

95/V06



Producer Research Support

Seedstock Code provides QA standards for bull buyers

Beef Improvement Association – ARCBA



The project

The Australian Registered Cattle Breeders Association and Beef Improvement Association jointly launched the Seedstock Code of Practice, following a Producer Research Support project begun in 1995. While the number of herds registered with the code is not large, they have a significant influence.

Buyers of stud bulls and females can now seek a uniform vendor declaration that ensures the collection and presentation of pedigree, performance and physical information from seedstock producers is done in accordance with a standard code.

Objectives

1. Resolve the lack of precise definitions in some critical elements relating to structural soundness and financial efficiency as components of the quality assurance program; and
2. Develop a comprehensive manual which describes all definitions, procedures and information disclosure and interpretation necessary for the quality assurance program to be effective in the hands of lay persons.

What was done

The Seedstock Code of Practice was developed with the assistance of Producer Research Support funding in 1995 because of the perceived benefits to both vendors and purchasers.

About 50 herds are so far enrolled, some of them very influential in beef production.

"The number of herds is not huge but they have a big impact," said BIA director Mike Stephens.

"What the Code does is give buyers confidence that the way performance and physical characteristics are measured, recorded and displayed is meaningful and valuable," Mr Stephens said.

The major aims of the code of practice are to:

- provide uniform presentation of pedigree and performance information; and
- provide accurate statements of feeding, foot trimming and herd health status to encourage the adoption of conditions which are equitable for both the vendor and the purchaser.

Breeders and vendors wishing to market seedstock using the Certification trade mark are required to provide a minimum set of information on seedstock which are offered for sale.

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Contact details

Mike Stephens

BIAA

Yendon VIC 3352

Tel (03) 5341 7652

Key points

- A comprehensive Code of Practice for beef seedstock producers was developed.
- Buyers now have confidence in cattle bought and information presented.

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

The minimum information requirements for seedstock or genetic material marketed under the Code of Practice trade mark are:

- permanent identification and pedigree;
- a physical examination report;
- a statement of breeding history and pregnancy status for females;
- a statement of feeding history;
- a statement of foot trimming for each animal;
- a statement of herd health and vaccination procedures;
- a statement of registration status and agreement to pay transfer fees of registered stock; and
- a statement of vendor obligations.

Additional information considered desirable for seedstock producers to provide includes:

- a statement in a form approved by the Australian Association of Cattle Veterinarians (AACV) that bulls have been observed to serve normally;
- an AACV bull examination certificate (that would replace the simple physical examination required to meet minimum requirements);
- BREEDPLAN estimated breeding values;
- AACV semen evaluation of each bull; and
- a statement reporting herd status and current certificate number (if available/known) of the National Johnes Disease Market Assurance Program.

The code also standardises the way performance EBVs, live weight, frame score, eye muscle area and fat depth are measured and reported. The information may be provided on a group of animals where the statement applies to all animals in the group.

Discussion

Participating breeders are to comply with the code of practice for all animals offered for sale by auction, including multi-vendor and private treaty sales. Exemptions are possible.

Where a sale catalogue is printed the declaration sheet should be displayed at the front of the catalogue.

All certificates and statements about an animal's health, physical status and treatments should be available to the purchaser on request.

Users of the Certification trade mark must clearly and unambiguously identify herd bulls without a two generation pedigree date of birth or unique identification number. These animals are not covered by the code.

Each animal will be uniquely and permanently identified to denote the herd origin, the year of birth, if required by the relevant breed association, and the animal's individual number.

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MLA also recommends BeefPlan

BeefPlan is a non-traditional approach to learning. Groups of like-minded beef producers, work together as a management team to focus on property management. Importantly the learning agenda is set and controlled by the group.

Contact Steve Banney - Project Coordinator

Tel (07) 4093 9284 or
sdb@austarnet.com.au

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North Sydney NSW 2060

Tel (02) 9463 9333

Fax (02) 9463 9393

Free Phone 1800 023 100 (Australia only)

www.mla.com.au

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Any bull examination procedures are to be conducted in accordance with the guidelines described in the Veterinary Examination of Bulls published by the Australian Association of Cattle Veterinarians (AACV), May 1995.

Users of the Certification trade mark accept that bulls offered for sale (except calves at foot) are sold as fertile and being capable of natural service; that cows (except calves at foot) are guaranteed to be in calf or to go in calf within six months of the date of sale or by the age of 30 months whichever date shall be the later. A positive pregnancy test by a registered veterinarian shall be sufficient evidence that the animal is in calf.

The vendor obligation does not cover the sale of embryos and semen.

The code of practice also outlines vendor and purchaser obligations where, with regard to the sale of bulls, pregnancy does not result within six months.

Guidelines are also included for females sold as being in calf, and found not to be, and for females sold as not being in calf, that are shown to have been in calf at time of sale.