

Feedback

Investing in people

The benefits of building
skills in the meat industry

06// **Catherine Marriott**

A motivating voice

08// **Industry breakthroughs**

Three generations of the Beef CRC

14// **Livestock protection**

Taking the bite out of predators

17// **How to run more sheep
with less labour**

A note from the MD...

People drive progress. The value of your investment in MLA's research and development programs is only fully captured when outcomes are taken up and successfully implemented by those in the frontline.

A key role of MLA is to support producers to build the knowledge, skills and confidence to adopt new management practices, tools and technologies in their businesses.

These activities include Producer Demonstration Sites, Making More From Sheep, FutureBeef and More Beef from Pastures events, and many other online tools, workshops and information.

Another critical 'people' area is the ongoing shortage of experienced researchers in fields including meat science, grazing management, and animal health and disease.

MLA supports a range of post-graduate and PhD scholarships, as well as mentor programs, to support and encourage more researchers to commit themselves to generating new ideas and innovations that can improve producer profitability.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *Feedback* magazine which focuses on some of the initiatives your levies are invested in to develop the most important asset to our industry - people.



Scott Hansen
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Contents

COVER STORY

06 In profile: Catherine Marriott

IN BRIEF

02 A tough or tender journey?

02 Hello Dubai

02 WA Meat Profit Day

03 Priorities for northern beef research

03 Keeping tabs on sheep measles

FEATURE

04 Carving futures in the meat industry

05 Creating research leaders

INSIGHT

07 Promoting the power of people

ENVIRONMENT

10 Conversation starter

11 Reducing emissions and boosting productivity

INDUSTRY

12 Scholars pay it forward

12 From Marlborough to Mexico

ON-FARM

08 Beef CRC delivers a swag of outcomes

14 Taking the bait

16 Watching their flocks

08

Outcomes served up by the Beef CRC

14

Predator control for spring lambing, calving and kidding

30

Winter - the beefgiving season

17 Sheep - not all hard work

19 Labour savings in sheep

20 Managing out-of-season calvers

21 Segregating breeders

22 Plan ahead to avoid calving time pitfalls

23 Muscling up the herd

24 Gains to come from better mortality recording

26 Group power helps Mallee producers

27 Best Wool Best Lamb leads to producer confidence

CONSUMER

28 MSA symbol hitting the mark

29 Steak expectations

30 Winter - 'tis the season to give beef

31 Recipe: Slow cooked beef ragu

MARKETS

32 Around the globe

33 Market observations

34 On the ground: Philippines

34 Market insight

MLA IN ACTION

36 Past and upcoming events

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Your feedback

Facebook page
on target

More than 500 people now like Target 100 on facebook - not bad going for an initiative that only launched a month ago. You can join the conversation at www.facebook.com/target100AUS



Tracy Wykes

Yay me!! I'm your 500th "Like" :)
Like · Comment – 13 hours ago



Target 100 shared a link.
April 17

Let's have a discussion...



Are food miles relevant?

www.target100.com.au

Do you think it is realistic that we can meet all our food needs within a relatively small radius of our homes? Especially when urban sprawl continues to grow and farming land is pushed further and further away?

Like · Comment · Share

1

4 people like this.



Stuart Warner Not a hope. How could we grow enough carbs and protein as well as have land available for housing without using commercial farming?
April 17 at 7:39pm · Like



Matthew Arkinstall if everyone didnt live on the coast, maybe. realistic for only a few. shouldnt discount that though, the less transport cost/ less footprint/potential save money can reconnect consumers with producers and it is a message that resonates well.
April 17 at 9:58pm · Like



Patrick Murphy doesn't that depend on your lifestyle and eating choices? Sure you could do it, but you would need to alter your diet to suit your resources.
14 hours ago · Like



Carbon farming Innovations

Soil Carbon is the key to sustainability.
Love it or loose it.

Like · Comment – April 23 at 6:37pm



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

MLA
online

MLA tools

Labour saving sheep

Download a new industry publication to help local sheep producers boost the efficiency of their flocks.

www.mla.com.au/laboursavingsheep

Beef Australia highlights

Check out the highlights from MLA's innovation workshops and producer seminar at Beef Australia 2012.

www.mla.com.au/beefaustralia

Upcoming events

Find out about industry events during June including BeefUp forums, social media workshops, Bred well fed well events and Lambex.

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

Social networking

Facebook

Stay connected with MLA by friending us on Facebook.

www.facebook.com/meatandlivestockaustralia

Twitter

Stay in touch with your service company by following MLA on Twitter.

www.twitter.com/meatlivestock

Flickr

View MLA's photo stream on Flickr including the Farm Pavilion at the Sydney Royal Easter Show.

www.flickr.com/meatlivestock

YouTube

Check out the latest episode of *feedbackTV* on YouTube including Controlling pests and predators.

www.youtube.com/mlafeedbacktv

A tough or tender journey?



The impact of extended transportation time, on the eating quality of beef, without compromising animal welfare, will be the focus of a newly-commissioned MLA-funded research project with findings expected by early 2013.

Titled 'Transport Duration Effects on MSA Eating Quality', the research will monitor 352 *Bos indicus*-cross and *Bos taurus* animals, sourced from four collaborating properties in southern and central Queensland, subjected to four different transportation periods prior to slaughter at JBS Australia's Dinmore processing facility in Queensland.

MLA's Manager Northern Production Research, Wayne Hall, explained blood and urine samples would be collected from all animals at the time of slaughter and striploin samples would be taken for sensory testing at time of boning to assess the impact of combined transport (up to 36 hours) and lairage (12 hours) including one treatment looking at the benefits of rest during longer duration transport.

"Currently MSA requires that all cattle are slaughtered the day after dispatch. In practical terms, this generally limits maximum transport duration to approximately 24 hours," Wayne said.

"However, if the research provides evidence that longer periods of transport of up to 36 hours do not impact on MSA eating quality, the potential for many more producers to sell into this market is greater."



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Albany Meat Profit Day

West Australian producers will learn how their enterprises can 'meat' the future demands of their industry when MLA, and the local producer consultants co-host a Meat Profit Day in Albany on Tuesday 28 August 2012.

The Albany Meat Profit Day will be a combination of field day, conference, trade show and expo. The focus will be on the exchange of information and to bring to producers the latest industry research, products and trends with the aim of boosting their business productivity.

Chair of the Albany Meat Profit Day Committee and sheep producer from Kojunup, Craig Heggaton said the event would provide a good opportunity for attendees to "get down and do business" in an open and informal environment with access to industry leaders and researchers.



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Left to right: MLA Chairman Rob Anderson, Mr Nasser Al Madani and His Excellency Mr Pablo Kang.

growing financial clout of the oil-rich UAE. Despite a population of only eight million, this small country ranks as one of the world's wealthiest with gross domestic product per capita of more than \$48,500.

Last year, the UAE replaced Egypt as our number one beef and lamb export market in the region, with Australian red meat imports to the country reaching 28,804 tonnes in 2011. The MLA office relocated across the Persian Gulf from its former location in Bahrain.

Forecasts indicate demand is likely to strengthen in the UAE, with Australian red meat well placed to seize future opportunities to deliver quality beef and lamb.

In the UAE's foodservice sector alone, beef sales are expected to grow 152%, alongside a 290% increase in lamb sales by 2014. Food purchases overall are predicted to grow by 191% during the same period.



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www.mla.com.au/uaemarket

Widely recognised as Australia's largest sheepmeat export destination, the Middle East region has developed a growing appetite for Australian beef.

Australian beef exports to the region have witnessed a period of rapid growth - increasing by 107% in the past two years to 34,310 tonnes swt in 2011. For the second year running, the MENA region was Australia's largest sheepmeat export destination despite small declines in volumes from the heights of the previous year.

To capitalise on these shifts, MLA opened its MENA regional office in the United Arab Emirate's (UAE) largest city, Dubai, on 25 April 2012.

The growing popularity of beef reflects social and economic changes in the region, in particular the



Priorities for northern beef research

Future research, development and extension (RD&E) priorities for Australia's northern beef industry have been identified through the most comprehensive strategic planning process ever to be undertaken for the region.

Australia's northern pastoral zone produces 85% of the nation's beef exports and its beef industry has an annual farm gate value of \$3.7 billion.

During the past 20 years, leading herds in the region have made significant productivity improvements and profitable grazing systems have been widely adopted.

But beef productivity gains generally have not kept pace with cost of production.

To address these challenges, the North Australia Beef Research Council (NABRC) industry groups, government, RD&E providers and funding bodies have mapped the RD&E priorities that will deliver the greatest benefits to northern grassroot's beef producers in the short and long term.

"Producer input was a critical part of the NABRC planning process and this will help to ensure future RD&E efforts in the northern region are firmly focused on boosting producers' production capacity, productivity, sustainability and competitiveness," said MLA Manager Northern Production Research, Wayne Hall.

The NABRC RD&E Priorities Prospectus outlined the major needs of the northern beef industry in areas of:

- cattle reproductive performance
- grazing land management
- nutrition and growth

→ human capacity and enabling change

→ animal welfare

→ information technology and precision livestock management

This is likely to include work in the following areas:

- 1 More accurate and user friendly genetic and genomic tools and technologies
- 2 Identify the extent and causes of calf loss from confirmed pregnancy test through to weaning
- 3 Improved control options for weeds and feral animals
- 4 Options for optimising the growth, quality, reliability and utilisation of the feedbase
- 5 New supplements and improved supplementation strategies

What it means for MLA

MLA will use the NABRC plan to help prioritise its investments to boost northern beef industry productivity and provide northern beef producers with the best returns from their levy funds.

Wayne said MLA would work with its industry committee to determine RD&E investment priorities for the sector.



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Keeping tabs on sheep measles

MLA-funded research will find out more about the life-cycle of the sheep measles parasite and examine the financial cost to the industry.

Sheep producers are being asked to help researchers from Charles Sturt University find out more about sheep measles, a widespread problem that imposes avoidable costs on the meat industry.

"Sheep measles is caused by infection with the larval stage of a dog tapeworm, *Taenia ovis*," researcher Dr David Jenkins said.

"Sheep become infected through accidentally eating the tapeworm eggs while grazing. These eggs hatch in their intestine releasing microscopic parasites that grow into sheep measles cysts in the muscles."

He said the infection does not pose a problem for public health, but the downgraded and condemned meat is a cost for abattoirs and a potential trade barrier.

As part of a two-year study, questionnaires have been sent to 240 sheep producers in Tasmania, NSW, and southern WA.

"We want to find out about the risk factors for the transmission of the parasite such as dog maintenance and feeding, worm control in dogs, along with the presence of foxes and wild dogs on the property," he said.

"The information collected through this survey will help us develop an education program to improve on-farm control."



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Building capability



Left: The team which participated in the South West Invitational Contest comprised Katelyn Braine (CSU), Naomi Hobson (CSU), Claire Payne (Murdoch) and Lucy Sheppard (Sydney).

Right: The National Team - Claire Payne (Murdoch), Lucy Sheppard (Sydney), Emma Hegarty (coach), Katelyn Braine (CSU), Naomi Hobson (CSU), Brad Robinson (coach) and Melissa Adams (Tocal) at the National Western Presentation Breakfast.

Carving futures in the meat industry

Getting close up to carcasses might not be every young student's idea of fun, but it is proving a valuable means of building knowledge in the meat industry.

The Australian Intercollegiate Meat Judging (ICMJ) Association was initiated to encourage young people to consider careers in the Australian meat and livestock industry and now, each year sees teams of Australians travel the country and the globe to compete as meat judges.

To help students gain a better knowledge of meat science, meat quality and carcass specifications required by markets, the ICMJ runs a national tertiary program and two secondary school competitions annually with competitors attending from a range of Australian educational institutions.

ICMJ President and MLA's Meat Standards Australia (MSA) Manager, Michael Crowley, said the association runs a five-day annual tertiary meat judging program attracting more than 100 students from across the country, as well as a team from Japan and the United States.

"An Australian national meat judging team is also selected from the top five performers in the domestic competition," he

said. The Australian team then travels to the US to compete in two prominent meat judging competitions, exposing the participants to the industry on an international level.

"The ICMJ's focus is to raise tertiary students' awareness of career opportunities in the meat and livestock industry and to engage them in an industry career path by increasing their expertise, industry network and professional opportunities," Michael said.

"Meat judging has been very successful in helping create future industry leaders. The program is an extracurricular activity, so the students show enormous dedication and enthusiasm by taking part during their holidays. By engaging them in a fulfilling industry career, we are building future capability."

The 2012 national team, sponsored by MLA and the Australian Meat Processors Corporation (AMPC) returned home from competing in the US in January with a swag of awards. The team also visited

abattoirs, feedlots, ranches, research centres and universities.

ICMJ Australian team coach and former national team competitor, Emma Hegarty, 24, said the international competition allowed students to gain an understanding of the US meat industry - one of Australia's major competitors and export markets.

Emma works as a Beef Extension Officer with Agri-Science Queensland in the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF).

"The ICMJ provides a great opportunity to network and talk about industry pathways with industry leaders, major companies and processors."

The national workshop is held on 4-8 July 2012.

Fast facts

The objectives of the ICMJ Association are:

- Exposing students to the fundamentals of meat quality education.
- Demonstrating to students how and why markets perceive meat quality differently and highlighting the various carcass specifications required by these markets.
- Exposing students to different systems of meat identification and classification.
- Providing training and a non-threatening competitive environment to assist students develop confidence and communication skills.
- Providing an opportunity for students to acquire and apply knowledge of practical aspects of meat science.
- Raising awareness of career opportunities in the meat industry.
- Exposing students to the requirements of end-users.
- Exposing students to new technologies in the meat industry.



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Building capability

Creating research leaders

An MLA-funded program is seeing mid-career researchers and academics focus their attention on the meat industry.

The funding of scientists under MLA's Mentors for Postdoctoral Fellows Program has already produced important research relevant to northern beef producers and stimulated funding for further research.

MLA Strategic Science Manager Dr Terry Longhurst said the program provided value

to industry in two ways. Firstly, research identified by MLA as vital to the industry's progress is carried out.

"Secondly, by funding post doctoral fellows mid-career, we set them on a path in the livestock industry to establish themselves as up and coming research leaders in their scientific field," he said.

Dr Simon Quigley (see article below), the first young researcher chosen for the program, has completed work addressing

dietary phosphorous (P) deficiencies in northern Australia.

Through the program, a further five research groups have received funding for a salary and a three-year operational budget (up to \$30,000) to employ and supervise a person who has recently completed a PhD.

The postdoctoral fellows work under senior scientists, who provide mentoring and career guidance.



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With a little help from my mentor

Growing up on farms ignited Dr Simon Quigley's interest in raising livestock and methods to improve production.

"I've always been interested in understanding why animals perform the way they do and strategies to improve performance," he said.

This interest inspired later studies in livestock nutrition, growth and development.

Supervised by mentor University of Queensland's (UQ) Professor Dennis Poppi, Simon is contributing to beef cattle research in northern Australia.

The project requires Simon to conduct and report on at least five experiments addressing cattle nutrition in northern Australia.

He has obtained additional funding for the experiments through competitive funding schemes from other research bodies.

The experiments range from developing a better understanding of fundamental animal biology, such as the molecular regulation of feed intake in ruminants and body composition changes and adaptation in dry and lactating cows consuming low crude protein pasture, to more applied research, such as the response of cattle to dietary phosphorus (P).

Intensive experiments on responses of growing steers to dietary P are now completed with results soon available.

Studies on P supplementation of cows are being conducted in collaboration with Tim Schatz and Casey Collier of the Northern Territory Department of Resources (DoR).

Simon said having a mentor with the experience of Professor Poppi was invaluable.

"His Australian and international contacts have been important, especially with collaborative research projects, and his knowledge of previous and current research findings has allowed me to conduct both novel and industry relevant experiments," he said.

The mentor role grows under the program as Simon now co-supervises postgraduate students enrolled at UQ conducting research relevant to ruminant nutrition in northern Australia.

Professor Dennis Poppi also values Simon's contribution. "He really could go anywhere. We're lucky this scheme came along to keep him in the industry. He's done a great job for us," he said.

Designed to address the decline in research capacity, MLA's Mentors for Postdoctoral Fellows program aims to attract mid-career scientists to develop research leaders.

The UQ received MLA-funding for a salary and a three-year operational budget to employ and supervise Simon.



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Building capability **In profile**

Catherine Marriott

Cattle industry consultant and motivating force

Catherine Marriott believes women are a relatively untapped resource for improving collaboration, communication and celebration in the beef supply chain to boost consumer demand for red meat.

Growing up on a Victorian sheep farm and with a professional background in animal nutrition, Catherine spent several years consulting to cattle feedlots in Queensland, Indonesia and the Philippines. She worked on ration formulation, quality assurance, animal handling schools, general management, building production capacity and improving animal welfare standards.

The now Kununurra-based cattle consultant also frequents the Coppin family's Yarrie station, in WA's east Pilbara, which supplies cattle into the livestock export trade.

Earlier this year Catherine was awarded the WA Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation's (RIRDC) Rural Woman of the Year for her efforts to empower and motivate rural women.

What are the big picture challenges facing the beef industry through the supply chain?

"Generally there is a need to boost demand for Australian-produced red meat domestically and internationally.

"Higher consumption and appreciation for Australian product means greater capacity to keep rural communities thriving and less need for foreign investment in agriculture."

Why are you passionate about building women's capacity to share their stories about the beef industry?

"Producers need to take more responsibility for engaging with their consumers and women are

a key to achieving this. Women help bring an ethical and nurturing side to the public debate that hasn't historically been demonstrated, but which can be highly effective.

"It is vital for the longevity of Australian agriculture that consumers have a better understanding of production systems and supply chains to boost demand.

"There are many women in agriculture who want to celebrate the efforts they put into primary production, the quality of their products and the sustainable practices and latest technologies they are using, but often they lack the confidence to get started."

How are you making a difference to the red meat sector's future direction?

"With my RIRDC bursary fund I am developing a series of 'Influential Women' forums, designed to give women in primary production confidence to tell their stories and promote their industries.

"The forums will be held nationally, with major sponsorship from MLA, to help women develop leadership and communication skills and network with community and industry leaders.

"Through the RIRDC award, I have been given a platform to build capacity and confidence in rural women.

"I love mentoring young people in agriculture, particularly in the beef industry."

Catherine will be a keynote speaker at the Albany Meat Profit Day on 28 August.



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Building capability

Promoting
the power
of people

From all accounts people are leaving agriculture. They are leaving the land. They are leaving the schools and universities. They are leaving the state departments. It is a steady decline that is putting pressure on the vital human resources that are left.

So what of them? What is left for them to do and who is there to support them?

Declining scope of public extension services

Historically, state departments of agriculture have been the major providers of agricultural extension services to producers, particularly productivity-enhancing initiatives. However, as funding pressures of state governments escalated, the budgets of agricultural departments have been tightened and so has their ability to carry out extension services on the same scale and across the same scope of topics.

At the same time, policy debate over using public funds that generate a private benefit intensified and culminated in the public sector investing more in group rather than individual extension and activities that generated public benefits (like environmental) rather than production benefits.

As public provision of extension services declined, research and development corporations, like MLA, and the private sector are looking at ways to collaborate and fill the gap.

More efficient producers and livestock production businesses

Jane Weatherley, MLA's R&D Communication and Adoption Manager,



explained MLA is all about ensuring R&D is relevant and delivered to producers in a way that is useful for building more efficient, productive and profitable farm businesses.

"More Beef from Pastures, Making More From Sheep, Going into Goats and FutureBeef are some of our key programs for how we deliver R&D," Jane said.

"There is never a one size fits all solution and we aim to provide a broad spectrum of opportunities to cater for the different needs and learning preferences of Australia's red meat production community."

So is there an app for that?

"We are aiming to better integrate our online tools within our programs as well as further develop producer networks within our producer demonstration site program- to maximise the opportunity of producers learning from trainers, researchers and importantly, other farmers."

Declining agricultural enrolments

It is not just about getting producers engaged. Looking towards the future, who is going to deliver the new scientific innovations and technologies when over the past decade student enrolments in courses related to agriculture have tracked a steady decline, falling from 4,500 enrolments in 2001 to 2,500 in 2011? With students having a myriad courses on offer in disciplines seen as exciting or rewarding, agriculture faces stiff competition.

Australian Council of Deans of Agriculture secretary Professor Jim Pratley, from Charles Sturt University's (CSU) School of Agriculture and Wine Science has witnessed these trends.

"With strong engagement of the meat industry with universities through scholarships, research and joint projects we will hopefully see more graduates choosing careers in this sector," Jim said.

In 2012 there has been a flicker of hope: CSU welcomed 80 first year ag students, compared with 60 in 2011.

MLA has a suite of programs also supporting the next generation of innovators.

One such program offers university graduates, newly employed within the red meat industry, a two-year development opportunity with mentoring, training and networking to build their research and innovation skills in a practical environment. Pastoral companies, feedlots and processors are all currently participating in this program.

Other programs include the Intercollegiate Meat Judging Program (see article on page 4) and the university scholarship program (see articles on pages 5 and 12).

"It's important all sectors of the industry have the people with the right skills and capabilities to evaluate new ways of doing things. For the industry to be competitive and sustainable, all levels of the supply chain need to be innovative," Jane said.

"Most importantly it is the individual business' ability and inclination to fully utilise the outcomes of R&D that will help manage the ongoing pressures and continue to build a profitable and sustainable industry."



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Beef CRC delivers a swag of outcomes

The Australian beef industry is about to farewell a pioneer, the Co-operative Research Centre for Beef Genetic Technologies, better known as the Beef CRC.

Since 1993, the Beef CRC has impacted on every Australian beef business with its advances in meat science, genetics, animal health and nutrition, management strategies, environmental sustainability and animal welfare. The Beef CRC has been funded by multiple participants including the Australian Government, state governments, MLA, as well as Australian and international research organisations.

The Beef CRC originated tools such as Meat Standards Australia (MSA), new traits in BREEDPLAN, Bovilis MH™ and Pestigard™ vaccines and cross-breeding strategies are widely used to improve bottom lines.

Beef CRC Chief Executive Officer, Dr Heather Burrow, was excited about the organisation's presentation at the recent Beef Australia 2012 of DNA-based prediction equations, the culmination of

entirely new research using the bovine genome sequence, which first became available in 2006.

"By combining measurements of cattle for economically important traits with information from the bovine genome sequence, we have developed entirely new prediction equations for very difficult or expensive-to-measure traits such as feed efficiency, carcass and beef quality, and male and female reproduction traits," she said.

"This means a simple DNA test can provide an accurate guide to an animal's genetic makeup for a broad range of production, health, quality and welfare traits.

"These are being integrated directly into BREEDPLAN to increase the accuracy of estimated breeding values (EBVs) in seedstock cattle."

The CRC uses a process known as "genomic selection" which uses a genome-wide panel



of closely spaced markers called single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs).

Genomic prediction equations are based on commercial panels of either 50,000 or 800,000 SNPs to provide beef producers with a simple and cost-effective method of identifying animals early in life best suited for breeding. In coming years, as the cost of using SNP panels reduces, it will be possible to use the tests to best manage commercial cattle to ensure they meet beef market specifications.

"We're now working on a 7,000-SNP panel which can be imputed up to 800,000 SNPs. This should considerably reduce the costs of testing. So perhaps in less than five years it will be commercially feasible to genotype mobs of commercial weaners," Heather said.

Beef CRC time line

Beef CRC I 1993-2000

- Progeny test programs established to provide beef-eating quality guarantee. Research outputs now underpin MSA.
- The world's first evidence to confirm a strong genetic correlation between cattle finished on grass versus grain, meaning Australia needs only one genetic improvement scheme.

Beef CRC II 1999-2005

- Genetic improvement without losing critical traits such as reproduction.
- Identification of outstanding sires to enable beef breeders to rapidly improve the full range of economically important traits.
- The world's first direct DNA marker for tenderness in beef cattle identified.
- World's largest beef cattle database for hard-to-measure traits such as carcass and beef quality, reproduction, feed efficiency and growth.
- New vaccines Bovilis MH™ and Pestigard™ commercialised.





Beef CRC Chief Executive Officer Heather Burrow is proud that every day beef producers use tools, vaccines and management strategies developed by the industry's peak research organisation.

Another achievement during the CRC's current term was the development of a diagnostic test for the polled gene in *Bos indicus* cattle.

"We were concerned dehorning would have animal welfare implications, so it was critical we find an alternative," Heather said.

"We now have the means to transition the northern beef industry to a truly polled herd."

The CRC estimates the value to Queensland producers alone of not having to dehorn calves at \$3.5 million a year. Beef CRC researchers have also produced two important vaccines: Bovilis MH™ to prevent bovine respiratory disease (BRD) and Pestigard™ used to control BRD and reproductive losses in herds due to pestivirus. Sales of the two products had

exceeded \$20 million from the time of their release up to June 2010.

Northern producers have benefited from the CRC's cross-breeding project aimed at improving beef eating quality and delayed post partum anoestrus in Brahman, a major inefficiency in northern breeding herds.

The CRC's results show that cross-breeding Brahman with a combination of African and British breeds to produce either first-cross or composite progeny have significant productivity and profitability benefits for the northern industry.

"Another benefit is it provides northern producers with new market options and by doing so, increases financial security," Heather said.

Based on just two outputs (MSA and new traits in BREEDPLAN), the Beef CRC has repaid the total \$66 million Commonwealth investment between 1993 and 2012 by close to

18-fold*

Total cash and in-kind resources invested in the first two successive terms of the Beef CRC amount to

\$146.4m*

*Source: BeefCRC

The CRC has delivered numerous other technologies and management practices:

- combinations of genetics and growth path strategies to maximise animal compliance with market specifications
- feedlot waste recycling
- pre-boosting strategies for weaners destined for feedlots
- reduced on-farm and pre-slaughter pathogen loads to improve food safety
- improved animal welfare practices

In future editions, *Feedback* magazine will review the findings from some of the Beef CRC's key projects.



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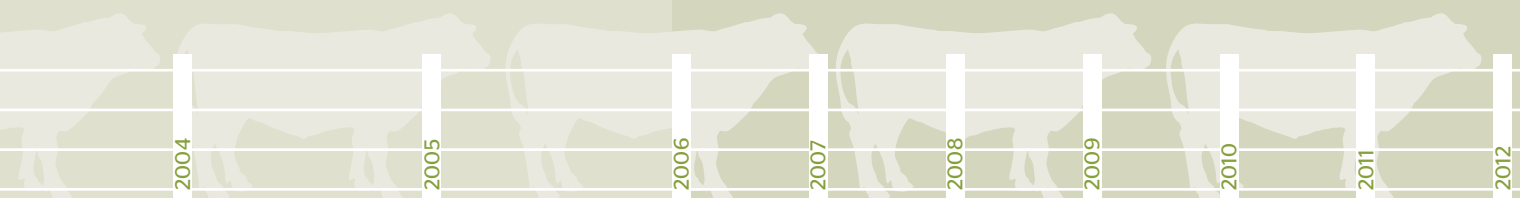


Visit: www.beefcrc.com.au

Beef CRC III 2005-2012

- New genetic parameters incorporated in BREEDPLAN.
- The world's first EBVs for net feed efficiency of sires of steers finished on a standard feedlot diet.
- Cattle welfare improvement strategies delivered to the transport, feedlot and processing sectors.
- Pre-boosting strategies developed to enhance production performance of cattle in feedlots and during transport.

- The bovine genome released in 2006.
- DNA marker prediction equations released.
- Work on a 7,000-marker panel which can be imputed up to 800,000 markers.
- Researchers predict that in less than five years it could be commercially feasible to use a cost-effective 7,000 marker chip on commercial weaners and NLIS tags could be enhanced to include genomic information. BeefSpecs will become the commercial equivalent to BREEDPLAN.





Conversation starter

The launch of Target 100 produced an encouraging response:

511

Facebook supporters

278

Twitter followers

2,196

YouTube views

5,000+

Hits to the site

Target 100 is already kick-starting the conversation between red meat producers and consumers about sustainable farming practices.

Target 100 was launched on 27 March 2012, with the goal to deliver more sustainable cattle and sheep production in Australia by 2020 and beyond.

Thanks to strategic promotion, support from the online community and a big thumbs-up from producers, this proactive initiative is gaining momentum.

The website www.target100.com.au and social media connects the community to:

- a growing directory of producers, profiling sustainable practices across Australia
- snapshots of 100 existing industry R&D initiatives relevant to sustainability
- tips to take positive steps at home
- monthly online forums with high-profile sustainability champions such as Sydney chef Justin North and food and sustainable agriculture blogger Rebecca Sullivan
- discussions between consumers and producers about food production

MLA Community Engagement Manager, Pip McConachie, who manages Target 100, said the program builds on past initiatives.

"MLA has focused on sourcing relevant scientific data in relation to sustainable production and making it available so people could find correct industry information," Pip said.

"Through Target 100, we are now opening ourselves up for a two-way conversation by asking the general community to take a look at what we are doing.

"MLA research shows that most people trust producers to do the right thing. However, there is a vocal minority who still have some concerns, particularly about animal welfare and environment. Target 100 is building a deeper connection with the entire community by educating consumers, demystifying industry practices and recognising producers," she said.

Journalists, bloggers and consumers have backed the initiative. The launch of Target 100 targeted urban consumers via print ads in urban weekend magazines, promotions at farmers markets, strategic advertising in art-house cinemas and on Qantas flights.



Third-generation NSW organic lamb producer Garry Hannigan and his wife Tracy are among 80 producers already supporting Target 100.

The Hannigans' 48,000ha Wilcannia property 'Churinga' could "fatten a fence post" in a good season. With more than 500mm of rain a year for the past two years (well over the 200mm 10-year average), Garry has good reason to smile.

Promoting sustainable farming is important to Garry, an MLA-sponsored Nuffield scholar who has travelled the world studying organic lamb production and marketing.

"Consumers' interest in where their food comes from is a world-wide trend, so it is critical for producers to proactively promote sustainable production systems," he said.

The Hannigans have locked up 4,000ha since 2002 in a paid government conservation area, where wildlife and native plants flourish. They graze to complement the soil profile and maintain conservative stocking rates, which promotes natural vegetation and boosts fertility.

A double-lambing program produces 160-170% average annual lambing with some individual mobs reaching 220%.

"Working in harmony with nature has made us more profitable," Garry explained. "We run less grown ewes but produce more lambs and are turning off a younger, heavier product. We aim to sell lambs at 6-8 months to achieve 23kg dressed weight from pastoral conditions.

"Our decision to produce sustainable, organic lamb has allowed us to sell this natural, world-class product into a premium market," Garry said.

The Hannigan's sustainable management program goes hand-in-hand with a focus on improving genetics. They are currently trialling Charolais rams over Dorper/Damara-cross ewes to increase muscle, with promising results. 'Churinga' Australian Certified Organic lambs are sold through organic meat company Cleavers to Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane supermarkets.



Watch the Hannigan's sustainability story and tell your own at www.target100.com.au



Reducing emissions and boosting productivity

The question of reducing ruminant methane while improving productivity is being given some answers, courtesy of the Reducing Emissions from Livestock Research Program (RELRP).

Investigating how the red meat industry can accurately measure and reduce methane emissions from livestock while still improving productivity has been the focus of the Australian Government's RELRP program managed by MLA over the past three years.

Some RELRP solutions can be used now; some lines of enquiry may take years to have an effect on-property. But according to RELRP Science Coordinator, Dr Julian Hill, most strategies share a common trait: helping the livestock industry reduce methane emissions also boosts productivity.

RELRP will report its full findings before the program concludes this month. Check out some quick highlights here...

More oil, less gas

RELRP research is measuring the effects of feeding ruminants fats and oils, in forms like cottonseed, canola or sunflower.

Fats and oils change the fermentation process in the rumen, producing more propionic acid and less methane, reducing emissions by 6-10% and increasing productivity.

Grapemarc - a wine by-product comprised of grape skins and seeds - has shown even more potential. It reduced emissions in cattle by a conservative 7-10%, with a related lift in productivity.

Current tactics and future technologies

Management strategies that aim to turn off livestock faster reduce the grams of methane produced per kilogram of product over the lifetime of an animal.

Producers can currently use improved pastures, better genetics or different grazing regimes to achieve this. The introduction of potentially transformative technologies may also contribute to this in the future.

RELRP research indicates that 'low methane' sheep can be identified, pointing toward a potential Australian sheep breeding value to identify low-emissions phenotypes. Future work will assess how this trait interacts with other production traits.

Super supplements

Scientists are looking at feed supplements that suppress the activity of methane-producing bacteria in the rumen. One investigation has found promise in compounds in native Australian shrubs, such as eremophila and rhagodia, which also reduce the level of internal parasites in ruminants.

Another has discovered that nitrate supplementation is more methane-friendly than urea supplementation, with investigation continuing in how to deliver the nitrates.

Measuring methane emissions

RELRP has dedicated considerable resources to better understanding methane emissions. One striking outcome from CSIRO research work in the northern rangelands indicates that methane production from beef cattle has been overestimated by up to 30%.

RELRP science underpins the Australian Farm Institute's FarmGas online calculator, which allows producers to compare current farm emissions against potential emissions from new enterprises.

Tools for carbon farming

Currently the Carbon Farming Initiative (CFI) has limited financial benefits for red meat producers. While further work is required, RELRP science could be used to establish emissions methods that allow red meat producers to effectively tap into this program.

Part of the answer may lie with a range of tools - supported through RELRP work - that can accurately predict methane emissions. These may include nutritional and herd management strategies, animal genetics and measurement of methane using a rumen bolus.

An intra ruminal device, developed as part of RELRP, measures methane production within an animal and wirelessly reports the statistic to a linked computer.

If the technology works, it may be a way to measure emissions for participation in the CFI.



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Read more about the RELRP on the MLA website www.mla.com.au/environment



FarmGas online calculator
www.farminstitute.org.au

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) has recently announced that a second round of RELRP will proceed, comprising of 16 methane and nitrous oxide gas reduction research projects which aim to reduce emissions while improving productivity. The program, renamed as the National Livestock Methane Program, will be coordinated by MLA and has received co-investment funding of \$14.4 million from DAFF. MLA will contribute an additional \$3.5 million over the three year program. In addition, DAFF will fund five projects related to manure management.

Building capability

Scholars pay it forward

When industry invests in personal development scholarships, the returns are delivered over lifetimes.

Nuffield Australia chairman, Terry Hehir, said sponsoring producers to undertake Nuffield scholarships creates red meat industry leaders out of the industry's own ranks, ensuring issues are understood first-hand.

"Having leaders who are producers on the ground means they are tackling local issues and disseminating that information to fellow producers - who are often more

inclined to listen to their peers, instead of someone who might be seen as being more removed from production," he said.

"They are able to bring the issues from a local to a national level, and can create networks through which industry can distribute the results of its investment in research and development."



For more information on scholarships:
Nuffield Australia: www.nuffield.com.au

1,250
Nuffield scholars
worldwide

1947
year first Nuffield
awarded

30 June, 2012
2013 Nuffield
applications close



One means of building capability in the meat industry is to expose individual producers to a range of experiences. The Nuffield and Australian Rural Leadership programs take just that approach.

Queensland cattle producer Ray Vella is finding many pre-conceived notions are being turned on their head during his Nuffield experience.

From Marlborough to Mexico

A tired but elated, Ray Vella was in Houston, Texas, when *Feedback* caught up with him.

The MLA-sponsored Nuffield scholar was nearing the end of a multi-week tour of New Zealand, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and North and South America. His scholarship is to research beef cattle productivity in challenging environments.

Ray and his wife, Leah, run Brahman-cross cattle and a Brahman stud on their 7,200ha property, "Bald Hills" near Marlborough, Queensland.

The Nuffield scholar has already shattered some preconceptions.

"In Brazil, they couldn't work out why I was so obsessed about genetics," Ray said. "Brazilians reckon you need to get the pastures right first."

He thinks it's still a matter of balance. The Brazilian ranches he visited soil-test annually, not just to determine nutrient rates but to assess what nutrients cattle might be missing out on.

In Mexico, at the CIMMYT International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre, Ray got thinking a bit more when introduced to "greenseeker" technology.

Using a handheld device, the technology scans pastures to produce a readout on fertility indicators, like nutrient deficiencies and soil organic matter.

All this emphasis on pasture has made Ray realise how little he knows about pasture, and what might be gained from a stronger focus.

The trip has also given Ray a better appreciation of business management.

"In Australia, we're great at producing beef, but we usually don't know much about the business and marketing angles," he said.

Increasing the diversity of beef markets for rangelands producers should be a priority, Ray thinks, which may mean improving producers' understanding of what business opportunities are available.

His travels have also given him the impression the lack of youth in agriculture is a global problem, and one that needs to be resolved.

Ray, himself, left school at 16. He conveys the sense of privilege he has at having the learning opportunities provided by Nuffield.

"When I was first awarded the scholarship, I didn't think I could do it," he admitted.

"I'm getting used to the idea now. Because the selection committee saw something in me, I want to repay the favour."

He's already been away for nearly 10 weeks, and this is just the initial part of his Nuffield experience.



Ray's Nuffield blog:
www.marlboroughmantravels.blogspot.com
E: rvella.mla@gmail.com

Research at work

Every month, check this section of *Feedback* to find the latest information and resources for making a difference in the paddock.

In this issue

Predator control

Tactics for reducing the impact of predation on your flock or herd this spring

Spring calving

How to manage the potential challenges resulting from a good winter

Managing mortality

Bangtail musters are just one tool for better monitoring of northern beef herd numbers

Best Wool Best Lamb in the Mallee

Lessons learned from Producer Demonstration Site



Predator control

Taking the bait



Wild dogs and foxes cost the Australian livestock industry more than \$100 million each year. With a coordinated community approach and the help of local authorities, producers can minimise the impact on their production.

Fast fact

PAPP (para-amino propiophenone) is a toxin being developed for wild dog and fox baits and induces a condition known as methaemoglobinaemia (similar to the affect of carbon monoxide poisoning) and is fast acting, results in a painless and more humane death and can be reversed in case of accidental poisoning, eg in working dogs.

The Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre (IACRC) has called for community-wide baiting and control programs, to lessen the impacts of wild dogs and foxes.

Greg Mifsud, IACRC National Wild Dog Coordinator, said producers introducing some key strategies prior to lambing, calving or kidding, could see weaning rates lifted significantly.

"In spring, a community baiting program is essential," Greg said. "To be effective, control programs need to be delivered over a broad area and this means conducting baiting programs in conjunction with neighbours.

"Baiting in isolation results in re-colonisation from other areas and properties that don't control foxes and wild dogs severely impacts on the success of the overall program. Even landholders not directly affected should take part."

Before spring, integrating several control techniques (like spotlighting and trapping) in between baiting is important.

"One technique on its own won't result in effective control and it's important to take early action. If wild dogs and foxes are present then wild dog strength baits are needed because fox baits (with less 1080) are unlikely to kill wild dogs," Greg said.

Greg said there were a number of ways to prevent working dogs taking bait.

"Baits should be buried underground in known, marked locations. They can be tied to a location to prevent shifting by predators. Muzzles can be used on working dogs."

Baiting programs should be the same for protecting cattle.

"There has been an increase in wild dogs affecting cattle herds across the country," he added.

"Even if producers don't have lambing, kidding or calving occurring, they should still take part in baiting programs to ensure greater control is achieved over the whole region. If wild dogs are left in isolated areas, they'll soon move into the land that has been previously cleared of predators."

The IACRC has been developing new technologies, due to come online within the next 12-18 months, which should further lessen the risk of baits to working dogs.

"These include a toxin called PAPP (para-amino propiophenone) which has an antidote and will be available in a manufactured bait; and the M-44 ejector which will contain either 1080, PAPP or cyanide," Greg said.



Photography courtesy of Jason Wishart, Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre

"It's a spring-loaded device containing poison which is ejected into the predator's mouth when it pulls on the baited section which sits above the ground."

Predator control is vital for livestock welfare. In most cases predators maim stock, rather than just taking them for food.

"To lessen predator impact, some producers choose to implement additional options such as livestock guardian dogs," Greg said.

MLA funded R&D, the majority of which is through the IACRC, includes a multi-dose toxin ejector (funded by MLA only), a bait containing PAPP for wild dog control and a PAPP paste to target animals such as foxes and feral cats.

Products to help fight the predators

The Invasive Animals CRC has a number of tools to help producers better manage wild dogs and foxes.

Here are a few:

→ *The Managing Vertebrate Pests DVD* - Provides tips and techniques for capturing wild dogs and foxes, particularly using foot hold traps. Distributed widely for use at field days and training courses, it is also available free to landholders.

E: contact@invasiveanimals.com or T: 02 6201 2887.

→ Producers can download the *Glovebox Guide for Managing Wild Dogs* at www.feral.org.au/pestsmart-glovebox-guide-for-managing-wild-dogs/

→ Go online to www.feralscan.org.au to map where wild dogs, feral goats and starlings occur anywhere across Australia. The site is designed to record sightings, damage and control activities.

Predator control checklist

Coordinate and apply wild dog management at landscape scale

- Coordinate a planned, community management program involving all stakeholders in the district.
- Seek assistance from local authorities.
- Start baiting programs prior to spring.
- Integrate as many forms of control as possible for the spring baiting program.
- Use trapping and spotlighting in conjunction with baiting.
- Be mindful that no one technique on its own will deliver effective control.
- Long term, targeted, on-farm programs can reduce annual impacts.

Target control

- Be proactive, not reactive, to lessen future predator populations.
- Actively search for predator presence and implement control before numbers get out of hand.

Minimise risk to working dogs

- Follow best practise baiting guidelines to limit risk to working dogs.
- Retrieve and destroy baits.
- Tie baits with wire to known locations and/or bury them to ensure bait has been eaten or collected prior to mustering.
- Muzzle dogs.
- Tie and bury baits to prevent them being removed by non-targets.
- Strategically place baits in areas of known wild dog activity for more effective control.
- Leave working dogs at home when checking baits or travelling to areas where control has been undertaken.
- Manage other farm activities prior to baiting programs so wild dogs are not disturbed and forced from the area.
- Manage predators to reduce impacts as eradication is unlikely.



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Watch episode 17 of *feedbackTV* for a story on controlling pests and predators.

www.youtube.com/mlafeedbacktv



www.invasiveanimals.com



Snapshot

Andrew and Glenda Bowran, Tallangatta, Vic.



Property:
1,215ha

Enterprise:
Cattle and sheep

Livestock:
600 cattle, 2,000 Merino sheep

Pasture:
Native, undulating pasture and bushland

Watching their flocks

Since implementing a guardian dog program, cattle and sheep producers Andrew and Glenda Bowran are sleeping easy. Not having to listen for wild dogs attacking their flock at night or having to deal with injured stock has taken an enormous load off their minds. The other benefit has been annual lamb survival rates have increased.

Sheep farming became unviable on their 1,215 ha property in the early 2000s because of wild dog predation, due to large losses of lambs and sheep. Added to this was the lost income from a lifetime of wool and meat production.

When all other control measures failed, Andrew and Glenda turned to guardian dogs. In 2006, three Maremma pups were bonded to sheep and socialised with humans.

Today, four Maremmas guard 'Riversdale' sheep, lambs are surviving and no adult sheep are lost to predation.

Andrew said when the pups were six-months-old they were moved to a bigger paddock near the house with a larger group of sheep.

"They gradually started to move toward the main sheep grazing area and after about two months they didn't return to the smaller paddock," he said.

"When the dogs settled amongst the sheep, we put a self-feeding system in the sheep yards. The dogs are not confined to any one area and on rare occasions when they return to the house, we lead them back up the hill."

The Bowran's Maremmas also guard the neighbours' sheep.

"Our neighbour's lambing time is a fortnight before ours, so the dogs will go there to protect the lambs, but as soon as our lambing starts, they return. Once Maremmas bond with sheep, it's their natural instinct to guard them."

He said watching Maremmas at work was remarkable.

"They'll round the sheep up, hold them on a ridge or similar and put themselves between the sheep and the wild dog.

"Some people become disillusioned with guardian dogs and give up on them," Andrew said. "But we've found with good, persistent training they are unbelievable. You need to ensure the dogs accept you as the leader and allow you to handle them.

"De-sexing all working dogs is essential to prevent unwanted breeding with wild dogs."



Andrew and Glenda Bowran
T: 02 6071 7231



Learn more about guardian dogs in the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre *Guardian Dogs - Best Practice Manual for the use of Livestock Guardian Dogs*
www.invasiveanimals.com

Why so many feral animals this year?

Pest animals, particularly those that rely heavily on pasture such as feral pigs and rabbits, tend to do very well in the months and years following high rainfall.

Steve Lapidge of the Invasive Animals CRC said wild pig populations, which exploded in western NSW after the Bourke floods in 2010, are now predicted to rise in Queensland.

A dramatic increase in rabbit numbers is also expected over coming months due to prolonged spring conditions being experienced in southern Australia. If left unchecked, rabbit populations could again reach plague proportions.

Although the response can be delayed, fox, wild dog and feral cat numbers will also

increase after flooding rains due to the increase of their prey populations, which can have devastating flow-on consequences for livestock production, native wildlife survival and vulnerable ecosystems.

Labour saving in sheep



Sheep – not all hard work

A new manual is designed to help sheep producers implement smart labour systems to lift efficiency and productivity.

One of the perceived challenges of maintaining or increasing sheep production is the high requirement for labour.

But WA agricultural consultant Bob Hall, argues sheep don't have to be hard work and can be run economically.

He has co-authored a manual called *Sheep - The Simple Guide to Making More Money with Less Work* in collaboration with researchers from the Sheep Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) and Department of Agriculture and Food WA (DAFWA). →

→

It ties in with the management principles promoted throughout the Making More From Sheep (MMFS) program and outlines how to use the latest sheep industry research, technology, innovation and practical advice to generate greater labour efficiencies and profits in sheep enterprises.

Bob said WA's top sheep producers commonly ran 8,000-10,000 Dry Sheep Equivalent (DSE)/labour unit, but this could be lifted to 10,000-15,000 DSE/labour unit if labour efficiency constraints were removed.

"A well planned system and smart use of labour can make management easier without needing more staff and without impacting on productivity," he said.

Bob said in WA, summer shearing and winter lambing was the best combination to maximise sheep system efficiency and returns.

"It is vital to match periods of high sheep nutritional requirements to good feed availability," he said.

"Pregnancy scanning of ewes and feed budgeting will help to achieve year-round sheep

The Australian Wool Innovation's The Sheep's Back network will host seminars across WA this winter that include labour saving ideas for sheep and wool producers.

Labour saving initiatives will also be discussed at the LambEx 2012 seminar in Bendigo, on June 28-29. To register go to www.lambex.com.au

An eastern Australian version of the *Sheep - The Simple Guide to Making More Money with Less Work* manual is being developed.

condition score profiles that optimise reproductive performance, lambing percentages, meat and wool production and minimise flock mortalities."

Bob said further labour savings could be made by having good farm laneway systems, investing in modern sheep infrastructure and handling equipment, amalgamating husbandry jobs and ensuring sheep were healthy.

He said the argument that sheep were not worth this investment did not stack up.

"In the WA Wheatbelt, as the percentage of farm area sown to crops increases above 60-70%, overall farm profits tend to decline," he said.

"In traditional sheep areas, profits start to drop when cropped area climbs above 40% at the expense of pasture.

"For many farm businesses, sheep are also needed to spread risk, manage grazing and help with weed control for cropping."



Bob Hall

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LambEx

www.lambex.com.au



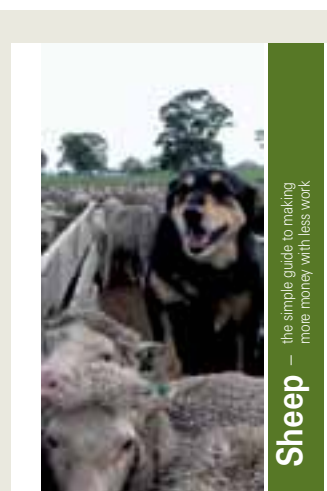
1,351_{DSE}

on the average WA farm
(344ha arable land) in 1964

17,877_{DSE}

on the average WA farm
(2,536ha arable land with
744ha crop) in 2010

Source: JRL Hall & Co



Sheep - The Simple Guide to Making More Money with Less Work can be found at www.makingmorefromsheep.com.au

in the Hot Topics section under the module tab and then click on Easy Sheep Management

Making more from sheep - saving labour, money and time: A checklist

- Smart management and labour use starts with a whole-year plan for the sheep enterprise.
- Make timely decisions and react quickly to seasonal conditions.
- Use time-efficient husbandry systems, such as improved water points and big feed trailers.
- Amalgamate tasks such as tailing, drenching and lice control.
- Create well designed laneways.
- Invest in good sheep handling facilities, including a modern shearing shed, and latest equipment and production technologies.
- Match sheep stocking rates to available feed and undertake feed budgeting to run an efficient sheep enterprise.
- Manage year-round sheep condition score to optimise flock productivity and reduce mortalities.
- Pregnancy scan ewes for more accurate feed allocation to meet sheep energy requirements.
- Manage weaners to optimise production and reduce mortalities.
- Run big mobs to save time and effort.
- Breed easy care sheep, including those that do not require mulesing.
- Control parasites and disease to produce healthy sheep that are less labour intensive.
- Benchmark gross margins, costs of production and returns from meat and wool each year to assess efficiency and identify areas for improvement.

Source: *Sheep - The Simple Guide to Making More Money with Less Work*, produced by the Sheep CRC and DAFWA

Snapshot

Craig, Helen, Bob and Elizabeth Lubcke, Darkan, WA.



Property:
2,335ha

Enterprise:
Prime lamb and wool production, cropping

Livestock:
17,000DSE

Pasture:
Subclover mixes, ryegrass

Soil:
Bauxite gravel, sandplain over clay

Rainfall:
475mm



Labour savings in sheep

Difficulties sourcing quality permanent staff have forced the Lubcke family to use contract labour for major sheep husbandry operations on their Darkan farm in south-west WA.

The mining boom in that state has decimated the agricultural workforce and Craig Lubcke and his father Bob now bring in locally based contractors for shearing, crutching, pregnancy scanning ewes and tailing lambs.

Craig said this was cost efficient because the scale of their sheep enterprise at 17,000 Dry Sheep Equivalent minimised costs per head, tasks were completed in less time and family members were freed-up to do other jobs.

About 60% of the Lubcke's farm business comprises prime lamb and wool production from 6,000 Merino ewes and up to 2,500 crossbred ewes mated to terminal sires. Mixed cropping makes up the balance.

The labour force comprises Craig, his wife Helen and two children (when home from boarding school), and Bob and his wife Elizabeth.

A switch to using contract labour for major sheep tasks has coincided with the purchase of bigger seeding and harvesting equipment to allow the family to get more done across the entire farm business with less manpower.

Planning ahead

Craig said sheep management, cropping operations and budgets were carefully planned at the start of each year and benchmarked to analyse progress.

He said Bob Hall, author of the new *Sheep - The Simple Guide to Making More Money with*

Less Work manual, had been the family's consultant for 30 years and they also sourced information through the Sheep's Back program and Pastures From Space.

Craig said their sheep production system was based on optimising productivity and labour use by pregnancy scanning ewes and splitting them into single bearers, multiple bearers and dry sheep for preferential feeding.

Sheep are regularly assessed for condition score to ensure the correct feed regime to meet animal requirements and minimise wastage of pastures and supplements.

Bob said the family had upgraded its shearing shed, covered all yard areas, installed sprinklers in yards and invested in new technologies for automatic jetting and backlining to make sheep handling jobs easier and faster.

Making less work

"When we are weaning we also vaccinate, drench and jet for flies all in one pass," he said.

"All our sheep work is done on a Sheepman VE handler and we refuse to work in a drenching race.

"Having healthy sheep is a priority, as this reduces our workload during the year."

Craig said labour efficiencies had been made at shearing by removing the wool classing table and running separate presses for fleeces and other pieces.

"We save one labour unit and about 40 cents/head in workers compensation insurance with this system," he said.

Using family members to push-up sheep at crutching enables 2,000-2,500 sheep to be processed per day and contract pregnancy scanning can process 3,500-4,000 head per day.

Craig said although labour efficiencies in the farm business had been made out of necessity, these measures had allowed them to maintain high sheep numbers while still cropping 40% of the property.



Craig Lubcke // T: 0427 361 131



Investing in well designed infrastructure has been one labour saving technique employed by the Lubckes.

Effectively managing out-of-season calvers

Northern cattle producers can use a simple breeder segregation system to quickly become more profitable and sustainable.

Segregating breeders in northern Australian herds can enhance cow body condition at critical times to increase re-conception rates, decrease overheads and operating costs, and tighten the calving period to produce fewer lighter heifers at first mating.

Mt Isa cattle veterinarian Ian Braithwaite said introducing a breeder segregation system to manage cows that calved out of season (from May to October) could lift weaning percentages by 25% a year for the ensuing four years.

"In more extensive areas of northern Australia, bulls are run year round, but calving windows can be controlled through preg testing, foetal ageing and segregation without bull removal," Ian said.

"Out-of-season calvers lose body condition fairly markedly because they are calving down when pasture nutrition is declining, and have difficulty raising calves. We see higher mortalities in this group.

"To identify this group and market them for cash flow minimises the problem and generates first-round income."

The segregation system

The initial steps are to segregate wet and dry cows at first-round muster, around the end of the growing season (March-April), and to manage each mob separately.

"(Without segregation) you have to look after every cow in the herd to feed the out-of-season calvers, which is costly. If you keep them separate, you can target your efforts for that group of cows," Ian said.

Each year, producers need to decide whether to cull or keep the out-of-season calving mob.

If sufficient pasture is available, the late calvers can be kept segregated and unweaned until the break of season, at the

Up to
25% annual gain
in weaning rates for four years
following segregation implementation

Up to
\$50 a head
saving in supplementation

end of the year. Ian said this would let the lactating cow's body condition score slip to around 2.5 and interrupt cycling. After weaning, the cow regains body condition and re-commences cycling.

The timing of weaning for segregated out-of-season calvers is critical to bring them back in line with the ideal calving group.

Pregnancy testing the segregated group helps to identify the worst reproductive performers. Producers with good replacement heifers can increase pressure on fertility by culling all cows that lose a calf between pregnancy testing and branding, regardless of how the calf may have been lost.

Enterprise benefits

Ian said that he could lift weaning rates by 25% on four-year rolling averages for businesses not using these systems, which he likened to bringing on an entire weaning crop every four years.

"Once I paddock 1,000 cows, pregnancy tested in calf (PTIC), I'll guarantee 85% weaning," he said (ie a 15% calf loss between preg test and weaning).

"If we've identified 1,000 PTIC cows to calve by a certain time, and only 650 come in with a weaner, we're starting to use the system to identify animal production issues like disease or predation."

Saving feed supplement costs can be a lucrative spin-off from managing

out-of-season calvers as a separate mob, without affecting re-conception rates. In herds of 10,000 breeders, Ian recalled savings of up to \$500,000 a year. Reducing the calving window from 12 months to seven months and using foetal ageing information gives business predictability and helps identify marketable animals up to a year ahead

In addition, Ian said that replacement heifers taken from a shorter calving window were a lot better grown, meaning fewer lighter heifers at joining and improved first-time conception rates.

Essential elements

Essential requirements for a successful breeder segregation system include an effective heifer replacement program, some basic infrastructure to keep breeders separated and a careful plan to manage the various mobs.

"Even with basic infrastructure these systems will work, but a producer who can save \$200,000 in supplementation costs can afford to invest a little more in infrastructure," Ian said.

The potential benefits include:

- reduced dry season supplementation costs because supplements can be targeted
- easier marketing of cull females (planned, no need to muster all breeders)
- increased re-conception rates
- decreased breeder mortalities
- decreased mustering costs in subsequent years (one round for most breeder calving groups)
- more effective drought planning (destocking options based on the level of risk associated with each mob).

The challenges include:

- a reasonable number of secure paddocks
- pregnancy rates in lactating breeders are lower on tougher country
- access to good markets for cull cows
- running a good weaner program.



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Download *Heifer management in northern beef herds* at www.mla.com.au/heifermanual or *Managing the breeder herd - Practical steps to breeding livestock in northern Australia* at www.mla.com.au/breederherd

Segregating breeders: a profitable strategy



Snapshot

Dan and Sue Lynch, 'Tara' via Cloncurry, Qld.



Property:
20,000ha

Enterprise:
Beef cattle breeding

Livestock:
3,000 Brahman breeders

Pasture:
Mitchell, flinders, blue grass, herbage in some seasons

Soil:
Predominantly grey cracking soils, with some red and sandy soils

Rainfall:
400mm annual average; variation 100-1,000mm

Queensland producer Dan Lynch has found breeder segregation a proven strategy for managing grass, calves and cash flow.

Queensland producer, Dan Lynch, introduced a breeder segregation system 13 years ago to match his herd's peak nutritional requirements with peak pasture nutrition.

"Basically, this system reduces overheads and can increase production by 30% within the first 18 months," he said. Dan estimated savings of \$35-65/head in supplements for out-of-season calvers, if aiming for re-conceptions."

"By June, after a foetal age pregnancy test, I will know the calf numbers for 2013."

Dan's cows begin calving two months prior to the onset of the wet season (the 'green date'). The breeders' peak nutritional requirements then occur during the wet season when the pasture usually offers a high level of nutrition.

"We also expect the lactating cows to re-conceive during lactation, and to achieve that, they have to be in at least body score 3.5 going into calving," he said.

Dan has used breeder segregation and a 63-day controlled joining - without removing the bulls - to tighten his calving period to November-December. Calves are weaned according to cow body condition scores.

"Weaners are left on cows that calve after the end of January. This produces a big weaner and the cow re-conceives in the following January - February. Weaning controls re-conceptions."

Each year, Dan decides whether to keep the late calvers. His decision is dictated by available pasture, firstly, and then whether he needs extra calves or extra cash.

Managing for drought

Dan said managing breeders to calve in the ideal breeding envelope (November-January) meant their calves could be weaned earlier.

"If the wet season doesn't eventuate, you are not handling wet cows with baby calves," he said.

"It increases your management options in drought."

Selecting for fertility

Dan has used breeder segregation to increase breeding pressure on fertility by culling all cows that lose a calf between pregnancy testing and branding.

"You can easily identify cows that don't have a calf at branding, and the meatworks usually pay higher prices at that time of year," he said.

"We can't identify the cows that have lost calves due to predation, but we've reduced our calf losses between preg testing to branding from the industry average of about 14% to about 6%."

Saving overheads and direct costs

By segregating breeders using a professional pregnancy testing service that offers accurate foetal ageing, Dan has made considerable savings in overheads and direct costs.

"Foetal age preg testing and then segregation of calving groups is more cost beneficial than testing for in-calf and non-detectable. It's what you do with the preg test information that returns the value of preg testing."



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Plan ahead to avoid calving time pitfalls



Winter is no time to rest on your laurels. For southern beef producers with spring calving herds, it's a time to make some sage decisions about grazing strategies to make the most of any extra feed while protecting herd health.

Cattle veterinarian Rod Manning urges southern producers to plan ahead to avoid the major pitfalls of good springs - dystocia in heifers, disease and mineral deficiencies leading to metabolic disturbances such as milk fever and grass tetany.

"One of the main issues is allocating feed correctly to different animal classes. Work out how much energy is required per animal per day and adjust your stocking rate accordingly," he said.

"Ideally older cows should have a fat score of about three (not above 3.5 and not below 2.5) and heifers should have a fat score of no-more-than three otherwise you can have

increased problems with dystocia (calving difficulties). Hill paddocks, where they can walk, are ideal for heifers."

Rod emphasised the importance of keeping a herd in condition score of high twos to low threes to control body weight and an increasing plane of nutrition post calving to aid a rapid return to oestrus post-calving.

"If cattle are overweight you run more risk of calving difficulties, if cattle are underweight you can have a slow return to oestrus post calving and effect reproductive performance," he said.

"Ideally you want a cow back in calf by day 82 post-calving to maintain the same calving period each year. At the end of the day, it's about getting kilograms of beef out the gate - you don't get paid for over feeding a fat cow sitting in the paddock. That extra feed would be better allocated finishing off young stock."

BetterBeef Network (BBN) presenter and consultant with the Mackinnon Project at the University of Melbourne, John Webb Ware also highlighted a number of post-calving issues producers should be aware of.

"The low calcium levels in very lush feed can cause lazy calving syndrome where the heifers don't push very well during labour," he said.

Checklist

- Spring-calving cows should be body condition score three and heifers no more than three to reduce risk of calving difficulties.
- Low calcium levels in lush feed increases the risk of lazy calving syndrome (uterine inertia) and milk fever in the first week post-calving.
- Vaccinate, particularly young cattle, against clostridial diseases such as black leg and pulpy kidney with at least two shots four to six weeks apart before the onset of high quality feed in the spring.
- Prevention is the best cure. Develop a feed allocation strategy for different stock classes and get stock used to supplements such as magnesium, calcium and selenium blocks months before the critical risk periods.
- Run the older, high risk grass tetany cows (third lactation or better) on the lower risk paddocks that have higher clover, more standing dry feed and no recent history of potash application.

Ideally a cow should be back in calf by day

82

"Sometimes all the producer will notice is a dead calf in the paddock. This is more common during seasons when there's been green feed all the way through. Putting animals in paddocks with roughage or feeding out hay can help boost calcium availability and can go some way to reducing this."

In lush seasons older cows are at increased risk of milk fever (hypocalcaemia), particularly in the first week post-calving, as well as the onset of grass tetany a little later in the gestation usually in the first 4-6 weeks post-calving.

In situations with these high risk older cows, they need access to low risk paddocks that contain more roughage and no history of recent potash application.

"If you wait until you've got losses, it's almost too late to get an effective response from blocks and dry licks as it's hard to gauge how many cows actually bother to use them and it takes time to get all the cattle interested in eating salt," John said.

Clostridial diseases such as black leg and pulpy kidney are also a concern, particularly to weaners during good seasons that don't have a full, effective vaccination program in place.

The risk of selenium deficiency is higher in rapidly growing young stock in lush seasons in certain areas and supplementation should be implemented to improve growth if selenium deficiency is known to be a problem in your area.

Muscling up the herd

Increasing muscling in your herd can substantially improve returns without compromising growth, feed efficiency or any reproductive traits, recent research has found.



According to an MLA and Beef CRC-funded project, for each unit of improvement in muscle score (eg D to C), producers can expect a 15-21¢/kg increase in price received at live cattle sales.

Research Officer, Dr Linda Cafe, said the past two years of work, which also utilised 15 years of prior data from the NSW Department of Primary Industries' Angus muscling herd, has dispelled the myth that increased muscling in a herd will have negative impacts on cow performance traits such as calving ease and milk production.

"We compared cows selected for high or low visual muscle score. The cows in the high muscling line were similar in weight, slightly smaller in frame score and had more muscle and less subcutaneous fat than cows in the low muscling line," she said.

"These differences in body composition have not led to any difference in reproductive performance, with high muscling cows showing no difference in calving rates or calving ease, and producing weaned calves of similar weight to those of the low muscled cows."

The research also found that progeny from the high muscling line had similar feedlot growth rates to those from the low muscling line but improved feed efficiency, larger eye muscle area (EMA) and more retail meat yield.

However, Linda said care should be taken using extreme muscling genes, for example the myostatin (a growth factor which leads to double muscling) gene.

"During the study a third line of cows carrying one copy of a myostatin gene had the same performance as high muscled cows on moderate to good nutrition but their performance was reduced after 18 months on low nutrition," she said.

This project will run for a further two years.



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More Beef from Pastures manual at www.mla.com.au/morebeeffrompastures



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A new study aims to give the northern beef industry a greater understanding of the impact of breeder mortality on their enterprises.

Gains to come from better mortality recording

Recent surveys of beef operations across extensive pastoral regions across northern Australia indicate that most producers are unaware of the level of impact that breeder mortality can have on their profitability.

Many beef producers have traditionally estimated their breeder losses to be around 3% but surveys conducted in the Northern Territory in 2010 indicated true breeder mortality rates could be as high as 9%.

MLA is now undertaking a study of seven regions across northern Australia to get a better understanding of the issue of breeder mortality at a station level.

Preliminary findings from this study indicate average regional breeder mortality rates have ranged from around 3% to 12% annually over the last three to four years. The seasonal and management reasons for this range in mortality rates are being analysed.

Alastair Henderson, a livestock consultant with more than 40 years' experience in the northern beef industry, has teamed up with consultants Steve Banney and Nigel Perkins, to lead the research project.

The project team analysed station records from 39 properties across northern Australia.

Alistair hopes the research findings, due later this year, will give producers a better understanding of the negative impact breeder deaths can have on their bottom line.

"We believe that the economic modelling on individual properties that we are currently undertaking will show a significant economic impact at a property level," Alistair said.

He commented that the accuracy of station records was not uniformly high and suggested northern producers could achieve a higher rate of accuracy by conducting bangtail musters every three to four years (see box below).

The results of the study will be finalised later this year, however Alistair said producers could start to consider ways to get a true understanding of their breeder mortality rate.

"The most important thing is to establish a recording system to accurately record cattle numbers handled, brandings and movements onto or off the property," he said.

"If producers aren't using electronic identification tags, a bangtail muster can be a starting point or a check method to compare with previous bangtail musters."

Below: Alastair Henderson



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Bcowplus www.dpi.qld.gov.au/16_6987.htm

Getting bang from your bangtail muster

A bangtail muster, if properly conducted, provides a very cheap and accurate tool for estimating the number of stock on a property. If all the stock that are captured (yarded) are identified with a cut tail (bangtail) and released back into the paddocks, then after a period of about 4-6 weeks it is reasonable to assume that they will be once again evenly distributed in the herd.



Find out more at www.mla.com.au/bangtailmuster



Checklist

The issues that affect breeder mortality rates are well known to most northern beef producers. However, producers could consider the following factors when looking to lower their breeder mortality rate:

- dry season protein supplementation
- examine the cull for age policy - generally reduce age of culling with emphasis on culling any breeder with broken mouth
- wet season phosphorus supplementation
- botulism vaccination
- assess other health risk areas eg tick fever
- early weaning and weaner ration supplementation
- stocking rates in line with carrying capacity
- selection of appropriate genotype for the region
- heifer management
- pregnancy testing and segregation of breeders on the basis of stage of pregnancy, with targeted supplementation for those that calve out of season
- consider controlled mating

What can producers do to get a handle on breeder mortality rates?

1. Carry out a bangtail muster every three years
2. Maintain accurate herd records

Preliminary survey findings indicate average breeder mortality range between

3% to 12%
per annum

Triple treat for northern producers

Catchall DVD for northern R&D

Find 20 years of northern cattle industry R&D in one place with the new *FutureBeef technical library*. This free DVD catalogue features technical resources published between 1992 and 2011, including final reports, publications, producer profiles, newsletters, factsheets, webinars and short videos. The resource has been produced by MLA in partnership with the Queensland Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation, Northern Territory Department of Resources and Western Australia Agriculture Authority.

Order the DVD at www.mla.com.au

Improve heifer fertility to increase profits

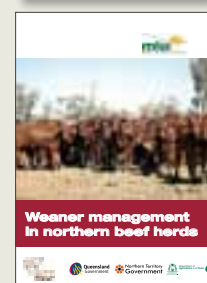
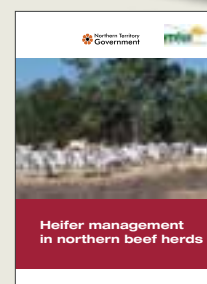
A new MLA guide provides everything you need to know about managing your heifers - from breeding to weaning. *Heifer management in northern beef herds* is a short, readable guide to best practice management, drawn from the latest MLA-funded research into the topic.

Visit www.mla.com.au/heifermanual to download *Heifer management in northern beef herds*.

Increase beef outputs through good weaning management

A new MLA publication has been released to provide northern cattle producers with practical insights for best practice weaning to improve herd productivity and profitability. The guide outlines the best management practices for weaning as well as the benefits of early weaning calves in difficult conditions to improve breeder fertility and reduce mortality.

Visit www.mla.com.au/weanermanual to download *Weaner management in northern beef herds*.



Best Wool Best Lamb



Group power helps Mallee producers

A group of like-minded sheep producers in the cropping dominated Victorian Mallee have learnt the value of research and knowledge gain to improve their businesses.

Farming can be a challenging business, but if producers work together to problem solve and share ideas and knowledge the outcomes can be quite powerful and profitable.

That is the experience of the Nullawil Best Wool Best Lamb (BWBL) Group in Victoria, whose achievements have become a flagship for how producers can benefit from networking and working together.

Formed in 2001, the group has tackled a range of issues from plant selection and grazing cereal crops for sheep through to electric fencing and group marketing of prime lambs.

Results have been keenly followed by producers wanting to diversify their cropping based businesses, with uptake of technology and more controlled grazing practices helping group members achieve more production from their sheep flocks while not affecting cropping acreages.

Problem solving

Group coordinator Garry Armstrong, from the Victorian Department of Primary Industries (DPI) at Echuca, said the success was a reflection of similar minded producers working together to solve issues relevant to them in a practical manner.

"Producers are tactile learners. They want to see how something works on their own farm or in their own environment before they are likely to adopt it," Garry said.

The Nullawil BWBL Group has 27 producer members, and a core group of about 17 who

regularly attend meetings and drive research activities.

Profitable grazing crops

A key area of research for the group has been how to incorporate specialist grazing crops into Mallee farming systems so breeding ewe flocks could be more profitable and sustainable. This was achieved through a Producer Demonstration Site (PDS) grant, part funded by MLA.

"As a group, producers have a lot more power to network and gain interaction with professionals that can help them achieve their goals, compared to acting as an individual," Garry said.

This was best illustrated by the group embarking on joint marketing of prime lambs to meatworks over the hooks, rather than being individual price takers in the saleyards.

"A few years ago the idea of several producers putting lambs on one truck to make up a kill order wouldn't have been thought of, but that's the sort of change that can happen when producers are willing to question and discuss options," Garry said.

Feedback magazine will revisit the Nullawil BWBL group later in the year.



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Best Wool Best Lamb
www.dpi.vic.gov.au/agriculture/beef-and-sheep/sheep/bestwoolbestlamb

More than just sharing ideas

The practice of sharing ideas and knowledge has grown into sharing equipment for producers in the Nullawil BWBL Group, in Victoria's Mallee.

Last year members banded together to buy a Pratley three-way draft and weigh platform – a \$14,000 piece of equipment which would not have been a viable investment for individuals running limited sheep numbers amid their cropping programs.

Group coordinator Garry Armstrong said cost-sharing was a smart way for producers with similar aims to tap into equipment that could help them generate better profits.

"Through practical experience the group could really understand the need to be able to accurately measure to manage for optimum returns," Mr Armstrong said.

Nullawil producer and BWBL member Geoff Poyner said the value of knowing lamb growth rates and weights was highlighted last year when group members began drafting stock from various properties to fill a domestic kill order.

He said lambs on one property were too heavy by a few kilograms, and when sold through the saleyard system made less money than the lighter domestic lambs sent over-the-hooks.

"Those lambs were 3-4 kilograms carcase weight heavier yet sold for \$15 a head less than the over-the-hooks lambs, and it really showed us how vital it is to know exactly what your lambs are doing in regards to weights and meeting specifications to get the best results," Geoff said.

Members of the group have built a trailer so that the draft and weigh platform can be easily moved between properties.

Best Wool Best Lamb leads to producer confidence

Geoff Poyner is one producer to benefit from the variety of topics covered by his local Best Wool Best Lamb group.

Being a member of an active producer group has helped shape Geoff Poyner's prime lamb enterprise into, what he describes as, a more 'professional and profitable' operation.

Geoff and his wife Edna, who run the Morecambe Poll Dorset stud at Nullawil, joined the local Best Wool Best Lamb (BWBL) group on its inception in 2001 and said it has fired them up to chase the extra dollar by really showing them what is possible.

"We've got a lot out of it - it has been a catalyst for a more professional and profitable attitude towards sheep in this Mallee area."

The Poyner's run 200 stud ewes and 350 commercial Merino ewes, joined to their Poll Dorset rams, alongside cropping on their 800 hectare property.

Geoff said the research and activities of the BWBL group had changed people's perceptions of the income potential of sheep in the grain-focused Mallee.

"With cropping you are never sure what you are going to get due to the influence of the season and rainfall, whereas with livestock you can generally bank on a certain amount of income," he said.

Geoff said a key benefit of working within a producer group was easier access to information and ideas, and developing the confidence to use it.

"The group has covered everything from grazing systems to sheep yard design, pregnancy scanning and using Alpacas (as flock guards)," he said.

"By putting elements of all these in place we've been able to effectively run more sheep for better results, and a lot of other members have had the same outcome."

Mr Poyner said an exciting part of membership had been the progression of the group's research activities into the impact of genetics on profits.

"We are now looking at pedigree match-making ewes and lambs using individual electronic ID and walk-over weigh systems to monitor growth rates and performance, and that sort of research is just something difficult to do by yourself," he said.



Snapshot

Geoff and Edna Poyner, Nullawil, Vic.



Property:
800ha

Enterprise:
Poll Dorset stud, commercial prime lambs and cropping

Livestock:
200 stud ewes and 350 commercial Merino ewes joined to terminal sires

Pasture:
Improved species and specialist grazing crops plus stubbles

Soil:
Sandy red loam

Rainfall:
375mm



Geoff Poyner // T: 03 5493 5241

The refreshed Meat Standards Australia (MSA) 'graded' symbol hit meat cabinets in February this year and is already making its mark with just over 40% of consumers surveyed now aware of the symbol.

MSA symbol hitting the mark

The strong awareness level comes hot on the heels of a national advertising campaign to increase awareness of the MSA program and symbol.

The campaign ran over three weeks in capital cities and consisted of a 30-second 'What's new?' infomercial that introduced the new MSA symbol to consumers as a visual identifier of quality they can trust.

Print advertisements also featured in metropolitan newspapers in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth to educate consumers that the MSA logo can help them take the guesswork out of buying beef.

Growing awareness has also been helped by the national presence the logo is achieving through retailer adoption at the point-of-sale. Combined with other marketing materials the use of the MSA logo at point-of-sale accounts for more than half of all the places where consumers surveyed said they had seen the symbol.

However, as awareness of the symbol grows, knowledge about how the program achieves good eating quality is still lacking amongst consumers, with less than half agreeing that the symbol "assists them to choose the right meat," or saying they have "looked for the symbol when purchasing beef."

40%

of consumers are already aware of the MSA symbol but less than half of them know what MSA grading involves or actively seek graded product yet



Choosing quality beef just got easier...

The Meat Standards Australia (MSA) symbol helps you take the guesswork out of buying and cooking Australian beef.

Beef identified with this symbol has been scientifically graded against an independent standard developed by consumers for tenderness, juiciness and flavour to ensure you get great-tasting meals when you follow the recommended cooking method. To find out more about MSA and for practical tips on how to cook perfect beef meals every time visit: www.themainmeal.com.au

Look for this symbol at participating stores.



Next step to beef up consumers' MSA knowledge

MLA is preparing to run an online and print advertorial campaign to enhance consumer knowledge of what MSA grading means.

A program to boost awareness of the program at the foodservice level later in 2012 is also being finalised. MLA is also working with industry to finalise the best way to raise awareness of the three, four and five star quality 'grades' initially developed as part of the system.

The logo initially focused on delivering an MSA 'graded' message to consumers - a clear visual indication that the product has been graded and passed the MSA system.

The option to extend beyond this to communicate the good, better, best grades has always been part of the plan and industry consultation is underway to agree on the best way of achieving this goal.



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For more information on MSA, view episode 17 of *feedbackTV*.



www.themainmeal.com.au

Steak expectations

Michael Fallon's prime motivation to promote Meat Standards Australia (MSA) graded product in the iconic Norman Hotel in Brisbane is the guarantee of consistent eating quality.



The Norman's reputation for its steaks, service and atmosphere, sets it apart and cements its position as 'Brisbane's worst vegetarian restaurant'! And it's the steaks, sourced from Australia's leading meat suppliers, that turn first-time diners into regulars. Part of the Norman experience is to select your own cut and watch expert cooks chargrill it to perfection.

MLA has worked with Michael at the Norman Hotel since February to help maximise exposure of the refreshed MSA-graded symbol so customers will recognise it as a quality meat symbol, removing the guesswork. The hotel recently promoted seven MSA-graded beef cuts from a number of brands with prices ranging from \$40 to \$48 per meal.

What's your opinion of MSA graded product?

"Being able to consistently source reliable, quality beef rather than just hoping for the best when purchasing non-MSA product, is fantastic. We know the meat we source will be what it's billed to be and we haven't had an issue with any MSA-graded product. When someone orders an MSA-graded cut we know (and they know) it will meet expectations. Including MSA-graded beef on the menu gives us a valuable point-of-difference and it's having a positive impact on our business."

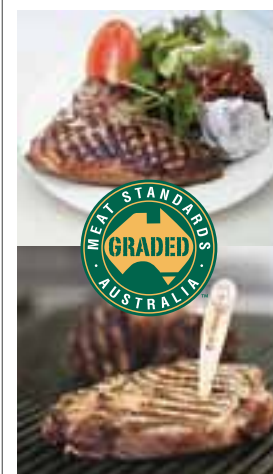
Which brands and cuts, underpinned by MSA have you been promoting?

"For our first promotion we chose MSA-graded brands; Sondella; Hereford Prime; Cape Grim; John Dee Gold; Riverine Premium and Harvey's Prime; with a mix of three rib fillets, two striploins, an OP (oven prepared) rib on the bone and a rump. We held an eight week promotion, 'Australia's Best Beef - You be the Judge', where customers could order from the display cabinet, vote for their preferred cut and go in the draw for prizes. Tasmania's Cape Grim rib fillet was the hands down winner, with Sondella's OP rib on the bone a close second. Our current promotion is the 1kg steak challenge - an MSA Hereford prime 1kg rump steak for \$55. Anyone who gets through everything on the plate, including the bread roll, gets their name up in lights on the honour board."

What customer feedback have you had?

"We're really happy with the positive feedback we've had. We haven't had time to collate all our data yet - but the feedback so far has been excellent. Tomorrow night there's a footy game at the Gabba (just over the road), so we'll sell 1,000 steaks before the game. We'll continue to use and promote the MSA symbol and expect our sales to further increase."

The Norman Hotel serves around 3,500 steaks in an average week - equivalent to 1 tonne of beef



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www.normanhotel.com.au

Fast facts about beef this winter

1. This winter, MLA is launching 'Beefgiving Season' which celebrates winter as the perfect time to share hearty beef meals with your friends and loved ones.
2. Beef is Australia's most popular meat throughout winter.
3. Sales of beef casserole cuts increase by around 80% during the cold winter months.
4. The best cuts for casseroles and curries are chuck, blade, rump and gravy beef (shin).
5. Australians eat on average 2.7 billion beef meals per year.
6. Australia is the seventh biggest beef producer in the world.
7. Beef is a rich source of iron and zinc, which supports a healthy immune system during the cold winter months.



Australians eat

2.7 billion
beef meals annually



Left: Point-of-sale posters displayed to remind consumers to share a warm winter meal with family and friends.

Below: The winter edition of MLA's consumer recipe and tips magazine ENTICE.



Winter - 'tis the season to give beef

Australians all let us rejoice, for a new season is upon us. Spring, summer, autumn, and beefgiving.

Beefgiving is the name of the new season at the heart of MLA's latest beef campaign for winter, designed to warm hearts and stomachs during the colder months.

As part of the campaign, last winter's successful television commercial returns to screens, carrying the 'beefgiving' message. The ad dramatised the 'plate envy' of a woman who is served a salad, while her partner receives a delicious beef curry in a restaurant. It was well-received by audiences, appealing to 69% of people surveyed.

Meanwhile facebook users will be encouraged to embrace 'beefgiving season,' with a new facebook 'beefriender' app. The app helps users organise a 'beefgiving day feast' with their 'facebook friends'. To encourage fans to engage with the app, they will also have the chance to win a Beefgiving Day Dinner in their home cooked by Fast Ed (channel 7 TV celebrity chef).

Sources: AC Nielsen, The Clever Stuff Annual Brand Report 2011, USDA.

A new edition of MLA's consumer recipe and tips magazine *ENTICE* has been produced. More than 2 million copies will be available at retail counters nationwide. Posters and other marketing collateral will also be displayed at the point-of-sale to remind consumers to share a warm winter meal with family and friends.

The campaign will also see warming beef meal samples handed out at the Winter Festival in Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney, while magazines including *New Idea*, *Better Homes and Gardens* and *Marie Claire* will feature beef meal recipes.

The winter campaign was launched on 1 June and will run through to the end of August.



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Warm up at www.mla.com.au/beefcampaigns
www.themainmeal.com.au

iBeef App wins international award



The 'Beef Essentials' iPhone app developed by MLA to help consumers cook the perfect steak, as well as match cuts with cooking method, has won a prestigious 'Webby Award' in the Lifestyle (handheld devices) category. It beat a US recipe and shopping app developed by Conde Naste, a Danish parking assistant app and a Russian clothes sizing app.

The Webby Awards are the leading international awards honouring excellence on the Internet. Winners are chosen by members of the International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences. The 'Beef Essentials' app has had over 7,000 downloads to date and is available for downloading through iTunes.

Download the app by visiting www.themainmeal.com.au

7,000
downloads of the
'Beef Essentials' app

Recipe

Slow cooked beef ragu

Serves: 4

Preparation time:
15 minutes

Cooking time: *Slow Cooker: low setting for 6-8 hours and then 1 hour on high setting or high setting for 4-5 hours. Oven: 180°C in casserole dish for 2½-3 hours stirring occasionally and topping up with beef stock if needed.*

Ingredients

1.2kg piece beef chuck or beef bolar blade
2 tbsp olive oil
1 medium onion diced
4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
1 tbsp plain flour
1½ cups beef stock
400g punnet cherry tomatoes
3 sprigs fresh thyme
2 small char-grilled capsicums, thinly sliced (optional)
½ cup small fresh basil leaves
Pinch of sugar
Pasta and grated parmesan, to serve

Method

1. Cut beef into four or five large pieces. Season with salt and pepper, and drizzle with a little olive oil. Heat a large frypan over a medium-high heat. Brown the pieces of beef well on all sides. Remove and place in a slow cooker bowl.
2. Reduce heat, add a little oil to the frypan and onion and garlic. Cook for 1-2 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the flour and stir to scrape up residue from the base of the pan and ensure the onion is coated with the flour. Gradually pour in the stock and stir until the mixture boils.

Pour over the beef in slow cooker dish. Add the tomatoes and thyme and a small pinch of sugar.

3. Cover the slow cooker with its lid, cook on low setting for 6-8 hours and then one hour on high setting (if you have time). Alternatively, cook on the high setting for 4-5 hours. To serve, shred the beef with two forks. Stir in the roasted capsicum and basil leaves. Serve over pasta and sprinkle with parmesan.

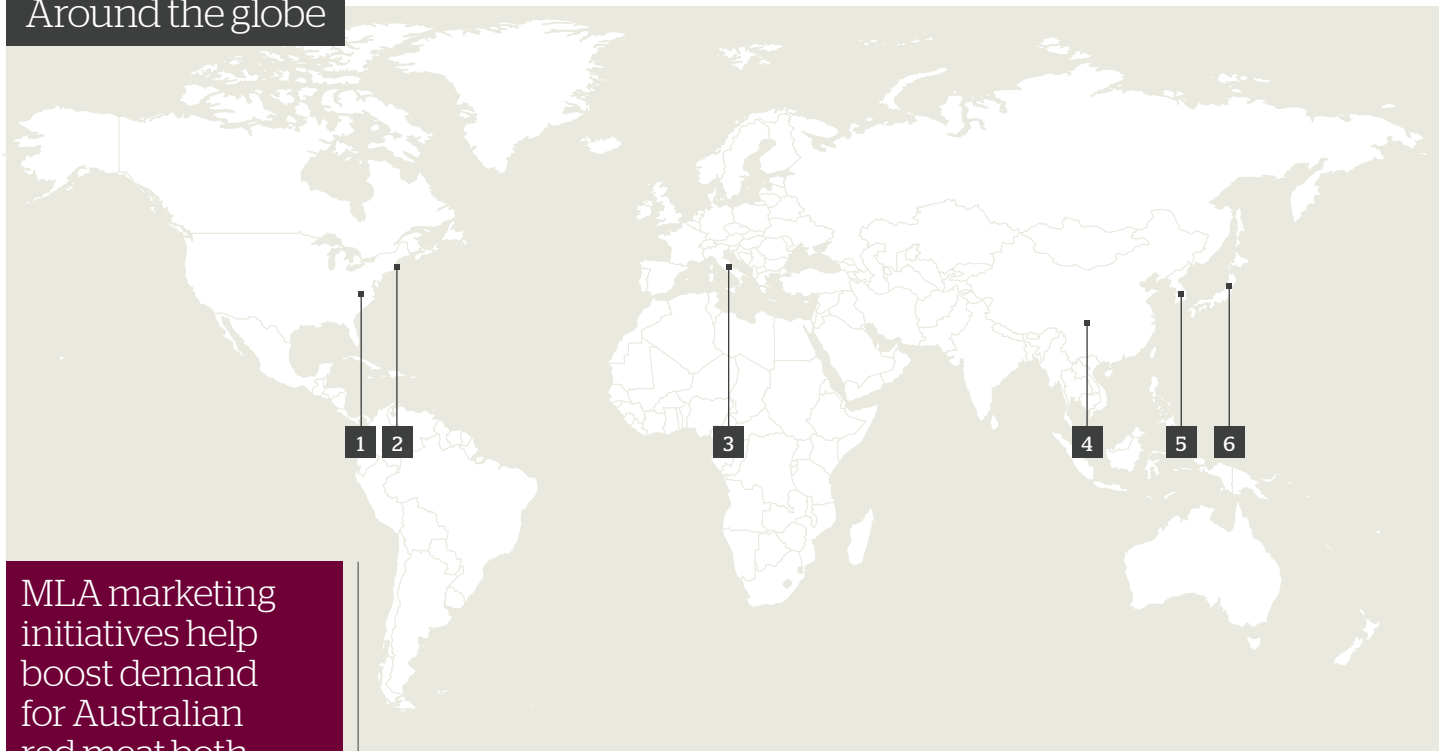
No slow cooker? No worries. Simply cook in a casserole dish in a moderate oven for 2½-3 hours. Stir from time to time and add a little beef stock if needed to keep the beef just covered.

Slow cooker tips

- Always brown the meat well - it adds colour and extra flavour.
- Saute any onion and garlic so their flavour develops.
- Ensure the ingredients only fill the slow cooker to half or three quarters full to ensure even cooking.
- Little or no stirring is needed when using the low setting. Stir the beef occasionally when using the high setting for good flavour distribution.
- Keep the lid on during cooking to maintain the cooking temperature.
- If you have time, turn the slow cooker to high for the last hour to intensify the flavour and thicken the sauce a little.



Around the globe



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

1 US

Aussie 'Tongmasters' do us proud in the US



Congratulations to the MLA sponsored Aussie 'Tongmasters' who took part in the Second Annual BBQ Capital Cook-off in Lexington, US.

The 'Tongmasters' won their place on the national team by topping state-based competitions, as part of MLA's summer beef campaign.

Representing Australia were: Viktor Zalums (NSW), Chris Luxton (QLD), Peter Mitcham (VIC), Damian Liddicoat (SA) and Stephan Jenner (WA).

They tested their barbecue skills against more than 50 teams across the US using Aussie beef.

A husband and wife team from Winston-Salem, US, who had

recently opened a restaurant were crowned grand champions leaving our backyard cooks in 36th place.

2 US

Easter eggs swapped for lamb in Boston



A recent lamb campaign launched in the month leading up to Easter promoted Australian lamb to around five million people in the Boston and metropolitan area. The integrated marketing campaign targeted retail, foodservice, consumers, bloggers and media. It included billboards placed prominently around Boston's living, working and shopping areas, food trucks serving lamb along with a competition focused on bloggers (eat lamb, blog and go into the draw to win

a trip to Australia), restaurants (win an Australian lamb dinner for six cooked by an Australian chef) and retailers (in store sampling of lamb on three consecutive weekends). One third of respondents surveyed by MLA about the campaign said advertising or news influenced their decision to eat lamb.

3 ITALY

Dinner 'n demo in Milan

Following a recent visit to Australia as part of a supply chain development program supported by MLA, a major northern Italian foodservice distributor has developed a program for promoting Australian red meat in Italy. Promotional activities by the distributor recently culminated in a dinner and demonstration in Milan showcasing Australian beef and lamb. The event catered for 120 people including 80 customers and featured a range of beef and lamb fresh cuts as well as sampling plates.

One of the opportunities with the distributor is to increase the

volume and awareness of branded Australian grainfed beef into high end northern Italian restaurants.

4 CHINA

Aussie red meat launches counter attack



After six month's preparation, Beijing Zhuochen Livestock Co. Ltd has opened its first Australian beef and lamb counter in Jinkelong Supermarket, Beijing - a large state-owned supermarket chain. The counter is located in a well-known supermarket in a middle class residential area and the new retail cabinet will encourage consumers to purchase and cook Australian beef and lamb. MLA will provide ongoing support to the supermarket, such as training for the store staff, point-of-sale material development and merchandising support. More supermarkets, including other Beijing Zhuochen Livestock Co. stores, are expected to include Australian red meat counters in future.

5 KOREA

Aussie beef all hyped up

Australian beef was featured in a high profile Australian Beef Festival promotion at several E-mart hypermarkets in Korea during April. E-mart is a major stockist of Australian beef and the Australian Beef Festival helped reinforce the 'clean and safe' positioning of our product. Customers were enticed with samples of Australian beef by experienced in-store promoters. Surveys revealed 78% of

consumers go on to purchase beef immediately after sampling.

Australian beef will continue to be positioned as 'clean and safe' across retail and foodservice outlets in Korea - aided by clear country of origin identification. This ongoing support is vital given Korean consumers seek constant reassurance about the safety of imported beef products. Coupled with increased competition from the US, as it increases its beef marketing effort.



78%

of Korean consumers go on to purchase Australian beef immediately after sampling

6 JAPAN

The Midas touch of Aussie beef



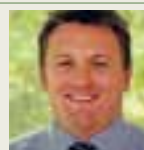
MLA Japan organised in-store Aussie beef cooking demonstrations in 735 Japanese stores throughout the country during Golden Week (20 April - 8 May). The demonstrations also promoted the nutritional benefits of iron from eating Aussie beef. Golden Week is typically a peak consumption period in Japan.

Market observations

India giving curry to beef competitors

Australia, Brazil and the US have traditionally been the three major players in the global beef trade, but the emergence of an export focused beef industry in India in recent years is expected to add another player.

Tim McRae
MLA Economist



Productivity and supply chain improvements in recent years mean India is expected to challenge the 'big three' for the title of the world's largest beef (or buffalo meat) exporter in 2012, according to the latest report from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The majority of beef produced in India is from buffalo, given the very large buffalo herd and religious and cultural issues attached with cattle. Thus, buffalo meat is traditionally seen as inferior to beef, but is also sold at reduced prices, which can make it competitive against the higher priced beef in many markets.

India easily has the world's largest bovine herd, at an estimated 325 million head, more than 128 million more than the next largest country, Brazil (197 million head).

Additionally, the low per head consumption of beef in India, where 80% of the population is vegetarian, lends itself to an industry that needs to look externally to remain viable.

Even though India has 325 million head of cattle, its beef production in 2011 was estimated at 3.2 million tonnes

cwt - given light slaughter weights. In 2012 production is tipped to reach 3.6 million tonnes (compared to 2.2 million tonnes in Australia), assisted by increased slaughter and an expanding milk producing sector.

In challenging for the title of the world's largest beef (or buffalo meat) exporter, concern is always raised as to how, or if, this will erode the demand for Australian beef. According to the USDA, most of the growth in export demand for Indian product will come from markets that traditionally favour low priced product, such as Vietnam, South East Asia, the Middle East and Africa.

One of the main barriers facing expansion of Indian beef into more lucrative markets is India's foot and mouth disease status which prevents it from exporting unprocessed product to countries including the US, Japan and Korea.

From an Australian perspective, the rise of India has not been a surprise, and there are indeed several markets where both Australian and Indian product are found - although not necessarily competing at the same levels within the market. All countries will continue to watch the rise of India closely.



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www.mla.com.au/overseasmarkets

On the ground

Philippines

**Aaron Iori**

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Economic growth in the Philippines has been rapid in the past few years, resulting in increased household income and a shift in demand within the growing middle class, particularly toward imported food products. HSBC Bank recently projected the Philippines economy to become the 16th largest in the world, and the largest economy in the South-East Asia region by 2050. The Philippines economy has been transitioning from agriculture to one focused on services and manufacturing.

The transition to a service based economy and the emerging middle class provides the foundation for MLA's business development and marketing activities in the Philippines. Our activities are focused on training and development of young chefs while improving the standard of food safety, product knowledge and handling within the retail sector.

As modern retail develops, MLA works in conjunction with retailers to further improve awareness, handling and overall hygiene of handling Australian beef and lamb. This is particularly important as a modern supermarket in the Philippines is typically similar to a wet market, where protein is available in open cabinets and customers are freely able to touch, feel and smell meat before purchase.

The Philippines has the highest concentration of culinary schools of any country in this region. MLA works closely with these schools, providing targeted technical training and product knowledge seminars to these young professionals.

As most graduates from these schools will likely work overseas, this training enables them to feel comfortable handling Australian beef and lamb before starting their careers and, in turn, becoming lifelong ambassadors for our product.

Business development activities and marketing promotions are underpinned by the recently developed Australian beef logo. The logo is the hallmark to the consumer positioning and our key message that Australian beef is clean and safe. The logo incorporates the word IMPORTED which responds to the desire of Filipino consumers and their trust in all things imported - particularly food products.

Market insight



Philippines: islands of opportunities

Australia is geographically well positioned to be a supplier of safe beef and lamb to the Philippines. Beef exports have grown five fold since 2005.



Drivers of demand

There is increasing demand for Australian red meat in the Philippines. This is attributed to a number of factors. Firstly, disposable incomes are increasing which is encouraging consumers to purchase higher quality proteins, which in turn is increasing the demand for Australian red meat. Secondly, local production has been falling, placing a high reliance on imported meat.

In 2011, Australia's beef exports to the Philippines totalled 19,800 tonnes swt, while lamb exports were 411 tonnes. Low cost competitors, such as Brazil and India have access; however, Australia's market share has grown despite this competition.

The market has generally not been affected by the global financial issues that have plagued many other countries. In many respects the Asian financial crises in the 1990s saw a growth in the national economy, with further opportunity for growth.

Beef consumption is currently estimated at 4kg per head (compared to 34kg in Australia). Local production accounts for 60% of consumption; however, the shortfall from local production continues to grow. Pork and chicken reign supreme as

Training Filipino butchers

A key function of MLA's after sales support program includes development of retail showcase sites to demonstrate to retailers what can be done with correct handling and preparation of Australian beef and lamb. MLA has established 10 sites in the Philippines, which boast a rapidly developing modern retail sector.

Recently 10 butchers, from retailers Rustans and Shopwise, visited Singapore with MLA for four days intensive training and retail visits. This trip was designed to give the butchers the opportunity to see how other retailers throughout the region display and sell Australian beef and lamb, and how they can leverage this to create meat displays in their own stores.

The butchers were accompanied by MLA master butcher Barry Lloyd, whose program covered:

→ Retail visits to leading outlets, allowing the butchers an interesting interaction with the main retailers.

the protein of choice, as there is an abundance of local supply and it is relatively cheaper compared to beef. The majority of beef is used in manufacturing - typically a 'corned' canned product, which takes up large volumes of shelf space in modern supermarkets.



Due to long term association (politically and militarily), US beef has a leading share of the foodservice market. However, Australia's share is increasing. Australia is the leading supplier into the growing modern retail segment and this is where there are opportunities to develop and work collaboratively with commercial partners.

MLA's focus is on harnessing the growth and opportunities arising from the rising affluent population. MLA's in-market activities centre on the rollout of a targeted business development program. This is based on identifying opportunities for imported red meat. Following this MLA provides technical after sales product support, and food safety and product handling training to develop and expand the skill set of butchers.



→ A theoretical session, where key visual merchandising options were developed.

→ A practical session, where Barry shared techniques in cutting, and in return, each of the butchers had the opportunity to prepare some cuts and show how they will display these in their stores. Each butcher then presented their plans to improve their respective stores.

MLA will be working closely with these 10 butchers in the future to monitor their progress and displays of Australian beef in the Philippines. MLA will also be conducting follow up training and theory sessions to further develop the retail sites.

7,107

islands and islets
make up the
Philippines

300

thousand km²
land area

103.7

million people

18.76

billion dollars
earned by 11 million
Filipinos working
overseas representing
13.5% GDP

4kg

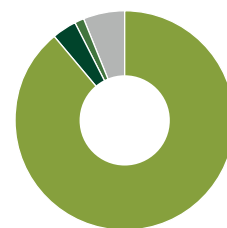
of beef per head
annually consumed
by Filipinos



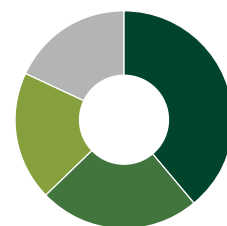
On the plate

Australian cuts are used in high end foodservice restaurants, served in western-style dishes. Australia also supplies manufacturing product which helps to fuel the canned meats and processed meat industry. Product, particularly bone-in items, purchased at retail is commonly braised and used in soups and casseroles.

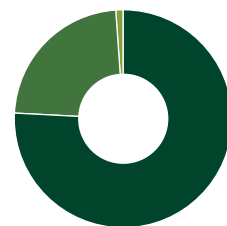
In the container



Beef:
88.96% manufacturing
3.69% shin shank
1.51% silver side/
outside
5.84% other



Lamb:
39% shoulder
24% leg
19% rack
18% other



Mutton:
76% carcase
24% forequarter
1% shoulder

The Philippines: an adobo nation

Any visitor of the Philippines will have enjoyed any one of the many versions of its national dish: adobo. The beauty of this simple yet delectable dish is its versatility. And while the most commonly used proteins for adobo are pork and chicken, its components, be it soy, fish sauce, salt and a wide range of vinegars, means the final product varies from region to region and table to table.

With Australian lamb now available in retail outlets in the Philippines, more and more Filipino families are preparing Lamb Adobo (pictured below). The rich flavour of lamb goes perfectly with the garlicky, salty, vinegar taste of adobo.



The Sydney Royal Easter Show

The 2012 Sydney Royal Easter Show attracted around 810,000 visitors over a two-week period. The beef and sheepmeat industries were well represented in the Food Farm pavilion where MLA delivered 182 sessions talking to visitors about how producers care for their animals and the land, and produce high quality, safe food. The show gives Sydneysiders a unique opportunity to get up close to livestock, and ask questions about beef and sheep production.



Samantha Krollig, Bowhill, with Rosanne McConnel and her mother Raelene Heidrich, Galga, at 'Understanding your Farm Finances' at Murray Bridge, 17 April 2012.

Understanding your farm finances

Three Making More from Sheep 'Understanding your Farm Finances' courses delivered by Natasha Morley, Rural Directions Pty Ltd were held across South Australia at Bordertown, Clare and Murray Bridge during March and April 2012. The aim of this course is to show participants how to find, interpret and use financial data in their business. During the course participants develop their skills and confidence to plan, prepare and analyse financial reports and key benchmarks to allow them to make informed decisions about their finances.

Target 100 launch

Target 100 was launched at well-known chef Justin North's restaurant Etch in Sydney. Justin joined Queensland beef producer, Stuart Barrett and industry representatives to launch the industry's sustainability program to 30 journalists and bloggers who enjoyed a sustainable lunch of lamb and beef. Target 100 provides the urban community the opportunity to ask questions directly to producers and showcases 100 initiatives the industry is undertaking to continually improve its sustainability credentials.

Justin North speaking at the launch.



Upcoming events

Social media workshop

To help producers use social media to have online conversations with each other and the community.

When and where:

14-15 June, Campbell Town Tas

Bookings:

mdwyer@mla.com.au

LambEx

A compelling two-day conference for lamb and sheep producers, featuring outstanding speakers, an extensive trade exhibition, quality entertainment and an opportunity to communicate with all sectors of the lamb value chain.

When and where:

28-29 June, Bendigo, Vic

Bookings:

1800 177 636
esther@estherpricepromotions.com.au

Bred Well Fed Well

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

When and where:

18 June, Winton Qld
19 June, Murrumbidgee Qld
20 June, Blackall Qld

Bookings:

0428 100 760
kate.nicholas@deedi.qld.gov.au



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

Tasmanian MLA pasture update

In April, 40 farmers, ag science students and advisers gathered at the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture's Burlington Road grazing trial site at Cressy Tasmania for an MLA Pasture Update, co-hosted with the Grassland Society of Southern Australia. Presentations from industry experts on pasture establishment, economics and grazing management filled the site's shearing shed. Walking the trial site, participants also heard an update on a survey of the state's pasture resource and received animal production comparisons across species and cultivars in the grazing trial. At the Nile trial site, the competitive interactions between a range of perennial grasses and legumes were on display.



Eric Hall, TIA, (front left) and Sandra Bales (front right) put some extra stress on a "Permatas" Talish clover plant.

National Soils Conference

MLA sponsored the North Central Catchment Management Authority's (CMA) 2012 National Soils forum in March which focused on 'Soils for a Future'. The forum in Bendigo, Victoria, brought together key landholders, local farmers, scientists and policy makers to discuss how to secure the productive and environmental values of soil in north central Victoria.



Attendees at the training session in Perth

Training to understand MSA

An initiative driven by the Meat Standards Australia (MSA) awareness campaign on 8 February and supported by Australian Meat Industry Council, MSA training was conducted by Greg Butler over eight group sessions held primarily at Fraser's Restaurant in Perth's Kings Park. Sixty three staff from 32 retail and food service businesses attended, and as a result there are now seven new MSA licensed end users and MSA point-of-sale at 11 additional butcher shops in WA.



Amy (apprentice chef), Mel Marshan (MLA), Kelvin Goodhew (Beak and Johnston) were in a group that was given 'Asian' cuisine and a laptop to search for recipe inspiration.

Connected Cooking - what inspires consumers in the kitchen?

Connected Cooking is an MLA study to find out where consumers are finding cooking inspiration. In March, 25-30 fast moving consumer goods insight professionals attended the Connected Cooking event in Sydney. MLA presented the Connected Cooking research, followed by practical applications - attendees split into four groups and had to use modern technology eg smartphone or wireless broadband, to cook a dish of a certain cuisine. This was to demonstrate how technology and media are used in cooking and food choices. The initiative will be used to help plan future MLA marketing campaigns.

Meat Profit Day - Growing to 'meat' the future

A chance for WA producers to hear from a stimulating panel of speakers on the latest R&D tools and industry outlook.

When and where:
28 August, Albany WA

Bookings:
events@mla.com.au

BeefUp forum

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

When and where:
22 June, Croydon Qld

Bookings: 1800 675 717

MLA Richmond field days

Hear about the latest challenges and opportunities facing the red meat industry at the Beef Industry Dinner.

When and where:
15 June, Richmond Qld

Bookings:
richmondfielddays@
mail.com

Southern Australia Grasslands

The conference is titled "Getting back to grassroot farming", the purpose is to explore traditional and new developments in pasture establishment and persistence.

When and where:
25-27 July, Launceston Tas

Bookings:
office@grasslands.org.au

South Australia breeder workshop

A full day More Beef from Pastures workshop, focused on maternal productivity and meeting MSA standards. Topics include: weaner throughput and meeting market specs.

When and where:
21 June, Kingston SE SA

Bookings: 08 8303 7972
stephen.lee@adelaide.
edu.au

Lambex²⁰¹²

A lamb industry event of excellence, designed to
unite, excite and enlighten



The Australian sheep and lamb industry is invited to attend this compelling two day conference, featuring outstanding speakers, an extensive trade exhibition, quality entertainment and an opportunity to communicate with all sectors of the lamb value chain.

June 28 & 29, 2012
Bendigo Exhibition Centre
www.lambex.com.au



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