg beef
March	Dubbo	Dubbo Beef Spec	Littler	30	Cow condition
March	Dubbo	Dubbo Beef Spec Forum	Hoffman/McConochie/Morse/McCormick	70	MBfP tools
March	Dubbo	Dubbo Beef Spec Forum	Hoffman/McConochie/Morse/McCormick	50	MBfP tools
March	Guyra	BPP -Guyra	Hoffman	18	Kg of beef
March		McMaster Field day	McKiernan	11	
March	Quambone	Breeding and managing your cattle for meat quality and profit	McConochie/Hoffman/Mckiernan/Oddy/vet/Swift buyer	60	Fat tool/CRC update
March	Trangie	Breeding and managing your cattle for meat quality and profit	McConochie/Hoffman/Mckiernan/Oddy/vet/Swift buyer	30	Fat tool/CRC update
March	Bourke	MBfP Tools Clyde Ag	Littler	8	Tools
April	Tamworth	Tropical Pastures Day	Rayner/McKiernana	80	FDS/ MBfP CD/utilisation
April	Gulgong	Bus Tour	Littler	24	
April	Rylstone	Beef Production for the 21st Century	Littler	68	Market specifications
April	Rydal	Landcare Field Day at Rydal	Littler/Clements	21	CoP paddock walk & market spec's
May	Tocal	Tocal Field Days	McConochie	50	DVD, CoP
May	Holbrook	Breeding and managing your cattle for meat quality and profit	Cumming/Irwin/oddy/Hoffman	55	Fat tool/CRC update
May	Braidwood	Breeding and managing your cattle for meat quality and profit	Meaker/Hutton/Hoffman/Oddy	70	Fat tool/CRC update
May	Yugilbar	NSW Farmer of the year Field day	Hoffman/McKiernan	300	MBfP and co presenter Growth path & Display stand
May	Ebor	Economic comparison of pasture systems	Hoffman	40	pasture utilisation
May	Wagga Wagga	Train the Trainer	Hoffman	30	Fat Calculator
May	Tamworth	Feed Demand Calculator	Littler/McKiernan/McConochie/McNeil	4	FDC
June	Crookwell	Crookwell Cattle assessment day	Littler	8	Live Cattle Assessment

July	Perth WA	Livestock Updates	Wilkins/Hoffman	80	BeefSpecs
July	Quambone	Jim Obrien's - data collection	Littler	12	cattle assessment
July	Mudgee	Mudgee Small Farm Field Days	Littler/House/McConochie	200	short talks on cattle assessment, BeefSpecs, Market Specification
July	Tamworth	Grasslands Paper Poster & Display	McKiernan/Tonkin/McConochie	250	MLA stand, FSD Tool, Beef Specs Tool Breeding
July	Cowra	Blue-E Field day	Littler/House	60	BeefSpecs - target market & specifications
August	Guyra	BPP	McKiernan	15	Pasture assessment Q and availability Pasture rulers
August	Ebor	BPP	Hoffman	12	CoP tool to ID profit drivers & BeefSpecs
August	Gunnedah	Ag Quip	McKiernan/Rayner	100	MBfP Tools
August	Warren	Oxley Station Clyde	Littler	20	cattle assessment & Beef Specs
August	Quirindi	Beefnomics group	McKiernan/Rayner	15	Beef Specs talk
August	Lue	Sandy Yeates	Littler	12	Bulls
August	Grafton	Getting the basics right	Hoffman	20	Setting a breeding objective for your beef herd
September	Urbanville	Getting the basics right	Hoffman	20	Setting a breeding objective for your beef herd
September	Mumblegum	Getting the basics right	Hoffman	20	Setting a breeding objective for your beef herd
September	Orange	Beef and Sheep Conference	Hoffman/Wilkins	80	BeefSpecs
September	Yanco	Breeding and managing your cattle for meat quality and profit	Irwin/Parry/Exton/House/Cumming	104	CRC update & BeefSpecs
September	Condobolin	Breeding and managing your cattle for meat quality and profit	House/Parry/Exton/	50	CRC update & BeefSpecs
September	Wollongbar	Getting the basics right	Hoffman	20	Setting a breeding objective for your beef herd
September	Binnaway	Use of Sub tropical pastures	Littler	38	supplementary feeds on dry pastures

October	Gresford/Mudgee	'Understanding the Domestic Retail Beef Market'	Blackwood	48	a mixture of property visits, a saleyard visit, and presentations from domestic retail butchers and MLA technical staff.
October	Ebor	BEEF SPEC LAUNCH	Hoffman/McKiernan	35	BeefSpecs
October	Binnaway	Binnaway cropping/pasture day	Littler	24	Tropicals & field peas
October	Purlewaugh	Purlewaugh	Littler	34	Tropicals & field peas
October	Nyngan Showgrounds	Improving reproductive performance in your livestock enterprise'	McConochie	20	Weaner throughput module & calving histogram calc.
October	Dunedoo	Dunedoo Field day	Littler	24	BeefSpecs & Filling the feed Gap
October	Mendooran	Mendooran Cropping/Pasture field day	Littler	45	Tropical's & supplementary feeding
November	Taradale	Taradale Ryegrass trial field day	Parry/Ferguson	27	Performance
November	Coonamble	North West Discussion Group	McConochie	8	MBfP tools
November	Orange	Meat Profit Day	Littler	350	BeefSpecs and MBfP tools
November	Mummulgum	Beefing up your business workshops	Hoffman/Parry	8	Developing a profitable breeding plan for your herd
November	Ramornie	Beefing up your business workshops	Hoffman/Parry	4	Developing a profitable breeding plan for your herd
November	South Grafton	Know your CoP	Hoffman/Parry	10	CoP Tool
November	Yugilbar	Know your CoP	Hoffman/Parry	8	CoP Tool
November	Mallanganee	Know your CoP	Hoffman/Parry	20	CoP Tool
December	Oberon	Oberon BeefSpecs Day	Littler	10	BeefSpecs - direct to Woollies
December	Tamworth	Clyde Beef Assessment and BeefSpecs	Littler/ Rayner/McKiernan	15	Live animal assessment and Beef Specs
2009					
February	Armidale	The Feeder Steers School	Hoffman/McKiernan/Andrews/Littler	65	BeefSpecs etc
March	Dubbo	Dubbo Beef Spectacular - DPI Talks	Littler/House/Kilgour/Parry	70	Multiple
March	Dubbo	Dubbo Beef Spectacular - MLA forum	Littler/House/Kilgour/Parry	95	Multiple



March	Dubbo	Dubbo Beef Spectacular - stand	Littler/House/Kilgour/Parry	150	Multiple
May	Purlewaugh - Coonabarabran	Use that dry feed day	Littler	25	Supplementation and intro to BeefSpecs
April	Coonamble	Beef assessment and handling	Littler/Kilgour	12	Assessment for markets and handling
April	Lue	Beef markets and breeding	Mckiernan/Littler	27	Beef markets and breeding for Muscle
July	Hungerford	Hungerford Field days	McConochie	15	Bull Buying & Breeding management
July	Mudgee	Mudgee Small Farm Field Days	Littler/House/Cumming/McConochie	240	Paddock to plate demos
June	Kyogle	Field day -Angus Australia	Hoffman	40	BeefSpecs
August	Borambola	Bull Field day	Parry/Cumming	34	Better bull buying
August	Adalong	BeefSpecs	Parry	5	BeefSpecs
August	Yeoval	Job F'Day Market Specs/ Beef Specs	Littler	26	BeefSpecs
August	Gunnedah	AGQUIP	Littler/Rayner	100	MBfP / CRC/market/genetics
August	Baradine	Beef specs - fat score/HGP select	Littler	65	Beef Specs
September	Wollongbar	BeefSpecs Workshop	Hoffman	25	Meeting market specifications & Live assessment
September	Yeoval	BeefSpecs Group - James Morse	Littler	10	Beef assessment and Markets
October	Victoria	Simmental Group	Littler	84	Beef breeding, markets and the Muscle story
November	Bathurst	Angus Field day	Littler/House/Morse	70	Beef breeding
October	Purlewaugh	Norton Crane Day	Littler	45	Muscle, weaning and creep feeding
November	Bathurst/Central Tablelands	PDS	Littler	16	Discussions re COP & Facilitation
October	Orange	Orange Field days - MBfP	House/Littler	70	Muscle and Breeding
October	Binnaway	Cow fertility	Littler	26	Fat Score
October	Mendooran	Cow fertility	Littler	25	Fat score

October	Purlewaugh	HGP's & Beef specs	Littler	30	Beef assessment
October	Glenalice	Limmo	Littler	20	Markets & Muscle
November	Baradine	Grazing Management	Littler	25	Kg of beef
November	Baradine	BeefSpecs and HGP's	Littler	20	Beef Assessment
December	Orange	ONFD Steer trial assessment	Littler/House	20	Assessment and BeefSpecs
December	Scone	NLIS Assessment	Littler	7	Beef assessment
December	Cassilis	Cassilis Beef day	Andrews/Littler	8	Beef assessment
2010					
February	Armidale	Feeder Steer School	Andrews/Littler/House	46	Multiple
February	Dubbo	ALPA Meeting	Littler	32	Market access and NLIS
February	Adelong	BeefSpecs	Parry	10	Beef assessment
March	Dubbo	Dubbo Beef Spectacular	Exton/House/Rayner/Littler/Andrews	250	BeefSpecs, HGP, Multi