



# Feeder Steer Masterclass

The Feeder Steer Masterclass, brought to you by the Mortlake BetterBeef Group, Meat and Livestock Australia and Angus Australia/Angus Victoria, will be delivered concurrently with the Whole Farm Beef Systems program at the 2026 BetterBeef Conference in Ballarat on 24 June.


Every year, from October to January, Victoria sees a stream of B Doubles picking up loads of 70 to 80, 400 to 500kg yearling steers consigned directly to feedlots in SA, NSW and QLD.

It's perhaps the most standardised and common beef production system in the state – calve in Aug/Sep just before pasture growth fires up, join in Nov/Dec when the cows are guaranteed a rising plane of nutrition, wean in Feb as pasture quality deteriorates, supplementary feed the weaners through until pasture has responded to the autumn break and sell feeders once the abundant high quality spring pasture has got them close to capping out on entry weights.

The Feeder Steer Masterclass, a deep dive into steer production, provides an intensive look into the latest thinking, research and extension and analysis of the feeder steer supply chain. The program takes its inspiration from the very popular UNE Feeder Steer School and we thank Pete McGilchrist from UNE for his guidance.

To register click [here](#), or go to [trybooking.com/events/landing/1553856](https://trybooking.com/events/landing/1553856)

## Plenary Session, Terminus Theatre, The Goods Shed Ballarat

<p><b>Dougal Purcell</b> Executive Director Agriculture Victoria</p> 	<p>Dougal Purcell will open the 2026 BetterBeef Conference. Following the opening address, attendees can choose to remain in the Terminus Theatre for the Feeder Steer Masterclass or move to the Lydiard Room for the keynote speakers of the Whole Farm Beef Systems program. The Whole Farm Beef Systems program covers broader beef production topics. The full conference program is available at <a href="#">Bestwool/Bestlamb/BetterBeef Conference Program.</a></p>	<p>8.30am  20 min</p>
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## The feeder steer market revolution

MC: Mike Carroll, Mortlake BetterBeef Group

<p><b>Grant Garey</b> President, Australian Lot Feeders Association</p>	<p><b>Australia's feedlot growth and evolution</b> Over the last 10 to 12 years the number of cattle finished in feedlots in Australia has doubled to 1.6 million. Depending on the seasonal conditions, around 40% to 45% of the cattle processed (cont'd over)</p>	<p>9.00am  20 mins</p>
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<p><b>(Grant Garey cont'd)</b> General Manager of Feedlots for Teys Australia</p> 	<p>are now grain finished. Investment continues with current capacity of 1.7m head forecast to reach 2m by 2027. Grant is going to explain what's driven the growth of lot feeding in Australia and share his prediction on where and when it will plateau. He will delve into whether there has been growth across the board or whether it's been in specific segments. Importantly, looking to the future, Grant is going to pull out his crystal ball and share with us his thoughts on the market segments we can expect to provide the strongest growth in feeder steer demand and what the customer and market dynamics are behind this.</p>	
<p><b>Jon Condon</b> Publisher, Beef Central</p> 	<p><b>Feeder steer specs and preferences</b></p> <p>Beef Central has provided us with comprehensive analysis of the feedlot sector covering current capacity and expansion plans, feeding profit margins and deep dives into aspects such as pre-entry vaccination against respiratory disease.</p> <p>Many feedlots have asked whether they can present at this Masterclass but time is limited so we've asked Mr Condon to tap into his network and tell us which feedlots are sourcing southern cattle, what sort of feeding programs they're running, the carcass characteristics they're shooting for and the cattle that best suit their requirements.</p> <p>Jon will share his findings on brand hierarchies and how feedlots class carcasses into the different price points and whether there is a feedback loop to suppliers. We'll get some insights into the carcass weights, red meat yield, marbling and MSA scores feedlots are aiming for so we understand our customer's needs.</p> <p>We'll hear about preferred entry weights, genetics, accreditations, pre-entry vaccinations and sourcing preferences around dealing direct, through agents or AuctionsPlus.</p>	<p>9.20am  20 min</p>
<p><b>Jeff House</b> Jeff House Livestock Pty Ltd</p> 	<p><b>Insights from 16 years of feedlot and carcass data</b></p> <p>The Beef Spectacular Feedback Trial began in 2010. It is hosted by Teys Australia at their Jindalee feedlot and sponsored by ACM. Over the last 16 years it has provided producers with benchmarking data on feedlot performance and carcass yield and quality.</p> <p>Jeff House has been involved in the Beef Spectacular Feedback Trial since its inception as the trial analyst. Jeff evaluates the entries, monitors feedlot performance and analyses the carcass outcomes. The trial provides comprehensive benchmarking, highlighting performance variations and opportunities for entrants to improve the value their steers deliver to Teys branded beef programs.</p>	<p>9.40am  20 min</p>



<b>Question and Answer Panel</b>	MC: Mike Carroll, Mortlake BetterBeef Group Panel: Grant Garey, ALFA. Jon Condon, Beef Central. Jeff House, Jeff House Livestock.	10.00am 30 mins
<b>Morning Tea</b>		
<b>Optimising supply chain productivity and eating quality</b>		
MC: Ed Gubbins, Mortlake BetterBeef Group		
<b>Jake Phillips</b> Phillips Livestock Solutions  	<b>Commercial application of EBVs</b> Are EBVs just a marketing ploy for bull producers or can commercial producers use them to match their genetics to market specifications? Jake will draw on industry research to explain how carcass value traits such as weight, yield and marbling and feedlot performance traits such as ADG translate to EBVs in the breeding herd? Jake will answer questions such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What EBV maturity pattern delivers the ideal carcass weight?</li> <li>- What is the relationship between growth and ADG?</li> <li>- Is there a trade-off between ADG, carcass fat, red meat yield and marbling?</li> <li>- How much marbling is enough?</li> </ul>	11.00am  20 min
<b>David Packer</b> Program Manager, Meat Standards Australia, MLA  	<b>Understanding Carcass Value</b> How to drive more value from the carcass now and in the future. As Australian beef brands continue to evolve it's important to understand the key drivers of value from the carcass; eating quality and yield. David is going to uncover how these are currently commercially applied and what drives improvement. He will also talk to what technologies and tools are on the horizon, some nearing commercialisation.	11.20am  20 min
<b>Prof. Peter McGilchrist</b> Professor in Meat Science - School of Environmental and Rural Science, Uni of New England  	<b>Where to next on eating quality?</b> Peter McGilchrist, who works at the forefront of meat science, is going to share his thoughts on what the future might look like if Australian breeders, feeders and brand owners are going to lead the world on the red meat-eating experience. So much progress has been made on marbling that it's time to check on other attributes of beef. Pete is going to delve into red meat yield, shear force, age and their measurement and effect on eating quality. Pete will also unpack the differences between IMF distribution and fineness and whether these are important attributes we need to better understand if we want to improve the consumer experience.	11.40am  30 mins

<b>Prof. Peter McGilchrist (cont'd)</b>	<p>He will provide an update on the progress in developing eating quality EBVs and genomic selection for this trait which is expensive to measure phenotypically. Additionally, he'll delve into the science of beef fat composition and nutrient density. Can we manipulate the composition of fats in cattle through diet and genetics to meaningfully increase the levels of healthier monounsaturated fats?</p>	
<b>Question and Answer Panel</b>	<p>MC: Ed Gubbins, Mortlake BetterBeef Group Panel: Jake Phillips, Phillips Livestock Solutions. David Packer, MLA. Pete McGilchrist, UNE.</p>	<p>12.10pm 30 mins</p>

### Lunch

### Value-based marketing

MC: James Knight Mortlake BetterBeef Group

<p><b>Sarah Strachan,</b> GM of Research, Development and Adoption, MLA</p> 	<p><b>Value-based marketing for feeder steers</b> The MLA Strategic Plan 2025 emphasises value-based marketing (VBM) as a core strategy, aiming to increase industry profitability by linking production traits (genetics, quality, yield, sustainability) to market signals, creating a two-way data flow for better rewards, and building brand equity through verified credentials like provenance and welfare to meet consumer demand, all supported by data, technology, and collaborative supply chain efforts to capture more value for producers. Sarah will share MLA's vision on how investment in this strategy will play out particularly in the feeder steer market. Sarah will also answer the question of who is going to tell the bottom half that they're getting less for their steers because the producers of healthy, high gaining, high yielding, high eating quality steers should be paid more.</p>	<p>1.30pm 20 min</p>
<p><b>Charlie Perry</b> Trent Bridge Wagyu, Guyra</p> 	<p><b>Value-based marketing using genomic Feeder Checks</b> Charlie Perry and his family run the Trent Bridge Wagyu seedstock business in northern NSW on the New England tablelands. Charlie is also a past president of the Australian Wagyu Association. Charlie worked with supply chain partners to address the problems of price volatility, volume and beef quality. He is now part of a network of producers who have certainty about growing their supply to the market and using genomic testing on every animal to guarantee quality and ensure consistency of the final meat product.</p>	<p>1.50pm 20 min</p>


<p><b>Charlie Perry (cont'd)</b></p>	<p>Charlie is going to share his experience in using Wagyu Feeder Check on F1s in their supply arrangement. The grid references an Argus proprietary index as a base price and offers premiums and discounts based on genomic testing of potential feedlot performance, red meat yield and carcass quality. Charlie has been able to leverage this agreement across the supply chain including the contract purchasing of pregnant replacement females and backgrounding feeders on a profit share basis. Underpinning each of these agreements is a principle of sharing upside and risk across the supply chain. In theory genomic testing will improve the decisions breeders make on bull selection and for feedlots they'll improve decisions on what program a feeder animal goes into. Only animals with genetic potential to grow and marble will go into the long fed programs.</p>	
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<p><b>Question and Answer Panel</b></p>	<p>MC: James Knight, Mortlake BetterBeef Group Panel: Sarah Strachan, MLA. Charlie Perry, Trent Bridge Wagyu.</p>	<p>2.10pm 20 min</p>
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**Afternoon tea**

**On-farm: Setting steers up for success in the feed yard**

MC: Byron O'Keefe Mortlake BetterBeef Group

<p><b>Lachlan McKenzie</b> McKenzie Ag Services</p>  <p><b>MCKENZIE</b> AG SERVICES</p>	<p><b>Nutrition for high performance feeder steers</b></p> <p>Lach has 20 years involvement in ruminant nutrition, ration formulation and intensive beef production. He has worked with a cross-section of feedlots ranging from the largest to the more boutique producing super high-value product.</p> <p>With beef properties in south-west Victoria, Lach also understands our grass-based production systems and what it takes to run a sustainable and profitable grass-based breeding enterprise.</p> <p>Lach will couple his grazing and feedlot knowledge to share his thoughts on how producers can set their steers up for success in the feedlot and chiller. His talk will cover the pros and cons of low cost home grown fodder systems that rely on some compensatory growth in spring to achieve feedlot entry weights versus higher quality supplementary feeding post weaning to maintain a relatively high ADG.</p>	<p>3.00pm 20 min</p>
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<p><b>Dr Brad Hine</b> former Senior Research Scientist, CSIRO now Extension Officer with Angus Australia</p> 	<p><b>Animal Health for high performance feeder steers</b> Dr Brad Hine has played a key role in researching immune responses to disease in beef cattle and the development of an EBV and genomic test for immune competence in Angus cattle, known as ImmuneDEX. Bovine Respiratory Disease is the biggest animal health issue in feedlots and southern Bos Taurus steers are particularly vulnerable. Stressors such as transportation, social mixing and handling around the time of feedlot induction exacerbates their susceptibility. Brad is going to talk about ImmuneDEX and the practical use of genetic selection to improve general disease resistance, including resistance to BRD. Brad will also talk to us about best practice management on-farm to set steers up for good health through weaning, backgrounding and feedlotting. This will reference the work done by the Beef CRC on yard weaning and impacts on performance at the feedlot.</p>	<p>3.20pm 20 min</p>
<p><b>James Sage</b> TFI Southern Cross Feedlot General Manager</p> 	<p><b>Front line insights on high performance feeder steers</b> Thomas Food Industries feedlot has capacity for 30k head with plans to expand to 40k. The yard is now exclusively Angus fed for 150 days. Steers are purchased direct at entry weights around 450 kgs. Most marble scores fall in the 2 to 4 range with an average MSA Index of 64.5. Marble scores of 4 or higher go into a premium brand. TFI exports to over 80 countries with focus on high end food service customers in the USA, Japan, Korea and China. James is going to share the TFI team's observations and experience on the factors that contribute to feeder steer performance including weaning &amp; handling, respiratory vaccinations, entry age and weight and maturity patterns.</p>	<p>3.40pm 20 min</p>
<p><b>Question and Answer Panel</b></p>	<p>MC: Byron O'Keefe, Mortlake BetterBeef Group Panel: Lach McKenzie, McKenzie Ag. Brad Hine, Angus Australia. James Sage, TFI.</p>	<p>4.00pm 30 min</p>
<p><b>Question and Answer Panel</b></p>	<p>Extra time for any presenters from earlier sessions to respond to unanswered questions</p>	<p>4.30pm 30 min</p>

Conference close

The Mortlake BetterBeef Group acknowledges Agriculture Victoria, MLA and Angus Australia/Angus Victoria for their support with the Feeder Steer Masterclass