

Feedback



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A note from the MD...

Increasing global populations and the growth in the middle and upper classes in emerging economies means more mouths to feed and more income available to be spent on food—both positive indicators for future demand for red meat.

Every time you sell grassfed cattle, \$2.61 per animal is deducted from the proceeds by the federal government and forwarded to MLA to invest in activities to help grow demand for the products that are derived from that animal. This investment is \$2.32 per grain fed animal, 71¢ per lamb, 2¢ per sheep and 5¢ per goat.

This investment is used for both generic marketing and brand marketing around the globe, to capture the opportunities presented by these population shifts. Generic marketing aims to position Australian beef and lamb as safe, versatile, nutritious, convenient, consistent in quality and supply, and delicious. It is designed to entice foreign trade and consumers to purchase Australian.

Brand marketing, carried out through collaborative dollar for dollar funding with brand owners, is designed to assist tying the trade and customers to Australian product through brand loyalty.

The strategies and programs we propose to invest in were presented to the industry marketing taskforces recently. These taskforces comprise producers, processors, exporters, food service operators and retailers.

MLA has also recently merged its domestic and international marketing units to form a global marketing unit. I'm pleased to have our new General Manager for Global Marketing Michael Edmonds, on board now to spearhead this new unit. Turn to pages 4-5 to read more.

You can contact me anytime at managingdirector@mla.com.au



Scott Hansen
MLA Managing Director



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Your feedback

Have a say...

People are increasingly keeping up-to-date with the latest MLA news on Twitter and Facebook and commenting on MLA events, programs and resources—some even taking the time to mention the 'new look' *Feedback* magazine.

We've collected a few tweets and posts below. Check out what everyone is saying online or contact *Feedback* to share your own views and questions in the magazine...



HW Qld Young Beef Producers
Congratulations to the organising committee of the Next Generation MLA BeefUp forums in Capella last Friday - an informative and fun event.



Melissa Henry @melissahenry
Great article @Art4Ag @amcintosh1 about Art4Agriculture @meatlivestock Feedback magazine pg 30



Rebecca @rebecca02
Great day learning about red meat on @MLA Gate to Plate tour! My fav part @victorchurchill tour! Amazing!!



Julian Luke @jluke1988
fantastic turnout at the @meatlivestock BeefUp Forum in Capella
http://www.mla.com.au/forums



John Hardie @JohnHardie1958

the invasive animal problem would be one of the most important issues facing producers today. I commend the CRC products that have been researched. The release of some can't come soon enough.



Benita Benach @BenitaBenach
@meatlivestock Received my copy of Feedback March 2012. Love the new look & feel, enjoyed 'Ticked off' and 'Grand power' articles.

Now it's your turn.

Follow MLA on Twitter @meatlivestock or get connected on Facebook at www.facebook.com/meatandlivestockaustralia to have your say and join the conversation.



To share your views and questions, send your feedback to the editor at info@mla.com.au

MLA
online

MLA tools

Parasite management tools

Read about some of the strategies used by southern sheep and beef producers to manage worms and other parasites.

www.mla.com.au/wormcontrol

Heifer management manual

Download the new MLA publication that covers everything you need to know about heifer management in the north.

www.mla.com.au/heifermanual

Upcoming events

Find out about industry events in April including BusinessEDGE workshops, the PestSmart roadshow and financial planning workshops.

www.mla.com.au/events

fridayfeedback

Get practical on-farm information and the latest market news to your inbox every Friday by subscribing to *fridayfeedback*.

www.mla.com.au/fridayfeedback

The Main Meal Recipes and more

Visit 'the main meal' website for recipe ideas and inspiration, tips, techniques and information on the production and nutritional attributes of Australian red meat.

www.themainmeal.com.au

Social networking

YouTube

Check out the latest episode of *feedbackTV* on YouTube including tips on improving on-farm management using NLIS.

www.youtube.com/feedbacktv

Flickr

View MLA's photo stream on Flickr in particular the BeefUp forum in Capella.

www.flickr.com/meatlivestock

Twitter

Read the latest tweets by following MLA on Twitter.

www.twitter.com/meatlivestock

Facebook

Stay connected with MLA by friending us on Facebook.

www.facebook.com/meatandlivestockaustralia



Combating copper deficiency

\$7.66m/year
potential increase in the value of lamb production in south west Victoria

Mineral deficiencies across Australia are a significant cost to livestock producers through reduced income and increased expenses. Addressing copper deficiency in particular has the potential to increase the value of lamb production by up to \$7.66 million per annum in south west Victoria alone.

Copper deficiency is becoming more widespread and noted in areas where it has traditionally not occurred. It significantly affects livestock productivity and profitability through:

- reduced fertility
- induced lameness and scouring
- increased lamb mortality
- reduced wool quality and value

Traditional treatment options for copper deficiency such as rumen pellets, licks, blocks and water treatments appear to be highly variable in their effectiveness across properties and regions with the reason remaining unclear.

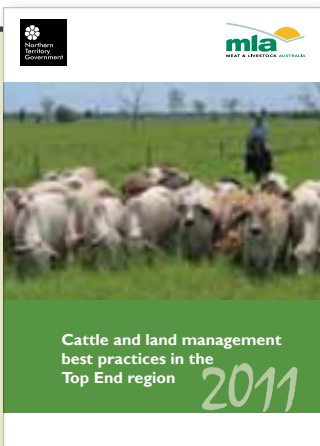
South Australian livestock consultants Productive Nutrition are investigating the causes, effects and management options of copper deficiency in flocks across southern Australia.

The MLA-funded project will review recent research and consult with industry to build on the information already known about copper deficiency.

An on-farm trial program to investigate contributing factors and determine the most effective treatment program will be conducted over the next two years. The results from these trials will result in the production of a practical guide as to how to properly determine and manage copper deficiency across southern Australian sheep properties.



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Tools for the Top End

The first comprehensive manual outlining best practices for cattle and station management in the Top End of the Northern Territory is now available to producers online and in CD format. The *Cattle and land management best practices in the Top End region* manual combines sound scientific advice with practical knowledge and experience from producers into a handy reference for up-to-date information

on the unique issues and challenges facing the region. The manual was produced by the Northern Territory Department of Resources with funding support from MLA. It builds on the best practices manual for the Katherine region released in 2009.



Download the manual at
www.mla.com.au/topendmanual



Stepping up Bluetongue surveillance

A new MLA-funded project aims to buttress southern Australia from any invasion of bluetongue virus by identifying the risks of the spread of its main insect host.

The research will investigate the distribution, feeding preference and transmission potential of the biting insect pest *Culicoides* (midges) in Victoria. It is being conducted by CSIRO Livestock Industries and is due for completion in mid-2015.

The virus is mainly present in cattle and endemic across northern Australia but it can extend as far south as Sydney. Any disease outbreak would cause significant disruption

to the live export trade and an invasion of bluetongue virus in southern farming systems could have potentially disastrous consequences, with a particularly high mortality rate amongst infected sheep.

By surveying the vector, the research aims to provide a fuller picture of the risks of the spread of bluetongue in southern Australia and provide the basis for improved surveillance and more effective measures to limit the impact of any outbreak.

 Search for research on Bluetongue at www.mla.com.au/research-and-development



Oats to sow

Forage oats are an ideal winter crop for Queensland, producing good quality feed when most pastures are dormant. The *Forage oat variety guide 2012* has just been released by the Queensland Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation with support from MLA.

The guide outlines recommended management practices for growing oats for forage and strategies to minimise leaf rust infection, which significantly affected forage oat crops again in 2011, plus how to identify other diseases. It also lists the current varieties of forage oats available for commercial sale in Queensland.

 Download the guide at www.mla.com.au/forageoatsguide

Did you know...



Woolworths joins over 600 independent retail butchers, Aldi, Costco and several IGA stores in identifying a selection of their beef as MSA graded.

Australia's largest beef retailer, Woolworths, is now offering its customers MSA quality graded product in an independent endorsement for the high standards of tenderness, juiciness and flavour the MSA system provides.

With a market share of around 30%, Woolworths has placed the refreshed MSA graded logo on 12 of its most popular beef cuts, supported by a range of educational materials that explain the MSA system to consumers, guiding them on how to cook these cuts to achieve the best results.

Woolworths joins over 600 independent retail butchers, Aldi, Costco and several IGA stores in identifying a selection of their beef as MSA graded.

While MSA has been around for almost 12 years, sufficient grading numbers achieved in 2011 provided the right platform for industry to take the complete paddock-to-plate quality grading system to Australian consumers.

 www.mla.com.au/msa



In profile

Michael Edmonds //
MLA Global Marketing
General Manager

Michael Edmonds is only a couple of weeks into his new role at MLA but marketing red meat is very familiar to him. Michael joined MLA from Top Cut foods where he led the customer facing side of the business, selling meat and meals solutions to foodservice customers, retail supermarkets, quick service restaurants and manufacturers who use meat as an ingredient.

He brings a diverse mix of marketing and industry expertise to his new role, having worked in Australia and overseas in both trade and direct consumer marketing of global brands like Fosters, Mars and Dulux.

Michael: "Top Cut's philosophy is to know your customer and customise your offer to give them exactly what they want. This is something I will seek to apply to my new role at MLA.

"I am sure that my past experience in building brand loyalty is something I can bring to the marketing team at MLA to help continually improve our marketing efforts to grow demand for red meat and create more value for the industry.

"Overall, I am very excited about the opportunity I have taken on. I see my role as harnessing the team to build on the successes of the past and improve our efforts wherever possible to get a better return on the marketing investment for the Australian red meat and livestock industry. That's my goal—and I am very much up for the challenge."



"We need to recognise that Australia is just one of hundreds of marketing options available to our industry, and we need to be responsive to the fluctuations in global markets."

Taking a global approach

In response to the increasing globalisation of red meat trading and the commonality of marketing messages across global markets, MLA recently merged its domestic and international marketing units.

Through this structural overhaul, the company has adopted a global marketing approach that no longer separates its Australian and overseas divisions.

Overseeing the new global marketing team is Michael Edmonds, who has vast experience in marketing and brand management in the confectionary, beverage and meat sectors. He comes from Simplot Australia's Top Cut foods, a provider of meat and protein-based meals across the foodservice and retail sectors where he was the General Manager of Sales and Marketing.

MLA will also appoint a regional manager for the Australian market. This manager will report to Michael alongside other regional managers in the Middle East/North Africa, North America, Japan, Korea, Europe/Russia and South-East Asia/Greater China.

Streamlined marketing

MLA Managing Director, Scott Hansen, said that taking a global marketing approach was a natural next step for MLA.

"It's become increasingly clear to me, particularly during my time as Regional Manager for North America and my interactions with exporters, that MLA's marketing effort needed to be streamlined," Scott said.

"We need to recognise that Australia is just one of a hundred marketing options available to our industry, and we need to be responsive to the fluctuations in global markets—when one market goes off the boil, we need to be on the front foot, knowing where other opportunities lie and alter our marketing efforts accordingly."

"This strategy also makes sense when you think that there are a number of key themes spread across global markets serviced by Australian red meat."

Common themes

Issues like nutrition and food safety and creating awareness about integrity systems are common across all markets so the global marketing approach will allow MLA to plan globally, while acting locally by

tailoring messages where appropriate to individual markets.

"In many ways, this approach mirrors how our exporters carry out and coordinate business in the commercial world."

MLA's 2012 Marketing Taskforce meetings were held in Sydney last month with key supply chain players and industry representatives to finalise plans for global marketing activities in the year ahead.

Greater efficiencies

As the global marketing strategy is rolled out, MLA has also started planning for a forecasted drop in grassfed beef levy funding.

Scott said the Marketing Taskforce meetings discussed tightening the budgets for a range of international and domestic marketing projects. But MLA is confident project targets can still be achieved through greater efficiencies in expenditure and sharing skills and resources.

"The change would deliver a more coordinated and efficient use of industry funds, with potential for cost savings and greater reach from existing expenditure," he said.



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Target 100 hits the mark

When one of Australia's most respected chefs, Justin North comes together with renowned environmentalist Tim Flannery and Australian livestock producers to promote the sustainability of the Australian red meat industry, people stop and listen.

Sydney chef Justin North is well known for his commitment to sourcing produce from farms that have a focus on sustainability. So it's little surprise that Justin has become an ambassador for Target 100—a program delivered by MLA based on 100 initiatives that the red meat industry is undertaking to deliver sustainable cattle and sheep farming by 2020.

Justin has joined Tim Flannery and Australian livestock producers in promoting the program to urban audiences and highlighting the industry's commitment to producing beef and lamb in a sustainable way.

Target 100 provides an easy way for producers to become advocates for the industry and engage in social media by uploading their own short case studies and photos onto the Target 100 website.

MLA Community Engagement Manager, Pip McConachie, said the initiative was encouraging all producers who are working towards sustainability in their enterprises to get involved.

Sharing stories

"It's not only about innovative or leading producers sharing their stories, but all producers demonstrating that the entire industry is doing the right thing, even if that's just business as usual," Pip said.



“It’s our job as producers to tell people that we care about the land and we care about our animals.”

NSW producer, Rob Lennon, Mudgee, NSW

2

Media and bloggers gathered at Justin’s Sydney restaurant *Becasse* for the official launch of Target 100 on 27 March. The event generated a buzz around the producer case studies on the interactive Google Earth map at www.target100.com.au

Paddock to plate

Increasingly urban consumers want to know not only that the meat they buy is good quality, but also how it was produced and who produced it. Justin uses both grainfed and grassfed meat in his restaurants and is interested in learning all there is to know about both production systems.

“For example, in the case of grassfed cattle, we want to know whether producers are using native perennials. In the case of grainfed, we want to know that they are following humane practises. We buy the whole beast, so we can use every part of the animal, nose to tail, effectively. That philosophy is the same for seafood and vegetables,” Justin said.

NSW producer, Rob Lennon, supplies beef directly to Justin’s restaurant and is also one of many producers who have already uploaded information.

Rob and his son George run Australia’s only grassfed organic wagyu property ‘Gundooeee’, near Mudgee in the NSW central tablelands and supply directly to select restaurants and butchers in Sydney, Canberra and Newcastle.

Rob said that the high-end businesses he supplies all have different requirements when it comes to carcass types but are “single-minded on sustainability”.

“When it comes to consumers, we have 20 different reasons why people may purchase our beef, and everyone has their own opinion. Some people are mainly interested in animal welfare, others in health issues or land management and we make sure we are able to tick those boxes for them while producing a top product,” he said.

Getting involved

Although Rob is part of a niche supply chain, Target 100 is about promoting the sustainable practices and work of all producers, not only those with brands or leading edge enterprises.

“I don’t think it’s only top chefs interested in sustainability. Everyone is becoming more interested in whether what they put on their plates is sustainable and it’s our job as producers to tell people that we care about the land and we care about our animals,” Rob said.



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www.target100.com.au

Join Target 100 today

MLA is encouraging producers to upload short case studies and photos for Target 100 on the recently launched www.target100.com.au

The website also has online forums where producers can join the discussions.

Hop online and become part of the conversation. It can be as simple as sharing a few sentences, an image or a photo of what you have done, or are doing, on your property to improve natural resource management—no matter how big or small.



Visit
www.target100.com.au

1. Sydney chef Justin North is an ambassador for Target 100.

2. Rob Lennon is one of many producers who have already uploaded information onto www.target100.com.au

Beef Australia 2012

Step inside the MLA Innovation Marquee

Make better beef business decisions

Agribusiness consultant and MLA BusinessEDGE presenter, Ian McLean, wants to use his Innovation Workshop to challenge the way beef producers think about business.

Ian said the session would be informative but highly interactive.

"It will give producers a better understanding of what drives profitability and take general business principles widely used in the corporate sector and apply them to agriculture," he said.

"I'll ask participants what they believe drives profitability in their business. We will talk about price per kilo, costs, number of cattle and other factors that impact profitability.

"Then we will identify the key profit drivers where producers need to focus their attention."

Ian said participants would also discuss the concept of profit versus profitability, and debt management, as well as work through BusinessEDGE decision-making tools looking at capital allocation, formulating a funding plan and calculating cost of production.



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www.mla.com.au/EDGEnetwork
www.redmeatinnovation.com.au

MSA—put it to the test

Queensland graziers, David and Rebecca Comiskey, will face the ultimate test when they supply Meat Standards Australia (MSA) graded carcasses for the Ascot Brahman Stonegrill at Beef Australia 2012.

Nine Brahman breeders, including the Comiskes, were selected to supply the Stonegrill. The couple produce grassfed steers for the European Union (EU) and MSA markets from their breeding and finishing operation at Alpha.

The steers they provide will spend 80 days on feed at Melbrig Feedlot before grading at Teys in Biloela.

"We're keen to compare feedback on the grainfed steers with the MSA information for our grassfed steers to see how our cattle grade after being on grain," David said.

He said feedback they got from MSA was one of the biggest advantages of the MSA system, along with the consumer confidence it provided.

"We use MSA online feedback to determine why some of our animals haven't graded and link our MSA data to our electronic life data."

Recently, the Comiskes increased their MSA

compliance rate from 15% to 69% grading Boning Group 11 or better by ceasing to use hormone growth promotants.

They hope to attend the MSA workshop at MLA's Innovation Marquee during Beef 2012.

MSA Manager and workshop presenter, Michael Crowley, will have a carcass on-hand to demonstrate the MSA grading process to producers during the sessions.

"We will discuss factors that influence eating quality, such as carcass weight, marbling and ossification," Michael said.

Producers will have an opportunity to taste-test graded product at the workshop and learn about tools they can use in their own operation, such as the MSA feedback and benchmarking system and grading calculator.



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www.mla.com.au/msa

Making a difference to the bottom line starts with focusing on key profit drivers. MLA's Innovation Workshops at Beef Australia 2012 offer new ideas and skills to overcome the daily challenges facing beef enterprises. Check out the hour-long practical sessions on offer here...

Social savvy

Marlborough beef producer, Ray Vella, has his own personal blog and now knows how to tweet, upload and chat online as well as any media-savvy teen, thanks to an MLA social media workshop in Charters Towers last year.

The 32-year-old father of three has only been using social media for a few months, but said he's fast learning shows how powerful the tool can be.

"I've received some great feedback about my blog, which includes photos from around the property and information on what we do," Ray said.

"I'm trying to use the blog to tell our story and hope to get more people to understand what it is that beef producers do and why we do it. I think it could be a very effective way to communicate with our consumers and other people in urban areas."

As MLA's 2012 Nuffield Scholar, Ray is using his blog and twitter to share experiences from his Global Focus tour.



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Read Ray's blog at www.marlboroughmantravels.blogspot.com



Get social and start a conversation online

Ray Vella will share his experiences on social media at daily workshops in MLA's Innovation Marquee at Beef Australia 2012.

MLA Social Media Manager, Matthew Dwyer, will help producers learn more about popular social media platforms and how they can be used to share stories with the urban community.

"Producers can use these tools to communicate what they do on their properties, how they care for animals and their role in sustainably managing the land," Matthew said.

"They can also use social media to promote their business and stay connected with each other and industry organisations."

Producers who attend the Innovation Workshops and want to learn more are encouraged to register their interest in attending MLA's more advanced social media workshops, which will be held throughout 2012.



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Workshop program

Join the small group workshops (20-30 participants) in MLA's Innovation Marquee to discover practical information and tools; work through real-life examples; and further network with industry experts and fellow producers.

When: 7-11 May

9-10am: Make better beef business decisions

11-12pm: Get social and start a conversation online

1-2pm MSA—put it to the test

3-4pm Turning pastures into profit

Where: **MLA Innovation Marquee**
Garden Grill
(Near James Lawrence Pavilion)
Rockhampton Showground

Cost: Free

Register:
Angus Street, MLA
T: 02 9463 9257
E: events@mla.com.au

MLA staff will also be available for discussions during Beef Australia 2012 at the marquee.

Turning pastures into profit

MLA Northern Beef Project Manager, Mick Quirk, aims to dispel common myths about grazing management during a hands-on interactive workshop providing practical tools and resources.

"Matching stocking rate to long- and short-term carrying capacity is one of the major drivers in improving grazing management," Mick said.

The workshop will discuss strategies such as wet season spelling, fire, selective grazing, paddock size and grazing

methods; where to get further information; and how to become involved in grazing management R&D.

"I also want to talk about how pasture rundown doesn't just affect buffel but is an issue for all sown-grass pastures," Mick said.

"We will also complete exercises around assessing land condition and diet quality, and may undertake a simple forage budget," Mick added.



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Bovine anaemia

Fighting the threat of *Theileria*



Parasites responsible for a cattle disease known as bovine anaemia caused by *Theileria orientalis* group (BATOg) are spreading in NSW and Victoria.

MLA is collaborating with the NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI) and Queensland Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI) to research the distribution, significance, diagnosis and treatments for BATOg.

Previously called benign bovine theileriosis, the disease can cost beef producers up to \$100,000 in prevention measures and production losses from anaemia, jaundice, abortions and mortalities.

Although the prevalence of BATOg remains relatively small compared to some cattle health problems, it is becoming more widespread.

The disease was confirmed on 191 NSW properties by 30 June 2011 and on 26 Victorian properties in October 2011.

But NSW DPI CattleHealth Coordinator, Dr Graham Bailey, estimated that at least twice as many properties with BATOg had been identified by veterinarians, and many more were likely to have cattle with *Theileria* parasites.

From surveys, Graham said beef herd costs associated with treatments, veterinarians, deaths and estimated production losses ranged from \$300 to \$100,000. The average cost to affected beef herds is \$11,600 or about \$67/head.

Testing of animal blood samples has been demonstrated as an effective detection tool for the main strains of *Theileria orientalis* parasites found in Australian herds.

Researchers have found that the rate of spread differs on individual properties, possibly due to vectors and other factors that need to be investigated to develop better prevention methods.

Drugs registered in Australia for other diseases have low efficacy against *Theileria* parasites. A number of chemicals are known to work against the parasite, including buparvaquone (BPQ), which was effective in one small-scale Australian trial.

Investigations and negotiations are underway to make available an effective drug as soon as possible, including compliance with regulatory requirements and location of a willing supplier.



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Read more about the disease on the NSW DPI website:
<http://tinyurl.com/89rxdy8>

The average cost to affected beef herds is \$11,600, or about

\$67/head

Research underpins drug registration

Of the few drugs that could potentially be used against *Theileria orientalis* infections, the most promising is buparvaquone (BPQ), which has been used effectively against exotic *Theileria* parasites overseas since the 1980s.

Researchers have studied the efficacy of BPQ to combat bovine anaemia caused by BATOg, but its residue levels in treated cattle need to be determined using a newly developed analytical method.

MLA-funded research is aimed at facilitating the supply and use of BPQ in Australia under permit and the possible future registration by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority.

Research project leader, Phillip Carter, said the drug dosages used were effective against the three main strains of *Theileria orientalis* parasites found in Australia.

"BPQ has been extremely effective in our pen trials, causing rapid reductions in local parasite species and variants once administered," Phillip said.

"More research is now needed to see how effective the drug will be in clinically affected animals.

"As we cannot currently replicate the disease, this will need to be done during actual outbreaks on cooperating properties, and will have to wait until industry has regulatory approval to use BPQ."

Dr Graham Bailey, is heading a team that will conduct a tissue residue depletion study for BPQ. The results will be used to determine meat residue levels and withholding periods for BPQ.

The project findings will assist the registration process for BPQ.



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Research at work

Find the latest information and resources for making a difference in the paddock every month in this section of *Feedback*.

In this issue

Flock productivity

Genetic selection and nutrition targeting more profitable ewes

Animal health

The benefits of a strategic approach to parasite control in heifers

Reproductive efficiency

Improving young breeder performance in the north



**Bred Well
Fed Well**
is a profitable motto

Katanning producers David, Sue and Hamish Thompson, are adopting genetic technologies to improve grazing and animal management and optimise flock productivity.



Genetics and nutrition



Snapshot

David, Sue and Hamish Thompson, Katanning, WA



Property:
2,000ha

Enterprise:
Merino wool,
seedstock rams,
crops

Livestock:
4,100 sheep

Pasture:
Annual pastures,
improved
perennials

Soil:
Medium-light soils

Rainfall:
375mm

wool cut, fibre diameter and adult body size," David said.

"We have analysed our income streams and good meat traits such as muscle, growth and fat are definitely worth the investment."

David said wool staple length, fibre diameter and zero skin wrinkles were key traits in the selection process to breed sheep that were easy to manage, and he now tests for worm resistance.

The LTEM program gives the Thompsons clear parameters for feeding sheep to meet their requirements throughout the year, helping to maximise potential gains from using readily available genetic tools.

After pregnancy scanning in early July, single and multiple-bearing ewes are managed separately, and sheep condition scores are monitored regularly. David uses feed budgeting to finetune grazing strategies and meet LTEM condition score targets.

"Our LTEM group members are continually learning from each other, and uncovering the paddock practicalities and budgetary outcomes of letting sheep go below or above the condition score targets," he said.

Using MERINOSELECT genetic information and LTEM management information, the Thompsons have significantly improved whole-flock reproduction and increased lamb growth rates, carcass muscle and fat.

During the past 15 years, weaning rates have increased by 15%, and 35% of the ewe flock is now consistently producing twins. The Thompsons want to boost the twinning rate to 50% in the next decade.

The Thompsons run a 2,500-head ewe flock and produce seedstock rams with a focus on environmental adaptability and easy care attributes.

They are long-time users of MERINOSELECT and members of a local Lifetime Ewe Management (LTEM) group but recently attended a Bred Well Fed Well workshop to access sheep breeding and feeding information to lift profits.

Since 2004, their Australian sheep breeding value (ASBV) profile has emphasised high early lamb growth (post-weaning weight), good muscling (post-weaning eye muscle depth), positive fat (post-weaning fat) and a zero tolerance of skin wrinkles, to produce plain-bodied animals (no mulesing) with high quality wool and meat.

"Injecting some fat into our Merinos is important in our area," David said.

"Extra fat is like having a haystack on the ewes' backs over summer.

It boosts their resilience to lower feed availability."

David's flock average ASBV for yearling fat is +0.5mm, and he aims to increase this to +1.0mm by 2021 using genetic selection.

He said genetic progress in post-weaning fat, along with targeted nutritional management of ewes during summer, was contributing to more uniform reproductive and weaning rates between good and bad seasons.

Use of growth and muscle ASBVs ensures good meat eating qualities and David said it had a positive effect on flock fertility.

The flock average for post-weaning weight ASBV is +4.2kg, and the Thompsons are aiming for +10.0kg by 2021 (well above the +1.5kg industry average).

Lamb growth-to-weaning rates have reached 350g/day in the first 200 days, a target set by the Making More From Sheep program.

"I think Merino producers place too much genetic emphasis on

"Extra fat is like having a haystack on the ewes' backs over summer. It boosts their resilience to lower feed availability."

15%
increase in weaning rates

35%
of the flock consistently producing twins

350g/day
lamb growth-to-weaning rates



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Breed to succeed—the science behind the story

Targeted genetic selection, good animal nutrition and best practice management will produce high-performance sheep that maximise profits.

Australian sheep industry leaders are promoting the benefits of using a range of industry tools to breed animals that are highly adapted to the local environment and target markets, and to manage flocks to optimise reproduction rates, the survival of lambs, ewes and weaners, and animal growth rates.

Together, these practices should significantly boost the productivity gain in the Australian sheep industry.

MLA estimated the current rate of productivity gain in the Australian sheep flock as 0.7% per annum. If this can be lifted by 10%—to average 0.8% per annum—for at least 20% of sheep managed, the net present value

to the industry would be about \$266 million over 25 years.

The Bred Well Fed Well program is a new MLA and Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) initiative, supported by the Sheep CRC, to help sheep producers access tools to increase individual flock productivity—and to contribute to national improvements—using the principles of high-performance breeding and management.

Program leader, Mark Ferguson, said the Bred Well Fed Well workshops were designed to help sheep producers analyse and plan a genetics and nutrition regime that suited their own environment and markets, to boost flock profits.

He said the keys to success were choosing rams that can deliver genetic progress to advance the

profit drivers of individual enterprises, and understanding the energy requirements of sheep and allocating feed to those that would respond best.

Mark said the workshops were an ideal stepping stone for producers considering joining a more in-depth training program, such as Making More From Sheep (MMFS) activities, Lifetime Ewe Management (LTEM) or Top Lamb Crop (TLC) in NSW.

He said Bred Well Fed Well workshops had a strong maternal focus and were primarily aimed at finetuning ewe flock management.

Breeding goals

To kick-start a flock productivity improvement program, Mark said the first step was defining breeding goals. →

0.7%
productivity gain
per annum

\$50/ha
potential extra profit from
flock productivity gain
by following condition
score guidelines

20
extra lambs per year for
each 1 unit increase in
condition score

→

He said Merino producers needed to analyse the ratio of wool income to meat income in their business to determine major profit-driving traits, and then develop three or four key breeding objectives to pursue progress in those traits.

Bred Well Fed Well workshops discuss the emphasis required for individual traits using Australian sheep breeding values (ASBVs) to convert breeding efforts into business profits.

Mark said using ASBVs enabled clear breeding targets to be set, progress to be monitored and a range of often-competing or antagonistic traits to be managed.

“Breeding values give a better estimate of a sire’s merit than raw measurements because they take into account variations caused by management, feeding, single or multiple birth and performance of relatives,” he said.

“It is important to consider individual ASBVs, but the use of a breeding index can also be a good selection guide to narrow down ram offerings for purchase”.

Environmentally fit animals

Breeding sheep that are better adapted to the local environment allows the animals to cope better with seasonal conditions that could otherwise hinder productivity. This is especially important in the Mediterranean climate across southern WA, where there is a long summer

drought. In these areas, Mark said injecting some genetic fatness into the flock would be beneficial.

“Research shows that selecting for some fat in maternals and Merinos improves reproductive performance, so aim for 0 to +1mm in ASBVs for yearling fat or post-weaning fat traits,” he said.

In terminals, consumer preferences for lean meat means that it is best to select for 0-1mm in fat to retain good eating quality.

“Feeding and breeding work hand in hand to create higher performing sheep systems.”

Mark said muscling was most often pursued by producers for its carcase benefits, and research had also shown positive correlations between higher muscle and better ewe reproductive performance, more twins, increased lamb growth rates and higher worm resistance.

He said maternal producers should also consider number of lambs weaned, worm egg counts, and wrinkle and dag score.

“These are all heritable traits that can be measured, will make animal husbandry easier, cheaper and less labour intensive, and reduce sheep mortalities,” he said.

“Breeding environmentally robust animals on the whole will make management less intensive and improve animal welfare.”

Nutrition and feeding

To optimise the potential economic gains from a genetic improvement program, good nutrition and feeding management was vital, according to Mark.

“Having well bred ewes in the right condition score at critical times throughout the year does pay off,” he said.

Lifetime Wool research highlighted that, for each ewe condition score increase of 1 unit across a flock in a particular year, an average of 20 extra lambs were born in that year.

LTEM, TLC and MMFS programs outline the principles of ewe nutritional management to meet a condition score profile across the year that will boost ewe and lamb health and survival, lift flock reproduction, increase wool and lamb production, provide more efficient feed resource allocation and reduce production losses from parasites.

Following these condition score guidelines has potential to generate estimated extra profits of up to \$50/ha from flock productivity gain.

Mark said the most critical times for ewes were at joining and lambing, and producers needed to be able to estimate the energy requirements of ewes and the feed in front of them.

“An energy budget should allocate feed to the mobs that need it most,” he said.

“It is good practice to split ewes into mobs of dry, single-bearing and multiple-bearing animals for preferential management.

“Keep in mind that it is rarely economical to feed-up ewes using grain, but it is very economical to maintain them in good condition and maximise the number of lambs born and weaned. The rule of thumb is ‘feed a little early, rather than a lot late’.

“As the Bred Well Fed Well workshops will demonstrate, feeding and breeding work hand in hand to create higher performing sheep systems.”

Bred Well Fed Well workshops

Attend a Bred Well Fed Well workshop to learn strategies to boost profits in all types of production systems, with a focus on ewe management. The workshops are a good introduction to Lifetime Ewe Management (LTEM), Making More From Sheep (MMFS) and Top Lamb Crop (in NSW) training opportunities.



Enrol now...

Bred Well Fed Well

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Top Lamb Crop
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Check out events at
www.sheepgenetics.org.au
and www.mla.com.au/events

Seven strategies for highly productive ewe flocks...

1. Pregnancy scan to identify and segregate multiple-bearers for preferential management and feeding.
2. Run mobs based on condition score to best allocate feed to meet condition score targets.
3. Ensure 1,000 and 1,200kg DM/ha for single- and multiple-bearers, respectively.
4. At lambing, ensure 1,200 and 1,800kg DM/ha for single- and multiple-bearers, respectively.
5. Wean winter-spring lambs by 12 weeks, or 45% of adult body weight by pasture senescence, to allow good ewe recovery.
6. Maintain ewe and weaner weights during summer, using supplements where necessary.
7. Use good animal health practices.

Animal health

Drenched...

Profiting from strategic parasite control

A no-risk venture that turns \$3.60 into \$54.00 in just six months? It may sound like a scam or a miracle, but according to Central Tablelands beef producer, Matt Ryan, it's simply the result of a drenching strategy that works.

Matt Ryan and his son, Luke, run a self-replacing herd of 400 performance-tested Angus cows on 600ha in the NSW Central Tablelands. They run a tight ship in a high-altitude climate where up to 70% of their feed is grown between October and December. Timing is critical to optimise growth and to capitalise on the feeder steer market peak (usually August - September).



Central Tablelands beef producer
Matt Ryan takes a strategic approach
to internal parasite control.



Snapshot

Matt and Luke
Ryan, Oberon-
Lithgow, NSW.



Enterprise:
Feeder steers,
trade vealers
and heavy
supermarket trade,
fine wool Merinos
joined to
terminal sires

Livestock:
400 Angus cows,
300 Merino ewes

Soil:
Light granite to
granite loam

Elevation:
800-1,000m

Rainfall:
400-950mm



→

The Ryans have changed their approach to internal parasite control after taking part in a recent heifer trial funded by MLA's Producer Demonstration Site (PDS) program.

The PDS was facilitated by the NSW Livestock Health and Pest Authority and coordinated by Dr Jeff Eppleston and Dr Bruce Watt. It focused on the NSW Central Tablelands, a predominantly Angus beef breeding area where internal parasites cause significant effects on producer profits.

A more effective approach

During the trial, Matt found that his heifers gained an extra 30kg in six months when administered with a single, long-acting mectin drench at weaning.

"We thought our regular drenching program was doing the job until monitoring through this trial proved that, although our cattle looked well and appeared to be growing, we were still losing money," Matt said.

Bruce said the PDS research touched on the effectiveness of need-to-drench predictors, such as worm egg counts, blood tests and visual assessments.

"Cattle can show no symptoms of having worms but have already sustained moderate stomach wall damage; if they look wormy, you are already losing production," Bruce said.

"A strategic drenching approach would be far more effective for southern producers than tactical drenching following monitoring."

The Ryans have taken this approach on board as a result of the trial. They have changed their treatment times and now invest \$3.60/head in drenching.

"It's amazing. A \$54.00 return on a \$3.60 investment is the biggest bang we've seen for our buck," Matt said.

He added that the benefits of the trial extended beyond the extra \$4,300 per B-double of feeder steers.

"We thought our regular drenching program was doing the job until monitoring through this trial proved that, although our cattle looked well and appeared to be growing, we were still losing money."

Gastrointestinal worms cost
southern beef producers about

\$40m /year



"We've not only got more steers meeting market specifications but we also have more heifers reaching joining weights, and those that don't conceive are heavier at the point of the sale," Matt said.

"Another benefit is that the closer that heifer is to its mature weight at calving, the more chance it has to ovulate for its second joining. If it fails to get in calf, you have a heavier animal to sell."

Prioritising weaner performance

The Ryans wean calves between five and six months of age so they can prioritise them in their grazing strategy.

"They get the best pastures while our cows follow behind," Matt said.

"The first six weeks post weaning are very stressful; the calves have a poor immune system and are vulnerable to everything. We found the long-acting drench, administered post-weaning in March, helped them enormously, and they gained an extra 10-15kg within the first three months."

To make the most of the short spring flush, weaners are fed protein meal during winter to attain weight gains of at least 500g/day.

"In a cost analysis, it's a breakeven exercise but it sets the calf up to better utilise the spring flush," Matt said.

"They need to be gaining at least 1kg/day immediately. It allows us to turn off our steers earlier (between 400kg and 500kg at 12-13 months) and for our heifers to make joining weight earlier."



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Want to read the final project report?
Visit www.mla.com.au/weanerparasites

Quick take

- Undrenched weaner heifers were 60kg lighter than the weaners 12 months after weaning.
- Heifers drenched using normal commercial practice with short acting drenches were 30kg lighter than the suppressed weaners at 12 months after weaning.
- This difference had developed by six months suggesting that the developing immune system can effectively control worm resistance after about 12 months of age.
- Improving worm control in the six months after weaning by a single treatment with a long acting mectin drench recouped these losses.
- WECs and plasma pepsinogen levels were elevated in worm affected heifers but these indicators were low and would be difficult to use as predictors of the need to drench. Generic strategic drenching recommendations would be more useful for Tablelands beef producers than tactical drenching following monitoring.
- There's no evidence that adult cattle need to be drenched between about three and eight years of age, so rotating drenches and not drenching all cattle in the herd are tools against developing resistance and reducing the cost of drenching.



Read the PDS results at
www.mla.com.au/weanerparasites

The Ryans have changed their parasite control program based on PDS results...

Before

- calves are weaned in March and given a short-acting worm drench and a fluke drench
- no further treatment until August

After

- calves yard-weaned in March and given a long-acting mectin drench
- all weaners receive a worm and triclabendazole (immature and adult fluke) drench in April - May and a worm and adult fluke drench in August
- heifers are treated with a worm and triclabendazole drench the following June (pre-calving) and September
- treated mobs are moved to clean pastures
- animals are culled based on worm resistance

Heifer management in northern Australia

Girl power:

Improving young breeder performance

In the heart of Australia, where rainfall is highly unreliable, a unique database is being developed to track the fertility and growth performance of Angus heifers across seasons.

Tieyon Station, situated 370km south of Alice Springs and bordering desert country in South Australia, was the first property in the region to record heifer performance going into and coming out of a prolonged drought from 2004-2009.

The MLA-funded research was part of a Northern Territory Department of Resources (NTDoR) project to improve young breeder performance in the region.

Its groundbreaking results have contributed to best practices outlined in the new publication *Heifer Management in Northern Beef Herds*, funded by MLA.

During the project, differences between heifer performance in good and bad seasons on the property were so significant that fourth generation Tieyon Station owners, Paul and Jo Smith, are continuing to record the fertility, growth and calving rates of their young breeding stock as they re-build herd numbers.

The Smiths will use the information to refine herd management strategies that boost heifer conceptions, calves weaned and re-conceptions the following year.

Economic benefits

Economic modelling has indicated that for each five percentage point increase in re-conception rates of first-calf heifers, herd gross margins can be increased by up to \$1.20/AE (adult equivalent), or about \$26,000 for an average herd in the Katherine and Victoria River districts.

The research was led by NTDoR's pastoral production Principal Research Officer, Tim Schatz. Across the whole of the NT, Tim said that lifting first-calf heifer re-conception rates by 30 percentage points (eg from 15% to 45%) could reap an extra \$10.95 million for the local pastoral industry.

And Tim said this could be achieved within five years if properties implemented the best practice management strategies outlined in *Heifer Management in Northern Beef Herds*, with a focus on reaching critical heifer mating target weights and maintaining body condition.

Genetics for a challenging environment

The Smiths run a self-replacing, continuously mated Angus herd, and finish steers on native pastures to 600kg liveweight for the Jap Ox market.

Pasture production occurs on many soil types, in a region characterised by highly variable, summer-dominant rainfall that averages only 200mm/year.

During the 2004-09 drought, the average dropped to 143mm, and only 98mm was recorded in 2008.

To manage risk, the Smiths have focused on breeding hardy, highly fertile Angus cattle that have a strong growth response to even minimal rain. At the end of every year, digestibility of grasses on the property drops below 50% and palatability declines. Cows need to lay down fat as soon as summer rain arrives.

The Smiths use a profile of BREEDOBJECT estimated breeding values (EBVs) to produce females that lay down excess fat for energy storage in poorer seasons and maintain a body condition buffer after calving.

Bull selection emphasis is put on positive rib and rump fat, and 400- and 600-day growth EBVs are capped at breed average plus 20kg and breed average plus 15kg, respectively.

Reproductive performance results

Tim said that many northern producers over-estimated heifer fertility, a major profit driver, and two interplaying factors were body condition and critical mating weights, which were affected by nutrition and time of weaning.

The Tieyon research data showed large variations in heifer growth, body condition and resultant fertility between good and bad seasons. (Table 1)

Across good and bad seasons, there were wide-ranging average daily weight gains (ADG)—for dry heifers; pregnancy rates in heifers lactating for the first time at each muster; and average liveweight adjusted for stage of pregnancy (Av. LWAdj.) across good and bad seasons. Adequate bodyweight and a good plane of nutrition (ADG) were critical for achieving good conception rates.

Over one six-month period in the project, average heifer growth rates fell as low as -0.003 kg/day in the worst years of the drought and peaked at 0.73kg/day during a good season.

Pregnancy rates in lactating first-calf heifers averaged only 15-18% during poor seasons when cattle growth plummeted, but climbed to 74% in April 2011 on the back of two good rainfall years and correlating strong growth rates and improved body condition. →



Snapshot

Paul and Jo Smith
Tieyon Station,
Kulgera, NT.



Property:
6,500km²

Enterprise:
Angus cattle breeding,
grass-finished steers

Livestock:
7,000 head

Pasture:
Native grasses
and mulga

Soil:
Decomposing granite;
clay and rocky
tablelands;
sandy ridges

Rainfall:
200mm

Tieyon progress report

The Smiths now run a younger breeding herd as a result of finetuning heifer management at Tieyon. Cows are sold as 10-year-olds and the herd is replenished each year with young, hardy, resilient and more fertile stock.

Paul said profitability improvements were hard to measure because the business was

still recovering from the severe drought of the mid-2000s, after which breeder numbers plummeted to 1,800 head.

“We are still here, our herd is improving and the outlook for our business is good,” he said.

“What helped us through was having a plan and we are still focused on collecting records,

continuing to finetune management practices and improving our genetics.

“We now have excellent herd reproductive performance figures and have been able to make management and breeding changes based on that solid data.”

Table 1 Heifer performance at Tieyon Station 2005-2011

Muster date	Seasonal rainfall (mm)	Av. ADG of dry heifers (kg/day)	Av. LW ^{Adj} of first lactating heifers (kg)	First lact. heifer pregnancy rate (%)	First lactating heifer (n)
7/06/2005	34	NA	321	15	108
24/11/2005	54	0.275	305	6	145
21/04/2006	115	0.438	315	17	146
25/10/2006	27	0.209	320	12	95
25/04/2007	87	0.200	293	16	149
24/10/2007	9	0.287	306	11	123
30/04/2008	72	0.241	319	22	137
07/10/2008	28	-0.003	299	5	135
20/04/2009	148	0.736	361	47	116
10/08/2009	25	0.193	341	22	36
20/04/2010	247	0.442	432	41	96
05/10/2010	126	0.602	475	57	47
20/04/2011	374	0.503	502	74	47

Across good and bad seasons, there were wide-ranging average daily weight gains (ADG)—for dry heifers; pregnancy rates in heifers lactating for the first time at each muster; and average liveweight adjusted for stage of pregnancy (Av. LW^{Adj}) across good and bad seasons. Adequate bodyweight and a good plane of nutrition (ADG) were critical for achieving good conception rates.



Tieyon station from the air.

→

“Our goal now is to have first calf heifers and overall herd conception rates above 90% in good years.

“We have also noted that a higher percentage of heifers are re-conceiving in less than three months after calving in the good years than in the drought years.”

Managing for fertility

“The research project has proven that managing heifers to be in good condition before calving (about score 3.5 on a 1-5 scale) and at critical weights above 420kg before the next mating could significantly increase whole-herd fertility.”

At target mating weights of 300kg, maiden-heifer conceptions at Tieyon have averaged 83% during April musters.

To achieve this and strive for 90%, the Smiths have introduced a regimented approach to early weaning—even in good seasons—and now segregate heifers after weaning for preferential grazing management.

The average calf weaning age has been reduced from eight to five or six months of age, when calves weigh about 150kg or more. This maintains cow body condition and paves the way for higher re-conception rates in the future.

Weaners are fed hay in small yards for up to two weeks, and those selected as breeders are moved to better quality pastures at conservative set stocking rates to boost weight gain to about 300kg for the next joining.

Paul said many animal husbandry practices had been modified to avoid setting back cattle growth patterns. These included using rings for steer castration, some supplementary feeding in poorer seasons,

de-stocking and agisting when necessary, and regular vaccinations for botulism (every three years) and pestivirus (prior to first joining).

Based on data generated by Tieyon and another 12 properties involved in the NT young breeder performance project, Tim said local cattle producers could now better predict heifer performance for a range of seasonal conditions and make more accurate management decisions and budget calculations.



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Download free *Heifer Management in Northern Beef Herds* www.mla.com.au/heifermanual

Fast facts

- Seasonal subnutrition, heat and long distances to feed and water create a stressful environment for cattle across northern Australia that decreases heifer fertility.
- Most maiden heifers in northern areas are mated 12 months later than those in southern Australia.
- Pregnancy rates of maiden two-year-old heifers in the dry tropics are usually about 75%, but can be less than 50%.
- Re-conception rates in heifers during their first lactation are often less than 25%.
- Low heifer re-conception rates are the biggest inefficiency in cattle breeding herds of northern Australia.
- Increasing maiden heifer re-conception rates by 30 percentage points—to about 45%—to boost herd productivity has potential to inject an extra \$11 million in the NT pastoral industry.

Heifer management at a glance

Tieyon Station increases young breeder performance by:

- Segregating heifers from older breeders after weaning and running them on better pastures at conservative stocking rates
- Targeting a mating weight of 300kg for maiden heifers.
- Ensuring condition score 3.5 before calving
- Mustering first-calf heifers first for weaning
- Weaning calves at 5-6 months instead of the traditional 8-months-old
- Supplementary feeding, de-stocking or agisting cattle in poor seasons
- Vaccinating all breeders against botulism every three years
- Vaccinating all calves and weaners against pestivirus

Management options

Climate clever beef

Cattle producers have a strong vested interest in improving the efficiency of greenhouse gas emissions efficiency in their herds. It's called productivity.

The MLA-supported Climate Clever Beef program aims to build the profitability of beef enterprises and their resilience to changes in climate and markets.

Run across six regions in Queensland and the Northern Territory, the project is showing that working towards increases in productivity and profitability can go hand-in-hand with reducing greenhouse gas emissions—and vice versa.

Climate Clever Beef is supported by the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's Climate Change Research Program. It's led by Steven Bray from the Rockhampton office of the Queensland Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI). →

Snapshot

Alan and Penny Wallace, Clarke Creek, Qld.



Property:
3,830ha

Enterprise:
Beef cattle breeding, Red Brahman stud

Target market:
Heavy slaughter cattle to Teys Brothers, Rockhampton

Livestock:
1,200 breeders and followers

Pasture:
Native, semi-improved and improved grasslands with a tropical legume

Soil:
Mostly heavy brigalow soils, some alluvial creek and black soil

Rainfall:
650mm



→

“On nearly every property we’ve looked at, there are management options that simultaneously increase profit and adaptation to climate change as well as reducing livestock methane emissions,” Steven said.

Grazing land management and soil health

A group of seven central Queensland landholders who are proud of their land management and interested in seeing how their work was reflected below ground volunteered to be part of a Climate Clever Beef study at Clark Creek looking at soil health.

The results intrigued Alan and Penny Wallace, who have owned their 3,830ha beef cattle property, ‘Clive’, for 11 years.

“Managing for the triple bottom line has always been important to us, and we’re interested in how we can improve our resilience to climate change,” Penny said.

“We are always going to have droughts and floods, and we want to know whether we can better manage for them.”

Soil sampling on Clive showed a generally good relationship between how country is managed and levels of soil carbon.

The Wallaces have maintained high levels of soil carbon in areas where healthy pasture has been maintained, a finding that was consistent across the Clarke Creek study.

In one comparison, topsoil (0-10cm) was sampled in one paddock that was sown straight to buffel grass after development and in a neighbouring paddock that was cultivated following development and colonised with buffel grass over the past 11 years. Cultivation is well known to significantly reduce soil carbon and soil health.

Both paddocks are currently in good condition, but in the uncultivated paddock pasture



2



3

1. Alan and Penny Wallace are working on strategies to improve their resilience to climate change.

2. The 3,830ha property includes a Red Brahman stud.

3. The Wallaces are interested in the role legumes may play in combating pasture rundown and maintaining soil carbon levels.

yield was measured at 5,040kg/ha with 1.9% soil carbon, compared to 4,470kg/ha pasture and 1.6% soil carbon in the cultivated paddock.

Microbial activity and microbial diversity were similar, pointing to recovery of the cultivated paddock.

A second assessment on flooded brigalow country compared a developed grass paddock to uncleared brigalow forest.

Livestock productivity was much higher in the pasture paddock, which has a pasture yield of 4,740kg/ha compared to 1,070kg/ha in the uncleared brigalow forest.

But surprisingly, soil carbon was the same –2.85%–and microbial activity was similar. This suggests that current grazing management is sustainable.

“One of the things we wanted to prove was that grazing the country and looking after it was no different to keeping it native.”

“This study seems to have shown that’s the case.”

Steven said the findings showed that under sustainable grazing management, soil carbon storage in grass pastures could be maintained at–or close to–pre-clearing levels while maintaining grazing productivity.

However, Steven added that soil carbon wasn’t straightforward.

At the Wambiana grazing trial, south of Charters Towers, soil carbon levels for two land types (brigalow and silverleaf ironbark) were lower under a heavy grazing regime, while the box land type had higher soil carbon under a heavy grazing regime. That’s a puzzle scientists are still trying to understand.

The Wallaces regard themselves–and the other six landholders in the group–as conservative stockers and progressive managers as seasons and markets allow. Alan said compared to many brigalow holdings, the Clarke Creek blocks were small (4,000–5,600ha), which makes the landholders wary of pushing their country too hard.

The Wallaces strategically spell their paddocks, and aim for a burn across their pastures every 6–7 years. Like most of the district’s landholders, they have experimented with tropical legumes; others have planted leucaena.

They are interested in the role legumes may play in combating pasture rundown and maintaining soil carbon levels, which has them wondering how they can increase their legume content.

Alan said it was largely a management issue. Legumes are sown down on ‘Clive’, but are sought by stock and grazed hard.

Fast facts

→ There is generally a good relationship between land condition, the productivity of a grassland and levels of soil carbon.

→ However, the relationship with soil carbon levels can be variable depending on soil type.

→ There can be little or no difference in soil carbon levels between improved grassland and uncleared native vegetation, indicating that good grazing management can be sustainable.

Seven strategies for increasing productivity while reducing emissions.

Adaptation measures:

→ managing stocking rate for optimum productivity

→ wet season spelling to allow pastures to reach greater maturity before being grazed

→ prescribed burning for woody vegetation management

→ better distribution of grazing pressure through fencing and watering points

Mitigation strategies:

→ increased breeder herd efficiency (more calves per unit of methane)

→ higher diet quality (more beef per unit of methane)

→ managing woody regrowth to sequester emissions in vegetation without affecting productivity



Discover more about Climate Clever Beef...

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Check out MLA’s Feed Demand Calculator to optimise feed use and plan for feed gaps
www.mla.com.au/tools

Weed control

From garden lover to groundhog

5.3 million /ha
of the Murray-Darling Basin is affected by lippia.

Recent flood events across eastern Australia could lead to new infestations of lippia, heightening the effects of this damaging weed.

Lippia is present in several catchment systems throughout Australia, and has infested more than 5.3 million/ha throughout the Murray-Darling Basin since it was introduced to Australia as a garden ground cover in the 1920s.

A prostrate, perennial broadleaf herb, lippia has many branched stems, often up to 1m in length. It can send down roots at nodes along the stems, and when well established, can form a dense mat of groundcover, sometimes referred to as a 'green desert' by landholders.

The weed has a thick central taproot that can reach deep moisture reserves and dry out soil to a depth of several metres. This is particularly damaging along watercourses, where banks infested with lippia can collapse as a result of the dried out soil.

Fresh outbreaks

Dr Rieks van Klinken, a senior researcher with CSIRO Ecosystem Sciences in Brisbane, has been studying lippia since 2006.

"Lippia is generally not a good competitor and will have difficulty invading vigorous stands of pasture."

He said recent floods across eastern Australia could increase the weed's spread and urged landholders to be vigilant for fresh outbreaks.

"It spreads by stem fragments and seeds that are easily dispersed, especially by floodwaters," he said.

"The danger is that flooding may have scoured out grasses along watercourses, and that's where lippia will become well established because it won't have a lot of competition.

"The challenge is to ensure that local areas that are currently lippia-free or lightly infested don't become heavily infested and unproductive over time."

Control options

Rieks said that lippia was mainly found in environmentally sensitive areas, such as wetlands, riparian zones and floodplains, which limited the number of control options available to landholders.

"Spraying lippia with herbicides is very difficult for most landholders because of the location of the weed along watercourses. Also, there is often only a small window of time when high kill rates can be achieved, in part due to its large tap root," he said.

"Cultivation is probably the most effective method of controlling lippia, although this can only be done in areas where farming is suitable and cultivation is permissible, and with the weed present in areas that regularly flood that is often just not an option."

Grazing management

Rieks said that, in most cases, grazing management was the main method to control the weed.

He said heavy lippia infestations were often found in areas that had been consistently overgrazed.

"Lippia is generally not a good competitor and will have difficulty invading vigorous stands of pasture," he said.

"However, once it has become dominant, then it can be very hard to shift, even if vigorous pasture can be maintained through resting, rotational grazing or sowing.

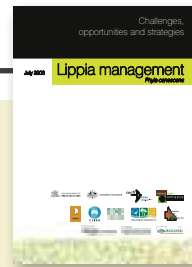
"Avoiding situations where lippia will become dominant is therefore critical. This might include allowing grasses to return after big flood events or other disturbances."



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www.mla.com.au/lippia



Lippia management manual

Producers seeking more information on managing lippia, including control options, should read the *Lippia Management Manual*. An initiative of the National Lippia Working Group, it was developed in 2009 and is a comprehensive collation of historical work on lippia, as well as the ongoing activities of landholders and the research community.



Read the manual at
www.mla.com.au/lippia

Weeds of northern Australia

Check out *Weeds of Northern Australia: a field guide*, a new resource for land managers, those new to the issue of weeds and even gardeners. The book features photographs and descriptions for 150 weed species and detailed descriptions for 90 high priority species.



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Snapshot

Tony and Sally Woods, Boggabilla, NSW.



Property:
5,000ha

Enterprise:
Mixed farming,
beef cattle

Target market:
Weaner market

Livestock:
300 breeders

Pasture:
Native and
improved
pastures

Soil:
Coolibah-black
soil floodplain

Rainfall:
600mm

The long battle with lippia

Second generation Boggabilla grazier, Tony Woods, has been fighting infestations of lippia on his property since the late 1990s.

Together with his wife Sally and son and daughter-in-law, Robert and Amanda, Tony runs around 300 Shorthorn-cross cows on 'Limebon', turning off steers and cull heifers to the local weaner market. The family also farm around 4,000ha, predominately for cereal crops. The Woods are located on the Whallan Creek floodplain. Tony said almost all the 5,000ha property could be affected in a major flood.

"That makes us pretty susceptible to weeds that are transported along river and creek systems, such as lippia," he said.

Stemming the spread

"We had lippia in the past but it really started to explode here in the 1990s, particularly along some of our very good grazing country, and I knew we had to do something about it.

"We had some beautiful clover country that was virtually growing no grass or clover, and we ended up having to reduce our carrying capacity."

Tony was the inaugural chairman of the National Lippia Working Group, which was established in 2002 in response to

landholder concerns about the rapid spread of lippia and the effect of the weed on grazing land and sensitive riparian, wetland and floodplain environments.

The group has helped to direct research activities into the spread and control of lippia, culminating in the release of the comprehensive *Lippia Management Manual* in 2009.

Cultivating to control

While busy in his role as group chairman, Tony has endeavoured to control the spread of lippia on his own property.

He said cultivating areas that were suitable for crop production proved the best method of control on Limebon.

"Lippia is particularly hard to control, and if it's really bad, you need to cultivate it to keep on top of it," he said.

"We did try to control it by spraying around 400ha but found our country was too rough for the boom spray. We also had concerns about spray drift to neighbouring properties.

"We decided to cultivate what we could and put it into cash crops, which has been very effective for us.

"In areas that we haven't been able to cultivate, we have tried to minimise the impact of lippia by looking after our pastures as best we can and making sure we don't overgraze."

Tony said recent flood events could aid the spread of lippia and produce more heavy infestations of the weed.

"In a year like this, lippia seeds and fragments will travel from the top of north Queensland right down to Victoria," he said.

"We probably won't see the effect now because our pastures are so thick, but we'll start to see where this weed has taken hold once the season dries off.

"Lippia is simply another weed that we have to live with. We will never get rid of it entirely, but we can try to reduce its effect."



Tony Woods
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Northern weeds research



Biocontrol a bitter pill for Parkinsonia

MLA is continuing to invest in research to find a biocontrol agent for parkinsonia.

CSIRO has completed assessments of the potential biocontrol agent, parkinsonia looper, and submitted an application to the federal government for its release. Another potential biocontrol agent, the parkinsonia tip borer, is also being imported from Mexico and Nicaragua.

Meanwhile the University of Queensland (UQ) is studying the parkinsonia dieback phenomenon in northern Australia.

MLA Northern Beef Project Manager, Mick Quirk, said this research had identified a range of naturalised or native fungi that have adapted to use parkinsonia as a food source, resulting in significant tree deaths.

“The research has developed a capsule formulation which can be used to inoculate parkinsonia trees to cause dieback,” he said.

A new project will conduct more detailed field trials to support the development and registration of a bioherbicide to control Parkinsonia.

Erasing rubber bush



Rubber bush (calotrope) is increasing in density and range in some areas of northern Australia but its potential impact and spread is uncertain.

A new MLA-funded research project led by DEEDI is looking at distribution, invasiveness, biology and control options for this weed across six experimental plots on Helen Springs Station, north of Tennant Creek.

The project will monitor the reproduction biology of rubber bush to investigate the possibility of controlling its spread by mechanical or chemical thinning at low density.

Herbicide testing has already found several new chemicals that warrant further investigation as potential foliar options for the control of the weed.

Prickly acacia—get them while they're young

University of Queensland scientists have been examining a prickly acacia dieback phenomenon, similar to that seen in parkinsonia.

Laboratory and glasshouse testing of fungal isolates from soil associated with dieback found that the most promising agents belonged to the genus

Botryosphaeria, which is able to kill seedlings and induce dieback symptoms in juvenile trees.

Preliminary studies by Dr Vic Galea are being taken further by a UQ PhD student with the objective of further developing the prickly acacia dieback into a practical management option for wider use in northern Australia.



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www.mla.com.au

Check out Weeds Australia's weed identification tool at www.weeds.org.au

Divide and conquer

Cootamundra processor GM Scott is using technology including robotic cutters to secure a promising future for its business, staff and suppliers.

GM Scott Managing Director, Barry Noble, makes no apologies for wanting to be the best. The tenacious 84-year-old has been on this mission for most of his life.

The processor is a major supplier to Woolworths and Cootamundra's largest employer (with 250 staff), injecting \$12 million into the community each year. During the past six months it has replaced the band saws used to divide carcasses into primal cuts with Australia's most up-to-date robotic ovine cutter.

The technology was developed through a \$2 million project completed in partnership with the MLA Donor Company, which matches commercial investment with Australian Government R&D funds. It is based on a prototype first used by Midfield Meats in Warrnambool. The robotic cutter has increased output by over 50% and improved quality, passing on benefits to all stages of the supply chain.

Why have you implemented this technology?

I'm determined that our plant will be the best in Australia and keep abreast of world trends. My aim is to become a tier two export works, which means every market around the world will be open to us. This is a very exciting time—it's great to be able to say that at my age.

What are the benefits?

The band saws achieve 67% accuracy in the cuts across an entire day but we can achieve 97.98% with the robotic cutter.

It has the capacity to process up to 400 carcasses an hour and produces a more hygienic product because it uses a dustless circular knife and not a bandsaw blade. That means a far better yield for the customer and better prices for delivering higher quality which will flow on to producers.

Another benefit has been the reduction of stress on employees because the band saw area was previously a 'hot spot' for workplace accidents.

What difference has it made in the workplace?

There haven't been any job losses—all band saw operators have been retrained and redeployed to other parts of the plant.

Our latest venture—a \$6 million, state-of-the-art slaughter floor—should be operational by February next year.

This automation development will reduce occupation, health and safety risks, boost throughput to more than 5,000 carcasses a day and use more sheep and lamb by-products.

About 15 positions will be redeployed off the slaughter floor but about 20 new positions will be created, as we take on new processes. These new jobs will provide a huge boost for our local community.



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Lamb sales bloom during spring campaign



Strong support from retailers, an entertaining television commercial and eye-catching marketing collateral contributed to increasing lamb servings during MLA's 2011 spring 'Lamboutique' campaign.

Lamb serves increased to 23.34 million per week in September 2011, marginally higher than in September 2010 and nearly 2 million serves per week higher than the usual level of lamb serves in Australia.

The campaign also contributed to increasing the value of lamb sold by 2.4% on the previous year. However, tight supply and strengthening prices saw the volume of lamb sold over the same period fall slightly by 0.6% to 5,310kg.

Retailers strongly supported the campaign, with 74% of butchers surveyed participating in the campaign. Innovative retail ideas such as butcher stickers customised by suburb and flagship 'lamboutiques' generated strong retailer and media interest. The campaign generated press coverage valued at \$1.89 million.

South Australian retailer, Drake Supermarkets, ran a competition where customers who purchased lamb products went into the draw to win dinner with lambassador, Sam Kekovich.

More than 7,000 Drake's customers entered the competition which was supported by in-store lamb cooking demonstrations and advertised specials on lamb products.



Drake Supermarkets reported an overall increase in lamb sales by 54% compared to the six weeks prior and overall meat department sales increased by 8% for the competition period.

Drake Supermarkets Meat Controller, David Knapman said he was "ecstatic" with the result of the competition.

"It led to improved sales and lamb product being at the forefront of the customer's choice of meal during their shopping experience at Drake's," David said.

\$1.89m

in press coverage attracted by the campaign

23.34m

servings of lamb plated up in September 2011

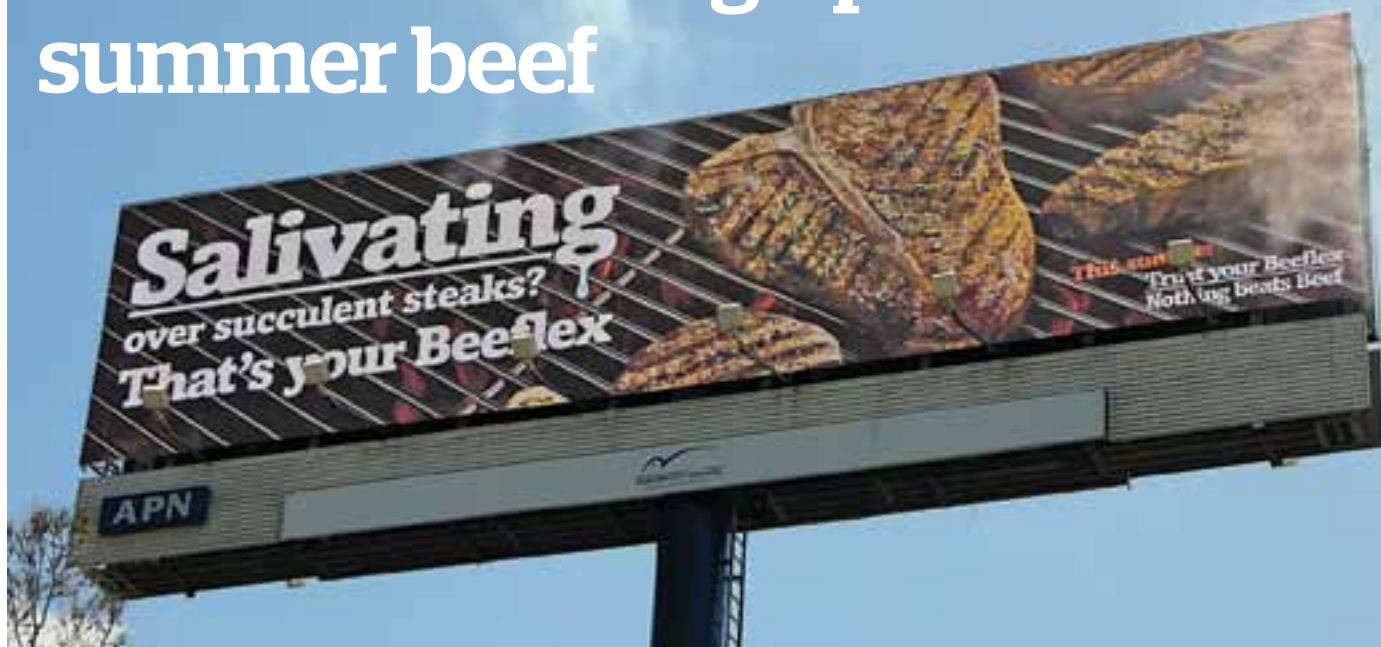
2.4%

increase in value of lamb sales



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Take 5: Summing up summer beef



MLA's longest running summer beef campaign.

1 Phase one of the campaign (October - November) helped increase servings of beef by 730,000 serves per week to 49.32 million/week during that period, compared with the previous year.

2 Independent retailers rated the campaign as the most useful summer campaign in growing sales for beef to date, with a score of 3.37 out of 5 (average score is 3.21), overall value share experienced a decline of under 1% to 35.6%.

3 The iBeef iPhone app, launched with the summer campaign, has been downloaded more than 4,000 times to date. The app helps users match cuts to suitable cooking methods for the best outcome.

4 State 'Tongmaster' competitions searched for Australia's top five barbecue chefs during

October - November as part of the campaign. The 'Aussie Tongmaster' team will compete in the BBQ Capital Cook off this month in Lexington, USA.

5 An innovative 'smoking billboard' emitted barbecued scented plumes of smoke to more than 65,000 Sydney motorists a day during November. The billboard received kudos from marketing industry website MuMbrella, which rated it one of its top seven outdoor advertisements for 2011. Phase two of the campaign kicked off in February with billboards at 16 prime capital city locations.



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How does MLA evaluate its marketing campaigns?

Evaluating the success of consumer marketing campaigns helps ensure MLA gets the best return on levy investments in growing demand for red meat in Australia.

MLA uses a wide variety of sources to do this, including:

- sales feedback from retailers
- consumer response to campaign including visibility/awareness, engagement, communication of key message and persuasion to buy

→ unpaid media generated by campaign

→ consumer 'Homescan' sales data

Recently MLA switched its sales data from Roy Morgan 'Single Source' to Nielsen 'Homescan'. Roy Morgan uses a survey measuring 'serves' purchased in the last seven days, Homescan is calculated from the actual purchasing habits of 10,000 Australian households, providing a better indication of value sales of fresh meat.

Why the switch to Nielsen Homescan data?

The number of 'serves' are a surrogate for value but do not show how much the consumer spent on the product, effectively treating a 100g serve of beef mince the same as a 400g sirloin. Using Homescan data enables MLA to judge changes in market demand.



A cut above

From the moment you enter Victor Churchill, a gleaming boutique butcher shop with copper, glass and sandstone features, the intoxicating experience begins.

Red Meat Networking Club members and founders of Vic's Premium Quality Meats, Victor Puharich and son Anthony, are the fourth owners of the Woollahra shop in its 133-year history.

They renovated in 2009, blending friendly European traditions with contemporary design. The business has become a foodies' hub where more than 70% of its customers shop two to three times a week.

Victor Churchill promotes an interactive, casual and personal experience for its customers and takes the transfer of information seriously.

Anthony is passionate about his industry—we spoke to him about how important engaging with the customer is to the future of meat retailing...

What sets Victor Churchill apart?

We offer the complete package: best quality meat, best range, a state-of-the-art fit-out, knowledgeable butchers and

hospitality professionals who understand fine food.

Our core family business is wholesaling meat to the middle-to-top end of the food service industry, so we've slotted this experience into the retail market.

It's about highly skilled staff communicating their depth of knowledge in a concise, accurate and transparent fashion. Unlike supermarkets, we educate in terms of different grades and qualities of meat, and how best to prepare and cook them.

How was MLA's spring 'Lamboutique' campaign?

Our 'Lamboutique' window became a traffic stopper on Queen Street and was photographed and mentioned globally.

While September generally sees people grilling lamb and beef, combined with the unique, eye-catching promotion, we definitely experienced increased lamb sales.



Which cuts are most popular?

Cutlets and stuffed and rolled loins of lamb are popular, and there has been a genuine spike in bone-in lamb shoulders, as well as butterflied and marinated lamb legs.

People are now more confident using secondary cuts like lamb shanks, shoulders and neck fillets for curries or slow braising dishes. We also offer a range of exclusive, dry aged beef steaks, rib-eye on the bone or T-bone. And reaching cult status is our 35-day, dry aged bistecca fiorentina, a thickly cut T-bone to share that is traditional in Tuscany.



Anthony Puharich
T: 02 9317 6900



www.victorchurchill.com

Recipe

Barbecued lamb shoulder

with lentil and spinach salad

Serves: 4

Preparation time:
10 minutes

Cooking time:
40 minutes

Ingredients

1.5 kg lamb shoulder, boned and butterflied

½ cup extra virgin olive oil

4 stalks fresh thyme, leaves removed

3 stalks fresh rosemary, leaves removed, roughly chopped

1 small red onion, finely chopped

1 small carrot, finely chopped

1 stick of celery, finely chopped

2 rashers bacon, finely chopped

400g can lentils, drained, rinsed

2 tsp Dijon mustard

1 tbsp red wine vinegar

2 cups (60g) baby spinach leaves

Method

1. Preheat the barbecue flat-plate or char-grill plate to hot. Lightly score the inside of the butterflied lamb shoulder in a criss-cross fashion. Combine 1 tbsp oil and herbs, rub over both sides of the lamb, and then season with salt and pepper.
2. Place the lamb on the barbecue, reduce heat to moderately-hot. Cook the first side of the lamb for 15-20 minutes, turn once with tongs and cook for a further 15-20 minutes. Cover lamb loosely with foil and rest it for 10 minutes before slicing.
3. While lamb is cooking, make the salad. Heat a large frying pan over a moderate heat, add 1 tbsp oil and heat. Add the onion, carrot, celery and bacon, cook stirring for 2-3 minutes or until vegetables have softened. Add the lentils and stir gently to warm through, remove pan from heat. Whisk together the mustard, vinegar and remaining oil.
4. To serve, toss the spinach and the mustard dressing with the lentils, serve with the sliced lamb.

Hot topic

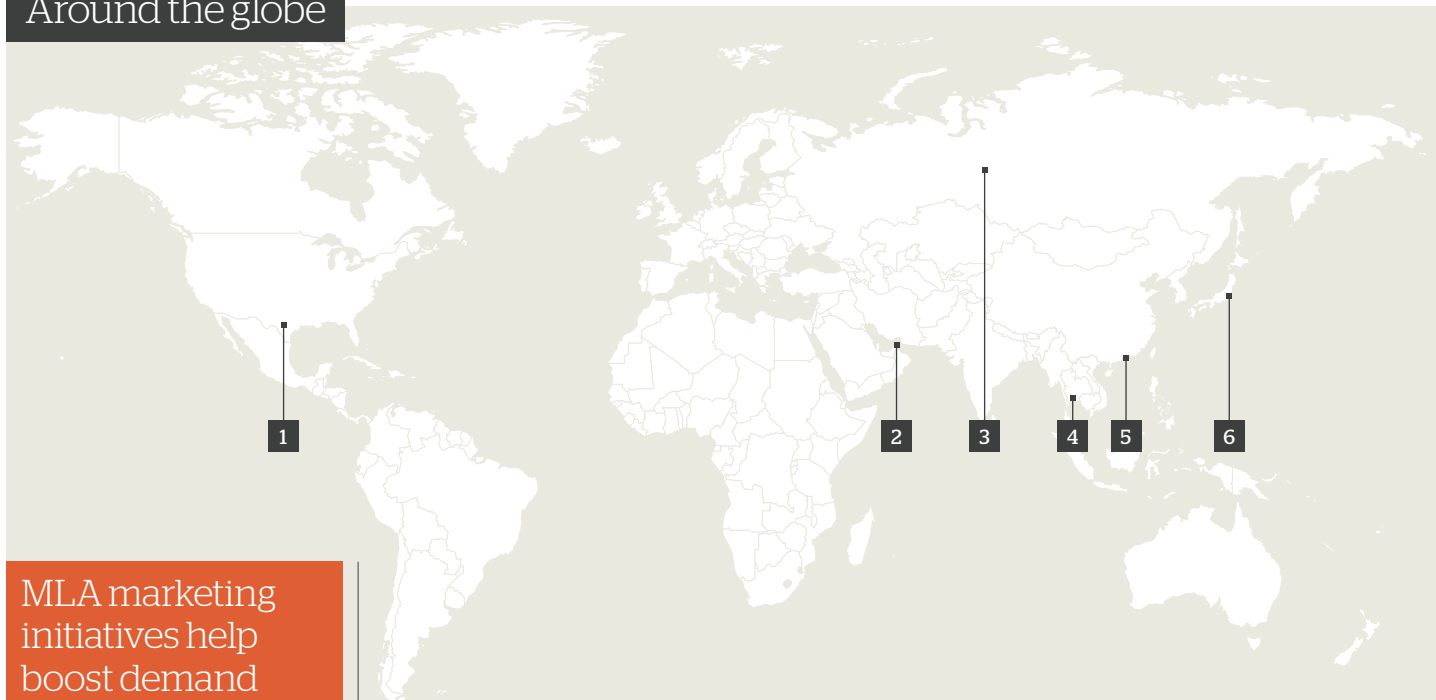
Lamb roasts are on the menu this autumn as the focus of MLA's next lamb marketing campaign, which launches this month. The 'Chuck a Sunday' campaign is set to show consumers that lamb roasts can be quick and easy enough for a midweek meal and provide a delicious way to unwind after a busy day at work and do as the campaign's tag line suggests—"Chuck a Sunday"—any day of the week. Keep an eye out for more on the campaign in the May edition of *Feedback*.



www.themainmeal.com.au



Around the globe



MLA marketing initiatives help boost demand for Australian red meat both at home and in our global marketplace.

1 US

Aussie beef and lamb shine in the Lone Star State

Australian beef and lamb was a gold sponsor at the Rising Star Chefs Gala in Austin, Texas in February. Texas is the 'beef capital' in the US, so Australian beef and lamb was showcased as a point of difference for restaurant operators, given the strong domestic beef production and consumption in the state. MLA provided participating chefs with organic, wagyu and grassfed Australian beef and lamb for the dishes served at the gala.

Two chefs who worked with Australian organic and wagyu beef at the gala were impressed with the yield and quality, and are now looking at switching their current supply to Australian product.

2 MENA

All business at Gulfood

Australian red meat exporters reported business from existing and new customers from across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region at this year's

Gulfood—the world's largest food and hospitality show.

Held in Dubai from 19-22 February, MLA again hosted the Australian red meat contingent, this year consisting of 18 exporters, together with the President and CEO of the Australian Lot Feeders Association (ALFA) on the peak council's first visit to the region.

3 RUSSIA

Aussie beef cooks up interest at Prodexpo

The Prodexpo International Exhibition is the largest annual food industry trade show in Russia and Eastern Europe, attracting a crowd of more than 50,000. MLA organised an Australian meat stand at the event, joining over 2,000 companies from 55 countries who displayed their products across 102,000 sq. m of exhibition space at the Moscow Expocentre in February. There were 10 Australian exporters involved with the stand, which included a kitchen and dining area where people could meet and sample product.

Prodexpo provides a prime opportunity to introduce Russian food service and retail to the benefits of Australian beef, as well as a good platform for effective business networking.

55
countries

2,000+
companies

50,000+
attendees

4 THAILAND**Logo launches one night in Bangkok**

MLA launched the new Australian beef logo for the Thailand market to retailers, importers and media during a dinner at the Intercontinental Hotel, Bangkok.

Guests were treated to a buffet dinner while they learnt about the new logo. Thailand Culinary Academy, the winning team from MLA's Black Box competition in the region, also had a chef on hand to take guests through a cutting demonstration. Numerous print, radio and television media attended the launch and the event was quickly posted on the internet.

5 HONG KONG**Riding high with Australian red meat**

In the lead up to the global Black Box Culinary Challenge final in Tasmania during May, MLA hosted the 97th challenge in Hong Kong. Ten teams battled for the winning title and a chance to go to Australia for the final during the three-day competition from 15-16 February.

Teams had one hour during the briefing day to design a four-course menu using the mystery ingredients from the Black Box including beef topside provided by Stockyard

and lamb saddle and flap sponsored by Australian Organic Meat (AOM).

The teams spent the next 24 hours cooking their set menu for judging, media and for the Gala Dinner, where the winners were announced in front of 200 guests.

The winner of the Black Box was the Hong Kong Jockey Club's Café Décor and will go on to represent Hong Kong in the global final.

The event was also supported by the Hong Kong Chef Association and Hong Kong Disneyland resort.

6 JAPAN**Beefing up healthy menu options**

A leading *yakiniku* (Japanese barbecue) company, Jojo-en, teamed up with MLA to develop a menu for women as part of their spring campaign during March. The specially designed menu provides healthy and nutritious messages about Aussie Beef, and includes the iron logo, tying in with MLA's 'Iron Beauty' marketing initiative and health trends in Japan.

This first collaborative menu development specifically for women aims to help beef sales in the *yakiniku* sector. An MLA survey conducted at the Yakiniku Business Trade Show in February 2012 demonstrated that more than 80% of *yakiniku* companies were interested in developing menus for women and found the concept suitable for their marketing.

80%
of *yakiniku* companies are interested in developing menus for women

Market observations

Australia goes against the herd

Tim McRae
MLA Economist



A review of cattle herds across a wide range of countries demonstrates that Australia has gone against the herd, being one of a very select number of countries to register an expansion during the past year.

The latest herd numbers for 2011 reveal cattle herds declined in the US, New Zealand, Europe, Russia, China and even Japan.

Australia will be one of the few global beef producers to have additional product available in 2012, placing it in a good position to fill the anticipated shortfall in many overseas markets over the medium term.

As the world's largest beef producers, the US cattle herd fell to 90.77 million head, its lowest level since 1952, according to the 1 January 2012 Cattle Inventory report released by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The 2.1% decline over the past year was largely attributed to severe drought conditions across the southern states of the US, and associated higher turnover.

New Zealand beef cattle numbers at 30 June 2011 were down 1.7% year-on-year at 3.88 million head. However,

the NZ herd is expected to show some increase in the year ahead, led by the expanding dairy industry.

Across Europe, most cattle herds declined in the past year, with USDA figures revealing total EU cattle herd slipped 1.2 million head, to 85.75 million head. Numbers for the past year also contracted 1% in China (103 million head), with declines in Russia (19.6 million head) and Japan (4.13 million head) also registered.

Along with Australia, one exception to the general falling trend for herds globally was Brazil, which according to USDA figure increased 3%, to an impressive 197.3 million head. However, the robust Brazilian economy and consumer demand is expected to account for the increase in beef production in 2012, leaving fewer products available for export markets.

Given the wet start to 2012, the Australian cattle herd is forecast to increase 4.1% in the year to 30 June 2012, to 30 million head. This will continue to set Australia aside from a number of other nations, who given a range of conditions in each of their own markets, will still be attempting to halt the downwards momentum of recent years.



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www.mla.com.au/
Trends-and-analysis

On the ground

Japan

**Melanie Brock**

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Dieting in Japan often means eating only low-calorie meals of just vegetables, making it very difficult to absorb sufficient iron for daily needs. A recent Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare survey revealed that the iron intake of most Japanese women does not satisfy the recommended daily intake.

Coupled with this, MLA research shows there is an awareness of the widespread iron deficiency across Japan's female population and the related health risks, but there is a lack of knowledge among consumers that beef is a good source of iron. As a result, MLA is currently focusing its marketing efforts in Japan on a campaign to promote the nutritional benefits of Aussie Beef—specifically as a good source of iron—to women in Japan.

MLA ran a winter retail promotion "Feel great with iron in Aussie Beef—say goodbye to poor blood circulation" as part of its 'Iron Beauty' program.

Over 1,700 stores, including major retailers AEON, Ito Yokado, and Seiyu as well as regional chains participated in the promotion. MLA helped provide education on the nutritional benefits of Aussie beef to in-store demonstrators working in retail outlets and supermarkets nationwide.

The promotion also gave MLA the opportunity to survey consumers to help build an Aussie beef customer profile. Survey results showed that men are more likely to be concerned by "price" than women, who show greater concern for health and nutrition than men.

Retailers responded positively to the winter promotion with some, including Ito Yokado, AEON, and Uny (whose female managers participated in MLA's 'Iron Beauty' mission) asking to hold more customised activities in the future to promote the nutritional benefits of Aussie beef.

MLA is now planning a spring promotion from April-June, which is a high demand season for beef.

Market insight



Japan's road to recovery

Japan remained Australia's top export destination for beef in 2011 in spite of an unprecedented natural disaster that has been the nation's biggest setback since the Second World War.

The magnitude 9.0 earthquake followed by a catastrophic tsunami that struck north east Japan on 11 March 2011 caused massive casualties. The serious damage to the Fukushima nuclear reactors as a result of the earthquake greatly disrupted the country's supply chain and caused a series of food safety issues that have also affected beef consumption.

However, last year Japan remained the biggest export destination for Australian beef in terms of both volume (36% of total exports) and value (35% of total exports), with Australia occupying 39% of the total beef market share there.

Pub grub a healthy option

Kichiri, a Japanese pub-style restaurant chain that operates 57 outlets in both the Kansai (western Japan) and Tokyo metropolitan area, has worked with MLA on Aussie Beef promotions in the past and embraced the latest Aussie Beef iron and nutrition campaign.

Kichiri focuses on high end hospitality and food quality, using only Australian grainfed beef for their hamburger steaks (steak sized flattened meatballs), roast beef and steak menus.

The company has been using the MLA's Aussie Beef iron campaign logo and nutrition information on their menu and also in their media release for the opening of their new ishigama (stone oven) hamburger steak restaurant.

Kichiri is promoting nutrition messages to increase the restaurant's popularity



with women, who represent 70% of its customer base. It has run staff nutrition seminars with Ms Yumi Date, who also works with MLA to convey Aussie Beef nutrition messages to consumers, and recently collaborated with Tanita (a healthcare equipment company), to open a restaurant promoting healthy menu options. Kichiri's approach has been successful, increasing sales and profits despite the sluggish economy.

While Australian beef continues to be recognised as safe and reliable protein source for Japanese consumers, the tough economic climate in Japan has also led the Japanese trade to look to US beef, on the back of a high A\$ against a weak US\$.

US beef imports into Japan during 2011 rose by 32% on 2010 to 120,605 tonnes swt, occupying 23% of Japan's imported beef market (up 5% points from 2010).

While the short term outlook for Australia's beef trade with Japan remains challenging, the Australian beef industry continues to build on its close relationship with the Japanese beef industry and consumers, working together to recover beef consumption in Japan.

"Survey results showed that men are more likely to be concerned by "price" than women, who show greater concern for health and nutrition than men."

Last year Industry launched the 'Together with Japan' initiative to show Australia's support for Japanese beef producers in Tohoku following the devastating tsunami and nuclear accident in that region. This program created scholarships for Japanese agricultural high school students to travel to Australia; provided support to producers in the form of hay deliveries to tsunami and nuclear affected areas and conducted events in evacuation centres in the aftermath of the tsunami.

A future Free Trade Agreement with Japan would help greatly strengthen this important trade relationship.

Supermarkets support Aussie beef nutrition campaign

MLA closely worked with one of the largest meat packers in Japan, Prima Ham, and supermarket chain, Sotetsu Rozen, to run an Aussie beef promotion last September.

The promotion ran in 54 outlets in the Tokyo metropolitan area, offering consumers the chance to win an invitation to the Aussie Beef female seminar that was organised and customised for the packer and retailer as part of MLA's 'Iron Beauty' initiative. Over 1,500 people entered the competition and the supermarket chain reported an increase in sales by about 30% during the promotion period. Female staff of Prima Ham, who attended MLA's Iron Beauty missions last year, delivered a presentation on Aussie Beef at the seminar.



On the plate

In addition to the lingering sluggish Japanese economy, the natural disaster last year has more encouraged Japanese consumers to eat in at home or eat out at fast food or casual dining restaurants.

Australian manufacturing beef is often used as ingredients for hamburger patties, hamburger steakes, meat sauces, curries and other processed food.

Yakiniku (barbecue), *shabu shabu* (hot pot), and *gyudon* (beef bowl) are also popular Japanese cuisines, and mainly use Australian brisket. Cuts such as shoulder and butt are usually sold as *kiritoshi* (thinly sliced beef) at retail, which Japanese consumers enjoy as stir-fries, *yakiniku* and *shabu shabu*.

In the container

342,188 tonnes shipped to Japan in 2011.

27% rib cuts

13% shoulder cuts

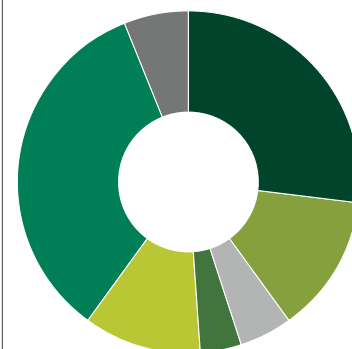
5% other

4% full set

11% butt cuts

34% manufacturing

6% loin cuts



374.7 thousand km²

127.7 million people

2.76 million cattle in its domestic herd

499.8 thousand tonnes (cwt) annual domestic beef production

862.3 thousand tonnes annual beef consumption

Why does Japan need our beef?

Japan relies on food imports. The Japanese food self-sufficiency rate for JFY 2010* was 39% (calorie base), whereas it was 42% for beef. The nation consumes 348,500 tonnes cwt of its domestic beef supply and 513,700 tonnes cwt of imported beef. The Japanese government has set a goal to 50% overall food self-sufficiency rate by 2020.

* JFY: April to March (eg JFY 2010/2011 - April 2010 - March 2011)

BeefUp forum— Next Generation

The Next Generation BeefUp forum in Capella in March focused on providing information and tools for 18-35 year olds with an interest in the beef industry. Producers were given practical information and tools to take home and put into practice straight away. Expert discussions focused on the key profit drivers of beef businesses and sustainability practices that can make a real difference to producers' bottom line.



Greg Butler (Centre), MSA trainer, demonstrated how to get higher profitability out of different cuts of meat at the BeefUp forum.



Dr Brian Cooke, the godfather of Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease (Calicivirus) in Australia, talking about rabbit management at the Albury PestSmart Roadshow.

PestSmart Roadshows

Since the launch on 30 January, there has now been 11 roadshow events in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia with nearly 1,000 individuals attending. The events aim to showcase best practice pest animal management, including the latest innovations from the Invasive Animals CRC, brought to stakeholders by the species experts.



Workshop participants considering the lasting impact of structural soundness in breeding females.

Better Bull Selection workshops in South Australia

Seventy two beef producers participated in two MBfP Better Bull Selection workshops in South Australia in January. Coordinated by Stephen Lee from the University of Adelaide, these events gave commercial beef producers the opportunity to hone their bull selection skills in the lead up to the autumn bull sales in South Australia and reinforced the importance of establishing a breeding objective and selecting animals which will assist the producer in meeting their breeding objective.

Upcoming events

BusinessEDGE

A two-day financial and business management training workshop for northern beef producers.

When and where:

18-19 April, Clermont Qld
22-23 May, Katherine NT

Bookings: 0488 599 033
businessedge@
jkconnections.com.au
www.mla.com.au/
EDGENetwork

Integrated weed management

The latest science from the BEHAVE program in the US, using livestock to manage weeds. This will be a hands-on day with demonstrations on how to motivate stock to eat weeds.

When and where:

17 April, Cumnock NSW

Bookings:

www.sheepconnectnsw.com.au

Understanding your farm finances

Improve knowledge of farm finances and begin the process of monitoring and evaluating farm financial performance.

When and where:

17 April, Murray Bridge SA

Bookings: 08 8842 1103
www.ruraldirections.com



Find more events and information
at www.mla.com.au/events

Bred Well Fed Well

At this free one-day workshop in March at a property in Kapunda, South Australia, 35 people turned up to discover how to use superior sheep genetics and achieve improved reproductive performance from better feed management. They were trained on using ASBVs to improve enterprise profitability, better manage ewe nutrition for reproductive performance and there were practical sessions including conditions scoring and feed budgeting.



Bred Well Fed Well workshop (left to right), Brett Nietschke from Koonunga, Kym Mosey from "Twin creek" Kapunda and Mark Ferguson, presenter of Bred Well Fed Well.



Anthony McGregor demonstrates the breakdown of a goat carcass.

Goat industry workshop

The Goat industry workshop was held on 20 February at Cecconi's Cantina in Melbourne. Attendees included 35 chefs, wholesalers, retailers, journalists and food writers. The event, held to stimulate interest in goat and make people aware of its availability as a quality product. Conducted by MLA, attendees witnessed Master Butcher Anthony McGregor (McGregor's Meats in Reservoir) demonstrating the breakdown of a goat carcass. While demonstrating the breakdown, Anthony explained what he does with goat at his shop and his customers requirements. Following the demonstration was a lunch where goat was featured on the menu.



Robert Barker (MLA), Greg Harper (MLA Director), Jody McNally (MLA Science Award winner) and Linda Hygate (MLA).

Science and Innovation Awards for Young People in Agriculture

At a presentation dinner in Canberra on 6 March, Jody McNally was presented with the Science and Innovation Award for the best project: Diagnostic test for detecting *Fasciola hepatica* (liver fluke) in sheep faeces. These awards for young people in agriculture, fisheries and forestry give 18 to 35 year olds the opportunity to undertake ground breaking research and innovation with an aim to keep Australia's rural industries sustainable and profitable.

MLA Producer Seminar and Innovation Workshops

The seminar will reveal the latest findings of the 'Cash Cow' project, and update you on the Meat Standards Australia move into the retail sector. The workshops focus on key profit drivers in your business.

When and where:
7-10 May, Rockhampton Qld

Bookings: 02 9463 9257
events@mla.com.au

PestSmart roadshows

Showcasing best practice pest management incorporating currently used techniques and the latest innovations.

When and where:
17 April, Bairnsdale Vic
1 May, Townsville Qld

Bookings: www.feral.org.au/pestsmart/roadshow/

BeefUp forums

Discover how to make more money from your beef production enterprise at MLA's BeefUp forums.

When and where:
Week of 28 May in Durong Qld and Biggenden Qld

Bookings: 1800 675 717

Victorian Farmers Federation conference and AGM

Take part in discussions and presentations about key issues in the livestock industry such as stock theft and future biosecurity work.

When and where:
19-20 April, Bendigo Vic

Bookings:
www.vff.org.au/

Bred Well Fed Well

A hands on workshop about breeding and feeding to make more money. Topics include: improving ewe nutrition, feed budgets and breeding better ewes.

When and where:
16 April, Cunnamulla Qld
17 April, Dirranbandi Qld
18 April, Goondiwindi Qld

Bookings: 0428 109 620
alex.stirton@deedi.qld.gov.au

Want to beef up your business?

Head to MLA's Producer Seminar and daily Innovation Workshops for insights into building a better beef business.



MLA Producer Seminar

The MLA Producer Seminar will:

- > reveal the latest findings of the 'Cash Cow' project
- > update you on Meat Standards Australia's move into the retail sector
- > give you a snapshot of MLA's beef marketing activities around the globe

When:

Wednesday 9 May 1.30pm-5.30pm

Where:

Bos Taurus Room, James Lawrence Pavilion
Rockhampton Showground

Cost:

\$10 (includes BBQ dinner and drinks following the seminar)

Register:

Call Rockhampton Venues and Events on **07 4927 4111** or visit www.beefaustralia.com.au to register

Innovation Workshops

Focusing on the key profit drivers in your beef business, MLA's series of one hour innovation workshops will deliver information and tools that can make a difference to your bottom line.

When:

Monday 7, Tuesday 8, Thursday 10 May

9am Make better beef business decisions

Ian McLean, Bush Agribusiness Pty Ltd

11am Get social and start a conversation online

Matt Dwyer, Social Media Manager, MLA

1pm MSA—put it to the test

Michael Crowley, MSA Manager, MLA

3pm Turning pastures into profit

Mick Quirk, Northern Beef Project
Manager, MLA

Where:

MLA Innovation Marquee Garden Grill (near James
Lawrence Pavilion) Rockhampton Showground

Cost: FREE

Register: Call 02 9463 9257

Register now to hear about the latest activities to increase productivity, grow demand and build trust for a profitable and sustainable meat and livestock industry.

MLA staff will be available for discussions throughout Beef Australia 2012 at the MLA Innovation Marquee.

Call Angus Street on **02 9463 9257** or email: events@mia.com.au to guarantee a place or sign up at Beef Australia 2012.

