

tips & tools



MSA04

MEAT STANDARDS AUSTRALIA

How to supply beef in the MSA system

Consumer taste-tests have determined the factors that affect eating quality resulting in accurately established grade standards. The factors that affect eating quality are set as minimum requirements for MSA. Producers supply cattle following the minimum requirements as outlined in *MSA Tips & Tools: MSA requirements for handling cattle*.

Cattle are consigned to an MSA licensed abattoir to be slaughtered within the required time frames. MSA accredited graders check MSA vendor declaration details prior to grading at the abattoir.

Producers can receive detailed feedback on the eating quality outcome of their cattle by consigning through MSA licensed participants.

MSA is a 'paddock to plate' pathway approach that rewards best practice operations to assure acceptable eating quality for the consumer.

Replacing variable quality with accurate eating quality grades can provide a basis for improved demand with an associated shift in price and volume.

The following steps can assist with supplying cattle to meet MSA requirements and improve your understanding of MSA.

Step 1

To supply MSA beef direct or through an MSA underpinned brand you must be registered as an MSA producer.

The easiest way to become registered is to use the online registration program at www.mla.com.au/msa. Following a short training program, you will have instant access to MSA electronic vendor declarations.

Step 2

Alternatively, a registration form can be downloaded from www.mla.com.au/msa.

When registering by paper-based form, allow two weeks to receive your registration number and producer pack containing information on how to obtain your MSA vendor declarations.

Key points

- Producers wishing to supply cattle for MSA must be registered.
- An MSA vendor declaration and a Livestock Production Assurance National Vendor Declaration (LPA NVD) must accompany cattle to the MSA licensed abattoir.
- The MSA vendor declaration confirms that MSA guidelines for cattle handling and trucking have been followed and that tropical breed content is recorded.
- MSA feedback is available on cattle consigned and graded for MSA.

Step 3

Check that you meet the list of requirements shown in the box on the *Tips & Tools: MSA requirements for handling cattle*. Once you have received your MSA producer registration number, access to MSA vendor declarations and are satisfied you meet the MSA requirements, you can consign cattle through the MSA system. Visit the MSA website for a list of MSA licensed abattoirs.

Step 4

If you are supplying through an MSA underpinned brand or to an MSA licensed abattoir make sure you are familiar with the purchaser's specifications. The processor or brand owner may have company specifications in addition to MSA minimum requirements. While these may not impact on eating quality, they are commercially important to your purchaser and should be taken into consideration before consigning MSA cattle. Carcasses outside the nominated specifications may be discounted regardless of their MSA grading result.





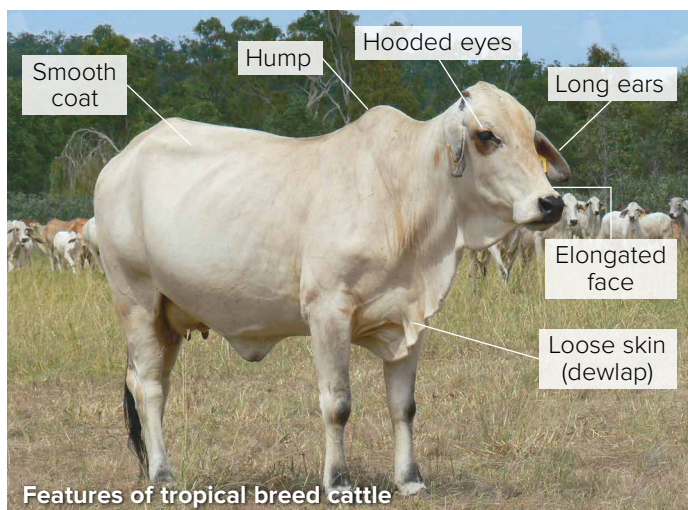
A butcher showing MSA quality meat.

Step 5

You should liaise with the abattoir to ensure cattle are slaughtered within the required time frames. When consigning cattle to an abattoir consider trucking distances and seasonal considerations. In extreme heat it may be necessary to truck cattle at night. Likewise in very cold conditions avoid trucking cattle at dawn. If possible avoid trucking through wind and rain. During high risk periods use trucks that have relatively closed in sides to minimise wind chill. For more information on the importance of these measures (see *MSA Tips & Tools: The effect of pH on beef eating quality*).

Step 6

Fill in both the Livestock Production Assurance National Vendor Declaration (LPA NVD) and the MSA vendor declaration to accompany the consignment to the abattoir. It is important that all the details are filled in correctly on both forms. MSA accredited graders use the information from the MSA vendor declaration in the grading process. Declare any tropical breed content (TBC) in your consignment by ticking the appropriate box that represents the TBC of your cattle. The box selected is determined by the animal in the group that has the highest TBC. Livestock personnel at the abattoir are trained in determining and verifying tropical breed content. MSA graders will also measure hump height on the carcass to verify tropical breed content. For more information on hump height measurement (see *MSA Tips & Tools: The effect of tropical breeds on beef eating quality*).



Features of tropical breed cattle

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Step 7

Ensure you receive your carcass feedback sheets from the abattoir or alternatively download them from the MSA feedback program, myMSA. Go to www.mymrsa.com.au and use your MSA registration number and password to access your feedback.

Check your compliance rates and eating quality performance. Note any common factor in the non-compliant carcasses. For example if most of the carcasses failed to meet the rib fat requirements, the cattle require more finish. If ossification levels are high but the carcass weights and rib-fat measurements are ample, the cattle may be better turned off earlier.

Compare each consignment with the one previous, particularly where production changes have been made in an effort to improve compliance.

A small management change can significantly improve compliance without the extended generation time associated with genetic improvements.

Step 8

Talk to other MSA producers to share the knowledge they have gained from using the system. At times of seasonal risk you may want to discuss strategies for minimising pH and stress risk (see *MSA Tips & Tools: The effect of pH on beef eating quality*).

MSA feedback will enable you to gauge the performance of the cattle you produce.

Link other sources of information into your production objectives. EDGenetwork® workshops, your state Department of Agriculture or Primary Industries, local or preferred consultants can all assist in improving your management system to improve your product.

For more information

Visit www.mla.com.au/msa or contact MSA 1800 111 672.



Level 1, 40 Mount Street
North Sydney NSW 2059
Ph: +61 2 9463 9333
Fax: +61 2 9463 9393
www.mla.com.au

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