

Feedback

Well schooled

22// **Annabelle Coppin** talks yard weaning at Yarrie Station

06// **Starting the real conversation**

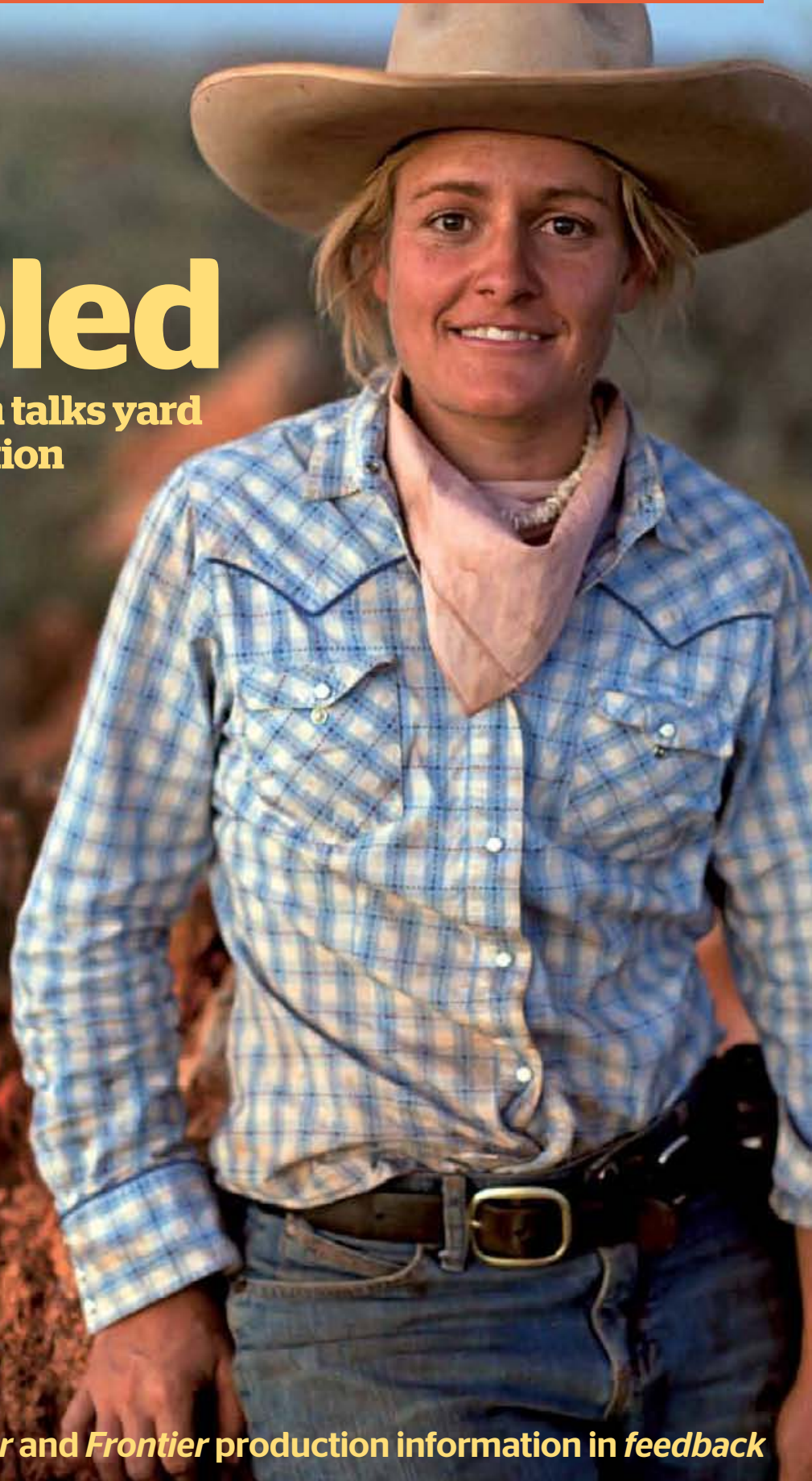
Producers share their stories and connect with the community

10// **MSA makes its mark at retail**

18// **Survival skills**

Target growth rates with our High Performance Weaners series

20// **10 things you need to know about ewe scanning**



Now find all your *Prograzier* and *Frontier* production information in *feedback*

A note from the MD...

Sam Kekovich is fighting **unAustralianism** again and this time his suit is as loud as his rant. Sam appears each January to encourage consumers to choose lamb for their Australia Day celebrations and this year he's using popular culture to get the message out (read more on page 9). But despite his passion, there is a voice that can outmatch Sam's when it comes to telling the community the story behind the red meat on their menus—and that is the voice of Australia's livestock producers.

Producers are trusted by urban Australia and hold the answers to the questions the community wants to ask about where their food comes from.

The growing interest in how food is produced offers our industry the chance to start a conversation with our customers. Sam Kekovich might be able to promote our product but Australia's farming families are best placed to share the real story of how red meat is produced and help counteract misinformation in the marketplace.

As an industry we have a wealth of good news stories to tell and MLA is working to equip producers with the tools they need to tell them. 'The Real Conversation' will roll out in 2012 with information and workshops on how to use social media and other platforms to connect to an urban audience.

You can read more about this initiative on pages 6-7. Better yet, attend a workshop, get involved, go online and join the 'real conversation'.

I hope you enjoy this 'new look' edition of *feedback*. We look forward to delivering more outcomes from your levy investment in R&D and marketing activities through your MLA member magazine in 2012.

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



Scott Hansen
MLA Managing Director



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Introducing your new *feedback*

When *feedback* magazine launched in 1999, we promised to bring you regular news from across MLA's marketing and R&D programs and information that could help add value to your business.

Our focus from the word go has been to keep you up-to-date on your levies at work—whether that is in research solutions that can reduce production costs and improve productivity or marketing activities to build demand for beef, lamb and goatmeat in our domestic and global marketplace.

We hope the magazine motivates you to explore and trial new farm management practices, access MLA's resources and tools online, and come to our events—all with the aim of helping make a difference to your bottom line.

After more than a decade, that hasn't changed.

Heading into 2012, your MLA member magazine is recommitting to those goals in the same way that MLA has recommitted to its core business of delivering on your collective investment in R&D and marketing.

But you may notice *feedback* looks a little different these days.

We've taken a cover-to-cover look at our magazine portfolio, conducted research among our readers and combined your favourite parts of, *feedback* and our on-farm publications, *Prograzier* and *Frontier*, into one monthly magazine.

We've kept the regular features we know you value—production information and case studies, snapshots of our global marketing campaigns and recipes from our foodservice and retail initiatives—and introduced some new things including profiles, Q&As and events.

Our 'new look' *feedback* magazine is a work in progress—we plan to keep it responsive and can't wait to hear your thoughts on the publication and features you'd like to see down the track.

Send us an email at info@mla.com.au



MLA online

MLA tools

MLA blog

Read about interesting issues relevant to the industry from a range of authors and while you're there, have your say.

www.mla.com.au/blog

Events

Find a list of upcoming industry events in your area.

www.mla.com.au/events

On-farm toolbox

Access a range of useful tools and calculators to help you with management decisions on farm.

www.mla.com.au/tools

friday *feedback*

Get the latest market information, industry news, case studies and weather directly to your inbox every Friday.

Social networking

YouTube

Watch a range of videos on MLA's YouTube channel including *feedbackTV* stories.

www.youtube.com/meatandlivestock

Flickr

View MLA's photo stream on Flickr.

www.flickr.com/meatlivestock

Twitter

Get the latest updates by following MLA.

www.twitter.com/meatlivestock

Facebook

Stay connected with MLA—find us on Facebook.

www.facebook.com/meatandlivestockaustralia

Your feedback

Members who were unable to attend the MLA AGM had the opportunity to submit questions to be put forward at the meeting.

See more Q&As online at www.mla.com.au/agm

What progress has been made to encourage the stunning of Australian derived slaughter cattle in Indonesian meatworks?

The responsibility for assuring acceptable animal welfare outcomes in overseas markets such as Indonesia rests with individual supply chains. Industry has been working with government to develop and implement supply chain assurance to ensure the well-being of exported cattle. Under Cattle Council Australia's direction, MLA is focusing grassfed levy funds on working with supply chains to accelerate the uptake of stunning. Since June, the number of facilities with the infrastructure in place that

allows stunning has risen and estimates are that soon over 70% of cattle exported will go to facilities that stun. (Note: At the time *feedback* went to print, 85% of abattoirs within the approved supply chains were stunning.)

MLA has a considerable number of research contracts... could quantity be replaced by quality in some of them for the benefit of producers?

The number of research contracts listed in the MLA annual report represents those projects completed within a 12-month cycle as well as longstanding contracts over several years. Any one program might involve four or five institutes, researchers or agencies, each separately

contracted to deliver specific pieces of work.

We are conscious that every contract comes with an administrative burden and cost to the company and we try to get that balance right between having the right sized contract to give us maximum efficiency in our administrative processes, while at the same time minimising risk exposure should we need to change the direction of an activity or a program throughout the course of its life.



Keep an eye out here for MLA member views and questions answered. Send your feedback to the editor at info@mla.com.au

MLA AGM 2011

MLA's 2011 AGM served as a useful forum to help clarify the role of MLA as the industry's service company—investing industry funds in R&D and marketing activities—versus the role of the producer peak councils such as Cattle Council Australia and Sheepmeat Council of Australia in representing producers on policy issues.

During his AGM address, retiring Chairman Don Heatley said MLA had reflected on the source of confusion about its role—whether it had overreached on its services to industry, above and beyond those it was established to deliver.

"MLA is not an animal welfare agency. We do not have any legislative authority in export markets. We are not commercial operatives. We do not buy or sell a single head of livestock. We are not the industry's representative or policy body. What we are is a marketing and

R&D service provider to industry—and what we do is at the direction of industry," Don said.

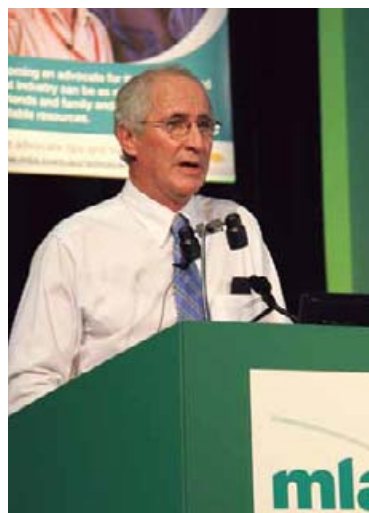
"Since starting in the role of Managing Director in July, Scott Hansen and the MLA Board are working to bring the scope of MLA activities back to basics."

Don has returned full time to his family cattle business after six years as MLA Chairman and 13 years on the Board.

Following the AGM, NSW cattle producer Rob Anderson was appointed by fellow Board members as the new chair of MLA's skills based Board.

"I look forward to working with the Managing Director Scott Hansen and my fellow Board members to ensure MLA continues to create opportunities for the Australian cattle, sheep and goat industries from the investment of their levies in R&D and marketing," Rob said.

Michele Allan, Geoff Maynard and Rodney Watt were also elected to the MLA Board at the AGM, while three new producer members—Ian McCamley, Ben Hopper and Warren Barnett—were elected to the MLA Selection Committee. Find out more about the new Board members and AGM news at www.mla.com.au/agm



Members show support

MLA members strongly supported their company at the AGM with 89.6% of votes cast against a resolution to wind up MLA.

This was stronger support than last year, when a similar resolution was rejected by 84.7% of votes cast.

89.6%
of votes cast against a resolution to wind up MLA

Beefed-up breeding predictions



The Beef CRC will deliver genomic predictions to BREEDPLAN by May that identify animals genetically superior for carcase and beef quality, feed efficiency and female fertility traits.

MLA is a core partner of the Beef CRC, which is on track to incorporate these predictions into BREEDPLAN to improve the accuracy of current estimated breeding values (EBVs) that are based on extensive phenotypic records and pedigree information.

The Beef CRC genotyped more than 10,000 research animals and industry sires using the latest DNA super chips and has calibrated the

genomic predictions within breeds based on DNA samples from 1,300 high-accuracy sires across several breeds.

The technology will enable seedstock cattle breeders to more accurately identify animals that are genetically superior for carcase and beef quality, feed efficiency and female fertility traits such as age at puberty, first-calf re-breeding and lifetime reproductive performance in tropically adapted cattle breeds.



For more information visit
www.beefcrc.com.au

Press play 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/publications

Fresh bait

A new prototype baiting technique has been designed as a more durable alternative to current options for wild dog and fox control in Australia.

The multi-dose ejector (MDE) system was developed and patented by Frank Gigliotti of General Dogs Body—R&D technical services. MLA has invested about \$245,000 for the first year of the research to ensure the mechanism is independently assessed to work accurately and efficiently.

"The ejector can deliver 20 or more lethal doses per bait."

The multi-dose ejector is designed to be target specific and have a longer 'life' in the field.

"We're also developing polymer (plastic) bait that can be impregnated with a lure that remains active for longer than natural food baits," Mr Gigliotti said.



More information at
www.mla.com.au
and
www.invasiveanimals.com

Predators cost Queensland about \$67 million per year and Victoria \$21 million per year in lost production.



Tips for staff satisfaction

A national study has found providing good lifestyle benefits, financial security and good people management are critical to attracting and retaining staff in the livestock industry.

MLA and Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) commissioned the study in response to current gaps in understanding and solutions to the problems of securing skilled and stable employees.

Five factsheets have been published to give employers of different sizes information on how to attract, motivate and retain staff in the northern beef, southern beef, sheepmeat and pastoral industries.



Download the free factsheets at
www.mla.com.au/publications

Fast fact

The Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre (IACRC) will continue research into pest and predator control following a \$19.7 million five-year funding extension from the Australian Government. MLA has invested \$1.4 million in invasive animal

control research conducted through the IACRC and a further \$2.5 million is pledged from 2012. The Centre for International Economics estimated that IACRC outputs will deliver about \$142 million in community benefits over the next 30 years.

\$142m

in community benefits estimated to be delivered over the next 30 years

Bad seed—avoiding carcasse contamination

Seed contamination causes significant financial losses for the sheep industry but taking an integrated approach to seed management options can help tackle the problem.

Seed infested carcasses can be downgraded by \$1/kg and also cause animals discomfort, reducing productivity.

While seeds only pose a threat to livestock over a few months of the year, the control program needs a year-round focus to ensure the most effective and profitable outcome.



Check out MLA's *Winning against seeds* manual and Tip & Tool for a detailed approach to seed control at www.mla.com.au/publications



Dung gone

Researchers are importing two new species of early spring-active dung beetles to fill seasonal gaps in dung beetle activity in southern Australia.

An MLA-funded project has obtained species from France and Spain to offer a broader suite of dung beetles to capture and recycle livestock dung and address a deficiency in active species during this seasonal period of rapid pasture growth.

Researchers aim to initially release the new species in 2014, following quarantine, adaptation to the southern hemisphere and mass rearing.

An estimated 2.5 million ha of Australian pasture is made unproductive by unburied dung. Investigations indicate 23 species of dung beetles have successfully established in Australia to address this problem and deliver significant benefits through improved water movement, increased earthworm activity, nutrient capture and flow to plant root zones.



More information at www.mla.com.au

Switch on to *feedbackTV* episode 16



Building a better business with NLIS

See how NLIS can be used as a management tool to improve your livestock enterprise.



Growing demand for red meat with social media

Find out what the fuss is about with facebook and twitter, and how MLA is using social media to promote red meat to consumers.



Keeping you informed on markets

A look at how MLA's National Livestock Reporting Service operates to help you make more informed decisions in your business.



MLA launches 'Streetfood'

The latest red meat meal craze to hit Australian shores is 'Streetfood' and MLA is driving it.



If you haven't received your *feedbackTV* DVD with this edition, contact MLA on **1800 675 717**.



For past stories visit www.youtube.com/mlafeedbacktv

In profile

Trent Loos
*US rancher and
'agvocate'*

It's hard to miss Trent Loos. Sporting a black cowboy hat and handlebar moustache that would make Wyatt Earp jealous, this sixth generation US rancher doesn't mind taking centre stage to share positive messages about the livestock industry.

For more than a decade, Trent has been talking about American agriculture to anyone who will listen—in supermarkets, on airplanes, at conferences, in newspaper columns, on his own website and via a daily radio program that reaches four million people on 100 radio stations across North America.

Last October, Trent spoke to producers at an MLA 'agvocacy' event at Durong in southern Queensland. He says in agricultural production it is "individuals not the institutions that make a difference"—the same can be said for telling the story...

Why do producers need to be part of the conversation about agriculture?

"Consumers have been bombarded with so many mixed messages and inaccurate perceptions of what we do on our farms that they really don't know who to believe. If it is important to us, then we need to be the ones to speak up for ourselves. We don't need slick ad campaigns; we need a real, true open dialogue between the people who raise the food and the people who eat it."

How do you tell the positive stories of agriculture?

"I'm fortunate enough to tell my story via radio, speaking engagements, columns and websites. But the best response I get is simply through conversations with consumers in airports, hotel lobbies and elevators. People need to start this conversation every chance they get. If you don't know the answer to every question, it's not a problem—guide people to a good resource for the facts. Just be confident you know what you do in your own operation to ensure the products that come to town are safe and of good quality. Most people really like to put a face with a product and know their food isn't produced in a factory but raised on a farm by a real family."

What lessons have you learnt from your experiences?

"Some people, regardless of what you tell them, will not care about what you do and you will not change their mind. Don't let that stop you from continuing to proudly tell your story to the many, many people that do really want to know how food is produced and genuinely care about animal welfare and the environment. We need to address their concerns and explain to them how we are working to achieve these same goals while also feeding a hungry world."



Visit Trent's blog at
www.loostales.com

The real conversation: Connecting producers with the community



Listening



Talking

Before the internet came along, we might have shared a newspaper with someone in our home or talked with friends about something we saw on television –that’s about as social as media ever got. With today’s online forums, we can share the same things with hundreds or thousands of people instantly. Responses and discussions are shared out in the open, which encourages more and more people to join in. Before we know it, stories and ideas that were once shared between two or three people are now shared by people all around the country, or even around the world. This provides some exciting opportunities for the red meat industry.

Unlike traditional forms of media, ‘social media’ is dominated by individuals and small groups. This new technology and connectivity means that companies, brands and industries no longer own the sole rights of creating their reputation. It is something the public at large will decide for themselves. Their sources will be the information they find, stories they hear and commentary they stumble upon. Not only will they make up their own mind, they will add their own opinion for others to see.

In this world real, authentic messages pack a greater punch than polished advertising campaigns or PR spin. And as the red meat industry faces increasing calls from the community to be more transparent about the activities we undertake to

produce beef, sheepmeat and goatmeat, the most powerful advocates for the livestock industry are livestock producers themselves and the individual stories they have to tell.

MLA Manager Industry Integrity Communications, Deborah Leake, said MLA had already been actively communicating about the industry to Australia’s urban community through educational tools like Virtual Farm Visit and in campaigns such as Red Meat Green Facts—always endeavouring to tell the producer’s story. However, MLA is now looking to help producers develop skills to take the reins and engage with consumers themselves through a new program called *The Real Conversation*.

“There is a high level of community support for our industry—people trust producers and are open to hearing their stories,” Deborah said.

“If we want to inform their views, then we need to genuinely participate in the conversation. This program is about equipping producers to share their stories and their passion, and engage in real conversations around what they do on-property in terms of animal welfare, sustainable practices and modern farming. It’s about making our industry more transparent in the face of any misinformation that’s out there.”

Deborah said there were several ways producers could share their stories but increasingly social media was seen as an effective tool to reach out and connect with urban communities. This year, MLA is rolling out *The Real Conversation* social media workshops across Australia to help producers learn how to strategically use social media to connect directly with an urban audience to effectively tell

their stories. The workshops will equip producers with skills in using different communications platforms, such as blogs, Twitter and Facebook.

“The industry is under a bigger magnifying glass and people are looking online for answers to their questions. It’s up to us to populate that space with the answers,” Deborah said.

“The most powerful advocates for the livestock industry are livestock producers themselves and the good stories they have to tell.”

“The program will give producers the support and tools to identify what method of communication suits them best and how to use all these different platforms together. But the story they choose to tell is up to them,”

In November, MLA ran pilot workshops for *The Real*

Supporting

Embracing

Energising

↑
How we use it.
When it comes to using social media professionally, it naturally takes on a different dimension—and there are five key ways it can be used.

Conversation with producers in Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia. Feedback from those events has been used to refine the program that will be rolled out across Australia in coming months, driven by expressions of interest and location.

Matthew Dwyer, who looks after MLA's own social media activities via Facebook, Twitter, blogging and YouTube, is available to support producers as they enter the world of social media.

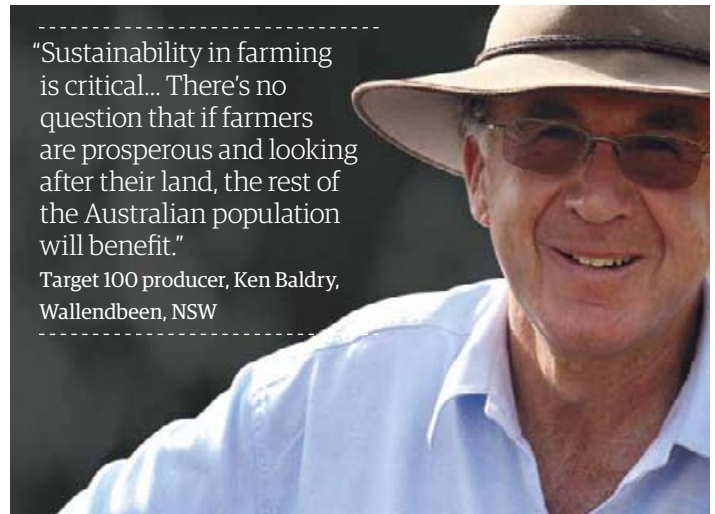
"Social media is now a mainstream source of information and technology in rural Australia is at a point where it can offer producers access to these communication methods," Matthew said.

"As an industry we have a wealth of good news stories, amazing initiatives and points of view that already exist—all we need to do is open up that direct dialogue."

Take a look at these producer's blogs...
<http://www.marlbroughmantravels.blogspot.com>
<http://topendcattle.tumblr.com>
<http://bushbabeofoz.com>
<http://www.farmerswayoflife.blogspot.com>

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Twitter: @meatlivestock
Facebook: www.facebook.com/meatandlivestockaustralia
YouTube: www.youtube.com/meatandlivestock



"Sustainability in farming is critical... There's no question that if farmers are prosperous and looking after their land, the rest of the Australian population will benefit."

Target 100 producer, Ken Baldry, Wallendbeen, NSW

Targeting the cities with producers' environmental credentials

MLA is set showcase the environmental credentials of Australian red meat producers through the 'Target 100' initiative to be launched in March 2012.

The campaign will promote to the Australian community 100 different initiatives making sheep and cattle production more sustainable. It will include a dedicated website, advertising and point of sale material in retail outlets.

Target 100 follows MLA's launch of the 'Red Meat Green Facts' website to share information with the community about the red meat industry's environmental credentials.

As part of this initiative, MLA is collecting case studies of individual producers who are making a difference on their properties by implementing sustainable practices for the Target 100 website.

Producers looking for a way to reach out and talk to the community about their work can get involved by sending through a case study for the website. Just send us a photograph and four or five paragraphs about what you are doing on your property to make it more sustainable—be it an environment, animal welfare or other initiative.



Scott McFarlane, MLA
T: 02 9463 9189 // E: smcfarlane@mla.com.au
www.redmeatgreenfacts.com.au/home



1 // Alex Kearns, Glebe Point Diner, at work.

2 // From left: Food blogger Melissa Leong with chef Lauren Murdoch.

3 // Chef Jowett Yu plates up Cape Grim short ribs.



BBQ madness fires up Sydney

Put 10 of Sydney's top chefs behind the barbecue and you'll come away with something a little different from the usual steak and snags on your paper plate.

From soup with red-braised and caramelised wagyu brisket to a mezze of smoked Dorset lamb cutlets and Boer goat sheftalies, more than 1,000 Sydneysiders discovered the versatility of Australian red meat at the Sydney International Food Festival's BBQ Madness event, sponsored by MLA. Well known chefs such as Kylie Kwong, Alex Herbert and Martin Boetz dished up a variety of cuts of beef, lamb and goatmeat to the crowd that gathered for the event on a sunny Saturday morning at Pyrmont Growers Market in October. More than just a barbecue, the event gave foodies the chance to hear their favourite chefs discuss the products they were using and the overall sustainability of Australian red meat production.

"It gave us a chance to get credible, celebrity chefs to talk to consumers about our product and show that they are proud to cook red meat."

MLA Marketing Executive—Foodservice, Connaugh Sheehan, said BBQ Madness was a great opportunity to show consumers the versatility of red meat using a cooking method that tied in with MLA's summer beef and Australia Day lamb barbecue campaigns.

"The festival celebrates what is happening on the Sydney food and dining scene. Putting beef, lamb and goat on that stage with all those amazing restaurants keeps red meat at the forefront of what's happening with food. It's important to stay top of mind with key influencers and foodies to maintain relevance with consumers in the long term," Connaugh said.

"The festival's sustainability theme was important too. It gave us a chance to get credible, celebrity chefs to talk to consumers about red meat—sharing broader messages around quality farming practices—and show that they are proud to cook with beef, lamb and goatmeat."

Six well-known food bloggers teamed up with chefs at the barbecue to experience the sizzle firsthand, generating 48 pieces of social media coverage from the event, with over 81,000 audience impressions.

"Bloggers are the emerging lifestyle influencers," Connaugh said.

"They're not only talking to foodies—people who understand and want to know more about food—but they're also foodies and consumers themselves, so it's vital that we engage with that medium and educate them about our product."

'Fooderati' blogger Melissa Leong helped Felix Bar & Bistro's executive chef Lauren Murdoch prepare barbecued lamb shoulder with mixed grains and sesame yogurt for the crowd. She said the event was a great showcase for whole-carcass use, not only in restaurants but at a consumer level.

"It's an aspirational thing to be able to see the possibilities of using alternative cuts—for people to go "wow that was amazing" and it was chuck steak," Melissa said.



Connaugh Sheehan, MLA

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www.chefspecial.com.au

For more see the latest episode of *feedbackTV*



"Popular culture's so unAustralian, I've decided to create Chopular Culture instead. So I'm changing my tune and releasing my own Chop Song."

2011 a smash record

Last year's Nielsen Homescan data indicated the week including Australia Day was a record period for lamb sales value (12% higher than the same time in 2010 and 22% higher than the average week). Sales feedback also indicated the 2011 campaign was highly successful at building demand for lamb over the Australia Day week, irrespective of strengthening prices. These strong figures are the benchmark for 2012 Australia Day lamb campaign.

Sam's chop hit drives demand for lamb

Disillusioned with unAustralianism permeating pop culture, Sam Kekovich returns this January to bring all Australians together over lamb in MLA's latest Australia Day marketing campaign.

The 2012 campaign features Sam channelling his inner pop star and releasing his first pop song—a version of the 1990's hit, 'Barbie Girl'—as a catchy reminder for Australians of the good times lamb meals bring on Australia Day.

"My fellow Australians, it's been a year of calamity: natural disasters, revolutions, economic turmoil and to top it off, unAustralianism has gone viral.

... Is it any wonder Charlie Sheen's lost his sparkle, when he's always off his chops? Our lack of lamb has led to a litany of lambentable behaviour," Sam said.

"Popular culture's so unAustralian, I've decided to create Chopular Culture instead. So I'm changing my tune and releasing my own Chop Song."

The campaign is supported by a 'pop' style range of marketing material for retailers including



posters and a recipe booklet, along with a program of social media activities.

A media partnership with Channel 9 will also see Sam promote and drive demand for lamb on Australia Day during various programs including Today.

i **Glen Feist, MLA**
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12%
increase on lamb sales value during Australia Day week 2011

22%
increase compared to an average week

MAKE LAMB AND SAM 'TOP OF THE CHOPS' ON AUSTRALIA DAY!

Vote for Sam's version of Barbie Girl online to make lamb #1 on Sydney radio station NOVA's top 100 on Australia day at www.youtube.com/lambaustraliaday

MSA making its mark with consumers



MSA is going direct to consumers with a refreshed MSA 'graded' symbol and new point-of-sale material appearing at large retailers such as Costco, Aldi, Woolworths and 600 independent retail butchers.

After a decade doing the hard yards in butcher shops, Steven Rosevear is about to take over Barry's Tender Meats in Carlingford at a time when he says consumers are becoming increasingly aware, demanding and selective.

According to the Sydney butcher, his customers are hungrier than ever for information to back up their choice from the meat cabinet.

"It's a phenomenon that extends to almost everything people buy," Steven said.

"But the Meat Standards Australia (MSA) grading system is addressing that issue for red meat by helping take the guesswork out of buying beef."

MSA has been around for almost 12 years but in the past 12 months this complete paddock-to-plate quality assessment system has graded sufficient numbers to support a program 'refresh', including new point-of-sale material. MLA has unveiled a new look MSA

'graded' symbol and supporting information, to appear in supermarkets and local butchers across the country.

Beef cuts carrying the symbol have been graded against an independent standard for tenderness, juiciness and flavour to ensure consumer satisfaction when prepared by a recommended cooking method.

Barry's Tender Meats supplies a higher-end market and presently sells about 20% of their total volume as MSA-graded product. Steven said that amount will slowly increase next year along with their MSA-graded product range, which is presently limited to premium cuts such as New York sirloin, eye fillet and scotch fillet.

Steven believes the increase in MSA-graded product and greater exposure of the refreshed MSA 'graded' symbol at point of sale will forge stronger retail-client relationships and help build customer loyalty at his new business.

"The grading system really gives me confidence in the product. I know when someone orders an MSA-graded cut of beef it will meet their expectations," Steven said.

"Now the amount of MSA-graded product has reached a critical mass, the new range of point-of-sale materials available to help butchers educate their customers about buying and cooking beef will help create more sales."



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Consistency courts confidence

Poll Hereford breeder and beef and lamb producer Sam Gunn believes MSA's increased point-of-sale presence will resolve an issue that has dogged the beef industry for decades.

"For all of us to prosper—whether we're farmers, processors or butchers—we need to be able to ensure consistency of the beef-eating experience," he said.

"MSA focuses on every aspect of the supply chain and it's this combined effort over many years that has delivered us to this point. We now have a critical mass of graded product and an opportunity to promote awareness of the MSA symbol to educate and inspire confidence in consumers; this is what we set out to do 12 years ago."

1.42m

cattle graded MSA in 2011

15c/kg

average premium received by MSA producers in 2011

19,000+

Australian producers registered with MSA

Blonde ambition

Michael and Kay O'Neill use performance feedback from carcass competitions to fine tune their stud breeding program.

For over 15 years Michael and Kay O'Neill have used carcass competitions as a means of gauging the market position of their cattle.

The O'Neills compete at both a local and national level and are keen to enter the Beef Australia 2012 Carcass Competition after winning champion pen of grassfed Jap Ox at the 2009 event.

They use performance feedback from these competitions to fine tune the breeding program at their Blonde d'Aquitane stud, 'Bottle Tree Blondes,' at Cinnabar in Queensland.

"Carcass competitions tell us where we can improve as we strive to produce consistent, quality animals that give our clients the same results," Michael said.

"We tap into the Jap Ox market and sell for the domestic trade, aiming to produce animals to meet market specs at a timely interval and emphasising carcass quality and visual appeal.

"For the Jap Ox market, we prefer an animal to have a continual growth curve and raise our cattle on pasture to ensure a consistent growing plane—if they're doing a kilo a day I'm happy."

Working for Nolan Meats in Gympie for more than 11 years has given Michael a trained eye for live cattle assessment. He looks for good length and depth when selecting animals for a carcass competition.

"Good width between the front feet indicates good width all the way through. I also choose an animal that dips in the middle of the back as a sign the carcass weight is pulling down, giving good volume," Michael said.

"This selection approach and following MSA guidelines, which take carcass competitions to another level, have made our animals very marketable because they perform in all situations."

Enter now

Beef producers across the country can benchmark their product at a national level by entering the Beef Australia 2012 Carcass Competition. The contest was developed from the Australian Beef Carcass Appraisal System and has participating processors in every state.

Carcass Committee Chair David Hill said the competition was a chance to showcase Australia's quality beef.

"The committee has endeavoured to set a schedule that recognises profitability across all sectors of our industry," David said.

"A significant part of the competition is based on Meat Standards Australia (MSA). Points for eating quality make up 40% of the total score, rewarding producers whose product will keep consumers coming back to beef."

Carcass competition specifications, classes and judging criteria can be found on the Beef Australia website.



Enter the ANZ National Beef Carcass Competition at www.beefaustralia.com.au



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Snapshot

Michael and Kay O'Neill, Bottle Tree Blondes, Cinnabar, Queensland



Property:
243ha

Enterprise:
Stud breeding;
lucerne hay

Livestock:
80 Blonde d'Aquitane stud cattle;
25 Brahman females for crossbreeding

Pasture:
Native and Rhodes grass;
improved pasture

Soil:
Cracking clay

Rainfall:
820mm





The Australian Bureau of Statistics indicates that the Australian cattle herd increased by 8.5% to June 2011, to reach 28.8 million head (preliminary estimate based upon 2011 Census). Producers are expected to remain in rebuilding mode given favourable seasonal conditions are set to continue into 2012. Further herd growth is expected over the medium term, pushing the national herd to its highest level in over three decades (Figure 1).

Such growth expectations always rely on seasonal conditions, which are difficult to forecast, but positive price and income expectations over this period are expected to underpin further

herd growth. Throughout 2012, numbers will remain tight historically, as producers continue to retain breeding stock, but cattle turnoff is expected to be higher than 2011 levels.

Production levels will be boosted by a consolidation in average carcase weights, after a significant jump in 2011. Carcase weights are tipped to be sustained through 2012, with an ample supply of feed grain assisting finishing regimes. However, the high cost of feeder cattle, combined with the anticipated tough trade conditions to traditional grainfed markets in North Asia will present challenges for the lotfeeding sector.

Cattle herds and beef production in the major beef exporting nations have declined, which will help increase demand for Australian beef in global markets. With an increase in beef production forecast, exports for 2012 are also forecast to increase (Figure 2), while volumes to the Australian market remain steady.

Export conditions in 2012 will again favour the smaller and non-traditional markets, including Russia, Middle East and South East Asia. Trading conditions are expected to remain tough, if not deteriorate, to Japan and Korea as US volumes to both markets increase, assisted by the weak

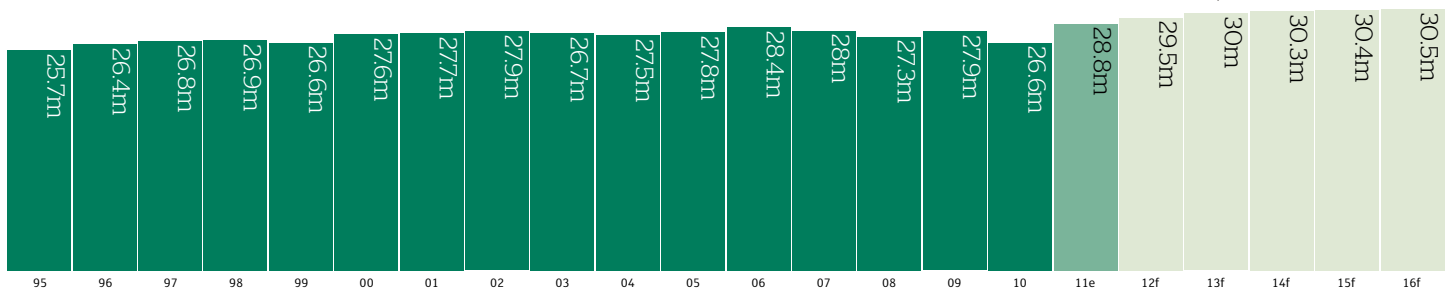
US currency and improved market access conditions to both markets.

After declining for the past decade, Australian beef exports to the US are forecast to increase in 2012. While the high A\$ and additional testing requirements for imported beef are expected to keep pressure on volumes, beef prices in the US are tipped to increase significantly, helping lure additional Australian product back to these markets.



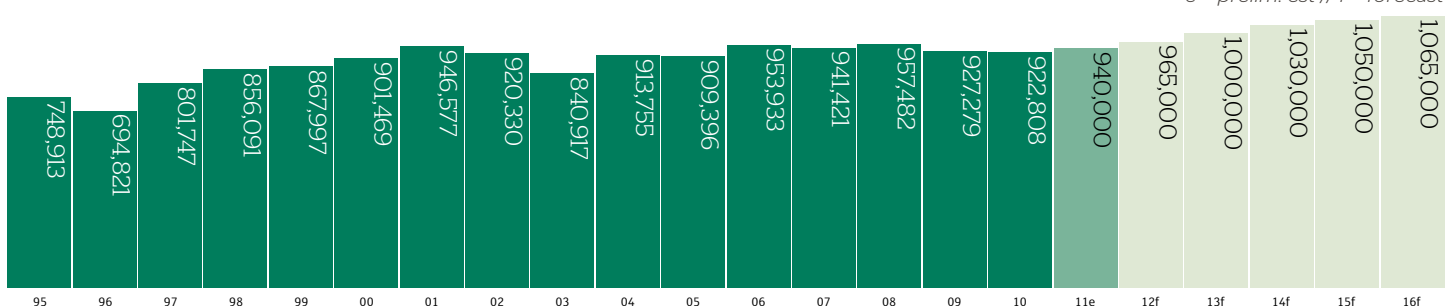
View the complete MLA 2012 beef and cattle industry projections at www.mla.com.au/industryprojections

Figure 1: Australian cattle herd (head)



Source: ABS, MLA forecasts
e = prelim. est // f = forecast

Figure 2: Australian beef exports ('000 tonnes swt)



Source: DAFF, ABS, MLA forecasts
e = prelim. est // f = forecast

Research at work // MLA works with industry to develop and deliver relevant research that offers real management outcomes at the cutting edge of the livestock industry. Our quarterly on-farm magazines, *Prograzier* and *Frontier*, delivered those research outcomes through expert advice and successful producer stories. Now you can find the latest information and resources for making a difference in the paddock every month in this section of *feedback*.

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survival

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Early weaning and training

Weaning for reproductive
efficiency and cow condition

Schooling weaner cattle for
easy handling



Target markets

Euro- vision

Opportunities are opening up for producers considering the lucrative European Union grainfed beef market as a selling option.



Snapshot

Andy and Anna Watson, Holbrook, New South Wales



Property:
1,200ha

Enterprise:
Hereford and Angus crossbreeding and backgrounding; prime lamb production

Livestock:
700 breeders; 400 composite ewes

Pasture:
Improved perennial ryegrass, phalaris and clovers, native pastures, tree corridors

Soil:
Alluvial creek flats, clay loams and loams

Rainfall:
680mm

Snapshot

Michael and Shirley Trewin Bungil, Victoria



Property:
800ha

Enterprise:
Poll Hereford breeding

Livestock:
330 breeders

Pasture:
Phalaris-based perennials, native perennial pastures

Soil:
From sandy loam to decomposed granite

Rainfall:
700mm

Holbrook producers Andy and Anna Watson are taking advantage of a good season and the fact a European Union (EU) accredited beef processing facility is now within their reach.

JBS Australia's Riverina Beef abattoir and 53,330-head capacity feedlot at Yanco has become EU accredited, offering market options for pure and crossbred feeder cattle across southern NSW and northern Victoria.

Encouraged by market signals from lot feeders, the Watsons became accredited through the EU Cattle Accreditation Scheme (EUCAS) in 2011. They hope to use the hybrid vigour advantage of their crossbred herd to reap higher premiums for supplying into the EU market through Riverina Beef.

"We have been supplying the feedlot market for 15 years and our genetics are already suited to EU requirements," Andy said.

They aim to turn off 450-480kg steers at 14-15 months old from their 700-head, spring-calving herd of Angus and Angus-Hereford cross cattle.

Average pregnancy rates on the property are 96-98% from a nine-week joining and spring growth rates are about 2kg/day.

Breeding for the EU

The Watsons select for high fertility and growth rates, assessing a wide range of BREEDPLAN performance data and using several indexes, including the Angus Long Fed index.

According to NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Beef Cattle Officer, Brian Cumming, growth rates

and carcass yields (determined by levels of fat and muscle) are key selection traits to meet EU market specifications in a crossbreeding operation.

"The EU takes a wide range of cattle types and breeds, making it available to many cattle producers in our region," he said.

In the Albury-Wodonga district, Brian said a mix of 25% or 50% European breed with British breed would meet EU criteria.

"Crossbred growth rates will vary through the year, but generally 0.6kg/day in winter and 1.8kg/day during spring will meet feedlot entry weights by 15-16 months of age," he said.

Minimum steer requirements are C+ muscle and frame score 5.

Brian is currently coordinating a More Beef from Pastures (MBfP) initiative in the region to help producers assess whether the EU market is a suitable target for their business and how to meet its requirements.

"This is a high quality, high price market that will lift returns to producers who don't have the type of cattle to supply traditional longfed markets, such as Japanese grainfed marbled product," Brian said.

Premiums for supplying feeder steers destined for the EU grainfed market are traditionally about 15-25 c/kg lwt—about \$100 for a 400kg steer.

Selecting genetics

Victorian Poll Hereford breeders, Michael and Shirley Trewin from Bungil, became EUCAS accredited last year to broaden the appeal of their cattle to buyers. →



Premiums for supplying feeder steers destined for the EU grainfed market are traditionally about 15-25 c/kg lwt—about \$100 for a 400kg steer.

EU MARKET SPECIFICATIONS

Steers and heifers of any breed in a 380-500kg lwt range

Milk or two-tooth, requiring genetics and grazing management to turn-off cattle younger than 30 months

Cattle with a 320-420kg cwt and 7-22mm of fat

No use of hormonal growth promotants

Producers are participants of the EU Cattle Accreditation Scheme (EUCAS)

EUCAS guarantees full traceability of all animals through NLIS



The Trewins run a self-replacing herd of 330 breeders, turning off 12-14-month-old steers at 325-425kg for backgrounding or trading.

They focus on cows and calves, early steer turn-off and pasture improvement as key strategies to boost productivity, drought-proof their property and restrict supplementary feed costs.

Michael said this meant backgrounding, feeder and trader markets better met their needs than supplying directly to feedlots.

"Because we are straight Poll Hereford breeders, we can offer buyers bigger lines of consistent quality animals that they can go on and finish," he said.

"Our steer turn-off weights and genetic make-up are well suited to the EU market, and we are excited that we can now access it through Riverina Beef."

The Trewins use estimated breeding values (EBVs) for low birthweight and 400- and 600-day growth rates. They are also concentrating on genetic improvements for muscle and frame.

Their EBV selection closely matches the Hereford EU index and some of their recently purchased bulls have high EU index values.

DPI Forbes Beef Cattle Livestock Officer, Jeffrey House, said some breeders could access BREEDPLAN EU and 100-120-day grainfed steer indexes to help select suitable genetics for the EU market.

Jeffrey said the Hereford EU Grass Fed Steer index could be useful because it had similar growth rate stipulations to the EU grainfed market, while maintaining the balance of fertility traits required for a self-replacing breeding herd. However, he suggested some emphasis on marbling for grainfed steers might be required.



Andy and Anna Watson.



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EUCAS Tip & Tool

www.mla.com.au/publications

Watching weight during Summer

Maintaining steady cattle weight gain between weaning and selling is tough when pasture quantity and quality slumps in summer and autumn.

It is vital to meet the nutritional requirements of retained stock during this period to ensure young cattle keep growing to suit feedlot entry requirements and other target market weights by spring.

Keys to success

Minimum growth rates of 0.6kg/day are needed to supply into the premium EU grainfed market. This can be achieved by selecting the right genetics for growth traits and having the right feed in front of your stock.

Regularly assess pasture quality and quantity and cattle weights leading up to the season break and provide feed supplements to fill any gaps.

February and March are typically lean months for pasture growth in southern NSW and northern Victoria.

Silage production frequently fills the feed gap, which often coincides with calf weaning.

Weaned calves need high energy, high protein feed supplements and quality silage can be a cost-effective solution. Other options include a mix of grain or feed pellets with a roughage source, such as good quality hay.

Key considerations for silage include the ability to cut pasture or crops in early spring—when protein and digestibility levels are high—and the availability of adequate storage.

You should also closely monitor animal health during summer, especially in weaner mobs that are most susceptible to stressors.

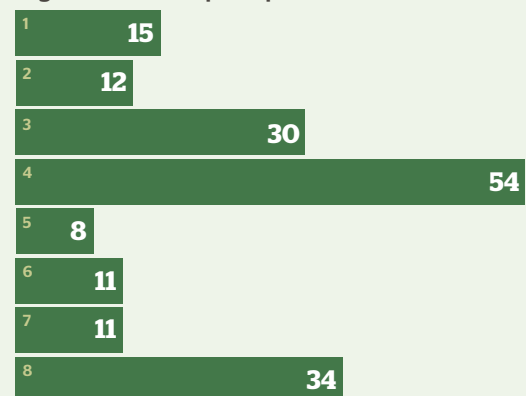
Treat weaners for round worm and other internal parasites at this time of year and regularly check for incidence of pink eye.

Did you know...

Over 2,500 people attended More Beef from Pastures (MBfP) events across southern Australia last year. More than half of those who gave feedback on the events said they intended to change their management practices as a result of attending a MBfP activity.

About 138 businesses indicated changes they had already implemented that aligned with MBfP principles.

Businesses implementing change aligned with MBfP principles



- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Setting directions | 6. Weaner throughput |
| 2. Tactical stock control | 7. Herd health and welfare |
| 3. Pasture growth | 8. Meeting market specifications |
| 4. Pasture utilisation | |
| 5. Genetics | |

Summer and autumn growth rate targets

1 kg/month

Merino lambs heavier than 20kg at weaning should be gaining at least 1kg/month

2 kg/month

Merino lambs weighing less than 20kg at weaning should be growing at 2kg/month

5 kg/month

Ewe lambs weaned at 25kg and intended for joining should be growing at more than 5kg/month to reach 45kg by seven-months-old

Weaner management

High performance a hot topic



Overfeeding weaners during summer and autumn can be a financial drain but underfeeding could cost more in the longer term.

An inadequate feeding regime runs the risk of high mortality rates, increased incidence of weaner ill thrift, lost wool and meat production, and poor maiden ewe reproductive performance.

Weaner mortalities are estimated to cost producers up to \$20/head in expenses for each lamb on the ground.

The Cooperative Research Centre for Sheep Industry Innovation (Sheep CRC) has found mortalities are minimised—and profits maximised—when weaners are fed to meet growth targets that optimise survival, boost ewe lamb conception rates and reduce susceptibility to intestinal worms.

In summer, this requires a focus on nutrition and flock management, including regular pasture assessments, monitoring sheep weight and condition, feed budgeting and using good animal health practices.

To assist sheep producers meet these challenges, MLA is contributing to the Sheep CRC's High Performance Weaners (HPW) training course.

The course guides groups of 5-6 producers through critical stages of the annual weaner management cycle. Each HPW group meets on-farm six times a year with a Rural Industries Skills Training (RIST) HPW coordinator.

Growth rate targets

RIST HPW Program Leader, Darren Gordon, said spring-born lambs should ideally weigh 45% of adult bodyweight at weaning or when pasture hays-off.

Post-weaning, lambs lighter than 20kg should be drafted off and fed preferentially to achieve growth rates of 2kg/month, or more than 60g/day. Lambs heavier than 20kg should be gaining at least 1kg/month, or more than 30g/day.

Darren said to optimise joining weights and reproductive performance, 25kg ewe weaners at three-months-old needed to be growing at more than 170g/day to reach 45kg by seven-months-old. He said higher growth rates were needed if weaning weights were lower.





Livestock Systems Senior Research Scientist with the Department of Primary Industries Victoria, Dr Ralph Behrendt, said weaners lighter than 20kg had less than 1kg of fat reserves, which would quickly metabolise under nutrition or cold weather stress.

“This makes them susceptible to extended time off feed, changes in feed quality or exposure to cold weather off-shears,” Ralph said.

“Adaption to supplementary feeding needs to occur before feed quantity or quality restricts growth.”

Grazing and pasture management

It is vital to regularly assess the amount and quality of paddock feed on offer during summer and autumn.

Ralph said pastures and feed supplements needed to meet animal requirements for metabolisable energy (ME) and crude protein, because mortalities were more likely once weaners started to lose weight.

A 25kg lamb growing at 33g/day (1kg/month) needs 7.8MJ ME/day to maintain weight—similar to the ME required by a 45kg adult ewe (1DSE). This increases to more than 10MJ ME/day if the weaner growth target is lifted to 100g/day.

Ralph suggested measuring ME and protein from cut pasture samples, and undertaking feed tests of supplements or rations.

Weaner health

Weaners are the most susceptible mob to sheep intestinal worms due to low resistance thresholds. They are often more susceptible to flystrike, so preventive management is critical.

It is estimated worms can suppress weaner appetites by as much as 30%, which has serious production implications, and associated scouring can exacerbate flystrike problems.

“It is important to closely monitor worm egg counts in weaners and treat with an effective drench when required,” Ralph said.

Ralph and Darren agreed that measuring and monitoring weaners every 4-6 weeks during summer would pay dividends in achieving flocks with high growth rates, low mortalities and good animal health.

Summer survival skills

Lifting weaner growth rates is boosting survival, conception rates and sale weights for Mark and Sheree Cooper's Merino and prime lamb enterprise at Edenhope.

The Coopers have entered summer on their Victorian property with confidence in the clear parameters they set for managing weaners to reduce mortalities and maximise productivity.

Mark and Sheree are currently participating in the Sheep CRC's High Performance Weaner (HPW) training course and have been members of a Lifetime Ewe Management (LTEM) group.

They have adopted these program strategies with the aim of cutting weaner mortalities to 1% from a long-term average of about 5%. They also hope to boost lamb growth rates and lift ewe weaner weights for joining to improve whole-flock reproductive performance.

Mark said using HPW's 'measure-to-manage' approach has highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of the family's sheep enterprise and the environment in which it is run.



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Interested in the High Performance Weaners course? Visit the education and training section at www.sheepcrc.org.au

"We are using our HPW and LTEM skills to fine-tune our business and achieve better outcomes by reducing costs and increasing production," he said.

Changing enterprise mix

The Coopers run a 5,000-head self-replacing Merino flock, producing 17-18 micron wool, and up to 30% of ewes are mated annually to Border Leicester sires.

During the past two years, high lamb prices and use of HPW and LTEM guidelines have prompted the family to retain these first-cross ewes for lamb production.

"Our major limitation in the past was carrying smaller Merino lambs through their first summer, and in some years, mortalities could be as high as 5%," Mark said.

"We are starting to see better summer survival by concentrating on lifting weaner growth rates—especially for the lightest 20% of the mob."

Mark said the short- to medium-term conception rate target for weaners (number of foetuses conceived per 100 ewes joined) was 100-110%. Their target sale weight for second-cross lambs is about 44kg.

The Coopers wean lambs at 21kg in early November, splitting them into mobs based on liveweight for preferential feeding.

Using HPW targets and tools

They adhere to HPW summer growth rate targets of 2kg/month for lambs weighing less than 20kg and 1kg/month for those weighing more than 20kg.

"The HPW targets are set with the economics of sheep feeding in mind. We've found they are achievable and workable on our property," he said.

They regularly weigh weaners during summer, monitor growth rates and assess pasture feed on offer to ensure nutrition is meeting animal growth requirements.

Mark said he had confidence in the HPW pasture quality charts, after noticing in recent summers

that the charts provided highly accurate predictions of how sheep would perform as feed quality dropped off.

Worms are the biggest animal health issue on the property at this time of year. The Coopers monitor weaner worm egg counts and have started breeding for improved flock worm resistance using the MERINOSELECT genetic evaluation system.

Mark said he now realised the value of measuring, monitoring and benchmarking key performance indicators of lamb growth rates, conception rates and reproductive performance, and identifying where lamb losses were occurring.

"Our flock is becoming more productive, with preliminary trends indicating higher outputs of wool and meat per hectare with fewer weaner mortalities, depending on the season."

Snapshot

Mark and Sheree Cooper, Edenhope, Victoria



Property:
600ha

Enterprise:
Merino wool;
first-cross lambs;
cropping

Livestock:
5,000 head of
sheep

Pasture:
Perennial Australian
phalaris and
annual renovated
sub clover and
ryegrass

Soil:
Heavy grey clays
to deep white
sands, tending
to acidic

Rainfall:
550mm



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Ewe scanning

Avoiding unplanned pregnancies

Pregnancy scanning enables producers to custom-manage their flock to maximise lambing outcomes.

Scanning is an essential management tool for New South Wales producers, Scott and Desnee Schlunke.

The Schlunkes use information on the pregnancy status of their ewes to better manage feed and achieve higher lambing percentages, adding up to savings on their property at Bowning.

They began scanning ewes in 2004, determining basic 'wet or dry' (pregnant or empty) status, then expanded to detecting multiple pregnancies for better flock management.

"During drought years, knowing the pregnancy status of our ewes made feeding more precise and saved us money. We knew that ewes carrying twins were getting the feed they required and we weren't wasting feed on dry animals," Scott said.

"Research shows that using objective data, such as ewe scanning results, can help lift the number of lambs weaned per ewe joined—known as the net reproduction rate (NRR)—by 15% within 10 years!"

Managing multiple pregnancies

Research from the Lifetime Wool program shows that lifting the weight of twin or triplet lambs from an average of 3.7kg to more than 4.0kg improves their chances of survival to more than 80%.

Ewes scanned with multiple pregnancies can be drafted out and given access to paddocks with best shelter (aiding lamb survival) and feed to ensure their nutritional requirements are met and they remain in an ideal fat score 3 for lambing.

The Schlunkes join ewes in March for an August lambing and scan about 95 days

post-joining, so multiple pregnancies can be detected.

They have achieved lamb marking percentages of up to 140% by using scanning results to target better survival rates for multiple pregnancies.

Scott said they prioritise the feed requirements of ewes with twins or triplets. Smaller mobs of 100 head are put in sheltered paddocks closer to home for lambing, so they can be monitored more closely. The Schlunkes' fox control strategy is also focused on these paddocks.

Selection for fertility

Scanning identifies dry ewes and those that fail to rear a lamb, which can help lift the long-term performance of a flock. Scott and Desnee use this objective data to forward plan and put selection pressure on their flock for fertility.

Maiden ewes are given two chances to conceive before being culled. Older ewes that scan as empty are assessed for past performance and type to determine whether they are joined to Poll Dorset rams, retained and run like wethers until the following year, or sold.

1. Lifetime Wool.



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Snapshot

Scott and Desnee
Schlunke,
Bowning, NSW



Property:
280ha

Enterprise:
Merino sheep and
beef cattle

Livestock:
600-800 ewes,
depending on the
season

Pasture:
Improved pastures
(clovers and rye);
native grasses

Soil:
Granite and
pipe clay

Rainfall:
700mm

10 things to think about

Pros

- 1 More precise flock and paddock management and allocation of feed resources/supplements
- 2 Targeted management of twin bearing ewes into protected paddocks to improve lamb survival
- 3 Non-pregnant ewes can be run as dry sheep for wool production or culled and sold if feed resources are limited
- 4 Information to identify where reproductive losses are in the breeding cycle
- 5 Likely to be most cost effective in drought years or when ewes are mated at low condition score and maidens at low body weight

Cons

- 6 More mobs to manage and stress of extra handling in some seasons
- 7 More labour intensive when scanning and managing for multiple births
- 8 A late lambing mob to manage when dry ewes are rejoined—can disrupt the normal on-farm breeding cycle
- 9 More precise management required, which may compete with other farm operations
- 10 Opportunity cost of scanning and extra labour and potentially an additional and unnecessary cost in low twinning flocks

Did you know...

→ Improving flock reproduction rates and lamb survival to weaning are key targets in the Making More From Sheep (MMFS) Wean More Lambs module.

→ Over 900 people attended (MMFS) *It's Ewe Time* forums across Australia in 2011. About three quarters of those who attended said they intended to make a practice change in their enterprise as a result of the forum—mostly in the areas of ewe management, genetics, business management and grazing management.



Find out how to wean more lambs at
www.makingmorefromsheep.com.au



Scott Schlunke uses scanning results to target better lamb survival rates in their Merino flock at Bowning.

Early weaning



Calf care

One-stop-shop for managing weaners

In northern Australia where the climate is seasonal and highly variable, the soils mostly infertile and grasses predominantly native, the most effective way to look after the breeding cow's body condition is weaning. Calves are taken from their mothers mainly for the benefit of the cow. As well as allowing her to regain condition to produce a calf each year, weaning also educates young stock for easier management, setting them up for life. Looking after both the cow and the calf after weaning goes hand in hand.

Why wean?

Co-author of MLA's upcoming *Weaner management in northern beef herds* manual, Russ Tyler, said the main reason for weaning was to conserve breeding conditions, reduce mortalities and improve reproduction.

According to the former Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI) Principal Extension Officer, some of the benefits such as improved reproduction may not be immediate but would accumulate over time.

"Weaning also provides an ideal opportunity to educate young animals which will set them up for ease of handling throughout their lives," Russ said.

He said a breeder cow's target body condition was score 3 or better at calving and planning the body weight cycle and condition throughout the year was key to higher fertility and lower mortality rates. Stopping the need to produce milk allows the cow to regain lost condition during lactation and is equivalent to feeding 2kgs of grain a day.

The calf's stomach

As a calf's ruminant digestive system develops with age, the stage of rumen development determines the calf's feed quantity and type. In most of northern Australia pasture will be not be of sufficient quality to meet the needs of weaners particularly those weaned at less than 150kg liveweight. As a result, most weaners will need supplementing to meet their target growth rates. When born, the calf has a small, non-functional rumen and cannot digest grass. Russ said much of the animal's protein came from digestion of rumen microorganisms (bugs).

"While the calf's rumen is functioning reasonably well by three months of age, it's not as strong as adults, so it's important to remember weaners can't handle poor quality feed. They need high levels (18-20%) of protein in their diet, which is usually fed as protein meals."

Energy, protein, mineral and vitamin needs can be calculated from the animal's size and its target growth rate using feeding standards.

Pasture and grazing management

Russ said having a dedicated paddock (which has been spelled over summer) was beneficial for turning out and training weaners.

"They should be put on the best country possible for high quality feed—not the holding paddock which is used for other stock and working horses.

"If two rounds of mustering occur, a different, good quality paddock for the second round weaners should be used.

"Weaning calves at a younger age helps keep breeders in better body condition, particularly if the year has been dry or the country is poor."



It's also important to consider the stocking rate and the decline in pasture quality during the dry season as the paddock must be able to carry the weaners until the break in the season."

Weaning strategies

Russ said factors to consider when planning and implementing weaning strategies include:

- country type and how well the cattle grow on it
- seasonal conditions and time of year
- breeders' ages
- mating system
- target markets and growth targets

How weaners are managed depends on economics and target market. What is considered normal weaning practice will vary according to the type of country. On more fertile country this may be weaning at six months of age while on lower fertility country weaning down to 100kg is often a common practice.

"Weaning calves at a younger age helps to keep the breeders in better body condition, particularly if the year has been dry or the country is poor," he added.

"With seasonal mating, calves are normally weaned at four to eight months of age in late autumn. It's important to look after weaners to avoid high mortalities."

Weaning management involves planning for the muster, the yards, cow-proof fencing, stocks of hay and other supplements, the weaner paddocks and transport.

Weaner health

Weaning is stressful on the calf so its health should be managed vigilantly.

"The big change, including the switch from milk to solid feed and being put into close confinement with other animals makes the calf more susceptible to diseases," Russ explained.

Key factors to manage stress include:

- providing the right nutrition
- segregating weaners on size
- regular and calm handling
- daily monitoring for a few weeks
- treating parasites and vaccinating against relevant diseases

Russ said good herd health began in the weaning yard. "The weaners need good quality hay as soon as they walk in," he said.

"If they go hungry the rumen bugs will start to die off—and trying to build them up again can knock the weaners around."

Coccidiosis, or post-weaning diarrhoea (PWD) can be common in weaned calves. Coccidia normally inhabit the intestinal tract without causing problems, but can reproduce rapidly when the calf's immune system is compromised by the stress of weaning.

Feeding weaners

Feeding is crucial, especially for animals under 150kgs. Russ said the type and amount of fodder and supplement to feed depended on local availability and cost, economic benefit for the target market and animal welfare considerations. "In most cases, calves should be fed high protein weaner pellets or high quality protein meal. It's also important to be aware of weaner performance as a group and as individuals. Weaners in a small group not doing well should be drafted and handled separately. If bigger ones aren't doing well, drop them back a group to get them eating. Weaners between 100-150kgs can be divided into a couple of groups according to weight and as they get bigger, moved into a heavier weight group to reduce bullying. As they grow, the cost of supplement generally decreases."

Longer term benefits

Growth in the weaning year can affect future productivity, health, meat quality and heifer performance.

"Poor weaner growth can result in delayed turn-off, failing to meet market specifications and more culls such as 'poor doers', 'woody' or 'poddy' animals," Russ said. The benefits of good weaning and breeder herd management include:

- better overall breeder condition
- higher conception rates
- fewer mortalities
- lower cost of supplements for breeders
- more females for sale
- more concentrated calving in continuously-mated herds
- more maiden heifers heavy enough to mate

Economic impacts

The economic impact of improving weaner management depends on current herd management practices, country

fertility and pasture quality. If a strategy of early weaning is implemented, the herd structure will change with fewer cows needed to produce the same number of calves. Within a couple of years, the proportion of small calves will decline—particularly at second-round musters and calving will better align with seasonal grass growth. Overall branding figures would be expected to rise to 10%. Weaning rates will rise from better conception rates and lower calf losses from birth to weaning. Extra costs will include more expensive supplementary feed, labour for tending small weaners and increased infrastructure for yarding and feeding weaners.

Educating weaners

Weaning is the best time for educating young animals. Keeping weaners unstressed with steady handling and adequate feed and water in the yards allows them to establish social orders in confined spaces. It also increases their immunity to common health conditions and desensitises them to noise and the movement of people, dogs and vehicles.

They learn to eat new foods such as hay, pellets or supplements, and once released as a mob can be tailed out in a paddock and then yarded at night. This training makes them easier to work in both the paddock and the yards throughout their lives.



Keep an eye out for the upcoming MLA manual *Weaner management in northern beef herds* which provides general principles on early weaning and weaner education.

www.mla.com.au/publications



Russ Tyler:

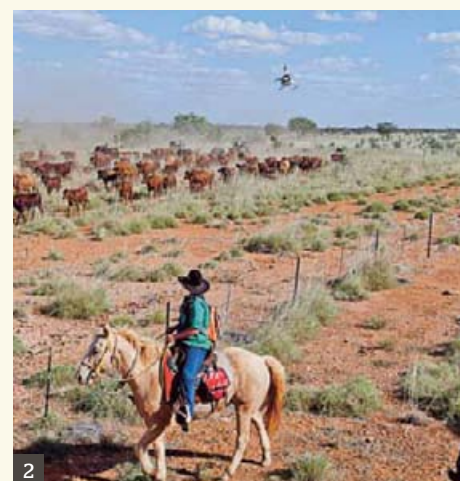
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Tips



1



2



3

1. Handle animals calmly and confidently, without sudden and loud movement.

2. Weaners can be released from the yards as a mob after a few days.

3. Get weaners used to the noise and movement of people and vehicles.

Educating weaners

Former DEEDI extension officer, Russ Tyler, provides some yard weaning tips from MLA's producer manual, *Weaner management in northern beef herds*.

Yard weaning and training

→ Handle animals calmly and confidently, without sudden and loud movement.

→ Draft calves to be weaned into a yard with a clean water trough and good quality hay to make their experience pleasant.

→ Work weaners through the yards on foot to familiarise them with people on the ground.

→ It's better to work with separate classes of animals, as a few older ones with bad temperaments will affect the behaviour of the whole mob.

→ Cattle read body language so show them clearly where they should move.

Tailing and yarding

→ Weaners can be released from the yards as a mob after a few days. Tail them out into a paddock (bringing them back and teaching them to 'block up') and then yard them at night.

→ After a few days they should walk out calmly, put their heads down and start eating. They can then be settled on the water in their paddock, or left in a holding paddock for a further week as they get used to living without their mothers.

Other management tips

→ Familiarise weaners with trucking without a rush against tight schedules—a short, smooth ride teaches them it's not a negative experience.

→ Preferably carry out dehorning, branding and castration procedures a couple of months before weaning or make them the last procedures in weaner training.

→ Check the weaner paddock daily for a few weeks to make sure the weaners are coming to water and supplements and that none have escaped.

Images by Nicolle Versteeg. Photography www.nicolleversteeg.com

Quiet, responsive cattle are a priority on 'Yarrie Station', where staff learn the ins and outs of weaner training to make animals easier and safer to handle.

Well schooled

Spending time on weaner education pays dividends for the life of the animal in terms of safe and easy management, time saved and increased productivity, which in the end "comes down to pure economics", according to Annabelle Coppin.

Annabelle manages the Coppin family's East Pilbara Cattle Company property, Yarrie Station, in Western Australia, running 3,500 breeders across 400,000ha.

Educating young cattle destined for the live export trade is an important part of the business.

"In most cases, our breeder cows are only handled once a year," Annabelle said.

"Good weaner backgrounding ensures cattle are easier and safer to handle throughout their lives, and it's also important for sale cattle. Quiet cattle are less stressed in any situation, whether it is trucking, in a feedlot or on a ship."

During the six-month mustering season on Yarrie Station, weaners are trucked in from around the property's bush yards to a central yard for handling and marking.

Annabelle then runs a week-long course for staff that trains them in yard education for weaner cattle.

She designed the station's yard weaning course with livestock consultant Boyd Holden to enable handlers to develop a positive relationship with young cattle, making future handling more manageable and cattle more saleable.

"Good weaner backgrounding ensures cattle are easier and safer to handle throughout their lives."

The course covers receiving animals, drafting relevant lines, feeding hay, yard activities and tailing out into holding paddocks on horseback and motorbike.

"We train as we work and teach theory at night, so that by the end of the week everyone has a fair idea about how to carry out weaner training activities," Annabelle said.

Annabelle said it was important to start with a small mob of weaners for these activities (around 30 works the best in Yarrie's infrastructure) and keep them in lines of similar size to avoid bullying.

"Watch the mob for behavioural changes of individual cattle, and don't overwork them once they are doing the right thing; leave them be for a while," she added.

After about a week, weaners are ready to go into surrounding holding paddocks and are then either trucked off-property or put out for the year.



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Keep an eye out for the upcoming manual *Weaner management in northern beef herds*: www.mla.com.au/publications

How to...

Yard weaning at Yarrie Station

Activity 1: Holding and moving—introducing weaners to pressure

1. Position a mob of no more than 50 weaners in a straight line (no bullies or larger, flighty cattle).
2. Introduce yourself, ensuring all weaners are standing and aware of your presence and there are no sick or injured animals.
3. Take the mob to one end of the yards and hold them. When settled, with a person in the lead, take them to

another corner and repeat. Cattle should stand still and respond to pressure from the operators. Repeat at least three times, or more if required.

Activity 2: Developing mob structure

This activity trains weaners to follow leaders (both people and cattle) and stay in the mob.

1. Place one person on the lead and another on the tail.
2. Move cattle between yards. The leader should look for leading cattle that will lock

onto them and encourage these animals to follow, then lead the mob and keep them from stringing out too much. The tail handler keeps the mob connected with the lead and turns it through the gates.

3. Don't stop until the mob is connected to the leader, not breaking, not difficult to work and moving around corners and through gates without relying on the yards to turn them.



Snapshot

East Pilbara
Cattle Company,
Yarrie Station,
East Pilbara, WA



Property:
400,000ha

Enterprise:
Live export
cattle trade

Livestock:
3,500 breeders,
predominantly
Shorthorn,
Brahman,
Droughtmaster
cross

Pasture:
Spinifex and
buffel grass

Rainfall:
300mm

4. Once flow is consistent and well established, park the mob on the water trough.

5. Repeat these steps. It is important to release the pressure once the mob is responding to these requirements.

Activity 3: Moving through gates and into confined spaces

This teaches weaners to look for gates and control speed.

1. Once weaners settle from activity 2, move cattle in and out of two yards, preferably

in parallel. One person on the side applies pressure to encourage weaners through the gates and another is on the tail. Cattle should move smoothly without resistance and be happy to stand still with the gate open.

2. Once settled, move them back. One person in the lead, one on the side inside the pens, slowing or speeding through parallel positioning.

3. Repeat until cattle need minimal pressure to move quietly from each pen, are responding to parallel

pressure (either speeding or slowing) and are looking for the gates to move through.

Activity 4: Introducing the race

After activities 1-3, weaners can be put through the race, ensuring minimal pressure and no bad experiences. One person should be able to do this activity.

1. Open the race.

2. Pressure the weaners, letting them flow with minimal pressure from force.

Things to observe:

→ Are they flowing freely, looking for gates and moving up the race with minimal pressure? If unresponsive, return to activity 2, then activity 3 and encourage movement.

→ If still flighty, fast or stressed, return to activity 1 and slow it all down.

Barber's pole vaccine may cut losses

Australian sheep producers could be using a vaccine to fight Barber's pole worm infestations by mid-2014 thanks to a new research project funded by MLA.

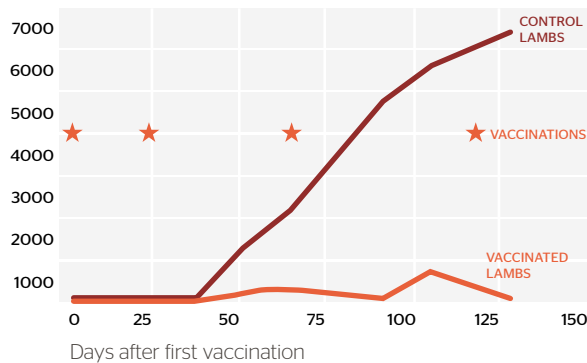
The UK-based Moredun Research Institute has patented a vaccine shown to protect against this damaging parasite.

Senior Veterinary Parasitologist, Dr David Smith, leads the Barber's pole worm vaccine research at the Institute. His team is collaborating on the project with Dr Brown Besier and other researchers at the Western Australian Department of Food and Agriculture.

David said producers controlling Barber's pole worm with drenches often needed to apply up to six treatments in a season in regions where infestations were endemic and many strains of the parasite were now resistant to more than once class of drench.

"We're on target to develop, manufacture and sell the vaccine. Animals will require repeated immunisation but it promises superior, more persistent worm control with no withdrawal period," he said.

Mean number of Barber's pole worm eggs per gram of faeces



"The vaccine also doesn't involve toxic chemicals and worm resistance is unlikely to develop."

Preliminary trials of the vaccine with grazing lambs in Western Australia showed it was highly effective (figure 1).



Moredun Research Institute
David.Smith@moredun.ac.uk

←

Figure 1:

A preliminary trial run by the Western Australian Department of Food and Agriculture at their Mount Barker research station shows a significant reduction in faecal egg count in vaccinated lambs versus the control group.

Worms cost the Australian sheep industry up to an estimated \$369 million/year in mortalities and production losses.

How to

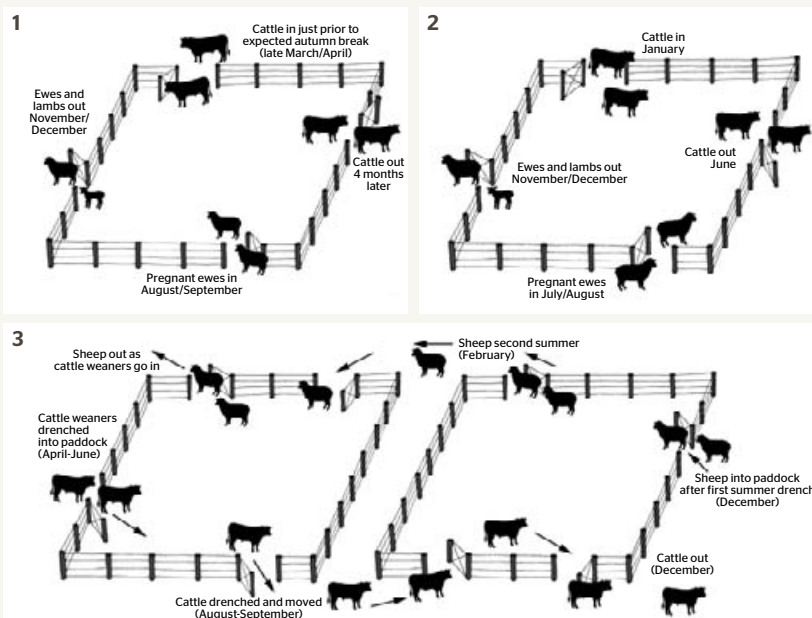
Prepare low worm risk pastures

→ Sheep that are treated for gastro-intestinal roundworms and returned to the same paddock can be rapidly re-infected with worms.

→ Moving sheep to low worm risk pastures after drenching can help delay reinfection.

→ Mixed enterprises can take advantage of rotationally grazing sheep and cattle to break the parasite life cycle.

→ The following rotational grazing systems can be used to prepare low worm risk paddocks...



←

1 Six-month, single paddock rotational grazing system—northern summer rainfall zone.

2 Single paddock rotational grazing system—southern winter rainfall zone.

3 Double paddock rotational grazing system—southern winter rainfall zone.

Battling Barber's pole worm in Queensland

At the height of summer Barber's pole worm can cause significant mortalities and major production losses in weaner sheep across set-stocked systems in southern Queensland.

MLA and the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI) have launched the Weanersafe survey and trial to collect data on the cost of worms in the region and develop best management techniques for worm control.

DEEDI Parasitologist, Maxine Lyndal-Murphy, said the Weanersafe project would survey the extent of drench resistance across 15 properties and trial the impact and management benefits of rotational grazing for worm control on two properties over the next two summers.

DEEDI Agricultural Economist, Dr Jim Page, will assess the cost of worms to the Queensland sheep industry and potential economic benefits of rotational grazing in terms of worm control.



Grab these factsheets to learn how to prepare low worm risk paddocks:



Worm control in southern prime lamb production systems

Low worm risk pastures for sheep

www.mla.com.au/publications



Eid al Adha program well supported in the Middle East

Sheepmeat Council of Australia (SCA) directed MLA and industry's live export activities in the Middle East during Eid al Adha. SCA CEO Ron Cullen discusses the outcomes.

Ron Cullen
Sheepmeat Council of Australia CEO



Sheepmeat Council of Australia and the Australian Livestock Exporters' Council recently led an industry initiative to extend our animal welfare programs in the Middle East during Eid al Adha.

We focussed on the three markets of Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain, where industry implemented a policy of no private sales to unknown slaughter points. Australian sheep had to be processed in approved facilities that met or exceeded international animal welfare standards (OIE).

Eid al Adha is a deeply religious time for Muslims and a significant cultural event in the Middle East region, and making major changes to the process of selling sheep during this peak period is a significant challenge.

The success of our program depended on industry addressing some key elements to successfully limit private sales of Australian sheep in Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar:

→ Ensuring importers and local governments understood the preferred policy regarding no private sales to unknown slaughter points

→ Ensuring widespread communication to the general



Industry representatives provided in-market support under SCA's direction.

public of the importing countries

→ Helping importers plan the logistics of moving people and livestock from the point of purchase to the point to slaughter at approved locations

→ Providing Australian industry resources at critical locations, including livestock handling support and monitoring and reporting

With the strong support of importers and governments in key Middle East markets, our program delivered a compliance rate of 98%, which we consider to be a success. In terms of numbers, this means of the estimated 54,000 Australian merino sheep sold during Eid al Adha this year, just over 1,000 were sold privately and slaughtered at unknown locations.

Following this year's program, a number of improvements have

been identified for possible implementation in future years. These include improving crowd control, improving education and communication prior to the Eid period and increasing local investment in infrastructure.

Industry is now assisting supply chains to implement a new framework to assure the welfare of exported Australian livestock as recommended by the Farmer Review of industry operations. This will require each supply chain to ensure that Australian animals are processed in facilities that meet or exceed OIE standards. The first phase of this program will be delivered in key Middle Eastern markets by March 2012.



Sheepmeat Council of Australia
T: 02 6269 5610



www.sheepmeatcouncil.com.au

Racking up lamb sales

Danny Milne knows his customers are looking for quick, easy meals that deliver value and quality. Danny gets ideas from MLA's Counter Attack program that help him create up-to-the-minute products at Milne's Country Style Meats, the butcher shop he and wife Tara own in Young, NSW.

feedback caught up with Danny following an MLA Racking up your profits workshop designed to encourage butchers to sell value-added lamb products that increase secondary cut returns and take pressure off high valued loin cuts.

You've already attended several of MLA's Beefing up your profits events – what made you decide to do the value added lamb workshop?

Racking up your profits is timely given that lamb is currently more expensive and offering a range of cheaper cuts—as well as the normal cuts—is a popular alternative. People love lamb, so they're happy to try new ideas.

What did the workshop involve?

It showed us how to cut and prepare a range of lamb cuts from the forequarter, leg and even the flap section; how to use these in more cost effective ways and how to break them down into several different cuts.

The *Racking up your profits* publication has lots of ideas for lamb trimmings or mince and even new ideas for lamb sausages.

How do you promote your new product lines? We run a weekly column in the Young newspaper, fax ideas to businesses, feature cabinet display items and have free taste-testing days.



What kind of customer feedback do you get? Introducing new ways to cook secondary cuts has created a lot of interest and given people more options. MLA's *Racking up your profits* program is a massive motivation. People are time-poor, so making easy-to-cook and cost effective new products is great for them and, as it's lifting our sales percentage, great for us. We expect to see more growth in lamb sales and more satisfied customers.

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i For more detail on MLA's Counter Attack program, contact **Stephen Pocock, MLA**
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www.themainmeal.com.au

Recipe



Spanish paprika lamb ribs

These Spanish style lamb ribs will have your guests dancing with delight!

Serves: 4

Preparation time:
15 minutes

Cooking time:
10 minutes

INGREDIENTS

1.2kg lamb party ribs
(4 x 8 rib), frenched
½ cup tomato sauce
1 tablespoon olive oil
2 teaspoons dried oregano leaves
2 teaspoons chopped red chilli
2 teaspoons smoked paprika

METHOD

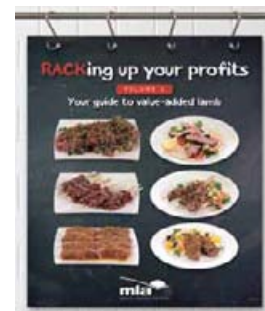
1. Score meaty side of lamb ribs.
2. Combine tomato sauce, oil, oregano, chilli and paprika. Spread over scored side of ribs.
3. Cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour.
4. Preheat BBQ to moderately high heat.
5. Cook lamb ribs for 5 minutes on each side, until well browned and cooked through.
6. Remove to warm plate. Cover loosely with foil and rest for 10 minutes before serving.

Serving suggestion

Serve with roasted sweet potato and mushrooms.

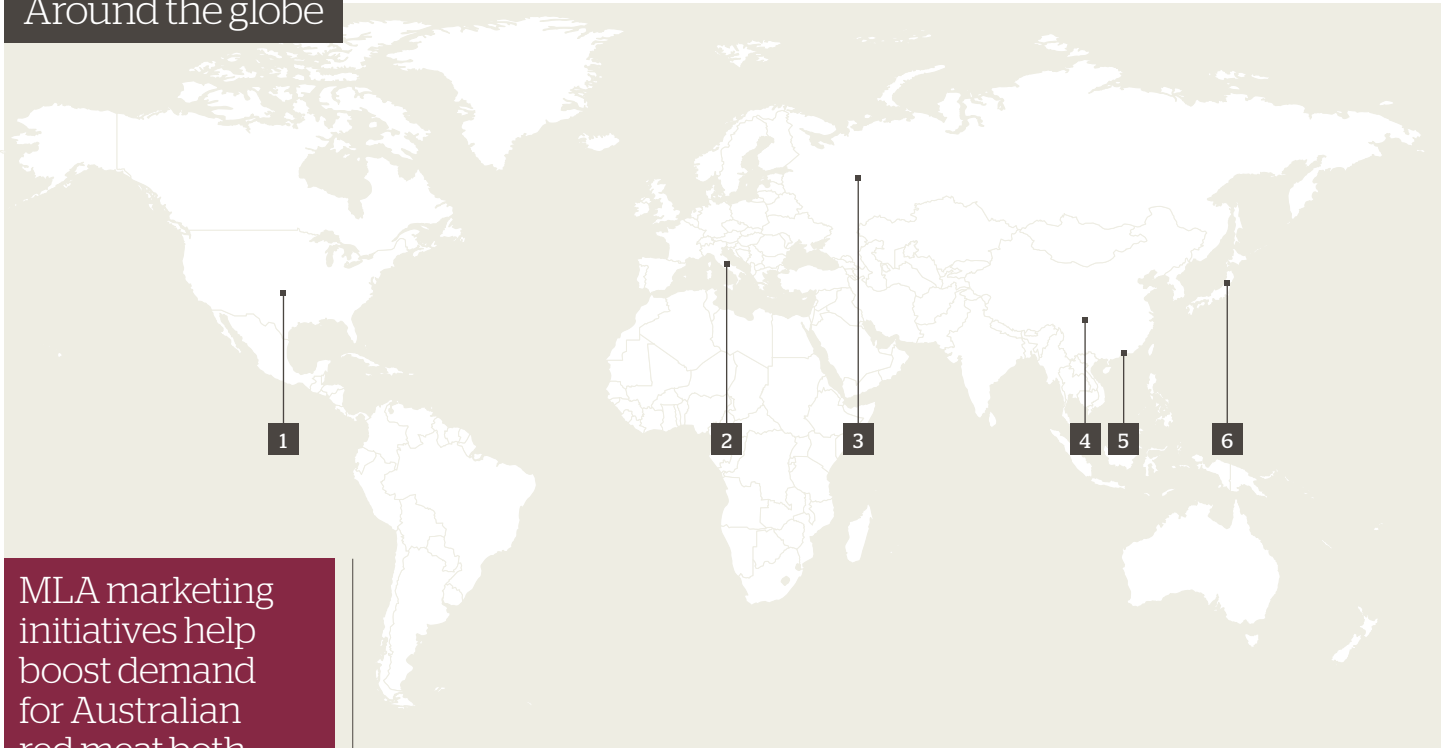
COOKING TIP

Wrap the bones in foil before cooking to prevent them from burning on the BBQ.



This is just one of the great lamb recipes in MLA's *Racking Up Your Profits* booklet.

Around the globe



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

1 US

Bloggers click with Australian lamb

US consumers increasingly turn to the internet for information on how food products are produced/raised, cooking instructions and recipe ideas. About 74% (229 million people) of the US population are involved in social media and one social media phenomenon gaining momentum is food blogging.

MLA was a sponsor at the recent Foodbuzz Blogger Festival in San Francisco. Foodbuzz is a publishing and blogger community of 4,000 dedicated, influential food bloggers. More than 300 bloggers attended the event, where MLA dished up Jamaican Filo Cigars (pictured) made with Australian lamb shoulders—demonstrating lamb's versatility and suitability to global cuisines without resorting to using racks. MLA also had business cards printed with Quick Response codes linking to the Jamaican Filo Cigar recipe and Australian Lamb's

social pages on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.



2 EU

Tour links the chain

A major supply chain for Australian beef into Italy took part in an MLA-supported Australian tour to better understand our production systems and supply chain.

The group included representatives and buyers from the parent company, Grain Fed Beef purchasers; their food services distributions company; a large supermarket chain in northern Italy; and the manager for purchasing and sales for a major northern food service distributor. They also looked

China has 23 provinces, four municipalities and five autonomous districts. The social, demographic, economic and geographic variation within these provinces means China cannot be viewed as a single market.

87m

US shoppers have a smart phone and use it for looking up recipes and checking weekly prices

at sheepmeat opportunities and had a session with MLA on market information and marketing activities.

3 RUSSIA

Promoting quality to up the steaks

MLA has supported an increasing number of retail promotions in Russia focused on high quality Australian beef. These promotions include branding Australian product, providing information to consumers and rewards for purchasing minimum volumes. Leading up to Christmas there were additional promotions, including product sampling in a St Petersburg supermarket.

4 CHINA

Business development beyond Beijing

Huge opportunities exist for marketing Australian product in China outside the major cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Dalian and Guangzhou. Hangzhou, Tianjin and Shenzhen have been identified for an MLA business development program that focuses on assisting importers to develop supply chains in these centres through:

- trade awareness seminars and product introduction training
- foodservice training and trade events focusing on predominantly non-loin cuts for Chinese cuisine and banquets
- training and point-of-sale support for potential retailers and importers

5 HONG KONG

Inaugural Pencil Box sharpens talent

A dozen young chefs competed in MLA's first Hong Kong Pencil Box culinary competition at Towngas Cooking Centre in Hong Kong.

Contestants had to plan their dishes in 30 minutes using compulsory ingredients including Australian beef flap and bone-in lamb leg. They had two hours to prepare two dishes in four portions.

Hong Kong Culinary School contestant, Cheung Fung, won the competition with a 'Trilogy of Australian Lamb Leg served with Assorted Vegetables' and 'Stewed Australian Beef Flap Meat in a Rich Tomato Sauce'.

6 JAPAN

Beefing up the importance of an iron-rich diet



Japanese consumers look for information about the health benefits of food even when dining out. With this in mind, MLA's 'Iron Beauty' beef nutrition campaign now features on menus in over 6,000 foodservice outlets across Japan. The 'Iron Beauty' message focuses on the importance of an iron-rich diet and how Australian beef can assist intake of iron. Key users of Australian beef such as McDonald's and Denny's Japan also sent senior female representatives to Australia on MLA's 'Iron Beauty' study tour to learn more about our clean, safe and versatile beef.

6000

plus foodservice outlets across Japan have menus that now feature MLA's 'Iron Beauty' beef nutrition campaign

Market observations

Everything is bigger in the US

Tim McRae
MLA Economist



To suggest a country that produces 11.5 million tonnes cwt of beef will potentially face a critical shortage of supplies seems hard to fathom but that is exactly what most industry pundits anticipate for the US in 2012.

The magnitude of meat production in the US is vast but so is the size and appetite of the US consumer and export markets.

Australia's 2012 beef production is tipped to reach 2.2 million tonnes cwt—essentially, it takes us five days to produce the same amount of beef that the US produces in one day.

While 11.5 million tonnes cwt of beef sounds like plenty, the US population (313 million) consumes almost 90% of all beef produced. 2012 forecasts for the lowest US calf crop and cattle herd in half a century make the market very aware that US beef supplies will be under increased strain. Prices are expected to be higher, accentuated by the weak US influence on exports with imports also increasing.

The interesting thing for the US market in 2012 will be how tentative consumers (given the economy) deal with higher expected beef and meat prices.

The US will be the world's largest beef producer in 2012 (exceeding Brazil by 2.3 million tonnes), but is also forecast to be the world's second largest importer (948,000 tonnes cwt), just behind Russia. Recent years have seen exports kick, with the US forecast to export 1.25 million tonnes cwt next year—just behind forecasts for Australia, Brazil and India. With such massive numbers, the US will continue to be one of the heavy hitters in the world beef trade, whether it is producing, buying or selling product.

As Australia's second largest export market and main competitor in North Asia, developments in the US market influence the Australian market. Historically, Australian and US cattle prices follow each other very closely. Higher prices forecast in the US for 2012 (due to historically low cattle supplies) should be positive news for Australian producers. The forecast decline in US beef production means it could also potentially be one of the markets to increase imports of Australian beef in 2012.

On the ground

Russia



Jason Strong
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Russia and the EU
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Australia accesses the Russian market through a global beef quota of 560,000 tonnes swt. Sheer distance is a significant challenge for our beef exports to this market. Many Russian ports freeze over for most of winter, creating difficulties for sea freight. Import quota requirements (largely making sure it is fully used each year) can also influence trade flows.

In the EU and Russia, the challenge is to work out how to best increase awareness of Australian red meat, access new customers, and support current customers across such a broad and diverse market.

In Russia, manufacturing beef finds its way into processed products that target the needs of a large population with limited income. MLA's efforts in this sector are at a trade level, working with the importers to understand Australia as a clean green consistent supplier of economical manufacturing product. Recently Australia has benefitted from the fact that major supply lines out of South America (our major competitor in this market for commodity beef) have become inconsistent and expensive.

In the high end of the market, rising numbers of restaurants and steakhouses are driving the 'westernisation' of the Russian food market and feature branded Australian and US beef. MLA works to build demand for this high quality Australian product through significant support activities in retail stores and steakhouses. This includes product samplings; rewards programs for buying minimum amounts of Australian beef; Australian product branding and support materials. Training is also a key part of these activities and we have held programs on cut usage and cooking as well as Australian tours so Russian chefs and buyers can experience our production systems.

Market insight

Cold thaw: demand heats up in Russia



The Australian beef industry no longer watches the world's largest imported beef market from the sidelines...

The Russian market used to be viewed as something of a spectator sport for Australian beef exporters. They were interested in who was operating in the market but had little chance to participate.

That has changed rapidly in recent years.

The shake-up in global beef flows now gives the Australian industry and exporters a sizable and lucrative opportunity.

Russia has a large population, a traditional demand for beef and an expanding economy that not only forces it to look further afield from traditional suppliers but enables it to be more competitive on prices.

The country spans an area 2.2 times larger than Australia. Despite this, it only has 7.7% arable land mass and very cold temperatures throughout much of the year dictating production methods.

Russia makes the world's top 10 for both population and the size of its economy but the size of its beef market is often understated. In 2012, it will maintain its mantle as the world's largest imported beef market, with forecast imports of 1.06 million tonnes cwt.

So, Russia is a huge country, economy and market but what does this mean for the Australian beef industry?

If the current trend continues Australia will have another large buyer to compete against Japan, the US and Korea.

There have been periods of very strong demand for pure protein from the Russian processing meat sector over the past decade, causing a surge in demand even for kangaroo meat and mutton.

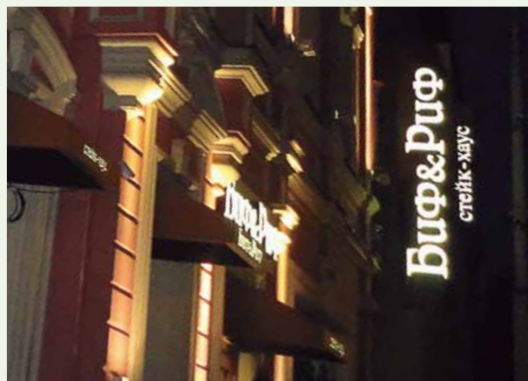
Australian beef exports to Russia from January to October 2011 increased 30% on the same time last year to total 49,906 tonnes swt. It was estimated that total exports for the year could exceed 60,000 tonnes swt (after reaching 56,646 tonnes swt in 2010).

If the current trend continues, Australia will have consolidated its presence in the world's largest imported beef market and added another large buyer to compete against the traditional markets of Japan, the US and Korea.



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A steak in the market



Beef & Reef Steakhouse

Beef & Reef Steakhouse is part of Russia's expanding high-end foodservice movement. The Moscow restaurant could be a top steak house anywhere in the world, with its elegant dark wood and leather interior, but plates of salted herring and an array of vodka belie its location. Its menu boasts Australian and US grainfed and grassfed steak cuts, with grainfed steaks from Rangers Valley in northern New South Wales.

Beef & Reef's foodservice suppliers, East West, imported 500 tonnes of high quality Australian chilled product last year.

"I value the business supply chain relationship with Australian exporters. We don't have that with the US—they just sell as a commodity," East West's Andrey Panasyants said.

Banking on the burger boom

MARR Russia

Foodservice wholesaler, MARR Russia, is capitalising on the country's fast-food boom by opening a new hamburger processing plant and one of Russia's largest, modern logistics platforms for marketing and distributing food products.

There are about 280 McDonald's outlets in Russia, with 30 more in the works. Burger King has opened 22 outlets in the past two years, while American burger chain Wendy's opened its first two outlets in 2011 and plans to open 180 over the next decade.

MARR Russia General Director Igor Starostenko said their plant produces 2,000 tonnes of patties per month for major hamburger chains.

"Our main manufacturing supply is Australian frozen beef (1,300 tonnes per month)—60% of the beef in our burgers is Australian."



17.1 million km²
of land within its borders

139 million people
living there in June 2011

800 dollars
The average Russian wage in 2011

20 million cattle
in its domestic herd (source: USDA)

2.45 million tonnes (cwt)
of beef consumed in 2011

Hungry for beef

1.06 million tonnes (cwt)
Russia's forecasted beef imports for 2012 are roughly the same as Queensland's total annual beef and veal output



In the container

The main product shipped to Russia in 2011 was...

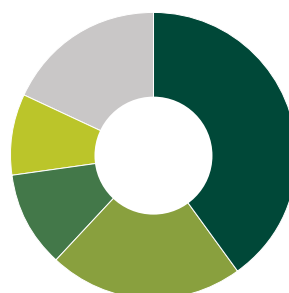
40% manufacturing beef

22% silverside and outsides

11% chuck

9% blade

18% other



Russia is the world's...

- ... largest natural gas exporter
- ... second largest oil exporting nation
- ... seventh largest economy
- ... ninth most populous nation

On the plate

Russian diets reflect the traditional need to store and preserve meat during the long, harsh winters. Australian manufacturing beef ends up in fresh and cured sausages that dominate retail meat cabinets or in popular local dishes such as dumplings, goulash and 'pasties'.

Russia's high end restaurants and steakhouses serve up branded Australian beef, while top-quality cuts (including chilled product) also sell in some higher-end retail stores in major cities such as Moscow and St Petersburg.

Why does Russia need our beef?

In 2011, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimated total Russian beef consumption at 2.45 million tonnes cwt—making it 57% self-sufficient for beef. The USDA estimates Russia's domestic beef production is about 1.385 million tonnes cwt and the past five years has seen the nation's cattle herd decrease by 8%.

Beyond the gate Brisbane, Queensland

From the time livestock leaves the front gate bound for the processing plant, it can take little more than a week to make its way to the consumer's plate.

Queensland producers joined MLA's Brisbane 'Beyond the gate' event to tour the supply chain.

Follow the journey from paddock to plate...



1. The processor // JBS Dinmore

Australia's largest plant processes more than 3000 head a day.

"Despite our size, JBS is committed to working with producers to ensure any improvement in our efficiency—through better carcass yields, consistency of product and food safety—flows on through the supply chain."

Murray Wilson, JBS Dinmore Plant Manager



2. The wholesaler // Bidvest

This Brisbane foodservice wholesaler, distributes over 1000 tonnes of red meat annually. The business has invested in tripling this volume in the next two years.

"We resource ourselves to provide a 'one stop supply solution' to the foodservice and hospitality industry in Australia. We've also launched our own premium red meat brand that will attract and capture more customers."

Michael West, Bidvest Brisbane



3. The value add // Black Pearl Cooking School

"Consumers are looking for new, simple, nutritious meals they can cook easily and have on the table fast. MLA's *Beefing up your Profits* and *Racking up your Profits* program is doing exactly that by providing butchers with ideas that keep red meat in the front of the display cabinet." *Artie Vella, Nambour Plaza Meats*



4. The premium retailer // Prime Speciality Meats

This boutique butcher sells premium cuts of MSA approved meats at New Farm's James Street Market. Store manager Phil Smith said their customers were looking for quality and consistency.

"If meat eats well and tastes delicious the first time, they will come back over and over again."



5. The family butcher // Carina Quality Meats

"Local butchers pride themselves on providing their customers with a reliable product time and time again. Using the MSA system guarantees a consistent product and I can be confident when I sell a piece of meat that customers are going to be happy." *Michael James, Carina Quality Meats*



6. The top notch restaurant // Cha Cha Char

"People want to be taken on a journey when they dine out. We developed Cha Cha Char's menu with this aim but also to educate customers on how different breeds, ages, feeding systems and meat ageing can affect tenderness, juiciness and flavour. Our philosophy is to provide a reliable and tasty experience that keeps them engaged with red meat." *John Kilroy, Cha Cha Char*

Young Beef Producers Forum

Australia's next generation of beef producers came together at the Young Beef Producers' Forum in Roma, Queensland.

MLA got involved as a sponsor of the event, designed to help attendees build their business, their networks and the beef industry as a whole. Speakers presented on the importance of a strong brand, taking agriculture to the general public using social media, the carbon policy and the impacts it could have on beef businesses along with tools to improve individual operations.

The young producers also took the opportunity to catch-up socially through a property tour, black tie ball and local race day.



Colin Davis, Cameron Pott and Tiffany Jorgensen at the Young Beef Producers' Forum.

Fine Food Australia

MLA had a stand at Sydney's Fine Food exhibition in September 2011. This exhibition for the retail, foodservice and hospitality industry showcased the latest products and services on offer. MLA hosted a butchery competition at the exhibition where apprentice butchers received bronze, silver and gold medals.



Apprentice butchers took part in an MLA-hosted butchery competition at Sydney's Fine Food exhibition.

'Tongmasters' BBQ their way to the USA

To get more Australians cooking beef on the BBQ this summer, MLA held five 'Tongmaster' Beef BBQ cook off championships around Australia. The winners from each competition form the MLA Aussie team which will travel to the US to compete in the BBQ Capital Cook-Off in Lexington in April. Events have been held in South Australia, Queensland, Victoria, Western Australia and New South Wales.



Tongmaster Damien Liddicoat won the South Australian competition.

Upcoming events

PestSmart Roadshows

Showcasing best practice pest management including current techniques and the latest innovations.

When and where:

Launch—30 January, Queanbeyan, NSW.
Go online for dates and locations Australia-wide February to May

Bookings:

T: 0418 417 943
E: suzy.balogh@invasiveanimals.com

Beyond the gate—NSW

This red meat supply chain tour is a chance for MLA members to meet with processors, wholesalers, butchers and executive chefs.

When and where:

20 March, Sydney NSW

Bookings:

T: 02 9463 9257
E:astreet@mla.com.au

BeefUp forums

MLA's BeefUp forums help northern beef producers make more money from their beef production enterprises.

When and where:

7 February, Jericho Qld
2 March, Capella Qld

Bookings: T: 1800 675 717

BusinessEDGE

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

When and where:

14-15 February, Mackay Qld
20-21 March, Gympie Qld

Bookings:

T: 0409 564 729
E: jackie@jkconnections.com.au or visit www.mla.com.au/EDGEnetwork

Meeting market specs

More Beef from Pastures information on meeting market specifications and managing cattle to ensure maximum compliance rates.

When and where:

24 February, Esperance WA

Bookings:

T: 0437 282 331
E: matthew.ryan@agric.wa.gov.au



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

BEEF AUSTRALIA 2012

7-12 MAY 2012

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INNOVATION • COLLABORATION • INSPIRATION • CELEBRATION



AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL BEEF EXPOSITION

Every three years the Australian beef industry and their international counterparts meet in Rockhampton, Queensland for a week of innovation, collaboration, inspiration and celebration. Beef Australia 2012, Australia's national beef exposition features national stud, carcass and commercial competitions, several thousand live cattle from over thirty breeds, hundreds of trade displays, dozens of seminars and tours and hospitality second to none.

Planning to visit?
Become a member today.

Membership period encompasses Beef Australia 2012 and up to July 2014

To join visit us online at www.beefaustralia.com.au and complete the application form; **call us on 07 4922 2989**; or complete and mail the following to us.



Please send to: Beef Australia, PO Box 199, Rockhampton Q 4700

Please send me a Beef Australia Membership application form:

Name _____

Address _____

Contact No. _____

www.beefaustralia.com.au

