

Feedback



Happy customers

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11// Australian activities during Eid Al Adha

13// Grass seed damage
Maintaining a clean flock this summer

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New northern research paints stark picture

A note from the MD...

I write this final *Feedback* column for the year on my way home from Fremantle where I had the opportunity to share with our members how MLA has invested your levies in 2011-12 at MLA's fourteenth Annual General Meeting.

For those who couldn't make it, or haven't watched the video on the MLA website, here's a snapshot. In the last financial year, MLA invested:

- 62¢ per head of cattle you transacted and around 17¢ per prime lamb on activities to **maintain and improve market access** for your products;
- \$2.61 per head of cattle and 71¢ per prime lamb in a programs and activities to help **grow demand** for your products;
- around 67¢ per head of cattle you transacted and around 26¢ per prime lamb into R&D that creates opportunities for you to **increase productivity** across the supply chain; and
- around 31¢ per head of cattle you transacted and 8¢ per prime lamb into

programs to assist the industry to promote their **integrity and sustainability**.

While our AGM is an opportunity to provide an annual overview of MLA's programs, *Feedback* magazine provides a regular update on the programs you are funding and, importantly, how you can access those opportunities that will deliver a return on your investment.

I was pleased with the results of recent reader research that showed 75% of our members have a 'good' or 'excellent' overall opinion of *Feedback* and 63% see it as 'relevant' or 'highly relevant' to their farm business.

I hope one or two of the articles in this issue stimulates ideas and encourages you to seek further information on particular topics or practices that will ultimately lead to a more profitable and sustainable business.



Scott Hansen
MLA Managing Director
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Your feedback



As part of the Target 100 Facebook forum series, media personality and blogger Sarah Wilson hosted our latest discussion on why she quit sugar but not red meat. The one hour forum brought up some interesting questions including:



To see the full transcript visit
www.facebook.com/target100aus



Stuart Barrett Do you personally feel like red meat available for retail in Australia (or your area) is good value and do you feel that where it comes from and how it is farmed important/where do you get this information from?

October 24 at 1:21pm · Like



Sarah Wilson I personally like to shop at farmers markets where I am able to develop a relationship with the person selling my meat. It's often more affordable and I know the money is going directly to the farmer. When I lived in Byron this was often with the farmer himself. In big cities this can be done by having a relationship with your butcher.

Do I think meat is too expensive in Australia? I think the way some of us buy meat gets expensive because we have been only educated to eat the expensive, fashionable cuts. A meat dish using say, osso bucco, can work out cheaper than any vegetarian dish. I think we can all get smarter and more economical with how we eat meat.

Again, for me knowing that the animals have been treated well is really important. I ask questions about the ethical and environmental aspects of farming whenever I can of the farmer or my butcher. I have a personal interest in all of this and I do my own research – blogs, newspaper articles.

October 24 at 1:22pm · Like



Ash Gillogly Do you think the media and other influential sources are pushing the wrong messages to young girls about meat and their diets??? e.g. How much? where from? environmental impact??

October 24 at 1:22pm · Like



Sarah Wilson Yes I do. I think it's not just messages to young women. I think the scare campaigns against saturated fats (meat fats) has been around since the 1960's, very much fuelled by the sugar industry and various bodies that have a vested interest in pushing polyunsaturated fats and vegetarian diets. Fortunately the best and most influential nutritional thinkers and scientists are getting louder voices telling us that information is not correct and we are all being inspired to eat as our grandparents used to. Interestingly our grandparents didn't have the same weight issues and illnesses that our generation faces.

October 24 at 1:37pm · Like 2

MLA online



MLA tools

BeefSpecs calculator

A tool to manage cattle to meet weight and fat specifications.

www.mla.com.au/beefspecs

Upcoming events

Find out about industry events coming up in December and early next year including Beyond the gate tours and practical beef marketing courses.

www.mla.com.au/events

fridayfeedback

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

www.mla.com.au/fridayfeedback

Social networking

Facebook

Stay connected with MLA by 'friending' us on Facebook.

www.facebook.com/meatandlivestockaustralia

Twitter

Read the latest tweets by following MLA on Twitter.

www.twitter.com/meatlivestock

Flickr

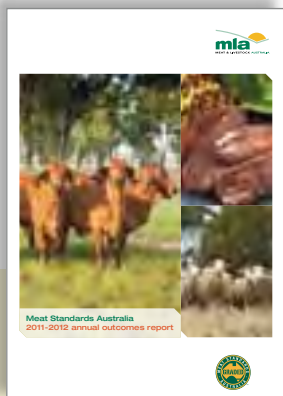
View MLA's photo stream on Flickr including the Beyond the gate tour in Melbourne in September.

www.flickr.com/meatlivestock

YouTube

Check out the story on Australian beef, safe and healthy.

www.youtube.com/meatandlivestock



An MSA snapshot

One of the great success stories of Australia's cattle and sheep industry has been the Meat Standards Australia (MSA) program. A recently released report has outlined the significant take-up of MSA.

Highlights of the *MSA 2011-12 annual outcomes report* include:

- There are 319 wholesalers, 594 retailers, 221 supermarkets and 425 foodservice operators licensed to utilise the MSA program and trademark. During 2011-12, 191 end users became MSA licensed, a 43% increase on end user licences from 2010-11.
- There are 40 MSA licensed processors grading MSA beef.
- During 2011-12, 4,232 cattle and/or sheep producers became MSA registered and able to supply livestock to the MSA program. Of newly registered producers, 89% are eligible to supply MSA cattle. This brings the number of MSA registered livestock suppliers throughout Australia to 23,751.
- Of all MSA-registered producers 13,992 are solely beef cattle producers, 8,802 are eligible to supply both cattle and sheep and another 957 are registered as sheep producers.
- The average premium for MSA yearling cattle across all weight ranges was 19¢/kg.

The report also includes data on the number of cattle and sheep graded MSA (these statistics were published in the October 2012 edition of *Feedback*, page 2).



To read the full report, go to www.mla.com.au/msa

AGM reflects on year of change

Members had an opportunity to hear presentations and meet with a cross section of industry representatives at MLA's 14th Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Fremantle, Western Australia, on 15 November.

The day started with a forum hosted by the Red Meat Advisory Council, which was an opportunity for producers to hear from their representative bodies and discuss the issues being tackled on their behalf. Following that, MLA hosted a producer forum with a series of presentations and Q&A sessions on the R&D and marketing activities managed by the industry service company. The day concluded with the MLA AGM where attention turned to the administration and governance of MLA.

In his Managing Director's address at the AGM, Scott Hansen reflected on 2011-12 as a period of major change for the company, with several new board members, senior staff appointments, and a new Managing Director and Chairman.

"This has given us a great opportunity as a company to take a fresh look at how we operate and to sharpen our focus to continue delivering results to stakeholders," he said.



MLA's two new board members, Christine Gilbertson and John McKillop.

"We focused on our role creating opportunities across the cattle, sheep and goat supply chains by optimising the return on collective investment in marketing and R&D."

The AGM saw all four board member resolutions passed. Peter Trefort and Dr Gregory Harper were returned to the board and were joined by two new board members, John McKillop and Christine Gilbertson.



Full details of the MLA AGM and producer forum, including a webcast of presentations, can be found on the MLA website at www.mla.com.au/agm

EweTube



If you were offered the chance to lift your lamb weaning rate by 15% and reduce ewe mortality by 50%, would you grab it?

Participants in Lifetime Ewe Management (LTEM) reported these benefits after participating in the program, developed and supported by MLA and Australian Wool Innovation.

Around 1,100 sheep producers have joined or completed the on-farm LTEM course, which is now available across Australia. It develops skills to help producers improve animal nutrition, lambing percentages and weaning rates.

A snapshot of the benefits of on-farm changes resulting from LTEM can be seen in a case study video on YouTube at www.mla.com.au/ewetube



To sign up for LTEM go to www.wool.com/LTEM

Lamb's quality message

A consumer education campaign was recently launched to raise awareness of the Meat Standards Australia (MSA) graded lamb program.

The campaign aims to increase demand for lamb at a time when there are record numbers of MSA graded lambs (3.3 million lambs were presented for MSA grading in the 2011-12 financial year).

A range of promotional materials have been created to increase awareness of MSA lamb among consumers and retailers. These include an information brochure, ticket toppers, pack stickers, staff badges, cabinet stickers and posters.

The MSA lamb campaign follows a refresh of the MSA-graded symbol and accompanying consumer education campaign for MSA beef, which has helped drive consumer awareness levels of around 45%.

Kerry Melrose, from Melrose Wholesale Meats, recently launched his company's own lamb brand underpinned by MSA - Tasmanian Royal.

"It (MSA) allows Melrose Wholesale Meats to guarantee tenderness, juiciness and flavour to our customers every time," Kerry said.

The MSA program also has the support of one of Australia's largest supermarkets, Woolworths, which has been selling lines of MSA-graded



lamb since May 2012, in addition to the MSA beef introduced in January 2012.

The MSA lamb program was developed by the Australian sheepmeat industry based on 90,000 consumer taste tests to identify the key factors that consistently deliver high quality lamb.

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Matt Dwyer (MLA), Lavinia Leone (Human Advertising), Phil Craig (Origin Energy - sponsored award), Selwyn Job (NSW cattle producer), Pip McConachie (MLA) and Pip Job (NSW cattle producer).

Target 100 applauded



Target 100 took out the top honour - the Gold Banksia - at this year's Banksia Awards, which recognise programs or organisations facing up to significant environmental challenges.

Target 100, an online sustainability showcase launched in March, tells the sustainability stories of 122 individual producers and 100 industry initiatives. The MLA program also won the Education Raising the Bar award.

Judges described Target 100 as: "Incredibly well thought through, and undertaken with deliberation and determination, and already demonstrating notable outcomes early in the game, so the ongoing benefits seem extremely exciting".

Target 100 participant and NSW producer Pip Job attended the presentation. She said the award showed the enormous support for producers as custodians of the land.

"Sitting in the room, you could feel the goodwill towards our industry from these people and organisations from across the environmental field," she said.

"This was great recognition from the broader community of the grassroots work being carried out by producers across the country."

To get involved visit www.target100.com.au

The Banksia Awards are organised by the Banksia Environmental Foundation.



Three ways to access more *Feedback*

1. If you would like extra free copies of *Feedback* mailed to you, call 1800 675 717 or email publications@mla.com.au
2. *Feedback* magazine is now available at www.mla.com.au/feedback. Back issues of the magazine from January/February 2012 are also available on the MLA website.
3. Receive weekly instalments of the latest MLA news by subscribing to *fridayfeedback*. Call 1800 675 717 or email publications@mla.com.au to get yourself signed up.



www.banksiafdn.com

Consumer trends

Mind reading

This week

- ☒ lamb chops
- ☒ beef mince
- ☐ chicken wings
- ☐ salmon



When a shopper peers into the meat cabinet, pondering their dinner options, a range of considerations come into play. Will it be beef, lamb or chicken? What's more nutritious? Is it good value for money? How fresh is it? Was it ethically produced?

When it comes to the crunch, consumers generally decide on the basis of price and freshness. Unlike other markets, food safety isn't a key driver in Australia - consumers expect meat to be safe. Recent research commissioned by MLA found that price and freshness are the two most important factors to Australian consumers when buying beef and lamb (see figure 1).

Although integrity (such as animal welfare and environmental sustainability considerations) is not a key driver at the checkout, it's on the consumer radar.

Increasingly, consumers want to know more about how their food was produced.

Other MLA research has found that price is a prime consideration for consumers, as well as the difficulty in preparing it (for beef), lack of cooking confidence (for beef and lamb) and limited versatility (for lamb).

These consumer insights directly influence and inspire MLA's marketing campaigns. For example, MLA Group Marketing Manager - Consumer, Andrew Cox said many Australians were concerned lamb was becoming too expensive. "We need to respond with promotions aiming to

convince consumers lamb is a product 'worth paying more for' and at the same time develop resources featuring more affordable cuts," he said.

In the beef campaigns we focus on educating the consumer about how to cook a variety of beef cuts that are available at different price points.

MLA's marketing campaigns are built around the 'six drivers of consumer demand' - those key aspects important to buyers of beef and lamb: enjoyment, quality, nutrition, value, convenience and heritage (the latter including cultural and historical reasons for choosing a certain food). These factors are tracked by ongoing consumer research and marketing campaigns are developed around them.

"A proper understanding of the drivers of demand helps us develop more engaging marketing campaigns that change or protect consumer behaviours in the long term," Andrew said.

Consumer research also taps directly into the way industry responds to community concerns and builds trust, according to MLA Community Engagement Manager, Pip McConachie.

"Knowing what issues are emerging with consumers enables us to develop programs to ensure the facts are available for consumers to make informed decisions," she said.



Andrew Cox, MLA

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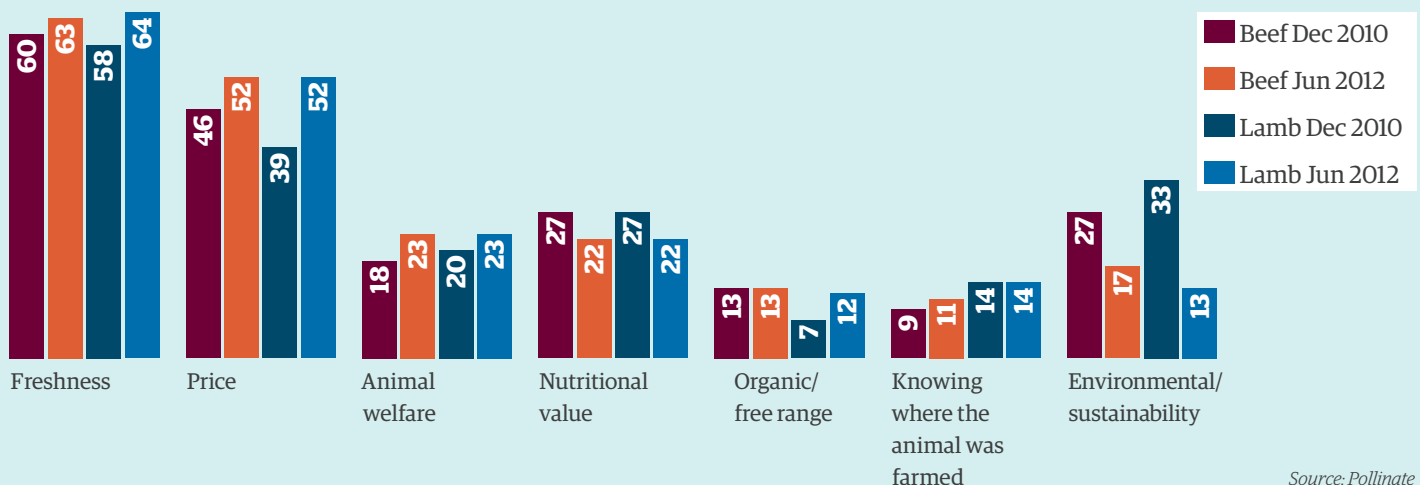
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Figure 1 Considerations when buying meat (percentage ranked first or second most important by consumers)



Source: Pollinate

In profile Sam's Paddock

Sam Burton Taylor // *Meating the market*

In 2010, Sam Burton Taylor and his wife, Nikki, swapped the corporate Sydney lifestyle for a butcher shop at Boorowa, in southern NSW. Today, 'Sam's Paddock' provides a loyal local and online clientele with meats including MSA beef, backed by genetic, environmental and welfare integrity. The Burton Taylor name has long been synonymous with beef and the family's Kenny's Creek Angus genetics business was an influencing factor in Sam's career change.

What is your business model?

We source high-quality, grassfed Angus cattle backed by genetics so we can sell beef with better flavour, tenderness and overall eating experience. We only use steers from Kenny's Creek clients because the genetic foundation we have established gives consistently high MSA grading scores. Cattle are processed at Cootamundra and broken down in our shop. We sell MSA sub-primal cuts under the 'Kenny's Creek Natural Beef' brand locally and online to 400 clients in Canberra and Sydney.

What does Sam's Paddock offer customers?

We guarantee a direct line of sight to the producer. We demand a high level of traceability to ensure they (cattle)

are HGP-free, entirely grassfed and sustainably managed. These relationships give our customers surety and encourage our producers to focus on the consumer.

How do you connect with customers?

We have a direct relationship with our customers in the shop and through email, Twitter, Facebook and a blog. Target 100 is another way to showcase our systems and link-in with other sustainable producers.

What are your customers telling you?

Our clients want to know the animals are being taken care of at all stages of their life, so I talk openly to them about how our cattle are sourced and processed.

I believe it is a growing, long-term trend. Consumers want to know animals are treated well.



Sam Burton Taylor

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Target 100:

www.target100.com.au

Understanding consumers

Meat-eating tribes

The 'foodies'

Foodies are knowledgeable, confident cooks. They have the highest consumption of organic produce and meat, and like to cook a wide variety of meat dishes. Active and healthy, foodies perceive beef as being high in nutrition and lamb as high-quality meat. While most foodies are cooking fanatics, one-third prefer going out for dinner rather than cooking for themselves.

Foodie, Hugh Sinclair is a 29-year-old living in Barton, Canberra.

Hugh and his girlfriend visit farmers' markets on weekends to select the finest produce. Hugh values being able to speak to producers face-to-face. His main consideration is quality.

As 'food captain' in his household, Hugh reflects the proportion of grocery buyers in this tribe - of which 37% are male. He sources his cooking inspiration from food websites and mobile apps. Hugh likes to cook from 'scratch' three or four nights a week and learn new culinary techniques.

1. How far in advance do you plan your meal choices? I try to plan my meals for the week on a Saturday before heading to the markets, but if it's been a long week I hit the snooze button and see what looks good when shopping.

2. Where do you get your food inspiration? A whole range of places. At the moment I'm dabbling with the *CSIRO Total Wellbeing Diet*, but if I see something good on TV or in a magazine I'll give it a crack. There are so many places that offer recipes now - the *Good Weekend* magazine usually has some good options.

3. What do you enjoy eating the most? I am definitely a meat man. It is hard to beat a great roast or steak. At least half my meals each week have an element of red meat. I love a good carpaccio as a starter.



Confident cooks

Confident cooks love cooking and food, and enjoy trying new recipes. They especially find chicken quick and easy. This group has a higher number of female homemakers and retirees, and although they are not overly active, they try to be healthy.

Confident cook, Lucy Encina is 44, from Bilgola on Sydney's Northern Beaches, has three children (including Isabella, pictured right). **Her priority is ensuring her family eats a balanced diet of mainly home-cooked meals, perfected through decades of practice. She cooks a range of dishes and has average beef and lamb consumption.**

Lucy likes to try new recipes, and will take recommendations on different cuts from her butcher. She reads *The Australian Women's Weekly* and regularly cooks recipes from its pages, or her vast collection of cookbooks.

1. What protein do you cook with most often?

We eat beef and chicken the most as the kids love it and we have lamb once a week in a casserole, or as chops. We also eat fish and pork regularly.

2. What's the family's favourite red meat dish?

Lamb casserole or a barbecue. The whole family enjoys eating meat, although we do try to eat everything in moderation.

3. Where do you do most of your shopping?

I shop at a variety of places as they each have their own products I like. Price is a factor as well as quality and taste.

MLA's actions to influence 'foodies'

- Showcase the latest 'in-home' foodservice trends
- Education about the industry's production, quality and integrity systems
- MLA's new magazine *Meat & Co* is aimed at this group, providing a more in-depth product message about farming integrity and promoting recipes using underutilised cuts
- Run seasonal consumer campaigns using a variety of media, including social media
- Segments on popular programs including *Masterchef* are targeted at this group, as well as the general public

MLA targets different consumer groups with tactical promotional activities. The Meat Expectations Study 2012, conducted for MLA by research company The Clever Stuff, identified five consumer groups according to cooking skills and attitudes. These are 'foodies', 'confident cooks', 'healthy cooks', 'low-confidence cooks' and 'cooking rejectors'. Here we introduce you to each group:

Healthy cooks

While confident in the kitchen, the healthy cook is not passionate about food. They are more likely to be females who like to stay active and healthy.

Healthy cook, Prue Roddy, 26, lives with her partner in Bronte, Sydney. While she enjoys cooking and food, her main concern is staying healthy. Making quick, nutritious meals is more important to her than going gourmet.

Prue mainly shops at the supermarket and will make her decisions based on health attributes and price. She cooks mostly beef and chicken with a simple salad or vegetables. She likes to try new recipes, but as she is 'time poor' she often reverts to tried and tested meals.

- 1. What protein do you cook with most often?** Mostly beef and chicken, but we would also have lamb at least once a week. We use the barbecue for cooking a lot because it's quick and easy for weeknight dinners. We usually cook at home at least four to five nights a week. We generally have meat like steak, sausages, stir fry cuts and chops with main meals, but tend not to have too much variety as it is quite expensive. If meat was less expensive and if I had more time to cook on weeknights we would probably buy more and experiment with it.
- 2. What's your favourite red meat?** Lamb.
- 3. What influences what you cook?** The amount of time I have to plan for the week, and to cook each night. If I have time to plan ahead for the week I will shop around for different types of meat and ingredients. If not, I will tend to make simple meals such as steak and salad, as I also try to stay relatively healthy.



MLA's actions to influence confident cooks

- Run seasonal consumer campaigns, and alongside integrated media campaigns, produce a range of point-of-sale material including recipe booklets such as *Entice* magazine
- Introduce beef and lamb meals into consumer repertoires with new recipes and lesser-known cuts
- Run consumer nutrition campaigns including back-to-school lunches



MLA's actions to influence healthy cooks

- Focus on the nutritional benefits of beef and lamb and perceptions of quality. MLA targets this group through healthcare professional campaigns and nutrition communications, where health is the key consideration when planning meals

Understanding our consumers

Low-confidence cooks

Members of this tribe are often not active or healthy, watch a lot of television and have the lowest meat consumption. They are more likely to be single and male, prefer convenience or takeaway foods, and rarely cook for others.



Low-confidence cook, designer Henry Pilcher is 27 and lives with two friends in Sydney's Paddington. He works long hours, never plans meals ahead, and often resorts to ordering takeaway or doing last-minute supermarket trips (often at about 10pm when butchers and grocers are closed). He regularly eats barbecued chicken and only ever prepares simple meals.

- 1. What protein do you cook with most often?** Chicken, as it goes with a lot more foods and is cheaper, but my favourite meat would be lamb. I never cook it at home and would probably go for a steak in that instance.
- 2. How often would you try a new recipe?** Rarely, but I do try those bachelor-style meals in five minutes. They often involve beef or chicken.
- 3. How far in advance do you plan your meals?** I start thinking about dinner an hour before I normally get hungry. I see what I have in the fridge or walk up the road and grab something. I'm usually pretty busy during the week so don't have time to prepare meals. Weekends I find myself eating out most of the time.

MLA's actions to influence low-confidence cooks

- Educate about simple and convenient beef dishes through seasonal consumer campaigns which include recipe booklets such as *Entice*, and are accompanied by point-of-sale material and integrated media activities

And lastly, the cooking rejectors

Cooking rejectors are active and healthy but don't enjoy cooking. They have average meat consumption and media-viewing habits, and perceive beef and lamb as difficult to prepare.

MLA's actions to influence this tribe

→ Being average media consumers, this group is difficult to target, but may be captured through foodservice marketing activities. There are opportunities to educate this segment on simple beef dishes.



Andrew Cox, MLA

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27%

of Australians consider themselves 'foodies' and most of them are male

29%

are confident cooks

12%

fit the healthy cook category

20%

are low-confidence cooks

12%

reject the concept of cooking altogether

Technology



Spatial monitoring technology applications are less than two years away from being commercially available. Here cattle are fitted with tracking collars as part of the trial work.

Calling up your cattle

Technology that allows producers to track stock movements via their mobile telephone or computer is getting closer to commercial reality.

Being able to find a missing cow in 100 square kilometres by simply checking your mobile may sound like science fiction but it could soon be coming to your lounge room, ute or holiday destination.

Spatial monitoring technology applications for producers may be less than two years away.

An ear tag-based tracking device called the 'Taggle System' is being evaluated at the University of New England's (UNE) Smart Farm. The device has the potential to detect behavioural changes in individual animals.

Producers could be alerted, via an SMS system, to inconsistencies that may indicate declining feed availability, injury or disease. It could also be used to improve mustering efficiency, locate missing animals and should provide a deterrent to stock theft.

Dr Mark Trotter, of UNE's Precision Agriculture Research Group (PARG), won an MLA-sponsored 2011 Science and Innovation Award for Young People in Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. He used his bursary to develop the modelling to be used by the

Taggle System, which not only pinpoints an animal's location, but can also trace its movements and behaviour over time. The data can be accessed via the internet either on computer or smartphone.

Mark plans to adapt the technology as a wild dog attack warning system to help wool and lamb producers protect their flocks.

"This would have an enormous positive impact on not only enterprise profitability, but on producers' emotional wellbeing," he said.

The current Taggle System is based on small ear tags which emit a radio signal picked up by base station towers, covering up to 100km², depending on terrain.

Progress on this project can be followed on Mark's Facebook page www.facebook.com/precision.agriculture or check out a real-time example of the Taggle System at <http://red.taggle.com.au/rt/une>



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Research and development

R&D directions for 2013

As MLA continues its research and development on behalf of the industry into the new year, *Feedback* asked MLA's R&D managers what their wish for 2013 would be if anything was possible. Here's what's on top of their lists...



Robert Banks
R&D Performance
and Evaluation
Manager

"To remove the hurdles to increasing the rate of genetic gain by increasing the amount of data industry has access to on traits that impact profit in the supply chain."

Rob said analysis had shown the rate of genetic progress could quadruple with the collection of more data on traits indicating eating quality, nutritional content, disease resistance and feed efficiency.



Jim Rothwell
Sustainability
R&D Manager

"For practical, pain-reduced, surgical husbandry practices to be developed and able to be used by producers to further improve animal welfare standards on their properties."

Jim said the development of improved animal husbandry practices was a key focus of the animal welfare program. Several projects are under way, including identifying the most appropriate age to apply different husbandry methods, non-surgical applications and pain-relief options.



Alex Ball
Program Manager
Eating Quality R&D

"For the MSA Index to deliver improved feedback to beef producers by providing a nationally consistent measure for comparing the eating quality potential of cattle."

Alex said the MSA Index would allow effective comparisons across regions and over time and also provide a benchmark for the whole industry. The MSA Index will have two components – quality, as defined by the MSA model, and quantity, described by the weight of the cut.

The MSA Index's benefits to producers include:

- a national standard that can be applied across Australia
- direct linkage between on-farm factors (genetic and management) and the MSA Index
- ability to benchmark progress



Jane Weatherly
R&D Communication
and Adoption
Manager

"For producers to be motivated to determine and improve their cost of production to maximise profitability using tools and resources developed through MLA R&D."

Jane said MLA would continue to develop and refine resources such as cost of production calculators and BeefSpecs to make business planning decisions more efficient and productive.



Australian support at Eid Al Adha

With the recent implementation of the Government's Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS) animal welfare program into live export markets, Australian exporters committed extra resources to ensuring good practices during Eid Al Adha – one of the most important religious celebrations on the Islamic calendar. Sheepmeat Council of Australia (SCA) Chief Executive Officer Ron Cullen discusses the outcomes.

Ron Cullen
Sheepmeat Council
of Australia
Chief Executive Officer



Eid Al Adha represents a high-risk period in terms of unsatisfactory practices being used on Australian livestock. However, exporter and industry investment and cooperation has improved animal welfare outcomes, while still respecting centuries of cultural and religious tradition.

Eid Al Adha, which this year fell between 26 to 29 October, marks the end of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. Muslims are required to sacrifice animals as an act of obedience to Allah. Families share the meat with their church and poorer community members and strict religious practices must be followed. The animal must be owned by the person who is offering the sacrifice and the slaughter must be done either with their own hands or witnessed by them.

With the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS) in place, unknown slaughter points for Australian livestock are a thing of the past. Major changes include having the ritual slaughter taking place in front of a glassed wall abattoir, where the family can witness the slaughter by a trained slaughterman, thus allowing the family to fulfill their obligations in accordance with religious custom.

The Australian Livestock Exporters Council (ALEC) reported that where ESCAS has been implemented exporters have responsibility for control, traceability and animal welfare, and must ensure compliance throughout the supply chain, as well as ensuring that no private sales of Australian sheep occur at any time, including Eid Al Adha.

Both SCA and ALEC agreed that in the interest of the trade, and as ESCAS was still relatively new, the LiveCorp/MLA Live Export Program would provide additional resources to exporters through the period of Eid Al Adha.

The support included:

- Planning, implementing and testing systems to cope with the pressure associated with Eid Al Adha (crowd and vehicle control, systems for livestock sales)
- Training management and staff on the ESCAS requirements and the new systems
- Providing 'on the ground' resources to work with local management, highlighting risks and adjusting systems as necessary

On 5 November, ABC's *Four Corners* program aired a story showing the inhumane treatment and culling of Australian sheep in Pakistan. Like the rest of the Australian livestock industry, SCA condemned this incident.

The conditions under which this cull of healthy Australian sheep was performed are extremely distressing and appalling, which is why the livestock export industry has already taken decisive action to voluntarily suspend exports of sheep to Pakistan and Bahrain. A full investigation is currently being undertaken by the Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

In light of this recent media coverage, the SCA believes programs with international customers, such as our involvement at Eid Al Adha, is indicative of our commitment to world class animal welfare outcomes for Australian livestock in all export markets. While more than 100 countries export livestock, Australia is the only one to invest in animal welfare and regulate livestock exports from the paddock to the point of processing.

Sheepmeat Council of Australia
T: 02 6269 5610

Australian Livestock Exporters' Council // T: 02 6269 5690

**www.daff.gov.au/aqis/export/
live-animals/livestock/escas**



Wayne Hall
Productivity
R&D Manager

"For the results of long term research projects underway or nearing conclusion to drive the transformation of the northern beef industry over the next 10 years so producers are able to reach the production levels they aim for."

Wayne said long term research projects like the Northern Beef Fertility program, or Cash Cow, allow researchers and producers to work together and explore options to deliver practical tools and management opportunities for production efficiency gains in the long term.



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Research at work

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

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A large MLA-funded project will identify how to drive gains from the massive on-farm investment in phosphorus

22// Breeder mortality

Research on the northern beef herd has found mortality is having a sizeable impact on productivity and profitability

Summer surveillance on seeds

Winter rains were good news for much of southern Australia this year, but sheep producers are being warned of a potential nasty side effect: an explosion in summer grass seed. →

Sheep health



1: A grass seed infested weaner, which was part of a grass seed contamination trial at Yeoval, central west NSW.

2: A grass seed infested weaner, with fleece removed using BioClip.

3: A weaner fleece, removed using BioClip, showing heavy grass seed contamination.

All photos courtesy of Karl Behrendt.

→

Graass seed contamination can have a sizeable impact on producers' bottom line. Seed-infested carcasses can be downgraded by \$1/kg or \$20/carcass and their skin value reduced by up to 50% with contamination affecting sheep and lamb production, product quality and animal health.

Biosecurity South Australia Veterinary Officer Dr Fiona Spurling said grass seeds took many producers by surprise after good rain in 2010 and in the winter of 2011.

South Australia's upper south-east and Mallee were the state's worst-affected areas last year, according to results from the SA sheep industry's Enhanced Abattoir Surveillance program.

"In some cases, abattoir management were taking photographs of very seedy carcasses so that their buyers were aware of the extent of the problem and could avoid seedy sheep," Fiona said.

"Many farming areas in South Australia have received decent rain this winter, so there may be seed problems in some areas again.

"Most producers are proactive about preventing seed infestation through either shearing sheep early and/or moving them to pastures that reduce the problems."

Research results

Grass seed researcher Dr Karl Behrendt, whose work is quoted extensively in MLA's *Winning Against Seeds* booklet, said producers had a number of different management options available to them.

Karl worked with the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) to conduct an MLA Producer Demonstration Site weaner trial at Yeoval, NSW, from 2007 to 2009.

Weaners were crutched, then either conventionally shorn, de-fleeced using the BioClip system or left

unshorn. The animals were weighed and fat scored until slaughter and then assessed for grass seed contamination after slaughter.

The trial found that reducing wool length significantly reduced grass seed contamination and increased production in weaners. However, the researchers predicted proactive management using the preparation of seed-safe pastures was a more profitable alternative.

"There is no one-size-fits-all solution to grass seeds; it comes back to the livestock system you're running and your pasture resources," Karl said.

He suggested a three-step approach.

1. Identify problem species in paddocks prior to moving sheep on to them.
2. Understand the impact of that species.
3. Adjust your system to reduce its impact.

On-farm seed infestation from grasses like brome grass, barley grass, spear grass, silver grass and geranium can result in poor animal growth rates, susceptibility to infections, tetanus, flystrike and damage to eyes, ears, feet and the mouth.

The major weed contaminants of lamb, sheepmeat and skins in Australia are:

- Brome grass
- Barley grass
- Chilean needle grass
- Silver grass
- Spear or corkscrew grass
- Wild geranium or erodium
- Wire grass



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View 3D weed management resources at
www.mla.com.au/weeds

View *FeedbackTV* episode 1 for a segment on 3D weed management or visit www.youtube.com and search '3D weed'.



Grass seed control tips

Grass seeds pose a threat to livestock for only a few months of the year, but a control program needs a year-round focus and an integrated approach.

Strategies include:

- **Grazing management to avoid grazing areas that are infested** – stocking density, grazing rotation, sub-dividing paddocks, slash strips to dams and tracks.
- **Agronomic management to reduce seed production** – pasture manipulation through spray topping, spray grazing and slashing, confinement crops, fodder conservation.
- **Stock management to avoid grazing pressure in the grass seed season** – feedlotting, genetics for faster growing lambs, shearing and lambing time.
- **Production management** – altering target markets and turn-off time to minimise pressure on paddocks during grass seed season.



Download *Winning against seeds* at: www.mla.com.au/winningseeds

More information and fact sheets can also be found at:

www.mla.com.au/Tipandtoolwinningseeds

www.pir.sa.gov.au/biosecuritysa/animalhealth/disease_surveillance/enhanced_abattoir_surveillance

Grass seed contamination: learning the hard way



Central NSW producer Leo Gibson is still feeling the financial effects of grass seed infestation, two years after corkscrew grass seeds wiped out 50% of his spring-drop lambs.

The replacement value of the lambs was \$50,000 and Leo couldn't sell the wether portion of the survivors as lambs because they failed to reach the 50kg target.

This year he's expecting his 2010-drop ewes to only achieve about a 70% lambing rate. The ewe flock contains survivors of the grass seed infestation, who now have a reduced reproduction rate.

The Gibsons lost 500 lambs in spring 2010, following 100mm of drought-breaking rain.

It provided a valuable lesson in fully assessing the make up of the feed before moving sheep into a paddock.

"We had about 950 ewes in a 20ha paddock, which has a creek running through it lined with box trees," Leo said.

"It's pasture-improved country, sown to phalaris, rye grass and clover, but underneath the trees and in the heavy stock traffic areas, the pasture couldn't handle the long drought and it bared off.

"We were worried about erosion so we ripped under the trees and tossed in some phalaris seed.

"When it started to rain, corkscrew grass grew. We weren't that concerned, because we were happy to see any groundcover."

The lambs were about eight weeks old when Leo realised they were in trouble.



Snapshot

Leo Gibson,
Manildra, NSW.



Property:
450ha, part of
a 4,000ha
aggregation
Leo runs in
partnership with
brothers Barry
and Graham

Enterprise:
Self-replacing
merino flock on
'Rock Glen', with
Merinos, first-
cross lambs and
some cropping
on the other
properties

Livestock:
1,800 sheep on
'Rock Glen'

Pasture:
Improved pastures
of phalaris, rye
grass and clover

Soil:
Granite-based
light soils

Rainfall:
650mm



Processors pay high price

Sheepmeat exporter Roger Fletcher said grass seed contamination in sheep and lambs is a massive problem. His livestock buyers are now wary of purchasing stock from areas with a grass seed issue.

The managing director of Fletcher International Exports said grass seed-infested stock resulted in loss of yield due to excess trimming, downgraded product, additional labour costs, loss of productivity and reduced skin values.

Vendors face significant deductions in the event of seed infestation. Skin prices can be cut by up to 50% if seeds are present, Roger said.

He said the losses suffered were not just shown in the return to the vendor.

"If we get a seed-infested mob come through, it can stop the chain and leave 170 people standing around," he said.

"We keep our yield losses to a minimum because we're good at trimming conservatively and might only lose an extra couple of hundred grams off a carcass.

"But it's the labour component and the time it takes to trim the carcass that really hurts us."

Non-vendor bred stock are a particular problem.

"Recently, we've found grass seed infested lambs sold by finishers from areas that historically don't have a seed problem," he said.

"These producers are unknowingly buying feeder lambs infested with grass seeds."

"We lost a few lambs and others were looking sulky, so we shifted them to a fresh paddock but they continued to die," he said.

"We called the Livestock Health and Pest Authority (LHPA) vet who suggested it might be grass seed infestation, so we skinned a few and you could see all the infection under the skin."

Wide ranging problem

Central West LHPA district veterinarian Alan Taylor said it was a story repeated around his region in 2010 and again in 2011.

"While the initial lambing rates were above average due to the good seasons, up to 50% of the lambs were not saleable due to death

or poor growth following the grass seed damage," Alan said.

"Corkscrew grass was the worst one, but ordinary grass seeds also caused a problem.

"I've been a vet for 47 years and I've never seen grass seed infestation like it.

"I hope the message got around and people are now having a good look at what's in their pasture before they put their sheep on it."



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Managing risk



Give yourself the edge

Many cattle producers would rather manage cattle than cashbooks, so MLA has developed a financial management program to help demystify critical business decisions.

MLA's Research Extension Manager - Beef Liz Allen said the BusinessEDGE initiative had so far provided 244 northern cattle producers with skills in basic financial and business management to improve the efficiency and profitability of their enterprises.

"Over a two-day workshop, BusinessEDGE equips participants to keep accurate records, identify if their business is economically sustainable in the long term, understand the key profit drivers in their business and herd, and effectively manage debt and capital," Liz said.

After a series of pilot workshops in 2010, BusinessEDGE has been rolled out across Queensland and the Northern Territory, with 20 workshops completed to date and more planned for 2013.

BusinessEDGE developer and lead presenter Phil Holmes said that although the program provides producers with many business solutions, there are key tools that participants are always keen to start using straight away.

"Producers already keep farm management accounts for tax purposes, but BusinessEDGE shows them how to use these resources to make important decisions, set key performance indicators, and to tell if their business is going to be profitable or not," he said.

"We also give participants a purpose-built spreadsheet to develop capital allocation budgets for their business. This provides a rational decision-making tool, so they can prioritise the best allocation of capital, whether that be paying down debt or investing in property developments."

Liz said the BusinessEDGE workshops were suitable for:

- family and corporate businesses
- producers who want to fine tune their business skills
- young producers who want to set out on the right business path
- producers who want to secure the viability of their business for future generations
- producers who want to reduce business risk, make better decisions and grow wealth
- beef industry extension officers



Register your interest in attending a BusinessEDGE workshop in 2013 by contacting JK Connections on 07 5482 4368 or businessedge@jkconnections.com.au

www.mla.com.au/EDGenetwork



Learn about Confident Livestock Marketing workshops at www.mla.com.au/CLM

Good business

Across the 2011-12 financial year, 244 producers attended BusinessEDGE workshops in Queensland and the Northern Territory.

Participants scored the workshops an average of 9 out of 10 for satisfaction and 9.3 for overall value.

Pre- and post-workshop knowledge and skills tests were conducted at each workshop. The average score improved from 38% correct before the workshop to 69% correct by the end of the course.

Attendees were also asked to rate their confidence levels as a business manager – 51% rated themselves as totally lacking or somewhat lacking at the start of the workshop. This dropped to 13% by the end.

When asked about plans for the next three to five years, 74% of attendees planned to expand their business gradually. Benchmarking their businesses, improving record-keeping practices, restructuring debt and refining herd structure were on their 'to do' lists.

Long term view at Clarkwood

Until this year, the roles in the Hill family were fairly defined: David focused on the cattle and his wife, Elizabeth, on the dollars and cents. So it was a surprise for both of them when David put up his hand to attend an MLA BusinessEDGE workshop.

"I'm very proud of our cattle, but I knew I should look at the whole business," David said. "The BusinessEDGE workshop was definitely a worthwhile investment for our business and I am glad I took the time to attend. I gained valuable tools for our enterprise because the course helped me identify key profitability drivers in our business and balance our economic and environmental sustainability."

With two children under 10, David and Elizabeth want to secure the long term productivity and profitability of their breeding and finishing enterprise, 'Clarkwood', 80km north-west of Marlborough, in central Queensland.

They run up to 950 head on 3,238 hectares as a separate business within a larger family operation.

The Hills cross Santa-based composite breeders with Charolais bulls and sell heifers and steers into the EU market. Depending on the season, they buy-in EU-accredited heifers to supplement production. They also see an opportunity to channel some cattle into MSA so are focusing on genetics to produce cattle suitable for a range of markets.

Their cattle are high performers at local processors (consistently averaging more than \$1,000/head) and in carcass competitions.

The Hills have weathered some tough years in the past decade. In 2002, they received just 150mm of their annual 650mm rainfall and had to cull their breeding herd from 320 to 250, a conservative level they still maintain. Supplementing cattle to achieve turn-off targets of 360–380kg during a tough winter in 2009 was also costly.

"It costs a lot of money to be conservative and sustainable. Our breeders take a lot of management in this environment, especially in tough years," David said.

The Hills have revised their turn-off targets to be more efficient and now aim to finish cattle at a more moderate 320–340kg off pasture.

The cost calculation

During BusinessEDGE, David calculated his cost of production to be around \$1.13/kg liveweight or \$2.27/kg



As part of monitoring his herd's progress, David Hill (right) regularly enters his cattle in carcass competitions. He is pictured with judge Wayne Davis and the winning carcass in the John Angus Memorial Single trade class at the 2010 Mackay Show.

carcass weight. He receives an average of \$3.13/kg carcass weight for a 320kg animal.

"We are fortunate to have a high equity. We do owe money, but mainly due to extensive infrastructure improvements in the past 10 years. Cost of production is the key area we can focus on in the short term to maintain the economic sustainability of our business," David said.

"We want to keep our operating margin but get the cost of production down. Turning off a 320kg animal is easier, quicker, costs less, and is better for our pasture. It will allow for a more sustainable business model which is better suited to this area and gives us greater flexibility to adapt to seasons."

For David, a key message from BusinessEDGE was that the value of beef in real terms is similar to the 1970s, but operating costs are three times what they were then.

"There is a really narrow window to make efficiency gains – if we know our profit drivers and cost of production, we can write better budgets," David said. "From a business perspective it makes sense, from the sustainability of our property it makes sense, and from an industry perspective it makes sense."

Snapshot

David and Elizabeth Hill,
Clarke Creek, Qld.



Property:
3,238ha

Enterprise:
Beef breeding and
fattening

Livestock:
900–950 head,
including 250 composite
breeders, fattening
both steers and heifers
for the EU market

Pasture:
American and Biloela
buffel, Queensland
blue grass, forest
mitchell, seca stylo

Soil:
Mix of light and heavy
brigalow and softwood
country running into
mostly usable forest
country

Rainfall:
650mm



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Compliance to market specifications

Premium position

Close collaboration between cattle producers, a Tasmanian processor and MSA has resulted in a brand that identifies high quality Australian beef in markets around the world.



Tasmania has a lot to offer the cattle industry with its natural, clean and green image and plenty of producers who are passionate about producing quality beef.

Adding Meat Standards Australia (MSA) to the mix has proven to be a winning combination for the Greenham family's processing plant at Smithton in north-west Tasmania.

The family expanded the HW Greenham & Sons Pty Ltd processing company from Victoria, where it processes manufacturing grade beef, to Tasmania in 2001. In 2007, MSA grading was incorporated into the business, a decision sixth-generation processor Peter Greenham (pictured) said allowed the company to capitalise on Tasmania's image by combining grassfed beef's

environmental credentials with the MSA stamp of eating quality. "When we started grading for MSA we discovered we were getting a lot of carcasses in the four best boning groups," Peter said.

"It was an opportunity to market our beef as a premium product so we developed the Cape Grim label for grassfed bullocks in the MSA grading groups 1-4 and relaunched our Greenham Natural beef as MSA (grading groups 1-6)."

On all the best tables

Greenhams has built throughput at its Smithton plant, increasing from 280 to 450 head/day.

Its 'Cape Grim' steaks are featured at celebrity chef Neil Perry's Rockpool Bar and Grill in Melbourne; and the company exports MSA beef to several countries. Cape Grim loin cuts are channelled into the high

end restaurant market, both domestically and to Singapore, Hong Kong, Maldives, Nepal, Fiji, Korea, Japan and the United States.

"MSA is a critical factor in maintaining this restaurant market, because it guarantees our clients a consistent product. Neil Perry charges between \$50 and \$80 for a Cape Grim steak, so MSA allows him to back our product and guarantee quality in every steak," Peter said.

Greenhams also supplies Cape Grim secondary cuts to the Korean supermarket chain, Lotte Mart, while the Greenham Natural yearling labelled product is sold into NSW and Queensland markets.

Cape Grim ox beef is better suited to restaurant style

cooking, so in 2012 the Greenhams opened the door to the domestic retail market by supplying yearling cuts through select butchers, under the Cape Grim YG label.

Greenhams currently process between 1,200 and 1,500 carcasses a week for the main Cape Grim label.

The ideal animal for Greenhams is a 0-2 tooth, 300-340kg Angus or Hereford steer with a marble score of 2+, which can be channelled into either label. Cape Grim beef needs an MSA boning group of 1 to 4, so MSA science is used to screen carcasses for the key traits of marbling, colour and consistent tenderness.

Producer feedback loop

Greenhams recently achieved 90.6% MSA compliance - a factor Peter attributes to strong relationships with the 1,000

90.6%

MSA and company
specifications compliance

1,000

producer suppliers

70,000

head annually

producers who supply more than 70,000 head each year to the Smithton plant.

Buyers from Greenhams visit each farm to select cattle and the plant provides carcass feedback within three days of processing cattle. Producers also receive support and information at field days and via a monthly newsletter. The company focuses on providing suppliers with as much carcass data as possible so they can adjust on-farm management in response to any non-compliance.

Greenhams also invest in systems to maintain MSA compliance, such as technology and infrastructure for best-practice stock handling. Its next focus is carcass utilisation to target a premium for every cut, and new retail strategies to boost lesser value Cape Grim beef cuts.

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Tasmanian Natural Beef

For more on MSA or to find out about MSA producer workshops visit: www.mla.com.au/msa
T: 1800 111 672
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Tasmania's tasty stamp of approval

Tasmanian cattleman John Bruce points to the local Circular Head Agricultural Show's annual carcass competition as evidence of MSA uptake in the region: "When my father updated the competition in 1983 it was for fat bullocks but it has evolved to better reflect what the market requires."

"We now use the MSA judging (grading) system to showcase how local producers are producing grassfed cattle that suit the higher value markets."

John's own management system is also now finely tuned to supply MSA cattle to the local Greenhams processing plant.

He prides himself on being a 'grass producer' first and a cattle producer second - a philosophy which underpins his supply of MSA cattle, which achieved 92.9% compliance in 2010-2011.

Rotational grazing is a core management tool and John and Angela Bruce have invested in infrastructure to optimise grazing.

The property had 18 paddocks when they bought it in 1975; now they move up to 1,250 head through 82 paddocks.





Snapshot

John and Angela Bruce, Stanley, Tas.



Property:
540ha

Enterprise:
Beef breeding and finishing

Livestock:
1,250 head
(including 320 Angus and South Devon breeders)

Pasture:
Ryegrass, clover, lucerne

Soil:
Basalt

Rainfall:
820mm

John's tips for MSA compliance

- **Meet the market:** use processor feedback as a tool for improved MSA compliance.
- **Focus on feed before breed:** Invest in nutrition and use genetics as an opportunity to fine tune the type of animal you produce.
- **Target turn-off:** supply when seasonal conditions are best for MSA compliance.

→

John is part of a local beef benchmarking group which participated in MLA trials to measure productivity gains from optimal grazing rotations.

"High-quality pasture is essential for high-quality beef so we focus on giving our cattle good nutrition for as much of the year as we can," John said.

"Ryegrass and clover are the predominant pasture species and paddock rotation is dictated by the leaf emergence rate of ryegrass. If we don't graze paddocks from when there are three mature leaves, it is a lost nutritional opportunity."

He continues to see annual productivity gains as a result of a strict rotational calendar based on the growth rate of rye grass. He moves stock in the range of 66-70 days in winter and 15-20 days in spring, depending on soil temperature and available moisture. Silage and hay maintain the rotation length when required in winter.

MSA advocate

Producers in the beef group were early adopters of MSA. They saw it as an opportunity to boost profitability from their existing systems and it was a perfect fit when the local Greenhams plant geared up for MSA.

Location is an advantage to MSA compliance. John only has to move cattle 38km to processing. He further reduces dark-cutters by using a single deck truck, as the increased transport costs are offset by higher MSA compliance.

Breeding almost all his own cattle is another important factor, John said.

"The majority of cattle are bred and finished in our grazing system, so they maintain an even plane of nutrition. We breed and select for MSA compliance and cull any breeders with calving, temperament or confirmation issues," he said.

Tasmania's wet winters reduce pasture quality, but John has overcome this by strategically selling the majority of steers between November and February, when better pasture conditions ensure improved MSA specifications and avoid the 15¢/kg discount for non-compliance.

He also usually gives young cattle a boost on lucerne-based pastures before processing to reduce meat colour and pH issues.

John incorporates feedback and carcass data from Greenhams into his business, as he believes cooperation and communication between producer and processor are important.



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Phosphorus management



Making more from P

An MLA and Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) co-funded research project is aiming to improve the effectiveness of phosphorus fertiliser and reduce producers cost of production in southern Australia.

Fast facts

480kt

(kilotonnes) of P used in Australia annually (prior to the recent droughts)

450kt

used in agriculture

25%

average efficiency for P applied as fertiliser across all agriculture in Australia

75%

accumulates in soil with a small amount lost to waterways

20-40%

P efficiency in grazing

45-60%

P efficiency in cropping

Crop production on

30%

of the world's soils is limited by low P levels

Phosphorus (P) is a particularly important element for Australian farming. It is often the largest input cost (after labour) in many livestock operations and a driver of food production crops and pastures grown in much of Australia's naturally low-P soils.

Livestock enterprises typically recover 20% of the P applied in farm products (according to the 2010 MLA-funded CSIRO review of P availability and utilisation). In cropping, P efficiency ranges from 45 to 60%.

MLA is aiming to move the P efficiency frontier and reduce costs to producers by co-investing in the four-year Phosphorus Efficient Pasture program.

Project leader Dr Richard Simpson, a senior research scientist with CSIRO Sustainable Agriculture Flagship, said that while low P efficiency is a cost burden for farms today, lifting P efficiency represents a major opportunity.

"Achieving substantial improvement in the P balance of Australian agriculture is not an easy task, despite the clear imperative and obvious potential for production and environmental benefits. If there were easy solutions, change would already have taken place," he said.

While extension efforts will improve efficiency through more targeted P applications, Richard said the research will initially focus on identifying pasture legumes with P-efficient traits. Research into novel fertiliser technologies is also on the cards.

The research will be a joint project of CSIRO, NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI), University of Adelaide, University of Western Australia (UWA) and the Department of Food and Agriculture Western Australia (DAFWA).

The three research components in the project are:

→ **Theme One: Sharpen industry best practice management.** Research has shown that small changes to on-farm management can deliver immediate efficiency benefits of 10%. The objective is to build innovation capacity and producer and advisory confidence to adopt the most profitable and effective practices when investing in fertiliser.

→ **Theme Two: Alleviate sub-soil constraints to production.** Develop and adopt farming systems that can operate productively and profitably at lower available P concentrations in the soil.

→ Theme Three: Develop innovative fertiliser and application technologies.

Novel fertiliser technologies and application strategies may also have a role to play in nutrient use efficiency, especially if better timing and placement of P fertiliser on pastures can modify the "locking up" of P in the soil.



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Read an article written by Richard on the topic at

<http://theconversation.edu.au/making-australian-farms-more-phosphorus-efficient-saves-money-ensures-food-security-4229>

Access '5 easy steps' phosphorus tools at: www.mla.com.au/fiveeasysteps

View FeedbackTV episode 10 on getting more P from your pasture or go to www.youtube.com and search 'more P from pasture'.

Northern reproductive efficiency

Boosting breeder cow survival

A recent MLA study showed a wide variation between breeder cow mortality rates across northern pastoral enterprises. It highlighted the opportunities and strategies to improve the welfare of animals, reduce mortality and make production gains.

Feedback's June edition this year reported preliminary findings from the study of seven pastoral regions across northern Australia that indicated average annual regional breeder mortality rates ranged from 3% to 12% in recent years. However, the full analysis is now complete and confirms the potential to reduce mortality rates and thereby lift production in the northern beef herd.

Researchers Alastair Henderson and Steve Banney and analyst Nigel Perkins randomly selected 45 properties for the study. They wanted to gain a representative insight into how breeder cattle were being managed and to estimate individual stock losses using property records and simple data modelling (see table 1).

The results showed a wide variation between properties and regions. Some of the higher mortality rates can be attributed to extreme weather events, such as floods

and droughts, but what was also illustrated were the opportunities to lift production in the northern beef herd.

The analyses by the researchers was carried out in terms of total breeders with an assumption – based on best estimates – of what the non-breeders might be, including heifer calves, heifers too young to join, spayed cows and so on.

“Take non-breeders away from total females and it leaves the breeder herd,” explained Alastair.

Regional rates and variations

The mean female mortality ranged from 3.9% in the WA West Kimberley region to 12.84% in the Alice Springs region for the same period. (The breeder mortality rates are likely to be somewhat higher than these values as non-breeding females are not suffering as much nutritional stress or other risks associated with pregnancy and calving).

Individual properties in the Queensland northern Gulf varied from 2.6% to 19.6%.

“Management of big properties in the Gulf in the early days of the study was characterised by big wet seasons, big droughts, late starts to the wet or early finishes to the wet, which can all have catastrophic consequences on the survival of the cattle,” Alistair said.

“The northern Gulf is not ‘well-endowed country’ in terms of soil and pasture quality, but the fact that it can be just over 2% on one hand and just over 19% on the other, says there are significant differences.

“In the five-year span of the project, there were also periods of huge rainfall; big floods just drowned the country and the cattle.”

Analysing the data set

In the study, the researchers analysed 22 different factors that might influence breeder



mortality to identify significant factors and non-significant trends related to mortality.

The strongest statistical associations with mortality rate were:

- age of females at last joining, at last weaning and at culling
- wet season phosphorus supplementation of all females and of aged females
- dry season segregation of breeders
- continuous versus controlled mating

“Producers who culled at 10 years or under had lower mortality rates than those who culled at 11 or more, and it’s not difficult to reason why: their teeth wear out unless they’re on soft country – then with the stress of lactation and pregnancy – it all gets too hard,” Alastair said.

“Wet season phosphorus supplementation was very important, especially of aged females.”

Managing the mating period was also important with mortality rates in controlled

Table 1 Female mortality rate by region (female deaths per 100 females per year)		
Region ID	Region	Mean mortality rate
1	Qld Southern Gulf	4.12
2	Qld Northern Gulf	11.14
3	NT Barkly Tablelands	4.58
4	NT Gulf-Katherine-Sturt Plateau	5.86
5	NT Alice Springs	12.84
6	NT Victoria River District	7.16
7	WA East Kimberley	6.89
8	WA West Kimberley	3.90
9	WA Pilbara	7.14
	All regions	6.49



One of the researchers, veterinarian consultant Alastair Henderson.

Calculating your own breeder mortality rate

As part of this project, a mortality calculator tool is being developed to help producers use their own property records to determine breeder herd mortality and consequential financial losses. Using the calculator will require a reliable standard of herd record keeping.

The minimum inputs to use the calculator (opening total female number, opening breeder number, branded number, female sales, female purchases and closing book female number) must be accurate to obtain a meaningful output.

The researchers hope supplying producers with the mortality calculator might act as a catalyst for properties to improve their herd record keeping.

Keep an eye out in *Feedback* for when the mortality calculator is available on-line.

mating systems significantly lower than continuously joined ones.

On some properties, it may be practical to implement a strategy of segregating the herd on the stage of gestation. This would identify cows that are going to calve out of season and need special assistance.

Why some factors were not significant

Some factors were not identified as being statistically significant due to the small sample involved.

For example, more than 90% of the properties surveyed vaccinated at least some of their cattle against botulism and there was a large reduction in female mortality when botulism vaccination was undertaken, regardless of whether part or the whole herd was vaccinated. However, the number of properties not vaccinating (2) was insufficient to allow any meaningful association between vaccination and lower breeder mortality.

Start with good record keeping

The researchers suggest that properties with breeder mortality rates above 8% warrant management changes to try and reduce breeder stock losses.

"It's most important to go to a lot of trouble to ensure records - cattle returns, paddock returns, mustering advices, monthly returns - are accurate," Alastair said.

"A lot of people in the survey did their best - even those with relatively small herds - and thought they had the job under control. But when we probed their answers, they found some records were missing or the data didn't stack up. If the information is only half-baked, any answers you get will also be half-baked.

"In line with that, we developed a mortality calculator (see box), a simple tool that allows the producer to plug in five or six sets of information and an analytical formula will estimate their mortality rate." →



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

www.mla.com.au/breederherd

Download *Phosphorus management of beef cattle in northern Australia* at
www.mla.com.au/phosphorus-management

Download *Weaner management in northern beef herds* at
www.mla.com.au/weanermanual

Read the *High-input systems for Northern breeding herds* report at
www.mla.com.au/highinputsystems
www.futurebeef.com.au/topics/breeding-and-genetics/spike-feeding/



Minimising mortality

Chris Towne, who manages Brunchilly, an outstation of Helen Springs in the Barkly Tablelands, for S. Kidman & Co has witnessed the benefits of a system committed to reducing mortalities.

The herd management program on the properties has been evolving for about 15 years - Stanbroke started it before Kidman came along - and the mortality rate is about 2.5% across both Helen Springs and Brunchilly.

"We make a lot of decisions based on body condition, and keep them in the right condition throughout the year as best we can," Chris (above) said.

"Getting the best out of cattle and keeping them in the best condition so they can calve every year is not a hard thing to do."

"Cows are put into calving groups (based on stage of gestation) and we allocate them to the right country, where they can access the best feed while they are lactating. We feed Kynofos™ (a monocalcium phosphate supplement) nearly all year round, which is a big plus in the marginal country."

The breeder segregation program at 'Brunchilly' (see *Feedback* May 2012, p 17) is the backbone of Kidman's success in reducing breeder mortality. Maintaining cows in body condition score 3 or better at calving means they re-conceive to calve at the best

time of the year (December-February), and creates a more manageable 12-month calving interval.

Brunchilly also benefits from early weaning in drier periods, some paddock rotations, pasture spelling during the wet season and between cattle movements, and herd recording using an electronic weighing and data collection system.

Snapshot

S. Kidman & Co
'Helen Springs'
and 'Brunchilly',
Barkly Tablelands,
NT



Property:
10,198km²

Enterprise:
Beef cattle
breeding

Livestock:
47,000 head
across both
properties

Pasture:
Mitchell grass
downs

Soil:
Predominantly
black soil

Rainfall:
422mm at Helen
Springs, 439mm
at Brunchilly

→

Table 2 Management options that could be introduced sequentially into northern Australian pastoral properties to improve breeder herd fertility and survival

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The breed. Appropriate genotype - select the right genetics for your property conditions • Managing animal condition through supplementation and nutrition - learn more with the <i>Phosphorus management of beef cattle in northern Australia</i> manual and the <i>High-input systems for northern breeding herds</i> report from MLA • Weaning and weaning management - learn more with the <i>Weaner management in northern beef herds</i> best management practice guide from MLA • Botulism prevention and management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heifer management - learn more with the <i>Heifer management in northern beef herds</i> manual from MLA • Selecting breeding cattle: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Learn more by watching the <i>Managing Breeder Condition: Body Condition Score</i> video at www.youtube.be/x2rjBjxwoo ◦ <i>Identifying and selecting female cattle for genetically improved reproductive performance</i> is available from the Beef CRC website www.beefcrc.com ◦ <i>Buying bulls - its all in the genes</i> available from www.futurebeef.com.au • Efficient culling by monitoring cow age, condition and pregnancy status, particularly during the dry season • Disease prevention and control, particularly in marginal tick areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Controlled mating to avoid out-of-season calvers and segregation of breeders to match management to condition. <i>Managing the breeder herd - practical steps to breeding livestock in northern Australia</i> available from MLA • Spike feeding to support improved re-conception following calving • Develop herd reduction strategies and fine tuning feeding options to manage a changing climate

Pastures

Southerners get a taste for the tropics



400,000ha

tropical grass based pastures sown in NSW

200,000ha

tropical grass based pastures sown in southern Western Australia

The take up of tropical grass pastures in subtropical and temperate environments has led to MLA investing in a project which aims to deliver producers increased productivity, reduced costs and improved natural resource management.

Led by Senior Research Scientist Dr Suzanne Boschma, from the Tamworth Agricultural Institute, the project aims to increase feedbase production and quality of tropical grass-based pastures.

"In NSW we've estimated from seed sales that over 400,000ha of tropical grass based pastures have been sown in recent years," Suzanne said.

"In WA there is 150,000ha of kikuyu on the south coast, while in the northern agricultural region over 50,000ha has been established since 2000.

The new project aims to increase the quality and quantity of feed from these tropical pastures by improving the establishment and maintenance of legumes and other compatible forage components in four targeted southern Australia livestock producing regions.

"The inclusion of companion legumes in the mix is critical to having a stable and productive pasture that supports higher livestock production."

The researchers will establish core sites at Bingara and Manilla in northern NSW, Trangie

in central west NSW, Albany and Esperance on WA's south coast, and in the northern agricultural region.

Work will evaluate ways to incorporate legumes and other species into tropical grass pastures.

"We know these grasses are very responsive to nitrogen but nitrogen is not cheap, and incurs another cost with application," Suzanne said.

"By identifying the right legumes we'll provide a cost-effective source of nitrogen to increase the quality and productivity of the grass."

Issues to be studied include the water use interaction between grasses and legumes in NSW, and how to establish companion species in highly competitive kikuyu swards in WA.

The five-year collaboration is between MLA, the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Western Australia's Department of Agriculture and Food.



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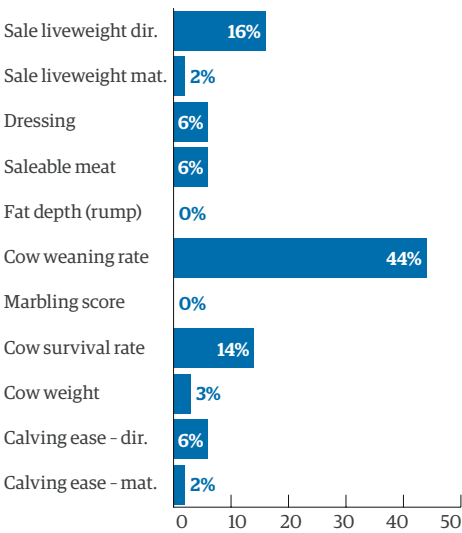
Genetics



Index to be more profitable

Northern cattle producers selling to the livestock export trade have an opportunity to improve profits with the development of a genetic selection tool: the Northern Selection Index for Brahmans.

Figure 1 Economic importance emphasis on EBV traits



The relative economic importance of each trait in the northern selection index.

Available on the BreedObject and BREEDPLAN websites, the index was developed by MLA in consultation with Northern Territory (NT) producers who recognised the drawbacks of relying on visual selection and/or the Japanese Ox index to select sires to produce offspring for the livestock export trade.

Producers breeding for the livestock export trade are aiming to turn off steers at about 600 days, weighing less than 350kg, with high growth rates and not too much fat. MLA's Animal Production Coordinator for Northern Beef, Geoff Niethe, said producers can use the index to rank sires across 13 traits on a commercial dollar value to produce animals which will not only meet livestock export trade requirements but also pass on valuable herd-improving traits such as fertility and calving ease.

"This tool is a big step forward for the northern beef industry and takes the guesswork out of selecting the best bulls to drive genetic progress in the herd," Geoff said.

"Producers who aim to produce the ideal animal for their environment can have confidence it will improve their enterprise profitability."


Geoff said prior to the index, many NT producers were selecting sires visually for growth or were being confronted with multiple estimated breeding values (EBVs) in a bull catalogue with no means to easily interpret all the data.

"Members of the Katherine Pastoral Industry Advisory Committee, who helped design the index, collectively input a range of production parameters important to their northern beef enterprises and the livestock export trade while addressing shortcomings in their breeding programs," he said.

The traits incorporated in the index include: birth weight, 200-day, 400-day and 600-day weights, carcass intramuscular fat (IMF), carcass fat depth, rib fat, rump fat, retail beef yield, days to calving, calving ease, mature cow weight and scrotal circumference.

The index project also examined and aimed to address barriers to the uptake of genetic technologies in the Northern Territory.

Producers can now use the Northern Selection Index to rank sires across 13 traits on a commercial \$ value to produce animals that will not only meet livestock export trade requirements but also pass on valuable, herd-improving traits such as fertility and calving ease.



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www.futurebeef.com.au/topics/breeding-and-genetics/

Improving reproductive efficiency

Genomic breakthrough means more Brahman calves

Brahman herd profitability should rapidly increase during the next decade with the adoption of new genomic predictors for fertility.

Recent genomic advancements mean northern cattle producers are getting closer to having tools for improved fertility and animal survival. Following seven years of Australian research, breeders can now identify bulls at weaning age, or even earlier, with strong reproductive traits.

Research Project Leader Dr Sigrid Lehnert, of CSIRO's Livestock Industries' division, said the new genomic predictors focus on both male and female fertility traits that lead to improved pregnancy and weaning rates.

"The northern cattle industry is committed to Brahman because the breed is so well adapted to their environment," Sigrid said.

"However, Brahman do have significant reproductive issues. It's not uncommon for producers to have five-year-old cows that are pregnant with only their second calf. We're aiming to genetically improve fertility so that cows raise more calves during their lifetime."

Researchers found that reproductive traits such as age of puberty (age at first ovulation for heifers and for bulls, scrotal size and semen quality) and length of the post-partum anoestrus (interval between calving and return to oestrus) are highly heritable.

"With genomically-enhanced estimated breeding values, producers will be able to select their herd bulls earlier in life without having to wait for other phenotypic indicators. Some selection decisions can be made at weaning, allowing for far more rapid genetic progress," Sigrid said.

The Beef CRC announced these genomic prediction equations at this year's Beef Australia, saying they allowed development of genomically enhanced estimated breeding values (EBVs) through the Brahman BREEDPLAN analysis.

A genomic test for fertility in the tropical breed Nellore, is already available in Brazil. However, Sigrid said the test is not based on the very sophisticated phenotypic measures used in the Australian-developed model.

Further research

Work by Australian beef researchers will continue to ensure the industry is able to tap into the advances made by genomic science.



Researcher Dr Sigrid Lehnert with British cattle.
Image courtesy www.beefcentral.com

"Reliable gene marker predictions for Australian beef cattle that can be made independent of pedigree are definitely a future goal of our research," Sigrid said.

According to Sigrid, the genetic gains made during this project highlight the significant value of multi-disciplinary, multi-organisational co-operation.

"Thanks to work done by Beef CRC researchers, we had a whole herd resource that was extremely well characterised that we could tap into, the genetic knowledge provided through Animal Genetics and Breeding Unit (AGBU) and BREEDPLAN, the practical knowledge and experience of Queensland Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries veterinarians and extension officers as well as the extensive contacts developed over the years by University of Queensland researchers," she said.

"Through a collaborative approach we are achieving significant gains for the Australian beef industry."



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www.beefcrc.com/documents/publications/fact-sheets/FS16-GeneticallySelectingFemales.pdf

Read Tips & Tools: *Buying better bulls*
www.mla.com.au/bulls

Biosecurity

Bigger grassroots' role in OJD management



Ron Cullen
Sheepmeat Council
of Australia
Chief Executive Officer



The Sheepmeat Council of Australia (SCA) and WoolProducers Australia have developed a revised ovine Johne's disease Management Plan, which will be fully implemented from 1 January 2013. Here, SCA Chief Executive Officer Ron Cullen explains the changes.

Regions (generally based on Livestock Health and Pest Authority zones in NSW or local government boundaries in other states) will be classified as either a protected or a control area, replacing the current low, medium and high-prevalence areas for ovine Johne's disease (OJD).

Control areas will be where OJD is well established or continues to spread and where there is no regional approach to disease control. A protected area will be an area where OJD is not known to occur or is rare and actively controlled, and a regional biosecurity plan is in place to prevent, detect and control the disease.

The plan will require producers to take greater responsibility and be actively engaged in managing the disease.

Producers will lose trading opportunities if they are not engaged in the management of the disease.

In the past, points were given for the area they lived in; now there won't be any points system, and trading will be based on testing and biosecurity practices.

The point system will not be continuing, as elements of this have led to the spread of the disease via non-engaged producers not understanding the risks and not practising sound biosecurity.

Producers will need to work together and actively manage the disease in their region. A regional biosecurity plan, which describes how the criteria will be met, needs to be submitted and approved to achieve Protected area status. The criteria are available at www.ojd.com.au and outline ways that producers in these regions can meet the outcomes.

MLA is supporting and informing the revised plan through its ongoing funding of research and development programs which aim to develop OJD control tools, diagnostic tests, and better understanding of the disease.



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www.ojd.com.au
www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Regional-Biosecurity-Plan-Guidelines.pdf

To be provided with regular updates on OJD email:
johnes@animalhealthaustralia.com.au

Download Tips & Tools: *On-farm management of ovine Johne's disease*
www.mla.com.au/OJDmanagement
Tips & Tools: *The role of vaccination in the control of ovine Johne's disease*
www.mla.com.au/OJDvaccination



Producers are encouraged to understand the implications of the revised ovine Johne's disease plan.



Ed invites producers to take OJD control

Snapshot

Ed Storey,
'Werong',
Yass, NSW.



Property:
1,400ha

Enterprise:
Self-replacing
Merino flock,
with 20-25% of
ewes joined to
terminal sires

Livestock:
11,000 DSE

Pasture:
Mostly native
pastures with
some improved
paddocks of
fescue, clovers,
phalaris and
ryegrass

Soil:
Granite based with
clay subsoil

Rainfall:
600mm

Image courtesy Yass Tribune

Southern Tablelands wool producer Ed Storey (pictured) believes the revised ovine Johne's disease (OJD) management plan represents a 'carrot rather than a stick' approach to managing the sheep wasting disease.

Ed, who runs an 11,000 DSE grazing enterprise at Yass, NSW, recently joined the ranks of WoolProducers Australia directors, as part of his new role as Chair of the NSW Farmers' Association Wool Committee.

"I think there were disincentives in the old plan to find out the status of your flock and vaccinate, particularly in the low or medium-prevalence zones," Ed said.

"The use of those zones was skewing some of the reported infection levels around the place, as people sheltered in them and didn't actually seek to discover their disease status."

Ed manages 'Werong' as a family partnership with his wife Nikki and parents John and Gillian.

The Storeys' first brush with OJD occurred about 10 years ago when a wether - one of

1,500 animals - tested positive to the disease at an abattoir.

"The Gudair vaccine had just become available and we felt the best thing to do for our enterprise was to start vaccinating immediately, which we did," Ed said.

"Given our location, and the fact the predominant expression of the disease was in our area, it was a pretty easy decision for us. We're now in the second generation of vaccinates, and nearing the third, and we haven't seen any impact of OJD on our place."

A new approach

The revised OJD plan sees regions classified as either a protected or a control area, replacing the low, medium and high-prevalence areas for OJD infections.

Areas that do not have an approved regional biosecurity plan in place by 1 January 2013 will revert to being classified as a control area. If producers in those areas believe they can meet the criteria, they can apply for their area to have a protected status.

The revised OJD plan will require producers to take greater responsibility, and be actively engaged in managing the disease.

"This plan puts the onus of proof on producers in a protected area," Ed said.

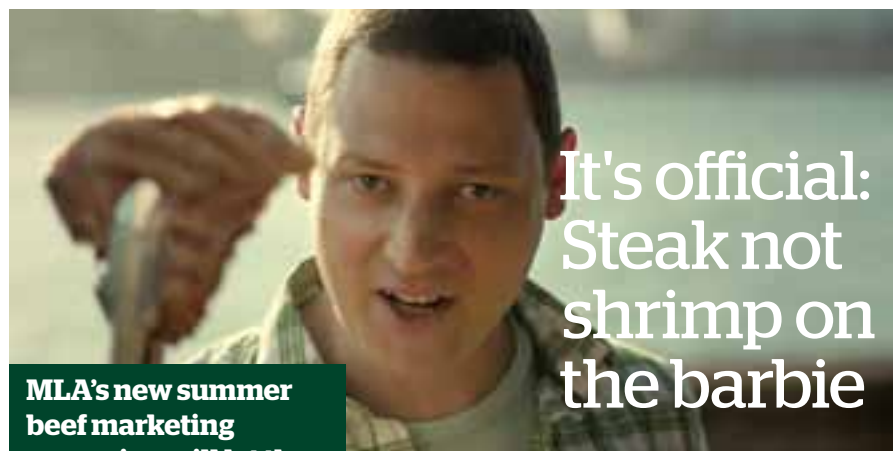
"But if they get together and develop a regional biosecurity plan and comply with the audit requirements, they should gain a market advantage.

"It might take a bit of organisation and a little bit of money at the start, but in the end it should strengthen the protected areas and provide them with real credibility."

Ed believes the key message for producers in control areas is to determine the status of their flock as soon as possible, and decide how they want to manage the risk for their own enterprise.



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MLA's new summer beef marketing campaign will let the world know that Australians throw steaks - not shrimps - on the barbie.

Throw another **STEAK** on the barbie

It's official: Steak not shrimp on the barbie

When Paul Hogan told the world he'll "slip another shrimp on the barbie", he created two misconceptions about Australians. First, that we refer to prawns as 'shrimps', and second, that we prefer to barbecue prawns over beef.

"Beef is 're-steaking' its claim as the meat at the centre of the hotplate," MLA Group Marketing Manager - Consumer Andrew Cox said. "We are righting the wrong perpetrated by the 1984 tourism commercial.

"The campaign reminds consumers that beef is the number one barbecue meat. It builds on the

strong connection Australians have with beef by encouraging them to cook even more beef steaks on the barbecue this summer."

In a recent survey conducted by Galaxy Research, 77% of respondents considered steak to be the traditional Australian barbecue offering, rather than prawns at just 9%.

Comedian and television and radio presenter Merrick Watts is the face of the summer beef campaign which started on 4 November. In the new MLA television commercial, Merrick rallies Australians to join him on his mission to set the record straight to have the old tourism commercial remade and replace the now infamous shrimp line, with "throw another steak on the barbie".

The campaign is supported by digital media activities, including an online petition to re-shoot the tourism advertisement. The new issue of *Entice* magazine includes summer beef recipes, tips and information and promotes a range of cuts including rump, strip loins, mince, t-bone and short ribs. Two million copies of the magazine have been distributed nationally by retailers and major supermarkets, including Woolworths and IGA.



Sign the petition at facebook.com/nothingbeatsbeef

Consumers have responded positively to MLA's new *Meat & Co* magazine.

Meat & Co warms up winter beef

Research found 71% of *Meat & Co* readers were more likely to buy new, 'lesser known' beef cuts after reading the magazine, which was launched in August as part of MLA's winter beef marketing campaign.

The magazine, distributed through 100 higher-end butcher stores, targets the 56% of Australians who consider themselves to be 'foodies' or 'confident cooks' (for more on these consumer groups, see pages 6-8). It featured information on production, cooking techniques and recipes using cuts from MLA's 'Masterpieces' program.

The research results revealed:

- 46% of respondents tried at least one recipe, while a further 40% planned to try a recipe
- 61% of respondents said the magazine improved their quality perceptions of Australian beef
- 63% of butchers involved in the program said Meat & Co converted to sales at the register
- 72% of butchers found Meat & Co helped increase sales of lesser-known cuts

Television, public relations and point-of-sale components of the winter beef marketing campaign were generally well received. The return of the 2011 television 'beef curry plate envy'

commercial drew high recognition levels of 70%. For this campaign, 82% of butchers participated, with 60% rating the resulting sales impact as good, very good or excellent.

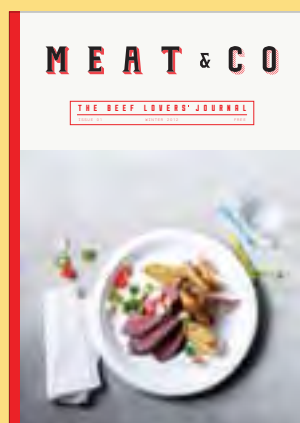
Beef's category value share rose slightly compared with last year to 39.16% (+0.11 share points) over the campaign period (June to August), while value sales were 4.5% lower against last year's figures for the same period. The value share of promoted beef casserole cuts dropped 0.5% on the previous year's level for June, recovering to stabilise at the same level as previous years for July and August (8%) with an overall slight fall over the three month period of 0.2%. These figures reflect the overall subdued domestic retail climate which provided the backdrop for the winter campaign.

82%

of butchers participated in the winter beef campaign, 60% rating the sales impact as good, very good or excellent



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Christmas canapé recipes



Serves: 4-6
Preparation and cooking time:
2 hours



Serves: 6
Preparation and cooking time:
35 minutes



Serves: 4
Preparation and cooking time:
25 minutes

Sticky beef ribs with herbed potato salad

Ingredients

- 10-12 beef short ribs
- 3 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tbsp English mustard
- 2 tbsp soft brown sugar
- 2 tbsp tomato sauce
- 2 tbsp lemon juice

Method

1. Put the beef ribs in a large saucepan. Cover ribs with water, and bring slowly to simmering point over a low heat. Gently simmer, partially covered for 1 hour.
2. Remove ribs from water and drain on paper towel. Combine the garlic, salt, English mustard, brown sugar, tomato sauce and lemon juice in a bowl and stir to combine. Brush marinade over ribs. Stand for 30 minutes or overnight.
3. Barbecue ribs over a moderate heat for 10-12 minutes, turning often and basting with marinade until ribs are golden brown. Garnish with baby coriander leaves.
4. Serve with herbed potato salad and spicy tomato sauce.

Herbed potato salad

Cook 1kg new potatoes and allow to sit covered for 30 minutes, then gently drain. Combine 1 tbsp lemon juice, 3 tbsp extra virgin olive oil, ¼ cup roughly chopped parsley, ¼ cup roughly chopped dill, ½ cup roughly chopped mint and 3 finely sliced green onions.

Add the warm potatoes, season with sea salt and freshly ground black pepper and gently fold the potatoes through the herbs.

Beef curry puffs

Ingredients

- 500g beef mince
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 2 tbsp mild curry paste
- 2 tsp grated ginger
- 1 ½ cups beef stock
- 400ml can coconut milk
- 2 tbsp brown sugar
- 1kg pkt ready-rolled puff pastry sheets (6 sheets), thawed
- plain thick yoghurt and cucumber to serve

Method

1. Place mince in a bowl and mix in a little oil. Heat a large frypan until it is hot. Crumble in half of the mince. Brown the mince, breaking up any lumps with a fork. Remove first batch, reheat pan and cook remaining mince. Return first batch of mince to frypan.
2. Add the onion, garlic, curry paste and ginger, cook stirring for one minute. Add stock and coconut milk. Bring to the boil, reduce heat and simmer for 20 minutes. The mince mixture should be thick. Remove from heat and cool.
3. Preheat oven to 200°C. Work with one pastry sheet at a time. Cut each pastry sheet in half vertically, three times, to give four equal strips. Place a tablespoon of cooled beef mince mixture on the bottom right-hand corner of each strip. Then fold the corner over to form a triangle. Keep folding, retaining the triangular shape with each fold, until you reach the top of the strip.
4. Place the triangles on a baking tray lined with baking paper. Bake for 10 minutes or until curry puffs are puffed and golden. Serve with plain yoghurt and chopped cucumber.

Tip

Cool the beef mixture before making into curry puffs with the pastry.

Lamb meatballs with mint jelly sauce

Ingredients

- 500g lamb mince
- 1 small onion, grated
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- ½ cup dried breadcrumbs
- ½ cup mint jelly
- 2 tbsp of water
- couscous or rice and cherry tomatoes to serve

Method

1. Place the lamb mince, onion, egg, cumin, breadcrumbs and a little salt and pepper in a large bowl. Using your hand bring the mixture together and knead lightly until combined.
2. Shape mixture into 20 small meatballs
3. Add oil to a medium-sized, heavy based frypan to one-third of the way up the side of the pan. Heat the oil over a moderately-high heat.
4. Cook the meatballs in batches over a medium-high heat, until golden and cooked through. Drain on absorbent paper. Warm the mint jelly and water in the microwave on low setting for 20 seconds, or use a small saucepan and stir in the water. Serve meatballs with a small bowl of the mint jelly, and couscous or rice and cherry tomatoes.

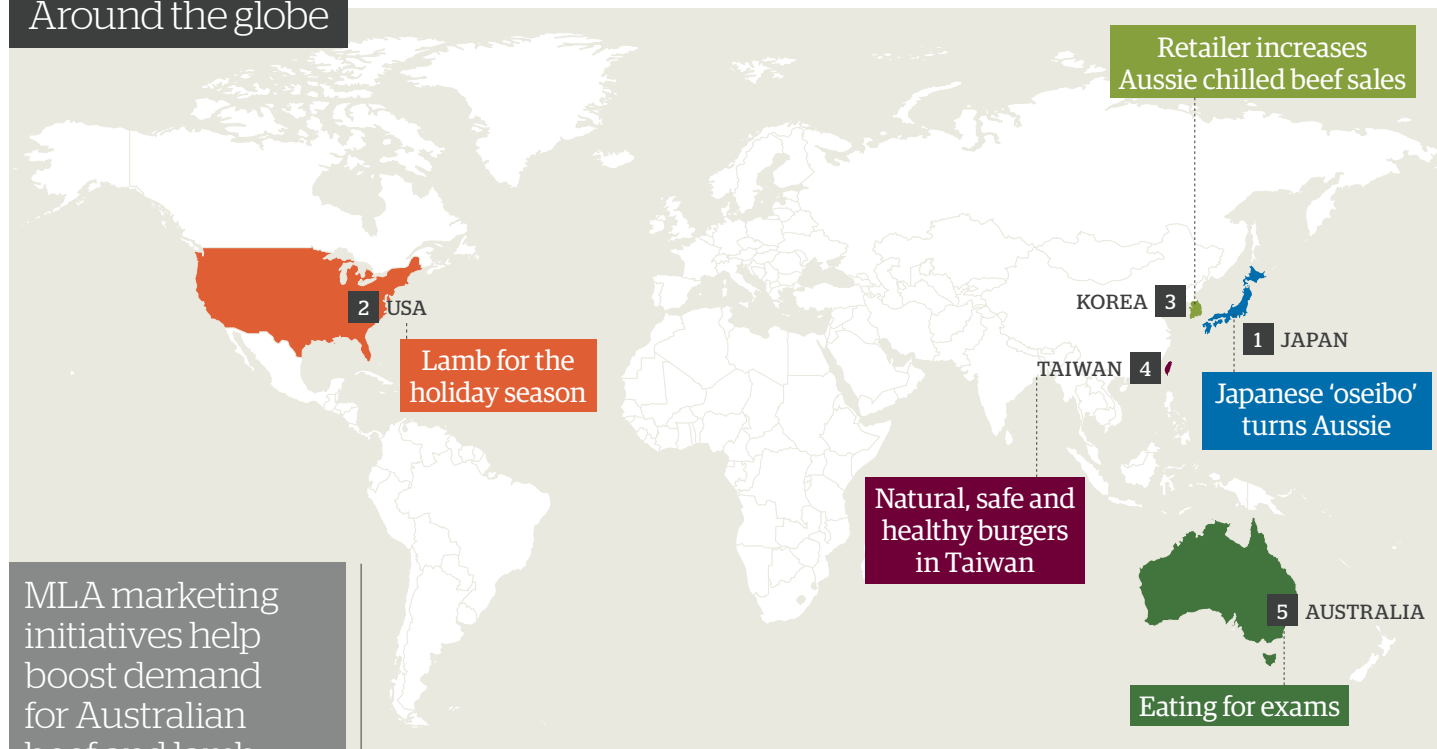
Tip

Meatballs, rissoles and burgers should always be thoroughly cooked. They should not be served rare or pink. A good guide is to insert a skewer into the thickest part; if it is ready to eat the juices will be clear.



For more festive season recipe ideas check out www.themainmeal.com.au

Around the globe



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

1 JAPAN

Merry Kurisumasu

Christmas is one of the busiest and liveliest seasons in Japan. While not a religious celebration for most Japanese, it is a time for exchanging gifts and spending time with loved ones. Christmas Day also marks the start of the school winter holidays.

Restaurants take reservations well in advance for special Christmas Eve menus that include dishes such as roast beef and steak. At home, families have started to opt for western-style menus that include roast beef and grilled chicken, purchased ready-made. It is also a Japanese custom to send formal end of year gifts called 'oseibo', usually to professional contacts. Examples of *oseibo* include deli meats such as ham and sausages, and meat and vegetable soup sets.

MLA will run a winter campaign from December 2012 to January 2013 to promote Aussie beef's safe, delicious and healthy image to coincide with

Christmas and New Year celebrations.

Under the concept of 'Genki (energetic) with Aussie Beef', in-store demonstrators will show the use of a range of cuts of Australian beef in western and Japanese style dishes and distribute recipes for 'Aussie deli' cuts, such as pastrami and thinly sliced beef.

2 USA

Talking lamb, not turkey

With its melting pot of cultures and religions, the end of year in the US brings celebrations including Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas and New Year - collectively known as the holiday season.

While turkey is king for Thanksgiving, the holiday season also provides the opportunity for other proteins to take centre stage, including a beef rib roast or a leg of lamb.

MLA's campaigns throughout the holiday season promote Australian lamb to American consumers through social media

and e-newsletters, providing recipe ideas, suggested cuts to use and how to cook delicious Australian lamb.

This year, MLA will promote Australian lamb for Christmas by encouraging consumers to enter a draw to win an Australian lamb dinner, with all the ingredients (including Australian lamb legs) and recipes provided.

3 KOREA

Chilling out



MLA has been working with major Korean retailers to stimulate sales by promoting the clean and safe Australian beef brand image through 'Australian chilled beef festival' promotions. The promotions offer customers discounts on key cuts with samplings for Australian chilled beef in hypermarkets.



Japanese oseibo.

MLA provides support with point-of-sale materials, festival banners carrying the *Hoju Chungjung Woo* message (Australian beef, clean and safe), while retailers provide 20-25% discounts on 10 key cuts. In August, a four-day festival at Korea's number one retailer, E-mart Yangjae branch, led to a 45% increase in Australian chilled beef sales.

Due to the success of the program, MLA is planning to run further promotions in coming months following strong enquiries from retailers.

4 TAIWAN

Maccas promotes Aussie beef



The world's most popular family restaurant, McDonald's (Taiwan) now features the Aussie beef logo, alongside New Zealand's beef logo, on posters and tray mats at its 360 restaurants.

The Australian beef logo placement gives confidence to McDonald's customers that they are buying beef guaranteed to be natural, safe and healthy. McDonald's (Taiwan) supply chain buys product only from Australia and New Zealand.

McDonald's (Taiwan) 'country of origin' product awareness campaign was launched in August following a chemical residue detection incident in US

imported beef. The campaign is promoted across its beef product ranges, including the new Big N Tasty burger. The campaign is also promoted through the McDonald's website, popular magazines and television commercials.

5 AUSTRALIA

Beef and lamb brain booster



As more than 250,000 Australian students headed into their year 12 exams, MLA worked with accredited dietitian Geraldine Georgeou to highlight the importance of a healthy diet with beef and lamb 3-4 times a week for concentration and energy during this all important study period.

A 'study diet' was developed to help students and parents prepare which included beef and lamb 3-4 times a week as well as whole grains, fresh fruit and vegetables.

The plan was featured in the *Body + Soul* magazine inserted into key News Limited newspapers nationally. It was also promoted online and in television segments on Channel 7.

Study nutrition plan promotion reaches

13

million people

Market observations

US drought impact

The drought gripping large parts of North America will shape global agricultural markets for many years. The fallout is likely to affect Australian producers largely in terms of the prices received and the final destination of exports.

Tim McRae
MLA Economist



In early September almost 25% of the US was experiencing extreme to exceptional drought, with 51% of the corn crop in poor or very poor condition. Across the US, about 59% of pastures and rangelands were assessed to be in poor or very poor condition, with four states reporting more than 90% of this rating (Missouri, Illinois, Nebraska and Kansas) home to 19% of the US cattle herd.

While the impact on US grain producer incomes will be mitigated by several factors, particularly the large expected increases in crop prices, higher grain prices will pressure sectors that use corn as input, including food manufacturing, ethanol and livestock production. In effect, the high corn prices will result in surging input costs across most sectors of the US economy.

Influenced by the lower corn supply outlook, the estimated US corn use for livestock feed for 2012-13 has declined to the lowest levels in 23 years. This, combined with a US cattle herd at a 40-year low as of July, led to the United States Department of Agriculture forecasting

a decline in animal protein production to 41.1 million tonnes in 2013, down 2% from the expected 2012 volumes. Retail meat prices are expected to continue to rise in 2012-13 on already record high levels.

From an Australian perspective, the impact of the US drought has already been felt across a number of commodities. The kick in global grain prices has brightened the outlook for Australian grain producers, while livestock producers will most likely feel the main impact into 2013 and beyond.

Australian export prices to the US are not likely to increase in the short term as a result of the US drought, given the temporary rise in US production, but over the longer term the historically low US production is likely to put pressure on prices, including product from Australia.

Indeed, one of the main impacts of the drought will be on the higher price of US beef into overseas markets, due to higher corn and production costs. Eventually, this will reduce the price competitiveness of US beef into export markets, which may assist demand for Australian product - even if the Australian dollar remains high.



Tim McRae, MLA
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360

McDonald's outlets in Taiwan promote Aussie beef

On the ground

Australia

**Lachlan Bowtell**

MLA Regional Manager
Australia
E: lbowtell@mla.com.au



After spending the past three years working in the Middle East/North Africa region for MLA, I am seeing the Australian market through fresh eyes.

The retail share of our major supermarkets hasn't changed that much, but relatively new entries to the market such as Costco and Aldi, and the increased presence of IGA and of butchers focused on offering a wider range of high-quality products have made the retail scene more competitive.

The foodservice market has also changed, with the decline of the fine dining sector and the re-emergence of good hearty food across pubs, clubs and bistros. There have been significant changes in the cuts chefs demand and quality is the number one factor governing their purchase patterns. Chefs and retailers alike are seeking a higher-quality product and are demanding to know the animals' breed, where they come from and what they have been fed. Consumers are informed about production and processing through social media, and place an enormous amount of trust in producers to "look after the product for them".

The MLA domestic team works at all levels of the foodservice and retail sectors to help increase demand for beef, veal, lamb and goatmeat products, with a range of innovative activities that inspire chefs and retailers.

We are working to gain extra space on the retail shelf for beef and lamb through our National Account Management program with major supermarkets and our Red Meat Network Club activities with independent butchers.

We are also working with the foodservice sector to gain more placements on menus through our beef and lamb Masterpieces program, designed to showcase lesser known cuts.

So three years away and the market has changed, but in a good way. Our goal is to maintain our strong position and look for more opportunities to lift the share of red meat protein on the plate in and out of the home.

Market insight

Still calling Australia home



With 33% of the beef and 51% of the lamb produced in Australia remaining on home soil, the domestic market is the single largest destination for Australian red meat.

Australia and 'red meat' go hand in hand. On average, Australians consume around 800g of beef and lamb each every week, comprising mainly of beef steak, mince, lamb chops and racks. For beef, the season dictates when cuts are consumed. Barbecue cuts (sausages, prime steaks) are more popular in summer; slow-cooking cuts (casserole cuts and roasts) are more popular in winter. Overall, beef sales are about 4% higher in winter. Demand for lamb is less seasonal, although there is increased consumption in spring and around Australia Day.

Australians consume around 800g of beef and lamb each every week, comprising mainly of beef steak, mince, lamb chops and racks.

Serving up *Rare Medium*

MLA's foodservice magazine *Chef's Special* has undergone a makeover.

Responding to feedback from focus groups with Australian chefs, MLA is renaming the publication *Rare Medium*. *Rare Medium* will also link the publication to an online 'meata-pedia' for chefs - www.raremedium.com.au - to be launched in early 2013.

Rare Medium is Australia's only meat journal.

It is produced by MLA and all its content is written in-house with the assistance of producers, butchers and chefs.

The objective of *Rare Medium* is to share with chefs the production stories of beef, veal, lamb and goat, with features on the different elements along the supply chain.

It is also designed to encourage trials of different cuts of meat by building chefs' knowledge of cuts and butchery, as well as offering creative inspiration using beef, lamb, veal and goat, with recipes from leading chefs worldwide.

At the end of the first quarter of 2013, MLA will launch an online version of *Rare Medium* and will use the new brand as the MLA identity in the foodservice sector.



Red meat purchases

In the domestic market, most of our beef (69%) ends up in the retail sector, while 31% goes into foodservice, including industrial catering. The proportion of lamb that goes to retail is slightly higher at 72%.

More people visit supermarkets as the primary place for purchasing beef and lamb, with Coles and Woolworths accounting for about 60% of the retail sales of fresh meat. Butcher shops hold about 25% of the market.

In recent years retailers and the foodservice sector have had to contend with a deterioration in Australian consumer sentiment due to the subdued global economy, 'two-speed' Australian economy and rising living costs. With consumers tightening their purse strings, retailers have reduced beef and lamb prices to attract consumers to their store and encourage spending.

A competitive marketplace

One of beef and lamb's biggest competitors in the domestic market is chicken. Over the years chicken consumption has surpassed that of beef, as the price gap between chicken, beef and lamb has been increasing. From a 20% price premium for beef and 40% for lamb compared to chicken two years ago, the price differences have increased in 2012 to 35% and 60%, respectively.

However, chicken isn't the only competitor in the Australian market. Given Australia's export focus, the domestic market competes tug-o-war style with export demand for beef and lamb. A decade ago nearly two-thirds of Australian lamb production remained in Australia. Now only half stays. This trend is expected to continue over the medium term. The trend isn't as visible for beef, with the lion's share already diverted abroad. However, markets like the Middle East and Russia tend to seduce product away from the domestic market by outbidding prices paid by the domestic market.



Average retail meat prices 2011

\$15.47 per kilogram retail weight (rwt) beef

\$15.79 per kilogram rwt lamb

\$5.49 per kilogram rwt chicken

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

\$6.2bn Australians spend on beef annually

\$2.3bn Australians spend on lamb annually

The beef Australians like to eat (by volume):

1	Mince
2	Steak
3	Sausages
4	Other beef
5	Roast
6	Stirfry/diced/casserole
7	Pre-prepared beef

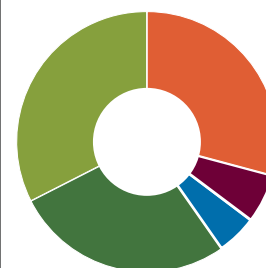
The lamb Australians like to eat (by volume):

1	Roast/rack
2	Chops
3	Other lamb
4	Pre-prepared lamb
5	Cutlets
6	Fillet/steak
7	Stirfry/diced/casserole

Value Share

(fresh and frozen)

Of all fish and meats used by foodservice, beef and veal represent 29%, while lamb and mutton make up 6%.



32% fish/seafood

29% beef/veal

27% poultry

6% lamb/mutton

5% pork

A spring fashion feast

MLA's Spring Lamb campaign hit the catwalk and kitchen from September to mid-October. The campaign was timed to grow demand for lamb during spring, with supply at its peak, and featured a new lamb recipe collection from fashion designer Leona Edmiston and chef Ben O'Donoghue. Their 'collaboration' resulted in great coverage on Channel Nine's *Today Show*.



Six 'weather cross' segments hosted by presenter Steven Jacobs introduced Leona and Ben's Lamb collection to the viewers, while promoting the campaign's *Chop til you drop* magazine which featured lamb recipes and tips.

Affordable lamb cuts were the topic of these segments, in line with the campaign strategy to educate consumers on cheaper meal solutions. Ben demonstrated how to cook lamb ribs, a popular and simple party dish.



From left:
Anthony Steinert
(cattle producer),
Simon Vogt (MBfP SA
State Coordinator, Rural
Directions Pty Ltd),
Angus Brown
(workshop deliverer,
Ag Concepts Unlimited),
and Michael Evans
(cattle producer and
MBfP producer
advocate).

Confident Livestock Marketing workshops

During July and August 2012, Making More From Sheep and More Beef from Pastures coordinated and funded four Confident Livestock Marketing (CLM) workshops in South Australia. Twenty-eight sheep producers attended CLM - sheep and lamb markets at Clare and Keith, while 19 cattle producers attended CLM - beef cattle markets at Mount Barker and Naracoorte. The workshops aim to assist producers to understand and apply market information to their business decisions.

www.mla.com.au/CLM



John Bertram from the
Agricultural Business Research
Institute speaking at the forum.

Agribusiness Today forum

The 2012 Agribusiness Today forum held in Bathurst, NSW, in August was attended by 150 cattle producers, advisers and service providers, along with 14 speakers and six committee members. Topics included the future of beef markets in Australia, managing bull fertility and making the most of genetic tools. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive and participants were impressed by the range of topics, the quality of the speakers, and the content and information provided.

Casey Collier, Pastoral
Technical Officer (far
right), talking about
the MLA-funded
Brunchilly
Phosphorus trial.



Victoria River Research Station field day

Victoria River Research Station field day 2012 is a biennial field day held at the Kidman Springs research farm with support from MLA. Eighty people attended the 1 August event, including producers, industry and government representatives. This year the theme 'Local Research, Local Knowledge' gave NT producers an update on current technologies and information to improve herd productivity and profitability in northern Australia.

Beyond the gate

Fifty Victorian producers discovered first hand where their marketing levy was being invested during a Beyond the Gate tour in Melbourne. The producers, from around the state, gained an insight into the range of MLA activities to increase demand for beef and lamb along the supply chain. Taken through the processing, retail and foodservice sector, the tour bridged the gap between paddock and plate.



Producers hear from Prime Quality Meats staff on how they value add to beef and lamb to keep consumers engaged.

MLA producer forum

In November, eighty producers from across the country attended the National Producer Forum in Fremantle where MLA general managers and industry guest speakers presented on MLA's work in R&D and marketing. MLA General Manager Business Capability, David Pietsch and WA Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation's Rural Woman of the Year, Catherine Marriott, spoke about how producers can promote their industry and tell their story. Visit www.mla.com.au/agm to view the webcasts from the forum.



Annabelle Coppin (WA cattle producer), Jim Rothwell (MLA) and Peter Hall (CCA).



Central West Queensland Next Generation MeatUp forum committee members. From left: Sophie Elliott (Winton), Kate Nicholas (Longreach), Paul McClymont (Longreach) and Loretta McKeering (Barcaldine).

Next Generation MeatUp Forum at Longreach

MLA and the Central West Queensland Regional Beef Research Committee hosted a Next Generation MeatUp forum at Longreach, attended by 72 people. Designed specifically for 18 to 35-year-olds, the program was developed by a local organising committee to help Central West Queensland producers discover new ways to make more money from their beef and sheep enterprises. Topics over the course of the day included animal welfare, succession planning, profit drivers, research and development opportunities, carcass grading and new pathways to success.

Melbourne Show

MLA held a paddock-to-plate exhibit at the Royal Melbourne Show from 22 September to 2 October. MLA demonstrated butchery and cooking skills, as well as educated showgoers about livestock, with MLA's Sarah Strachan holding regular livestock in-the-round sessions.



Sarah Strachan (in the background) giving a livestock demonstration.

Upcoming events



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

Beyond the gate tours

These red meat supply chain tours are a chance for MLA members to meet with processors, wholesalers, butchers and executive chefs, who deliver their product to the consumer.

When and where:

19 March 2013,
Rockhampton Qld
16 April 2013, Sydney NSW

Bookings: www.mla.com.au/BTG-Rockhampton
www.mla.com.au/BTG-Sydney

More information:

www.mla.com.au/events

Practical beef marketing course

This practical beef marketing course for Victorian producers, will develop marketing and live animal assessment skills during eight one-day sessions held on-farm.

When and where:

Courses start in February 2013, East Gippsland Vic.

Bookings:

03 5624 2234
fiona.baker@dpi.vic.gov.au

More information:

www.rist.com.au

Wild dog week

Workshops to increase awareness of the wild dog problem and to educate producers about solutions and integrated pest management.

When and where:

Various dates in April 2013, across northern Qld

Bookings:

07 3236 3100
agforce@agforceqld.org.au

More information:

www.mla.com.au/events

Reef rescue grazing forum

Attend a one-day forum about increasing grazing productivity and profits, while improving stream water quality. A follow up workshop on 14 March 2013 will focus on cattle nutrition and feed budgeting.

When and where:

13 March 2013, Mackay Qld

Bookings:

07 9658 4200

More information:

www.reefcatchments.com.au

Target 100 comes to Martin Place

Target 100 will bring cattle and sheep farming to Sydney's Martin Place for two days in December, allowing the city's workers the opportunity to chat with farmers, get up close with some cattle and sheep and see the sustainability of the industry in this interactive display.

When and where:

17-18 December, Martin Place, Sydney NSW

Bookings:

No booking necessary.

MLA's producer toolbox

Tools and calculators

You are here: [Home](#) / [Publications, tools & events](#) / Tools and calculators

Cost of production calculators – beef and lamb



Tool kits to help beef and lamb producers determine their cost of production and compare their performance annually.

www.mla.com.au/beefCoP
www.mla.com.au/lambCoP

'Five easy steps' phosphorus tools



Allows producers and advisors to understand the value of soil testing and how to use soil test information to plan fertiliser and livestock investments.

www.mla.com.au/fiveeasysteps

Stocking rate calculator



Determines the number of cattle or sheep you should put into a paddock based on its carrying capacity.

www.mla.com.au/stockingrate

Feed demand calculator



Allows producers to gain an appreciation of the pattern of feed supply and demand over a twelve-month period, the location of 'feed gaps' and how modifying the livestock enterprise might help to close these gaps.

www.mla.com.au/feeddemand

Tools for a profitable enterprise

MLA provides a range of tools and calculators to assist cattle and sheep producers in making decisions in their business. These tools are available to use online or can be downloaded.

www.mla.com.au/tools