final report

Project code: B.FLT.0480

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Date published: 15 July 2015

ISBN: 9781741919301

PUBLISHED BY
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Feedlot education, training and technical services

Meat & Livestock Australia acknowledges the matching funds provided by the Australian Government to support the research and development detailed in this publication.

Abstract

This project aimed to deliver information, education, training and technical services to improve management practices among cattle lot feeders throughout Australia, through the provision of on the ground extension support. To achieve these aims a Feedlot Industry Technical Services Officer was appointed on a contract basis averaging 3 days per week for the duration of the project.

Activities undertaken by the technical services officer included:

- the completion of a risk assessment of lot feeders and identification of the key areas where individual lot feeders and the wider feedlot industry needed to improve;
- visits to 143 individual feedlots out of a total of 453 NFAS accredited feedlots;
- the development of close working relationships with the ALFA CEO, MLA Feedlot R&D Project Manager, ALFA and AUS-MEAT staff; and
- assistance with the 'on the ground' organisation and delivery of ALFA/ MLA events and training.

The Feedlot Industry Technical Services Officer position has been extremely well received by the feedlot industry. Feedback has been received from numerous feedlot operators on the value and worth of a technical services position and the important linkage such a position provides between feedlot operators and ALFA/MLA.

Executive Summary

Small to medium sized feedlot operators have found it increasingly difficult to keep abreast of continual improvements in management practices across such areas as animal welfare, biosecurity, food safety and quality assurance. This poses a risk to individual feedlots and the broader cattle feedlot industry should a crisis unfold.

This project aimed to deliver information, education, training and technical services to improve management practices among cattle lot feeders throughout Australia, through the provision of on the ground extension support. This approach provides better leveraging of R&D levy investments and reduces identified risk areas within individual feedlots and the industry as a whole.

To achieve these aims a Feedlot Industry Technical Services Officer was appointed on a contract basis averaging 3 days per week for the duration of the project. Activities undertaken by the technical services officer included the completion of a risk assessment of lot feeders and identification of the key areas where individual lot feeders and the wider feedlot industry needed to improve; the development of close working relationships with the ALFA CEO, MLA Feedlot R&D Project Manager, ALFA and AUS-MEAT staff; and assistance in the 'on the ground' organisation and delivery of ALFA/ MLA events and training.

The Feedlot Industry Technical Services Officer position has been extremely well received by the feedlot industry. Feedback has been received from numerous feedlot operators on the value and worth of a Technical Services position and the important linkage such a position provides between feedlot operators and ALFA/MLA.

The project has been successful in meeting the stated project objectives. There is however scope for a continuation of the on the ground extension support to lot feeders to further leverage R&D levy investments and further reduce identified risk areas within individual feedlots and the industry as a whole. During the first 12 month period, 143 individual feedlots out of a total of 453 NFAS accredited feedlots were visited, representing 32% of the potential target audience for the technical services role. Ongoing extension support is required to service the majority of the remaining 68% of NFAS accredited feedlots.

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1 Background

Small to medium sized feedlot operators have found it increasingly difficult to keep abreast of continual improvements in management practices across such areas as animal welfare, biosecurity, food safety and quality assurance. This poses a risk to individual feedlots and the broader cattle feedlot industry should a crisis unfold.

This project aimed to deliver information, education, training and technical services to improve management practices among cattle lot feeders throughout Australia, through on the ground extension support to such lot feeders; thereby better leveraging R&D levy investments and reducing identified risk areas within individual feedlots and the industry as a whole.

2 Projective objectives

The objectives of this project were as follows:

1. Improve lot feeder capacity to adopt research and development outcomes as appropriate.
2. Develop training and communication material to aid in the delivery and adoption of technical and research & development advice and information.
3. In consultation with MLA and AUS-MEAT, initiate the delivery of specific technical services to the lot feeding industry.
4. Improve consultation and communication mechanisms on grain fed levy related matters to enhance future grain fed levy investments through MLA.
5. Improve lot feeder operational professionalism and performance over time to better manage and mitigate identified key risk areas within individual feedlots and the wider industry.

3 Methodology

A Feedlot Industry Technical Services Officer was appointed on a contract basis averaging 3 days per week for the duration of the project. The activities to be completed by this role were:

- Undertake a risk assessment of lot feeders and identify key areas where individual lot feeders and the wider feedlot industry need to improve. This assessment needs to record NFAS/ ALFA membership, prior lot feeder training, feedlot location, Katestone usage, shade, the provision of an onsite weather station and other factors;
- Identify the constraints that may be preventing improvement;
- Develop a work plan and strategy to target key areas, lot feeders and constraints. The plan and strategy needs to identify and rate the various options to improve such performances (e.g. feedlot visits, training, industry workshops etc), the most cost and time effective logistical arrangements to visit lot feeders in various areas, along with matrices that allow performance in these risk areas to be assessed over time;
- Maintain a close working relationship with the ALFA CEO and MLA Feedlot R&D Project Manager to provide an information conduit for future R&D, R&D outcomes and R&D feedback between lot feeders and ALFA/ MLA over time;

- Work closely with ALFA and AUS-MEAT staff to assist in the communication and dissemination of advice for the practical implementation of NFAS and legislative requirements;
- Utilise and develop (where necessary) training and communication material that will enable interaction with lot feeders to be constructive, valuable and time effective;
- Assist in the 'on the ground' organisation and delivery of ALFA/ MLA events and training;
- Develop a detailed list of activities undertaken and feedlots visited for submittal on a monthly basis.

4 Results

The project has been very well received by the feedlot industry with continuing positive feedback from feedlot operators on their appreciation of a field based position and the industry need for this type of role and information provided. Over the length of the project, an average of 3 days per week have been worked.

Activities undertaken against the specific service outcomes are detailed below.

4.1 Initial risk assessment

The risk assessment was undertaken early in the life of the project so the technical services officer could focus initially on those feedlots that were considered to pose the greatest risk to themselves and the broader industry.

The assessment utilised the collated data from ALFA, NFAS and Katestone. The assessment allocated risk based on feedlot size, NFAS audit non-conformances, participation in ALFA/MLA training and workshops, ALFA membership, the provision of shade in feedlot pens, and the usage of on-site weather stations and the Cattle Heat Load Toolbox.

For many of the smaller feedlots, data was not available on the last three factors so they were listed as 'Unknown'. From a risk perspective, 'Unknown' was treated the same as a "No" response. As feedlots were visited, information was collected to add to the initial available dataset.

The assessment of risk also took into account weightings of each of the identified risk factors. The higher the value, the greater the level of risk. The risk factors and weighting used in the risk assessment were:

- Feedlot Capacity <50 +5
- Feedlot Capacity 50-999 +10
- Feedlot Capacity 1000-10,000 +10
- Feedlot Capacity >10,000 +5
- Added per NFAS Audit Non Conformance +5
- No ALFA/MLA Training attended +10
- Not an ALFA Member +10
- No Pen Shade +15
- No onsite Weather Station +10

- Do not use Heat Load Toolbox +15

A total of 453 feedlots were assessed, with an average risk score of 58.3 and a range of risk scores from 5 to 105. There were 53 feedlots with a risk score of 25 or less, 72 feedlots with a risk score between 26 and 50, 314 feedlots with a risk score between 51 and 75 and 14 feedlots with a risk score greater than 75.

The risk assessment process will be ongoing. As additional data becomes available and further consultation occurs with industry participants, other risk factors may be identified and the weightings refined.

An example of the output from the Risk Assessment is included in Appendix 7.1 (feedlot names and towns have been removed to protect the privacy of the operators).

4.2 Identify the constraints that may be preventing improvement

There are a number of constraints that impact on the ability of feedlots, especially smaller feedlots, to implement new techniques to improve their performance. Cost and time were the most common constraints identified by operators in discussions with the technical services officer.

The cost of implementing changes or even attending workshops/training, relative to the return received from the enterprise, was seen by numerous feedlots as an impediment. With many feedlots being a smaller activity within larger farming or agricultural businesses, the return from improvements wass perceived as limited.

Likewise, time constraints were a challenge for all feedlot sizes. With smaller operations, where only a single labour unit is involved in the feedlot operation, the ability or desire to leave the operation to attend training, workshops or field days is very dependent on the proximity and timing of the activity. Many operators are not able to commit to any off site activities while they have cattle on feed.

Other constraints identified to date include remoteness of the feedlot site and competition within the marketplace limiting interaction between feedlots. As more individual feedlots are visited in this project, further constraints are likely to be identified.

The Technical Services Officer was able to overcome a number of these constraints through initial onsite visits. These visits allowed a better understanding of the individual feedlot business so that information could be tailored to their individual requirements. The visits also started to build a relationship with the feedlot operator and to establish the Technical Services Officer as an independent point of contact for future enquiries.

The visiting of a number of feedlots within a geographical area allows for the enhancement of local networks and discussions between feedlots. As the project develops, opportunities for small group activities will increase, allowing tailored workshops/training to be delivered in more locations, reducing travel time and time away from the feedlot for operators.

4.3 Work plan development

A detailed work plan and strategy to target key areas, lot feeders and constraints was developed and approved by ALFA and MLA. The work plan and an assessment of the status of agreed actions under the plan is included in Appendix 7.2.

The majority of feedlot site visits were identified through the risk assessment process. Locations visited were also selected to coincide with ALFA workshops or other activities to reduce travelling costs. Feedlot visits were grouped by location with priority being given to feedlots with higher risk assessment scores.

Requests for assistance were also received from a number of feedlots, resulting in planned visits to particular areas. These visits again provided the opportunity to target nearby higher risk score feedlots and to assist in the collection of further data to be included in the risk assessment.

4.4 Working relationship with the ALFA CEO and MLA Feedlot R&D Project Manager

A close working relationship was developed between the contractor and both the ALFA CEO, Dougal Gordon and the MLA Feedlot R&D Project Manager, Des Rinehart. Weekly email contact was maintained with both the ALFA CEO and MLA Feedlot R&D Project Manager through the Monday morning communication of the intended movements and activities for the following week. Regular face to face contact was maintained through attendance and participation at ALFA Council meetings, industry meetings and conferences. Monthly reports outlining the contractor's activities undertaken were submitted to both the ALFA CEO and MLA Feedlot R&D Project Manager. These reports were then disseminated to ALFA Council and staff.

Feedback obtained from feedlot operators was provided to ALFA and MLA, especially in regard to the performance of the Cattle Heat Load forecast during late December 2014 and January 2015. A specific heat load incident was identified as having occurred in the Miles/Condamine area during these times and feedback from a number feedlot operators regarding the lack of warnings was communicated.

Together with industry and other stakeholders, the contractor participated in a workshop, to determine the R&D strategic priorities over the next 5 years. The workshop was conducted by ALFA and MLA and was held in Brisbane in December 2014, as part of the Feedlot Program Strategic Planning process. A draft report of the workshop was circulated to workshop participants and a draft strategic plan is being prepared for wider distribution to the feedlot industry.

4.5 Working with ALFA and AUS-MEAT

The contractor met with relevant staff from both ALFA and AUS-MEAT to outline the purpose of the technical services role and the opportunity to enhance existing communication and dissemination of information to lot feeders. Input was provided to Bridget Peachey, Manager Policy and Projects with ALFA, on a number of technical issues including biosecurity, animal welfare and residue management.

Through discussions and meetings with key AUS-MEAT staff, the Technical Services Officer was able to develop a sound understanding of NFAS requirements. The auditing process was demonstrated and documentation provided to ensure that the expectations of the auditing process are understood.

All NFAS circulars and notices are obtained directly from AUS-MEAT, to allow follow up with lot feeders during site visits on their understanding and implementation of any amendments to the NFAS Rules and Standards.

4.6 Training and communication material

There is a large volume of existing training and communication material available to the feedlot industry. An extensive library of material, in both hardcover and electronic formats, was collated and utilised for dissemination to lot feeders. This library of material included but is not limited to the following:

- MLA Feedlot Technical Library DVD which includes a compilation of publications, reports and videos relevant to the Australian feedlot industry produced between 1992 and 2012
- ALFA/MLA Animal Health & Welfare workshop Jul/Aug 2013 presentations
- ALFA/MLA Milling & Nutrition workshop 2014 presentations
- ALFA/MLA Caring for cattle – feedlots. A guide for pen riders and stock handlers 2011
- ALFA/MLA Feedlot Backgrounding and Induction 2014
- National Biosecurity Manual for Beef Cattle Feedlots September 2013
- MLA tips & tools - Heat load in feedlot cattle
- ALFA/MLA Managing Summer Heat Workbook 2014
- ALFA/MLA Panting Score Reference Chart
- MLA/Australian Business Training Solutions Work Health and Safety Management System Upgrade 2005-2014 Workshop manual and resources

Electronic versions of these documents and resources were disseminated to lot feeders, both during site visits and when following up enquiries from lot feeders away from the site.

Unfortunately, many feedlots were unaware of the extensive resources available to them. While conducting site visits, discussions often focused on recent ALFA/MLA workshops and training activities. These discussions, complemented by questioning of the feedlot operator regarding their own operation, allowed for the communication and, where necessary, provision of existing information and resources. In some cases, it was sufficient to provide guidance or linkages to the source of available material.

Articles were prepared and published in the ALFA Lotfeeding journal in:

- July 2014 – Introductory article
- September 2014 – Workplace Health and Safety
- November 2014 – Preparing and Planning for Summer Heat
- January 2015 - Monitoring and Management of Summer Heat in Feedlots
- March 2015 - Feedlot Cleanliness and the Impact on Fly Numbers
- May 2015 – Animal Welfare Auditing for Feedlots

As reported previously, the contractor also contributed to the development of guidance material relating to the implementation of various NFAS changes, including in relation to internal animal welfare audits, pregnant livestock and calving management, and hospital pen management. This material will help lot feeders implement such changes more effectively and efficiently.

4.7 Assist organisation and delivery of ALFA/ MLA events and training

The contractor assisted with the on the ground organisation and delivery of two major workshop series and one major training activity:

- The ALFA/ MLA Work Health and Safety workshops delivered at Dalby, Tamworth, Wagga Wagga and Moama. The workshops were presented by Ken Golden from Australian Business Training Solutions with 82 workshop participants. In conjunction with ALFA councillors, who chaired each workshop, the contractor represented ALFA and MLA while assisting with the general running of the days, collecting evaluation forms and providing participants with an understanding of the role and activities with respect to this project.

- The ALFA/ MLA Managing Summer Heat in Feedlots workshops were delivered in Murray Bridge, Moama, Wagga Wagga, Tamworth, Dalby and Emerald. These workshops were presented by Christine Killip from Katestone Environmental and Tony Batterham of Quirindi Feedlot Services and were attended by a total of 191 participants. Once again the contractor was able to represent ALFA and MLA at each of these workshops, while also chairing the Moama and Emerald events. The contractor also assisted with the general running of the days, collecting evaluation forms and providing participants with an understanding of the role and activities with respect to this project.

- The ALFA/ MLA Animal Welfare Officer Training and Certification program delivered at Tintinara, Toowoomba, Comet, Wagga Wagga, Moama and Tamworth. The training was presented by Tony Batterham, Quirindi Feedlot Services and Matt George, Bovine Dynamics, and were attended by a total of 147 participants. The contractor again represented ALFA and MLA at five of these training workshops, while also chairing the Toowoomba, Comet, Moama and Tamworth workshops. The contractor was also the accredited trainer and assessor for the training program, representing the Registered Training Organiastion, TAFE Queensland South West, at the workshops and collecting and evaluating the completed assessments for the awarding of the Animal Welfare Officers Skill Set.

All three of these events enabled the contractor to make contact and interact with a large number of feedlots and offer assistance to them as part of this project. A number of follow up feedlot visits occurred from contacts made at these workshops.

4.8 Monthly reporting

Monthly reports were provided to the ALFA CEO and MLA Feedlot R&D Project Manager for June/July, August, September, October, November, December, January, February, March, April and May regarding activities undertaken and feedlots visited. These reports were

subsequently circulated to the ALFA Council and staff members. During the project a total of 143 individual feedlots were visited.

Monthly reports have been included as Appendix 7.3.

5 Discussion

The Feedlot Industry Technical Services Officer position has been extremely well received by the feedlot industry. Feedback has been received from numerous feedlot operators on the value and worth of a Technical Services position and the important linkage such a position provides between feedlot operators and ALFA/MLA.

5.1 Improve lot feeder capacity to adopt research and development outcomes

Lot feeder capacity to adopt appropriate research and development outcomes has been improved through the relationships developed by the contractor and individual feedlot operators. A proportion of feedlot operators do not participate in industry workshops, training or communication channels that provide network opportunities or linkages to the latest research and development outcomes.

The technical services role has been able to establish relationships with feedlot operators through 143 individual on site feedlot visits while also developing close working relationships with ALFA, MLA and Katestone.

The close working relationship between the contractor, MLA and Katestone has enabled the enhancement of lot feeder understanding and implementation of Heat Load Risk Management planning, monitoring, response and review during the 2014/2015 summer period.

5.2 Delivery and adoption of technical and R&D advice and information

Training and communication material has been developed to aid in the delivery and adoption of technical and research and development advice and information. An extensive library of resources was already in existence. This has been collected and actively disseminated to lot feeders.

Assistance has been provided in the development of materials for, and the delivery of the ALFA/MLA Workplace Health and Safety workshops, ALFA/MLA Heat Load Risk Management workshops and the ALFA/ MLA Animal Welfare Officer Training and Certification program.

Articles, six in total, have also been prepared and published in the ALFA Lotfeeding journal.

5.3 Delivery of specific technical services to the lot feeding industry

In consultation with MLA and AUS-MEAT, the delivery of specific technical services to the lot feeding industry has occurred. Technical assistance has been provided to feedlot operators across various aspects of NFAS including quality assurance program management, vendor declarations, residue management, biosecurity, heat load management programs, workplace health and safety systems, animal welfare and livestock handling.

The contractor has also worked closely with ALFA and AUS-MEAT staff to assist in the communication and dissemination of advice for the practical implementation of NFAS and legislative requirements.

5.4 Enhance future grain fed levy investments through MLA

Consultation and communication mechanisms on grain fed levy related matters have been improved through the development and maintenance of a close working relationship between the contractor and the ALFA CEO and MLA Feedlot R&D Project Manager. These relationships have provided an information conduit for future R&D, R&D outcomes and R&D feedback between lot feeders and ALFA/MLA. Information has been reported on a regular basis to both ALFA and MLA.

The continued promotion to lot feeders of the advantages of participation in NFAS and membership of ALFA and MLA has actively occurred during site visits, workshops and industry activities. Likewise the endorsement of ALFA and MLA for their support of workshops and training activities has occurred.

5.5 Improve lot feeder operational professionalism and performance

Lot feeder operational professionalism and performance to better manage and mitigate identified key risk areas within both individual feedlots and the wider industry has started to be improved through the development of an risk assessment matrix for the feedlot industry that allows targeting of key areas for improvement. Through consultation with key industry participants, key risk areas have been identified, with data collected and collated to perform the risk assessment.

Data collected includes NFAS/ALFA membership, participation in industry workshops or training, feedlot location, Cattle Heat Load Toolbox usage, the provision of shade and ownership of onsite weather stations. Not all data fields are available on all feedlots, thereby risk based targeting of onsite visits and continued collection of data is paramount.

6 Conclusions/recommendations

The project has been successful in meeting the stated project objectives. There is however scope for a continuation of the on the ground extension support to lot feeders to further leverage R&D levy investments and further reduce identified risk areas within individual feedlots and the industry as a whole. During the first 12 month period, 143 individual feedlots out of a total of 453 NFAS accredited feedlots were visited, representing only 32% of the potential target audience for the technical services role. Ongoing extension support is required to service the majority of the remaining 68% of NFAS accredited feedlots.

7 Appendix

7.1 Risk Assessment

Feedlot Name	Town	Risk Score	NFAS Accred	Cap. <50	Cap. 50-999	Cap. 1000 - 10,000	Cap. >10,000	NFAS Audit Non Conform.	NFAS Audit Non Conform. (Count)	ALFA /MLA Training w/shops	ALFA Member	Pen Shade	Weather Station	Heat Load Toolbox
######	####	70	A			YES		NO	0	NO	NO	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN
######	####	70	A			YES		YES	2	NO	YES	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN
######	####	25	A			YES		NO	0	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES
######	####	50	A			YES		NO	0	YES	YES	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN
######	####	70	A			YES		NO	0	NO	NO	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN
######	####	5	A				YES	NO	0	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
######	####	5	A				YES	NO	0	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
######	####	70	A			YES		NO	0	NO	NO	NO	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN
######	####	60	A			YES		NO	0	YES	NO	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN
######	####	40	A			YES		NO	0	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO
######	####	50	A			YES		NO	0	YES	YES	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN
######	####	60	A		YES			NO	0	NO	YES	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN
######	####	60	A		YES			NO	0	YES	NO	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN
######	####	70	A		YES			NO	0	NO	NO	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN
######	####	20	A				YES	NO	0	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES
######	####	50	A			YES		NO	0	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
######	####	75	S		YES			YES	1	NO	NO	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN
######	####	70	A		YES			NO	0	NO	NO	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN
######	####	70	A		YES			NO	0	NO	NO	NO	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN
######	####	20	A		YES			NO	0	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES
######	####	70	A			YES		NO	0	NO	NO	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN
######	####	85	A		YES			YES	3	NO	NO	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN

7.2 Management Agreement Work Plan ALFA and Jeff House Livestock

Project Title: Feedlot education, training and technical services.
Completion Date: 19 May 2015
Service Provider: Jeffrey House, Jeff House Livestock

Objective	Activities	Actions	Date Due	Progress
a) Improve lot feeder capacity to adopt research and development outcomes as appropriate.	Develop a detailed list of activities undertaken and feedlots visited for submittal on a monthly basis.	• Provide monthly reports to the ALFA CEO and MLA R&D feedlot manager regarding activities undertaken and feedlots visited during the month.	Ongoing	Reports provided on a monthly basis.
	Maintain a close working relationship with the ALFA CEO and MLA R&D feedlot manager to provide an information conduit for delivery of R&D outcomes to lot feeders.	• Participate and contribute to weekly ALFA staff meetings. • Program monthly phone hook-ups with MLA R&D feedlot manager to discuss ongoing and completed projects, availability of project reports and dissemination of project results to lot feeders.	Ongoing	Participation in weekly staff meetings and contact with MLA R&D feedlot manager on a regular basis.
	Distribute to feedlots grain sampling kits to increase collection rates for the Deltamethrin Sampling program.	• Obtain grain sampling kits from Department of Agriculture National Residue Survey team. • Distribute kits to feedlots visited and encourage lot feeders to submit samples. • Follow up with individual lot feeders to ensure samples are submitted.	30 Sept. 2014	Grain sampling kits have been obtained and distributed.

Objective	Activities	Actions	Date Due	Progress
	Work closely with MLA and Katestone to enhance lot feeder understanding and implementation of Heat Load Risk Management planning, monitoring, response and review.	• Maintain a close working relationship with key staff at Katestone to keep abreast of the technical aspects of Heat Load and the Cattle Heat Load Toolbox. • Encourage the increased adoption of Katestone and promote the full functionality benefits of various aspects of the service (eg integration of onsite automated weather stations with the Cattle Heat Load Toolbox) • Assist in the development of material for Heat Load workshops. • Assist lot feeders to develop their skills and understanding of Heat Load Management, including the calculation and monitoring of both Heat Load Index and Accumulated Heat Load, and the Risk Assessment for the various classes of stock on feed. • Assist lot feeders to further enhance the development and timely implementation of their Excessive Heat Load Action plans. • Encourage the purchase of onsite weather stations to accurately determine heat load conditions at feedlots.	Ongoing	A close working relationship has been developed with key Katestone staff through the development and delivery of the Managing Summer Heat workshops. Assistance was provided in the development of the workshop material and delivery of the workshops in Murray Bridge, Moama, Wagga Wagga, Tamworth, Dalby and Emerald. During site visits summer heat management and the importance of pre-summer preparation is raised. Previous experiences and knowledge of available resources such as the Cattle Heat Load Toolbox are discussed. Likewise the feedlots' Heat Load Action Plan, NFAS requirements and overall preparation are discussed. The advantages of registration with the Cattle Heat Load Toolbox, onsite automated weather stations and integration to Heat Load Data Network are actively promoted during site visits.

Objective	Activities	Actions	Date Due	Progress
b) Develop training and communication material to aid in the delivery and adoption of technical and research & development advice and information.	Utilise and develop (where necessary) training and communication material that will enable interaction with lot feeders to be constructive, valuable and time effective.	• Maintain an up to date library of available training and communication resources for dissemination to lot feeders as required. • Identify gaps in available training and communication material. • Develop material to fulfil identified gaps in currently available training and communication material. • Prepare articles for inclusion in the bi-monthly ALFA Lotfeeding journal.	Ongoing	An extensive library of resources has been collected and information disseminated to lot feeders on a number of occasions. Feedback on potential training/ workshop topics has been collected and provided to ALFA and MLA. Six articles have been prepared for inclusion in the ALFA Lotfeeding journal.
	Assist in the 'on the ground' organisation and delivery of ALFA/ MLA events and training.	• Assist in the delivery of ALFA/MLA Workplace Health and Safety workshops to lot feeders. • Assist in the development and delivery of ALFA/MLA Heat Load Risk Management workshops. • Assist where required with the delivery of ALFA/MLA information and key messages at BeefEx14.	June-Aug. 2014 Aug-Sept. 2014 Oct. 2014	Assistance was provided in the delivery and development of both the ALFA/MLA Workplace Health and Safety workshops and ALFA/MLA Heat Load Risk Management workshops which have now been completed. Attended BeefEx14 and assistance provided where required.

Objective	Activities	Actions	Date Due	Progress
c) In consultation with MLA and AUS-MEAT, initiate the delivery of specific technical services to the lot feeding industry.	Work closely with ALFA and AUS-MEAT staff to assist in the communication and dissemination of advice for the practical implementation of NFAS and legislative requirements.	• Meet with key AUS-MEAT staff to discuss NFAS requirements, auditing processes and ongoing collaboration. • Observe an on-site NFAS audit to gain a firsthand knowledge of the auditing process. • Ensure that all NFAS circulars and notices are obtained and fully comprehended to help advise lot feeders how to meet such requirements. • Maintain regular contact with key AUS-MEAT staff regarding NFAS issues and feedback received from auditors and lot feeders.	Ongoing	Meeting with key AUS-MEAT staff and observation of NFAS audit has been completed. NFAS circulars and notices are being received from AUS-MEAT. These circulars and notices are discussed during feedlot visits to ensure the understanding and assist with implementation of any changes.

Objective	Activities	Actions	Date Due	Progress
	Provide technical assistance to feedlot operators across various aspects of NFAS including quality assurance program management, vendor declarations (NVDs and CVDs), residue management, biosecurity and heat load management programs, workplace health and safety systems, animal welfare and livestock handling.	• Maintain copies of current NFAS Rules, Standards, Circulars and Notices for dissemination to lot feeders as required. • Maintain a close working relationship with ALFA staff to keep abreast of changes to key industry programs such as LPA, CVD's and NVD's. • Maintain a close working relationship with Katestone to assist lot feeders regarding changes to the Cattle Heat Load Toolbox, RAP, AHLU and HLI. • Assist lot feeders to understand and implement new NFAS requirements. • Provide advice and technical assistance to lot feeders in maintaining and implementing their current quality management system. • Encourage and assist non-accredited feedlots to become NFAS Accredited.	Ongoing	Current NFAS Rules, Standards, Circulars and Notices have been received and copies are maintained. Close working relationships have been developed with both ALFA and key Katestone staff to ensure I am kept abreast of any changes. Monthly reports are provided from Katestone and I have attended ALFA Council meetings. New NFAS requirements are discussed during feedlot visits to assist understanding and implementation into their quality management system. Likewise advice is provided on maintaining their quality management system and any problems or non-compliances that may have been identified. Assistance has been provided to 3 non-NFAS accredited feedlots to progress their accreditation.
d) Improve consultation and communication mechanisms on grain fed levy related matters to enhance future grain fed levy investments through MLA.	Maintain a close working relationship with the ALFA CEO and MLA R&D feedlot manager to provide an information conduit for future R&D, R&D outcomes and R&D feedback between lot feeders and ALFA/ MLA over time.	• Participate and contribute to weekly ALFA staff meeting, providing feedback on R&D projects when required. • Program monthly phone hook-ups with MLA Feedlot R&D Project Manager.	Ongoing	Participation in weekly staff meetings and contact with MLA R&D feedlot manager on a regular basis

Objective	Activities	Actions	Date Due	Progress
	Handle all ALFA and membership queries promptly and courteously. Provide feedback to CEO.	• Respond to all lot feeder enquiries within 1 working day in a courteous manner. • Maintain a log of all enquiries and provide feedback to ALFA CEO on monthly basis.	Ongoing	Enquiries have been responded to on the day of enquiry and are documented in the monthly report to ALFA CEO.
	Provide lot feeder feedback to ALFA regarding membership services, R&D, Marketing, Animal health/welfare and residue related matters.	• Participate and contribute to weekly ALFA staff meeting. • Actively seek feedback from lot feeders regarding current issues impacting their lot feeding business.	Ongoing	Feedback is actively sought from lot feeders during site visits and workshops. This feedback is communicated back to ALFA through regular participation in staff meetings and monthly reports.
	Actively promote ALFA and industry activities and initiatives within NFAS accredited feedlots.	• Maintain a current list of ALFA and Industry activities for dissemination to lot feeders. • Promote ALFA and Industry activities and initiatives when visiting or making contact with lot feeders.	Ongoing	ALFA, MLA and Industry activities and initiatives are actively promoted to lot feeders during site visits and workshops. Examples have included WHS and Managing Summer Heat workshops and ALFA awards presented at BeefEx.
	Assist with development, delivery and collation of feedback from Marketing/Research planning and outcomes workshops.	• Assist with development of material and agenda for workshops as required. • Participate in the delivery of the workshop to ensure feedback is received from lot feeders. • Assist with the collection and collation of lot feeder feedback as required.	Dec. 2014	ALFA and MLA conducted a workshop among industry and other stakeholders in December to determine the R&D strategic priorities over the next 5 years. A draft strategic plan is being prepared for wider distribution. Feedback on this plan will be actively sought during feedlot visits and interactions in early 2015.

Objective	Activities	Actions	Date Due	Progress
	Utilise and develop (where necessary) training and communication material that will enable interaction with lot feeders to outline the benefits of ALFA/NFAS/MLA membership, along with the roles and responsibilities of ALFA, MLA and AUS-MEAT.	• Continually promote the advantages to lot feeders of participation in NFAS and membership of ALFA and MLA. • Maintain an up to date library of available training and communication resources for dissemination to lot feeders as required. • Identify gaps in available training and communication material. • Develop material to fulfil identified gaps in currently available training and communication material.	Ongoing	During site visits and workshops the advantages and benefits of NFAS participation, ALFA and MLA memberships are actively promoted. Likewise ALFA and MLA support of workshops is endorsed. An extensive library of resources has been collected and information disseminated to lot feeders as required. Feedback on potential training/ workshop topics has been collected and provided to ALFA and MLA.
e) Improve lot feeder operational professionalism and performance over time to better manage and mitigate identified key risk areas within individual feedlots and the wider industry.	Undertake a risk assessment of lot feeders and identify key areas where individual lot feeders and the wider feedlot industry need to improve. This assessment needs to record NFAS/ ALFA membership, prior lot feeder training, feedlot location, Katestone usage, shade, the provision of an onsite weather station and other factors.	• Collate data on individual lot feeder NFAS accreditation, ALFA membership, NFAS audit performance (corrective actions raised at most recent audit), attendance at ALFA training and workshops, responses to feedlot industry shade survey, subscription/interaction with Katestone Heat Load Toolbox and forecasting service. • Identify the key risk areas through discussions with key industry participants. • Analyse collated data against key risk areas.	4 July 2014	Data has been collated and risk assessment has been completed for a total of 453 feedlots.

Objective	Activities	Actions	Date Due	Progress
	Identify the constraints that may be preventing improvement.	• Through discussions with key industry participants identify and document likely constraints for lot feeders to implement new techniques.	18 July 2014	Constraints have been identified and strategies to overcome implemented.
	Develop a work plan and strategy to target key areas, lot feeders and constraints. The plan and strategy needs to identify and rate the various options to improve such performances (e.g. feedlot visits, training, industry workshops etc), the most cost and time effective logistical arrangements to visit lot feeders in various areas, along with matrices that allows performance in these risk areas to be assessed over time.	• Further develop risk assessment to identify key target areas, whether they be geographical, capacity related or otherwise. • Consider identified constraints. • List various options available for improving performance. • Match options to target areas and develop indicative logistical, cost and time factors. • Develop and document a strategy to improve the performance of identified key target areas.	18 July 2014	Detailed work plan and strategy to target key areas, lot feeders and constraints have been developed and approved by ALFA and MLA.
	Develop matrices to allow the performance in these risk areas to be assessed over time.	• Develop key performance indicators for improved performance. • Develop a matrix to allow monitoring of improvements in performance. • Collate data on a 6 monthly basis against the matrix to document improvement.	18 July 2014	Monitoring matrix has been developed and data collection continues from feedlot visits and collaboration with industry stakeholders.

Objective	Activities	Actions	Date Due	Progress
	Provide appropriate technical advice to targeted lot feeders to reduce the identified risks to both individual lot feeders and the wider industry.	• Implement the developed strategy to provide technical advice to targeted lot feeders in a professional and discreet manner. • Maintain an up to date library of available training and communication resources for dissemination to targeted lot feeders. • Actively obtain and document feedback from targeted lot feeders to further enhance and improve the provision of services. • Visit 110 feedlots over the Management Agreement period (175 over the initial 12 month period) as per ALFA contract.	Ongoing	In the 12 month period, a total of 143 individual feedlots have been visited and technical advice provided. While this is below the original target, participation in ALFA/MLA and industry workshops has resulted in contact and interaction with far in excess of 175 feedlots. An extensive library of resources has been collected and information disseminated to visited lot feeders as required. Feedback obtained from lot feeders on their potential requirements or desired outcomes from the Technical Services Officer role has been documented in monthly reports.

7.3 Monthly Reports

June/July Report – Jeff House 25/07/14

Activities
Participated in Health and Safety workshops at Dalby, Tamworth, Wagga Wagga and Moama.

Meeting FSA Toowoomba regarding Feedlot Technology Adoption Group Facebook page and extension project – Peters Watts, Tim Sullivan and Des Rinehart.

Meetings at Katestone with Christine Killip for Heat load workshop planning (+ Scott, Tony, Des) and a technical introduction to the Cattle Heat Load Toolbox. Prepared first draft of workshop workbook.

Jindalee feedlot 4 day visit, allowing an in depth look at how the various operations at the feedlot, including observation of their NFAS audit.

Meeting with Craig Firrell and Bruce Gormley at Ausmeat Brisbane to discuss NFAS auditing and the role with the industry.

Enquiry from Nick Layton, Layton Legal Manilla NSW regarding feedlot approval and licensing. Their client is in the process of buying a property which included a feedlot.

Workplan completed.

First draft of Feedlot Risk Assessment completed.

Feedlots visited
Feedlot visits against target - 17 of 115 by 31 December (15%)

Feedback/Comments from Feedlot Operators
Training suggestion – web based training using videos for generic basic feedlot skills that could be used for new staff as part of their induction. Could cover introductions to WHS, Cattle handling, horse safety, cattle welfare. Example Wallaby Productions at Toowoomba.

Feedlot in NSW – what direct impact will the position offer to someone like *large feedlots*? He did not have any particular ideas for training at the time but did suggest that the position does need to offer something plausible to *large feedlots* as the largest levy payer.

Publicity required regarding NLIS tag positioning. Feedlots receiving too many cattle with NLIS tags in the left ear which can result in scanners not reading the tags. General publicity in something like The Land suggested.

It was also suggested by another feedlot that training for feedlots in NLIS requirements, how to reconcile NLIS devices on the site and more assistance from the NLIS database when trying to complete NLIS transfers for cattle from the incorrect PIC, while trying to maintain lifetime traceability.

Comment was made that Health and Welfare workshops getting stale. Suggestion was for more practical style workshops including workshops conducted at feedlots to allow sharing of ideas and potentially the running of bus tours to various feedlots, service providers to again allow the sharing of information.

Better understanding of MSA grading results, especially what influences the boning group the carcase falls into. Especially important with discounts applied to higher boning groups. Potential for training workshop.

Anti-competitive behaviour of JBS and Teys in the market. The two companies have too much influence. Comment made by one feedlot.

Current cattle issues in feedlots visited so far include dags and feet problems reflecting the wet pen conditions in many southern feedlots.

Days worked
Compared to target (3 days/week) to 25/07/14 (10 weeks) – 36 days worked, balance +6 days.

August Report – Jeff House

21/08/14

Activities

Presentation on feedlot industry and EU market to Herefords Australia Producer field day. The day began at ABRI where results from the Herefords Australia Progeny Test Project were presented as well as my presentation. The group then visited Tullimba feedlot to inspect the Hereford progeny test steers nearing the end of their feeding program.

Feedlot Vets and Nutritionists workshop, Brisbane

ALFA Council meeting, Sydney

Feedlots visited

Feedlot visits against target - 24 of 115 by 31 December (21%)

Feedback/Comments from Feedlot Operators

Generally good knowledge of upcoming Summer Heat workshops and a number of feedlots attending. A couple of the smaller feedlots visited in central NSW do not feed cattle through the summer, so eliminate any heat load risk.

Hereford field day presentation was well received with plenty of questions and discussion afterwards over lunch and at the feedlot. There were about 30 producers and Hereford Australia staff in attendance at the day.

Days worked

Days worked since last report – 7.5 days

Compared to target (3 days/week) to 15/08/14 (14 weeks) – 43.5 days worked, balance +1.5 days.

September Report – Jeff House 19/09/14

Activities

Managing Summer Heat in feedlots workshops in Murray Bridge, Moama, Wagga Wagga, Tamworth, Dalby and Emerald – I chaired the Moama and Emerald workshops. Great opportunity to spend valuable time with Tony, Christine and Madie. Many in depth discussions had and a great learning opportunity for me.

2 days working in office following up from workshops and feedlot visits and preparation for future feedlot visits.

Feedlots visited

Feedlot visits against target - 27 of 115 by 31 December (23%)

Feedback/Comments from Feedlot Operators

The feedback from the Managing Summer Heat workshops was excellent as reported by Madie. In total 195 attendees. The workshops were well received and both presenters did a great job of getting their messages across to the audience. There is a good opportunity for me to follow up these workshops with feedlots who did not attend. There are also plans to make abbreviated versions of the presentations, as well as further copies of the workbook available for attendees to assist with staff training.

I reinforce the comments made about the Dalby workshop being too big to be effective. As in Madie's report other venues could be considered like Goondiwindi/Toowoomba/Condamine in addition to Dalby.

I received a comment from 1 feedlot visited that it would have been beneficial for the NFAS Advice regarding daily monitoring activities for excessive heat load to have gone out to feedlots before the Managing Summer Heat workshops. He registered late for the Emerald workshop after receiving the NFAS advice.

Two of the feedlots visited also commented on having feet issues with Brahman cattle after about 60 days on feed. Situation severe enough to necessitate the drafting off of animals after 70 days to the domestic market rather than keeping on feed for the intended 100 days.

Days worked

Days worked since last report – 13 days

Compared to target (3 days/week) to 19/09/14 (18 weeks) – 56.5 days worked, balance +2.5 days.

October Report – Jeff House 20/10/14

Activities
Attended BeefEx conference – a great line up of speakers and good opportunity to network and meet both lot feeders and industry service providers. An excellent conference overall.

During the month I have received a number of enquiries for information:

- *Feedlot in NSW* looking for someone to write an NFAS manual for their feedlot they are getting accredited.
- *Feedlot in QLD* chasing further information on the TAFE feedlot training courses.
- *Feedlot in NSW* having issues with NLIS transfers and animals they had purchased not being on the correct PIC and loosing lifetime traceability.

Chris Williams, Department of Agriculture, followed up on the NRS grains program sampling. Unfortunately he had previously failed to send through the relevant information. This information has now been received and I am able to disseminate the 2 sampling kits he sent through to feedlots I visit.

1 day working in office following up from feedlot visits and preparation for future feedlot visits.

Feedlots visited
Feedlot visits against target - 45 of 115 by 31 December (39%)

Feedback/Comments from Feedlot Operators
QLD Environmentally relevant activities paperwork and fees especially for small feedlots. Fees of $1300 per annum for feedlots under 1000 head were commented on by a number of smaller operations as being prohibitive. These fees also greatly reduce the chance of these small feedlots becoming ALFA members because they already feel they are paying too many fees for their feedlot.

National Pollution Inventory online reporting – the fear that moving from a paper based to online system will increase the amount of time taken to complete the return by feedlots.

The importance of managing people during heat load events. The importance of feedlots sharing information and feeling free to discuss issues or incidents without fear of being persecuted. ALFA can have a crucial role in facilitating these discussions and continuing to provide information and support, especially through the Technical Services position.

Challenges with marketing of grain fed cattle, especially from smaller feedlots. Thought the prices received for smaller lots often did not justify the work involved. Conversely, many of the smaller feedlots tend to use the feedlot as a property management tool, allowing their own animals to be removed from pasture and finished to market weights in the feedlot on an as needed basis, depending mainly on seasonal conditions, rather than the feedlot being in continuous operation.

Complaint about having to complete feedlot numbers survey online. The site had very poor internet access, and limited computer knowledge and the owner of this small operation was not impressed by the requirement to complete the survey electronically.

Miles, QLD suggested as a potential town for future workshops.

Days worked

Days worked since last report – 12.5 days

Compared to target (3 days/week) to 19/10/14 (22 weeks) – 69 days worked, balance +3 days.

November Report – Jeff House 20/11/14

Activities
Busy month spent visiting feedlots in NSW, Vic and Qld. Key focus of discussions has been managing summer heat.

During the month I have received a number of enquiries for information:

- *Producer in* NSW has been operating a drought lot and is now looking get local government approval and NFAS accreditation. We spoke through the process involved and I sent through some information. He had already made contact with the local council, Local Land Services and was going to contact AusMeat.
- *Feedlot in* QLD – The construction of his new feedlot was almost complete and he was chasing information on NFAS accreditation and ALFA membership. The feedlot has approval for 2000 head and is going to start with 600 head.
- *Feedlot in NSW* requested additional copies of the Panting Score Reference Chart from the Managing Summer Heat workshops.
- *Feedlot in QLD* follow-up enquiries regarding NFAS heat load management requirements and weather stations.
- *Industry consultant* requested a copy of the Managing Summer Heat workbook after seeing a copy I had provided to a feedlot he serviced.

A phone interview was conducted to complete the NFAS Review Questionnaire with Peter Watts from FSA Consulting.

5 days working in office following up from feedlot visits, enquiries and preparation for future feedlot visits.

Feedlots visited
Feedlot visits against target - 74 of 115 by 31 December (64%)

Feedback/Comments from Feedlot Operators

There were a number of comments from smaller feedlots on the lack of availability of service kill space as abattoirs have centralised. This has resulted in cattle being transported large distances, for example from southern NSW/northern VIC to northern NSW/southern QLD for slaughter, to enable the retaining of ownership of product beyond the knocking box.

Another issue raised by a number of feedlot operators was the apparent lack of demand for grainfed cattle/beef on the domestic market. There seems to be a considerable amount of promotion/interest in grass fed beef on the domestic market at the moment which is having a negative impact on the image of grainfed beef. In fact it is thought that grainfed is now seen as an inferior product to grassfed, with grassfed seen as a clean, green product.

This is resulting in considerable numbers of cattle being fed in smaller feedlots not being sold with the grainfed delivery dockets as there is no demand from the customer for this verification. This has included cattle being sold to both Woolworths and Coles, as well as a number of independent branded products. These are mostly young cattle doing their 70 days, not recognised as grainfed and thereby the transaction levy goes into the grassfed bucket.

At the moment these cattle are being fed on grain due to the seasonal conditions, however the fear is that if there is a good pasture season there will be no demand for cattle fed on grain at all, and domestic customers will use MSA grading rather than grainfed status as the only recognition of quality (a win for MSA, not so for NFAS and grainfed beef).

The need for some form of differentiation/promotion of grainfed product on the domestic market was seen as essential. It is interesting to note that this comment was made by feedlots who did not have long term contracts with Woolworths or Coles and appeared to be selling on a more ad hoc basis and did not see any premium for grainfed above grassfed cattle.

Comment received regarding the Feedlot of the Year competition and the need to clarify how the size categories are determined. There seemed to be some confusion between built capacity, numbers on feed and licenced capacity when allocating feedlots to the categories. It was requested that there be more clarification next time round, as it was commented that many feedlots are licenced for greater numbers than they have physical capacity for or indeed numbers they feed.

Also received a number of comments from feedlots in southern NSW and VIC that their NFAS audit conducted this year had doubled in time and been much more in depth. There had not been a change in auditor however audits had gone from 2.5hrs to 5 hrs for 800-1000 head feedlots.

Plenty of discussion around the management of heat during summer. I have worked with a number to further explain the Cattle Heat Load Toolbox, the forecasting service and checking of their alert levels. I have also been distributing the workbook and panting score reference chart from the Managing Summer Heat workshops to all the feedlots I visit. These have been timely, as the warmer weather has resulted in animals panting in a number of the yards visited. There is also considerable interest in shade structures.

I received positive feedback from QLD feedlots on the attitude of the current QLD government to development. A number of feedlots had applied for increases in their licenced capacity and were impressed with the speed of the process and the positive attitude from the government. An approval from 500 to 1000 head was approved in less than 48hrs, while the process of increasing from 500 to 4000 head was completed in under 3 months.

Many of the feedlots visited in the last month have been associated with larger farming operations. The feedlot is seen as an essential part of the whole farm business in adding value to grain and/or forage produced on farm. In some cases, the feedlot allows their own cattle to be finished regardless of season and may also be used for weaning or drought feeding. The feedlot is seen as a very positive part of the enterprise and a good number of these operations are in the process of expanding their feedlot capacity.

Days worked

Days worked since last report – 15.5 days

Compared to target (3 days/week) to 20/11/14 (27 weeks) – 84.5 days worked, balance +3.5 days.

December Report – Jeff House 21/12/14

Activities
Participated in Feedlot Research, Development & Extension Program strategic planning workshop, Brisbane 27-28 Nov. This workshop was well facilitated and a high level of participation from all in attendance was achieved.

Attended ALFA Council Meeting, Sydney 11-12 Dec. I always find these meetings incredibly valuable as a means of getting up to date with the immense amount of work undertaken by the various committees, council members and staff. The opportunity to catch up everyone provides a unique insight to the machinations of the industry and the general vibe going forward.

During the month I have received a number of enquiries for information:

- *Feedlot in NSW* enquiring about shade structures for his small feedlot. Receiving quote from NetPro and was looking for information on steel structures. Contact details for Hi Marq Engineering Leeton provided.
- *Feedlot in QLD* – Looking to get a feedlot up and running again. Has council approval sorted and had spoken to AusMeat about getting it re-accredited NFAS, however was having trouble with document links provided by AusMeat. Able to provide Craig Firrell's details for him to follow up.
- *Feedlot in QLD* with follow-up enquiry regarding NFAS heat load management and suitable CHLT alert levels for their operation.
- *Feedlot in NSW* follow-up enquiry regarding daily heat load monitoring and recording. She also had an enquiry as to the availability of a DVD that may be used as part of the induction process to introduce new staff to the feedlot industry and basic procedures. I will get a copy of the Caring for Cattle DVD sent out.

Feedlot visits conducted in NSW, Vic and Qld. A key focus of discussions has continued to be managing summer heat.

3 days working in office following up from feedlot visits, enquiries and preparation for future feedlot visits.

Feedlots visited
Feedlot visits against target - 88 of 115 by 31 December (77%)

Feedback/Comments from Feedlot Operators

There is a strong sense of optimism from the feedlots visited about the coming year and the prospect of continuing good returns. A number of feedlots visited commented on processors offering prices out well in advance, even allowing some feedlots to lock in prices before starting 100 day cattle on feed. This is adding considerable confidence and stability to the industry.

This optimism is also reflected in the level of investment seen in a number of the feedlot visited. Feedlot expansions and shade structure installations have either been recently completed, underway or definitely in the planning phase.

One of the feelots visited in QLD are currently undergoing an expansion and have installed shade over all of their existing pens as well as installing the infrastructure for shade over the new pens. They have also purchased a weather station.

There has also been some positive follow on from the Heat Load workshops with a number of feedlots installing new weather stations and looking to get them linked up to the Heat Load Data Network.

Days worked

Days worked since last report – 13 days

Compared to target (3 days/week) to 19/12/14 (31 weeks) – 97.5 days worked, balance +4.5 days.

I will only be working 1.5 days this week and not working between Xmas and the New Year.

This will see the days worked return to a zero balance at the start of the New Year.

January Report – Jeff House As of 19/01/2015

Activities
Management Agreement final report completed and submitted to ALFA.

Feedlot visits conducted in NSW with a key focus of discussions continuing to be managing summer heat.

4.5 days working in office following up from previous feedlot visits, enquiries and preparation for future feedlot visits.

Feedlots visited
A slow month with numerous feedlot operators on leave or with greatly reduced staff numbers making visits difficult.

Feedlot visits against target - 90 of 175 by 19 May 2015 (51%)

Feedback/Comments from Feedlot Operators

Considerable discussion around carcase dressing percentages and carcase feedback. There is a strong feeling that dressing percentages have dropped and the levels of bruising being discounted have increased (of course these may well be linked) and it is felt, very strongly on a number of occasions, that the processors are taking advantage of feedlot operators.

I have discussed this issue with Ian King from AusMeat and he has outlined the process that is available to producers if they feel there is a problem, however most seem reluctant to go down this path.

Days worked

Days worked since last report – 5.5 days

Compared to target (3 days/week) to 16/01/15 (35 weeks) – 103 days worked, balance -2.0 days.

February Report – Jeff House 24/02/2015

Activities
Busy month visiting feedlots in NSW and QLD. Key area of discussion has once again been on managing summer heat. Collection of GPS coordinates for feedlots visited is continuing.

During the month I also received 2 enquiries for information:

- *Feedlot in QLD* enquiring about requirements for expansion from 150 to 499 head. Spoke to Mitch Furness from DAFF QLD and passed on the information and contact details when I visited Tuckonie.
- *Producer in QLD* looking to set up a small feedlot (under 150 head) on his property as a drought mitigation tool. He was looking for information on the approval and NFAS accreditation process, as well as information on designs. Email was sent with information and links to DAFF QLD, AusMeat and the Feedlot Technology Adoption Group Facebook page.

4 days working in office following up from previous feedlot visits, enquiries and preparation for feedlot visits.

Feedlots visited
Feedlot visits against target - 116 of 175 by 19 May 2015 (66%)

Feedback/Comments from Feedlot Operators

With the current weather pattern there has been considerable discussion with feedlot operators regarding the management of heat this year.

A significant heat event was experienced in the Miles/Condamine area of QLD on December 30 and 31. A number of feedlots indicated that they had lost significant numbers of cattle during the event, although still below the Level 1 reporting requirements. Three 3000-5000 head feedlots I visited last week reported losing 1-1.5% of cattle on feed, while other feedlots had only isolated losses. These losses have been detected through NFAS audits and also through discussions with feedlots I have visited this month.

In all instances the losses were British breed cattle, mainly Angus and Hereford, around 100 days on feed. The weather was described as cool the previous night and then humid, very still and up to 36°C on the 30th with cattle dying by 4pm. There had been rainfall earlier in the week.

The particularly unfortunate part of this event was that it was not forecast nor were any alerts issued by the CHLT forecasting service. This has caused long term damage to the forecasting service with a couple of feedlots in particular who were “disgusted” by the lack of warning and the whole experience. They have completely lost trust in the forecasting service. I hope to discuss this event further at the council meeting this week.

The result of the Queensland State election was also of concern to a number of feedlots visited. The change of government has many uncertain about the limitations that may be imposed on planned feedlot expansions (many of which are already approved), native vegetation clearing and animal welfare. There is a fear that if the government forms an animal welfare group, the beef industry, and feedlots in particular, are likely to come under

considerable pressure and the provision of shade may be made mandatory. Generally the result was seen as a step backwards for regional QLD.

Another common theme of comment received a few times this month is to ensure ALFA is mindful of smaller feedlots especially when it comes to training or QA requirements. They often feel the staffing levels for smaller feedlots (under about 5000 head) is generally very tight and the ability to have staff away attending training courses is extremely difficult. Also extra requirements for QA/NFAS usually add considerably to the workload of the operator/manager. The request was to try and keep things fairly simple and not too onerous.

On a positive note, the practice of backgrounding cattle before feedlot entry appears to have been adopted by the vast majority of feedlots visited. Most are trying to buy cattle at lighter weights and background them for various periods from 21 days to many months before entry to the feedlot. Many properties seem to have evolved from running breeders maybe 5-10 years ago to now being totally devoted to growing out bought in cattle for feedlot entry. The health benefits to the cattle in the feedlot are huge, as is the assured supply of suitable cattle to go onto feed.

The positive outlook for the industry also continues with a good number of feedlots visited in the process of expanding pen capacity, investing in new machinery and infrastructure, or doing simple things like installing new or updated weather stations. All indications are the industry is in a positive state and increased investment is occurring.

Days worked

Days worked since last report – 15 days

Compared to target (3 days/week) to 20/02/15 (40 weeks) – 118 days worked, balance -2.0 days.

March Report – Jeff House

23/03/2015

Activities

Attended ALFA Council Meeting, Sydney 25-26 February. This again was a very informative couple of days. It is great to catch up with the Councillors and staff and to get an update on all the activities that are being undertaken.

Assisted with Gundamain Feedlot tour with Tess, Bridget and Des. The tour was organised for representatives of those organisations involved in benchmarking, measurement and QA program R & D in the sheep & beef industries. The purpose of this visit was to provide a greater understanding of the background and functionality of the National Feedlot Accreditation Scheme (NFAS), along with continuing discussions on increasing collaboration across the supply chain when developing and, implementing and maintaining sustainability benchmarking, measurement, assessment tools and quality assurance programs in the Australian livestock industry.

Prepared documentation for TAFE South West Queensland to be recognised as the qualified trainer and RTO representative for the Animal Welfare Officer training workshops. I will also participate in the workshop at Toowoomba to gain the necessary units of competency for the training.

The first Animal Welfare Officer training workshop was conducted at Tintinara and Iranda feedlot SA. There were 10 participants in this first workshop and the training delivered by Tony Batterham and Matt George was very well received. The practical visit to Iranda Feedlot was a highlight of the training course and really allowed the participants to put the theory into practice and get a good understanding of the HACCP approach to Animal Welfare auditing.

Participated in Feedlot Vet and Nutritionist meeting in Brisbane. This is another extremely valuable opportunity to get a broad view of what is happening out in industry, an update on the research underway and to interact and network with the key industry Vets and Nutritionists.

During the month I received 2 enquiries for information:

- *Feedlot in NSW* – the feedlot is in the process of completing the Quality Assurance Manual for their feedlot and was seeking clarification regarding NFAS Element QM6, Review of Product Requirements.
- *Feedlot in NSW* – the feedlot are in the process of becoming NFAS accredited, having already submitted their NFAS manual for desktop audit and were awaiting their first on site audit the following week. Candy was wanting to talk through the audit process, clarify a couple of points and generally reassure herself that everything was in order.

Time was also spent visiting feedlots in QLD and SA. Key area of discussion has once again been on managing summer heat. Collection of GPS coordinates for feedlots visited is continuing.

2.5 days working in office following up from previous feedlot visits, enquiries and preparation for feedlot visits.

Feedlots visited

Feedlot visits against target - 135 of 175 by 19 May 2015 (77%)

Feedback/Comments from Feedlot Operators

I managed to visit a diverse range of feedlots this month, ranging from fairly new, modern operations to a number of older, more run down feedlots. Numbers on feed, or more correctly utilization rates, varied greatly as a number of the QLD yards were reducing numbers on feed as a response to the higher purchase price for stock and reduced demand for custom feeding as some of their clients had received rain. Most of the yards in SA were at or near capacity.

Generally speaking there was good confidence in the industry going forward.

As with the previous month, considerable time was spent discussing summer heat management and the impact of recent weather. No losses were reported in any of the yards visited due to heat.

I did receive a number of comments from various feedlots around processor pricing and grading. One feedlot suggested that processors should quote the lowest price on the slaughter grid rather than, what he believed, was the “unattainable” price for the animal meeting all the specs. This was a yard that did a considerable amount of custom feeding and found they spent a large amount of time trying to explain to clients why the animals they consigned to the abattoir did not achieve the quoted price.

There was also some further discussion around MSA grading with a number of the feedlots not seeing any real benefit to MSA, rather seeing it as a further way for processors to discount their animals. They were also concerned with what they saw as inconsistencies in grading results. On a positive note, there were also a number of feedlots that were very happy with their grading results.

NLIS was another area that drew a number of comments. With industry requesting continuing to demand whole of life traceability, there were a number of issues regarding the accuracy of transfers before the animals arrived at the feedlot and the number of errors that were occurring. The amount of time that is necessary to correct errors in order to maintain lifetime traceability is considerable. This is a growing issue for the whole lot feeding industry and I can only see an increasing amount of time needing to be devoted to this task, in addition to that taken reconciling the feedlots own NLIS database.

Days worked

Days worked since last report – 15.5 days

Compared to target (3 days/week) to 20/03/15 (44 weeks) – 133.5 days worked, balance +1.5 days.

April Report – Jeff House

19/04/2015

Activities
Assisted with Animal Welfare Officer training workshops at:

- Toowoomba and Kerwee feedlot QLD with 70 participants.
- Comet and Goonoo feedlot QLD with 11 participants.
- Moama and Associated feedlot NSW with 13 participants.
- Tamworth and Killara feedlot NSW with 22 participants.

Unfortunately the WA workshop had to be postponed and I was unable to attend the Wagga Wagga workshop with 22 participants. At all the workshops attended the training delivered by Tony Batterham and Matt George has been very well received, with the practical nature of the feedlot visits a real highlight.

While assisting with the Animal Welfare Officer training I have also been representing the RTO, TAFE South West Queensland, as the qualified trainer. This has involved explaining the assessment requirements for the Animal Welfare Officers Skill Set, consisting of the 2 units of competency, and ensuring all the requirements for assessment are being completed adequately. Follow up from the training has included scanning and emailing completed activities and assignment templates to the participants.

The AWO training workshops have also been a good opportunity to make contact with feedlots I am yet to visit and to catch up with numerous feedlots already visited. There have been a number of enquiries received from workshop participants unrelated to the AWO training, including advice on development applications, EU accreditation and NFAS requirements.

3 days working in office. Most of this time was spent following up from the Animal Welfare Officer workshops and some follow up from previous feedlot visits.

Feedlots visited
The only feedlots visited this month were in conjunction with the AWO training.

Feedlot visits against target - 135 of 175 by 19 May 2015 (77%)

Feedback/Comments from Feedlot Operators
Nothing to report this month.

Days worked

Days worked since last report – 12 days

Compared to target (3 days/week) to 19/04/15 (48 weeks) – 145.5 days worked, balance +1.5 days.

Additional Information supplied by email after report

The specific enquiries were as follows:

- *Feedlot in QLD* – they are looking at expanding the feedlot and in the process of preparing some of the documentation. *Operator* brought the site plan to the workshop

that she has had drawn up by local surveyors for me to have a look at. She was also enquiring about environmental consultants who would be able to assist with the development application.

- *Proposed feedlot in NSW* - Enquiry about getting the feedlot EU accredited and what was involved. NFAS advice was forwarded to her.
- *Enquiry from industry consultant* regarding a feedlot he had visited around ration analysis requirements under NFAS. The feedlot believed they were required to do a quarterly ration analysis to meet their NFAs requirements. It was discussed that there may well be some benefits of more regular ration analysis however NFAS requires that “ration analysis must be available for the feedlot’s principle rations with the most current test having been performed within the three (3) months prior to the assigned Audit Cluster Period”.

May Report – Jeff House 22/05/2015

Activities
Meeting to discuss the Cert III in Feedlot Operations with Des, Bridget and Phil Pamment from TAFE New England.

Meeting to review Technical Services Officer role with Dougal, Des and Jim. This was a very positive meeting and I would like to take the opportunity to thank Dougal, Des and Jim for their enthusiasm and positive feedback on the role over the last 12 months. I would also like to thank ALFA council, MLA and ALFA staff for their continued support. I look forward to continuing in the role for the next 2 years.

Participated in the ALFA strategy workshop held in Sydney.

During the month I received 3 enquiries for information:

- *Feedlot in QLD* - in the process of preparing documentation for a planned expansion of the feedlot. She was looking for an alternative environmental consultant in Queensland to either FSA or EnviroAg, who had experience preparing feedlot proposals. After considerable consultation no others, with feedlot experience, where able to be identified.
- *Feedlot in NSW* - enquiry regarding feedlots using manure for methane production. I was able to provide some information from the Federal Government Biomass Producer site with references to some MLA work as well as information from Peter Watts at FSA Consulting who is looking into this area.
- *Producer in QLD* - looking for information on establishing a 1000-5000 head feedlot on his property.

There were also a number of follow up enquiries regarding the assessment task for the Animal Welfare Officer training workshop. A large number of assessment tasks have been received from AWO participants. I will have a better idea on exact numbers at the ALFA council meeting.

An article regarding Animal Welfare auditing, which followed on from the AWO training workshops, was prepared for ALFA Journal.

6 days working in office - time spent following up from the Animal Welfare Officer workshops and preparing for feedlot visits.

Feedlots visited
Feedlot visits against target – 143 of 175 by 19 May 2015 (82%)
- 8 of 175 by 19 May 2016 (5%)

Feedback/Comments from Feedlot Operators
The feedlots visited this month ranged considerably in size from 49 to 8000 head capacity yards. Across the board operators remained positive about the industry and the year ahead. The cost of grain was of concern to a number of yards in Queensland, as was the likely availability of cattle as the year progressed. The price of feeder cattle was giving some the jitters, however the general consensus was the price being paid for finished stock still provided a sound margin.

A number of smaller feedlots raised concerns regarding the length and cost of their NFAS audits. They had all experienced audits of between 2-3 hours in length and a cost of around $500. This was seen as excessive given the small numbers of cattle they had on feed and the lack of changes from previous year's audits. Most had seen their audit time increase from only about 1-1.5 hours. A large part of this was put down to the time taken by the auditor to type their responses into the audit checklist, especially the fields that do not change from year to year.

As always the management of heat over summer was a topic of conversation at each site. A number of operators commented on how challenging the weather had been this year, but how pleased they had been with the improvements in managing cattle for heat and the subsequent low number of heat related losses, with most losses restricted to already sick cattle.

None of the yards visited had shade installed, but a number commented on how they had implemented much improved pen cleaning and pen surface management over the last few years, had actively tried to avoid feeding Angus and Hereford cattle over summer and had fine-tuned their summer feeding, in consultation with their nutritionists, incorporating heat load rations and altering feeding times to reduce heat build-up. All of these strategies where in addition to utilising the heat load toolbox and the daily forecasts.

A number of yards were looking at installing weather stations in the near future and a couple were starting to investigate options for shade, especially in sick pens.

Another animal welfare concern raised by one feedlot visited was the fitness of cattle received for feeding. This was a yard that predominantly custom fed, with considerable numbers of trade cattle and they were especially concerned about the management of cattle before arrival at the feedlot. They suggested "Fit to Feed" protocols or guidelines developed by the industry as a whole could be worthwhile. Some areas of specific concerns included:

- The time delay between sale and delivery to the feedlot of saleyard cattle, often stretching out to 4-5 days with cattle picked up in milk runs from different yards.
- Freshly branded, castrated or dehorned cattle being received.
- Cattle that appear totally naïve to handling.
- Small lot sizes being mixed on delivery.

Unfortunately, a very significant portion of these cattle were becoming sick and needing treatment which was seen as a potential welfare issue for the industry. This is in addition to some animals that require euthanasia upon or shortly after arrival.

I am not sure how widespread these issues are across industry, however this was also seen by the feedlot operator as an opportunity to promote some of the positive attributes of backgrounding and properly preparing cattle for entry to the feedlot.

Days worked

Days worked since last report – 14 days

Compared to target (3 days/week) to 22/05/15 (53 weeks) – 159.5 days worked, balance +0.5 days.