

95/N02



Producer Research Support

Tapping into the special demands of lot fed beef

Ebor Beef



Members of Ebor Beef in NSW have gained a stronger appreciation of which cattle perform better under feedlot conditions following this Producer Research Support project.

The project

A lack of information on how members' cattle would perform under feedlot conditions led the marketing group to contribute five steers and five heifers to be custom fed at the Myola feedlot in NSW.

Different breeds and cattle from different herds perform differently on feed. It is not possible to accurately predict how a particular animal will perform in a feedlot based on visual assessment alone.

One way of determining the feedlot performance of cattle from a particular herd is to conduct a feedlot performance trial.

Objective

To provide detailed feedback information on the performance of members' cattle in a feedlot situation (This information has been difficult and almost impossible to achieve from commercial feedlots.) The resulting information would form the basis of an on-going record of the performance of members' cattle in feedlot situations.

The collected information would also allow initial analysis for feedlot suitability of members' existing genetic material.

What was done

Seventeen members submitted 200 head for the trial in 21 teams. The cattle were in the weight range of 180–280 kg on entry. They were fed for 75 days.

A field day was held at the feedlot in the week prior to the cattle being slaughtered to review on-feed performance.

Carcasses were assessed for grain-fed market suitability.

Following the trial further seminars were held to present and discuss aspects of the data on induction, feeding and carcass quality, as well as marketing options that occur as the result of lot feeding.

What happened?

Group members learnt a great deal about lot feeding of cattle, especially the genotypes that perform best under grain feeding, said group spokesman Robert Perkins of The Racecourse, Ebor.

Those who participated in the trial received commercially useful information of relevance to their own herds.

"Most of the group members would have gained some information on the marketing options that can be accessed when cattle are finished in a feedlot," Mr Perkins said.

Key points

- Producers have either already increased their incomes by participating in the alliance or they strongly believe there is the potential to do so.

Contact details

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Producer Research Support

MLA Producer Research Support offers support funding of up to \$15,000 over three years for groups of producers keen to be active in on-farm research and demonstration trials.

These activities include:

- Producer Initiated Research and Development
- More Beef from Pastures demonstration trials
- Prime Time Wean More Lambs demonstration trials
- Sustainable and productive grazing grants.

Contact Stephen Feighan - MLA Project Manager, Producer Delivery and Adoption.
Tel (02) 9463 9245 or
sfeighan@mla.com.au

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North Sydney NSW 2060
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Fax (02) 9463 9393
Free Phone 1800 023 100 (Australia only)
www.mla.com.au

Discussion

Ebor Beef was formed in 1993 with a strong marketing orientation.

In its early years the group negotiated freight savings and access to distant markets. The group employs a marketing coordinator who keeps group members informed of market opportunities and organises sale lots where more than one owner is involved.

The group meets two to three times per year. These meetings are held during the day and usually include a guest speaker. Main focus is on production and marketing issues.

In addition to the meetings, the group usually runs two field days per year on matters of interest to the group.

By the end of last year 20 members of Ebor Beef were involved in supplying about 1,000 head a year to the Pacific Pride Alliance.

While financial gains from participating in the alliance have been variable, much valuable information has been gained on the quality of the meat produced as a basis for adjusting management practices and the genetics of the herd to achieve a higher quality product.

The project was managed by the research and development sub-committee of Ebor Beef in conjunction with a NSW Agriculture researcher, the feedlot management and an industry consultant.

The sub-committee had little difficulty getting the project underway and the trial was finished on time.

From the completion of the trial until the completion of the project, the group held several seminars and meetings to review the results of the trial and to investigate and develop alliances with feedlots and processors/exporters.

The aim of these alliances was to supply grain-fed beef to the high priced end of the beef market.

The members involved in the alliance are hoping they can increase the numbers of cattle the alliance will take over the next few years.

This underlies the fact that these producers have either already increased their incomes by participating in the alliance or they strongly believe there is the potential to do so.

The group's activities are organised and run by a small committee. All members pay an annual \$150 fee.

Next steps

By March 1997 the group had negotiated a position in an alliance consisting of producers, a feedlot and a processor exporter.

The group is negotiating access to a second alliance.