mla Your member magazine // September 2012

Feedback

Market destinations

A note from the MD...

Huge leaps in productivity improvement for the red meat industry are unlikely if historical total factor productivity is anything to go by. However, incremental improvements across a broad spectrum of activities over a long period of time – along with investment in potentially higher risk, higher return research – has been paying off. Almost two-thirds of the gross value of broadacre production in recent years has been attributable to productivity improvements.*

Our industry's ability to carry out a balanced portfolio of research to harness the full scope of potential improvement has recently been reinforced with the news that the Australian Government has reconfirmed its commitment to maintaining matching contributions to Rural Research and Development Corporations (RDCs) – of which MLA is one.

This matched Government funding provides the incentive for industry to invest its levy dollars in research and extension activities.

The Government's affirmation means MLA can continue to marshal funding into a targeted range of research and extension programs that deliver value to the red meat industry.

This issue of *Feedback* contains a snapshot of some of these programs. Take a look in the on-farm 'research at work' section to see how your levy funds have been put to work – with funding matched dollar for dollar by the Australian Government.

Also see page 9 for the 15 key focus areas we have recently identified as critical for MLA to deliver on by 2015 to maximise the return we provide to Australia's cattle, sheep and goat producers from their collective levy investment in research and marketing services.

I welcome your thoughts and comments any time at **managingdirector@mla.com.au**

Scott Hansen
MLA Managing Director

* ABARES, *Agricultural Commodities, Vol 2, No. 1 March quarter 2012*

Contents

Saudi men enjoying Australian red meat. Saudi Arabia is one of 110 destinations for Australian red meat.

Feedback is produced and published by Meat & Livestock Australia Ltd (ABN 39 081 678 364).

The magazine is free to MLA members and available on subscription to non-MLA members at an annual rate of $100 (including GST) within Australia and $150 overseas.

MLA acknowledges the matching funds provided by the Australian Government to support the research and development detailed in this publication.

Feedback Reply Paid 906, Locked Bag 991, North Sydney NSW 2059
E: info@mla.com.au
T: 1800 023 100 // **F**: 02 9463 9393
www.mla.com.au

This magazine was printed on Sumo Offset Laser, an environmentally responsible paper manufactured under the environmental management system ISO 14001 using Elemental Chlorine Free (ECF) pulp sourced from sustainable forests. Sumo Offset Laser is FSC Chain of Custody (CoC) certified (mixed sources).

Your feedback

Photo supplied by Animal Health Australia.

In July, one of MLA's blogs featured Johann Schroder, MLA Project Manager Animal Health and Biosecurity, who pointed out that biosecurity isn't just about preventing threats that aren't currently in Australia, such as Foot and Mouth Disease, bluetongue and old world screwworm fly.

Biosecurity is also about what happens on the farm. By looking to our own farm gates, rather than to our national borders, we can better safeguard biosecurity.

Here's what you had to say on the topic...

What do you do to stop the spread of disease on your property?

What do you think of industry's efforts with biosecurity?

Donald F Stewart

Beef industry representatives are claiming in the media that chemical residue in meat could be traced back to a specific farm in OZ from the wherever the meat was sold to overseas… is this a fudge? an overstatement?

06/07/2012

Sandra Baxendell

As a now retired vet and manager in Biosecurity Queensland I was responsible for tracing any livestock with chemical residues both from Qld testing programs and from the National Residue survey. This traceback system was regularly audited by the EU and reported publicly on their website. The beef system went back to individual animals and sheep to properties. There is a specific tag in the NLIS system for chemical residues and also for lead.

06/07/2012

Duncan Rowland

What a great message Johann. We at the coal face feeding Australia really are the first line of defence against any disease or pest. I came across a very practical website that focuses on farm biosecurity. The URL is: http://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au/ Checkout the toolbox section.

06/07/2012

Check out some of the other blogs on the MLA website, and see what your peers have to say at **www.mla.com.au/blog**
→ Sharpening MLA's focus → Cattle prices precariously balanced → Building for a brighter future → Red meat industry blogs

MLA online

MLA tools

Cost of production calculators

Download these tool kits to help determine the cost of production and compare performance annually.

Cost of production – Beef:
www.mla.com.au/beefCoP
Cost of production – Lamb:
www.mla.com.au/lambCoP

Upcoming events

Find out about industry events during September and October including a Next Generation MeatUp forum, Beyond the gate – Melbourne and Bred well. Fed well events.

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 Bred well. Fed well workshops in June.

www.flickr.com/meatlivestock

YouTube

Get an introduction to using Twitter so you can share your story with the community.

www.youtube.com/mlafeedbacktv

MLA AGM heads west

The MLA AGM will follow the tradition of travelling to members around Australia with this year's event being held in Fremantle, Western Australia.

To be held at the Esplanade Hotel on Marine Terrace, on Thursday, 15 November 2012, the meeting is open to all members of the company and will follow the format of recent AGMs at Longreach, Launceston, Darwin, Orange and Rockhampton.

The AGM will follow an MLA producer forum, providing results of MLA research and marketing activities.

The AGM agenda will include:

- → MLA's financial statements, directors' report and audit report for the year ending 30 June 2012
- → the election of directors to the board
- → resolutions proposed by members of the company
- → questions or comments from members.

All members are invited to the AGM and can find out more on 1800 023 100 or E: membership@mla.com.au

Korean burger king

MLA's resident chef and Product Innovation Manager, David Carew, has become somewhat of a supermarket celebrity in Korea.

On a recent trip to Korea to promote the use of a wider range of Aussie beef products, David impressed local retailer and Aussie beef stockist Emart with his beef recipes designed to give Korean mums tasty new ways to use beef.

Emart liked the recipes proposed so much they offered to launch a 'David Carew Signature Range' of products promoted with his image in its stores.

The David Carew Signature Range features Korean beef meatballs, stuffed peppers, vegetable rolls, beef and vegetable mandu (dumplings) and burgers.

David Carew, MLA
E: dcarew@mla.com.au


mla
facts&stats
NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
August 2012

Carbon Farming Initiative

No matter how people view the science of climate change, the inarguable fact is that it has influenced government policy. These policies will have a tangible impact on all sectors of the economy, including farm businesses, irrespective of personal stances on climate change.

On-farm greenhouse gas emissions are exempt from the carbon tax. The Carbon Farming Initiative, which will be operational from July 2013, is a mechanism designed to allow producers to interact with the carbon market.

- → Research to reduce ruminant methane emissions has corresponding productivity benefits
- → There are currently no practical and approved methodologies for livestock producers to participate in the CFI without a level of risk
- → The CFI will introduce a new currency, Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs)
- → ACCUs must be created using an approved methodology
- → Carbon credits can be created through activities that sequester or avoid emissions
- → Current methodologies for the livestock industry require the 'permanence' and 'additionality' rules to be met, limiting their application in many instances
- → Participation in the CFI is voluntary

Introduction

In July 2012, the Australian Government imposed a carbon tax on the nation's top greenhouse gas (GHG) emitters – about 300 major companies – as the first step in a program aimed at lowering Australia's greenhouse gas emissions.

This brand-new marketplace is built around a commodity, greenhouse gases – chiefly carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide – and introduces a new currency, Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs).

All Australians, including livestock producers, will be touched by the carbon tax because the cost of essential utilities like electricity will be affected by it. That in turn will affect the cost of food and fibre processing, and inputs like fertiliser.

Agriculture has a unique position in this marketplace. The emissions produced on farms in the making of food and fibre are exempt from the carbon tax.

To include them in the scheme, at least initially, was regarded as too complex.

However, Government has developed an incentives policy for landholders called the Carbon Farming Initiative (CFI). The CFI will allow them to voluntarily earn carbon credits by reducing GHG emissions or storing carbon on their land.

What is the Carbon Farming Initiative?

The Carbon Farming Initiative is designed to:

- → encourage landholders to set up emissions reduction or carbon sequestration projects
- → develop land-derived carbon credits that have a high degree of integrity
- → provide a mechanism for the sale of 'Kyoto-compliant' credits into carbon markets around the world
- → provide a robust market for the sale of Kyoto-compliant credits as offsets to businesses wanting offset emissions or reduce carbon tax
- → provide a way to sell credits that are not Kyoto-compliant, initially via a special government fund to encourage sequestration projects

Trading carbon

As financial markets trade in different currencies, carbon markets trade different types of carbon credits.

To link Australia in with other carbon markets globally, the government has created a currency called Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs). One carbon credit is equivalent to one tonne of carbon dioxide equivalents (CO^2-e).

ACCUs have two forms:

- → Kyoto-compliant ACCUs are those created under rigorous integrity standards. They can be traded in Kyoto-compliant markets around the world.
- → Non Kyoto-compliant ACCUs have lower market value, and so can only be used in domestic voluntary carbon markets.

1

Answering your carbon questions

With the Carbon Farming Initiative (CFI) underway, what does it mean for livestock producers?

MLA has published a fact sheet on the CFI covering what it is, the benefits and risks, how producers can create carbon credits, the methodologies currently available to livestock producers (and those in the pipeline), the rules of the CFI and how to participate.

Download the free factsheet at: **www.mla.com.au/carbon-farming-initiative**

Producers prompt Bovine Ephemeral Fever research

Following concern from producers about increases in the incidence of Bovine Ephemeral Fever (BEF), research is being undertaken to confirm the effectiveness of the current vaccine and develop a single-dose option.

BEF, or three-day sickness, is transmitted by biting insects in tropical and subtropical areas, but recent outbreaks have also occurred further south.

MLA's Animal Health and Welfare Project Manager, Johann Schroder said BEF affects joints, tendons and muscles in cattle and is a particular concern in larger animals.

"Improved animal production means beef cattle now reach a heavier weight at an earlier age, which also changes the clinical picture of the disease," Johann said.

"Infected animals are reluctant to move and become recumbent, which can lead to further complications and even death."

BEF is estimated to cost industry $90–100 million a year and this MLA Donor Company research has confirmed that the Websters BEF vaccine* is effective in the Australian market when applied according to the manufacturer's instructions. The vaccine was shown to be effective against a range of BEF viruses collected in the field from 1980–2011, indicating no significant change to the virus over this time period.

The next phase of the project is to develop an inactivated single dose vaccine that may lead to widespread use of the vaccination as an effective means of controlling BEF outbreaks in Australia.

** WEBSTERS® BOVINE EPHEMERAL FEVER VACCINE (LIVING).® Registered trademark of Pfizer Australia Pty Ltd*

Dr Johann Schroder, MLA // T: 02 9463 9192
E: jschroder@mla.com.au

Did you know...

MLA Donor Company research is funded through private investment and matching government dollars. No producer levies are invested in MDC research projects.

$90–100 million

cost to industry of BEF annually

Stand by what you sell

LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION ASSURANCE
STAND BY WHAT YOU SELL

LPA Advisory committee chairman
Kevin Roberts

As consumer scrutiny of food production grows, Australia's livestock producers are required to once again commit to the Livestock Production Assurance (LPA) program.

From 1 August 2012, accredited producers will be required to confirm their commitment to the LPA program when ordering new NVD booklets. If they do not, they will be unable to purchase LPA NVDs.

LPA is the Australian livestock industry's on-farm food safety program introduced seven years ago. It is owned by industry, overseen by the LPA Advisory Committee and is administered by AUS-MEAT.

It underpins the LPA National Vendor Declaration (NVD) which all LPA-accredited producers are required to sign when selling livestock.

"In signing the declaration, producers are pledging that they have carried out all the farm management practices that underpin the LPA standards," said Kevin Roberts, LPA Advisory Committee chairman.

"These practices ensure that the red meat produced is safe to eat, and meets the stringent conditions of our export markets.

"LPA provides a food safety assurance to all our customers. It's about every individual producer fulfilling their responsibility in the safe production of red meat.

"Signing the LPA NVD demonstrates that producers stand by what they sell."

To renew their commitment to LPA, producers are required to complete a declaration with nine questions online via www.mla.com.au/lpa or by calling the LPA helpline on 1800 683 111.

The website has also been updated with new resources for producers, including fact sheets and a template to support on-farm record keeping.

LPA Advisory committee chairman Kevin Roberts urges producers to commit to the LPA scheme.

LPA // T: 1800 683 111
E: lpa@mla.com.au
www.mla.com.au/lpa

Carcase utilisation

The great balancing act

Twenty years ago, dog tucker; today, a $30 gourmet dining experience. The humble lamb shank has undergone a transformation, becoming a cut that turns heads and opens wallets. The lamb shank's journey highlights the constant evolution of the global red meat market. But its journey has not ended.

It only takes an external shock like a natural disaster, a currency shift, abnormal seasonal conditions, a global recession or an animal disease outbreak to send the shank – and high-end cuts – on a downward spiral and removed from menus.

Aside from shocks which cause demand for individual cuts to ebb and flow, there are cuts which naturally sell well. These cuts are different for each market: Korea loves chuck roll for Korean-style barbecue. The US buys our lean manufacturing beef to complement its fattier trim to make the perfectly blended hamburger patty. The EU loves small lamb legs so home cooks can prepare them without too much wrestling. Papua New Guinea buys our lamb breast and flap because it's affordable.

Then there are cuts – like the lamb shank 20 years ago – that take a lot of effort to move off the warehouse floor. This is when exporters and marketers roll up their sleeves, invest in product development, and work their phones to move these less popular choices. Depending on whether the global economy is cycling in a boom or bust, even cuts which are normally snapped up can be hard to move at times.

At the end of the day, a home must be found for all cuts. Unsold product equates to money down the drain.

Tim McRae, MLA's Manager of Market Information and Analysis said if we rewind 15 years, 19% of Australian red meat was sold in carcase or fullset form where a market would take the lot.

"However, the days of sending container after container load of fullsets to Japan are long gone," Tim said.

"It's no longer whole carcases hanging in refrigerated shipping containers destined for international markets. Red meat cuts are now seen as commodities," he said.

Nowadays, the buzzword is carcase utilisation: splitting up the carcase to maximise its value. This involves dividing the carcase into cuts (and sometimes into individual muscles) and selling each to the market that offers the highest return.

Of Australian red meat exported annually

92%

is as individual cuts and trimmings

Recent examples of improving carcase utilisation:

- Sending lamb breast and flap meat to China as a 'hot pot' product.
- Developing lamb 'slider' burgers to increase demand for minced lamb in the US.
- Developing grainfed beef markets in China and Europe with training of importers and chefs.
- Promoting lamb forequarters, beef bolar blade and flank steak in the domestic market's Masterpieces range.

With this approach, Australian red meat cuts are now jettisoned across 110 destinations.

MLA Global Marketing General Manager, Michael Edmonds, says global markets generally assist exporters achieve good carcase utilisation because higher demand loin cuts (often in the domestic market) are balanced by demand for other cuts in export markets.

"MLA also assists by using in-market knowledge and contacts to link local suppliers to potential end users and support these efforts through product development, positioning and co-funded marketing activities to optimise product acceptance, usage and value," Michael said.

"In cases where there's an imbalance of high demand for certain cuts, MLA often assists exporters to find customers that have demand for the remaining cuts."

In many markets, MLA also carries out education seminars and training, demonstrating to retailers and foodservice chefs how to cook particular types of cuts to promote and assist the growth of those less popular cuts and find a home for every cut and muscle in the whole carcase.

And the next lamb shank? Well, according to Michael, beef short ribs are undergoing a resurgence domestically with huge interest in the foodservice sector.

Tim McRae, MLA
E: tmcrae@mla.com.au
Michael Edmonds, MLA
E: medmonds@mla.com.au

www.mla.com.au/Prices-and-markets

www.mla.com.au/Marketing-red-meat

In profile | International customer

Marcus O'Sullivan
Managing Director JBS UK

Marcus O'Sullivan

Ask a British supermarket shopper where the best lamb comes from and usually the answer will be New Zealand or the UK. But when the Managing Director of processor JBS's UK arm, Marcus O'Sullivan, spoke at LambEx in Australia this year, he told producers Australian lamb could establish a larger and more permanent place in large UK retailers.

Here Marcus provides us with an insight into a market which, with special promotions at Easter and Christmas, has seen one retailer sell one million legs of lamb in 10 days.

You put up a cartoon at LambEx of an English shopper: a middle aged woman carting home a large leg of lamb from a high street butcher, presumably for a traditional Sunday roast. Is this typical?
Maybe in the past, but things are changing rapidly in the UK. We've done a lot of work in the UK to move lamb from a Sunday roast to a mid week meal. Today's British consumer values flavour, consistency and cost but animal welfare and farm assurance are key considerations.

Is Australian lamb meeting UK market expectations?
Consumers don't understand market constraints. They want strawberries in winter and new potatoes 52 weeks a year. Australian lamb has an advantage in being able to fill the gaps for our locally sourced product - we only slaughter 13 million lambs annually in the UK. Historically Australian lamb was sold to the foodservice market because you just didn't have the volume of suitable product for retail, but that is changing rapidly. The total UK chilled imported lamb market is in the region of 25,000 tonnes pa . This is for a range of cuts from the carcase although legs would account for about 60% of that.

A constraint is you produce big lambs. The specifications are for 21.5kg carcases as our market seeks the smaller lambs, not those that are 25.5kgs. The EU quota for Australian lamb is 19,186 tonnes, about one tenth of New Zealand's quota.

The other challenge is logistics. It takes 40 days by ship to get Australian lamb to the UK.

How do you manage a quota based on bone-in equivalent lamb?
For every kilogram of bone-in product, one kilogram of quota is used, whereas 1kg of boneless lamb uses 1.67kg of quota, and 1kg of boneless mutton or goatmeat uses 1.81kg of quota.

JBS imports the meat as part bone product primarily to maximise the available quota. When it arrives in the UK it is further processed and then packaged as small legs (suitable for that mid week roast), lamb steaks, diced lamb or lamb escalopes and delivered to the retailers the next day.

Marcus O'Sullivan
E: marcus.osullivan@jbsglobal.co.uk

Watch Marcus's presentation to Lambex at **www.lambex.com.au/viewStory/Program+-+Videos**

Right on target

Sheep and cattle producers and processors across Australia are showing consumers the reality of red meat production with just the click of a button.

How Target 100 is spreading the word:

Monthly producer profiles in newspaper magazines eg *Good Weekend*

1,049 Facebook 'likes'

508 Twitter followers

202 re-Tweets

101 producers

17,000 website visitors

5,010 YouTube views

MLA's Target 100 initiative is driving conversations between the people who produce food and those who eat it, by showcasing industry R&D and on-farm initiatives, creating producer-consumer discussions about food production, and providing tips for positive action at home.

MLA Community Engagement Manager Pip McConachie said Target 100 continues to gain momentum since launching in March 2012, not only throughout the red meat sector, but importantly within the urban community.

"Target 100 focuses on engaging producers with new urban audiences online," Pip explained. "By presenting forums led by high-profile sustainability champions such as Sydney chef Justin North and food blogger Rebecca Sullivan, we gain access to their supporters and can build the community's understanding of how Australia produces some of the world's best beef and lamb in a sustainable way.

"Target 100 ultimately relies on farmers, feedlotters, processors and those throughout the supply chain getting involved."

Already more than 100 enterprises across the supply chain have taken positive action to promote their industry by sharing their sustainable practices on the Target 100 website.

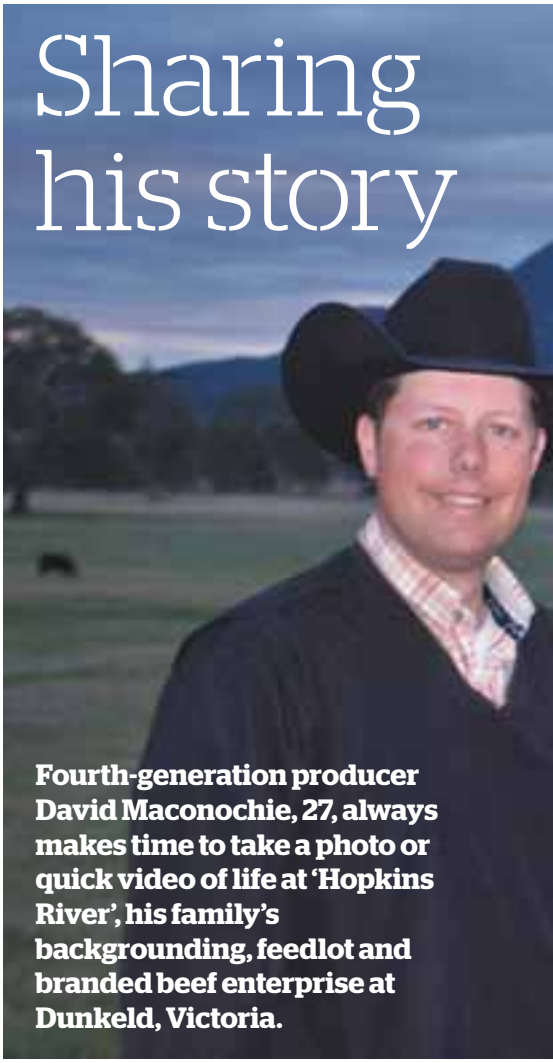
Want to sign up?

It is easy to get involved and play a part in building awareness and trust in the sustainability of red meat production across Australia. Producers just need to upload a photo and a few paragraphs about their management practices to **www.target100.com.au**

Pip McConachie, MLA // T: 02 9463 9156
E: pmcconachie@mla.com.au

www.target100.com.au

Sharing his story



Fourth-generation producer David Maconochie, 27, always makes time to take a photo or quick video of life at 'Hopkins River', his family's backgrounding, feedlot and branded beef enterprise at Dunkeld, Victoria.

David believes social media is an important way to educate the community about the realities of red meat production, so it was a logical step to add Hopkins River Beef to the growing list of Target 100 producer profiles. The profile showcases their 'Carbon Hoofprint' initiative which promotes sustainable production to their restaurant and supermarket clients.

"Target 100 is a valuable industry tool which reconnects consumers with producers. It is not just about educating the urban community about sustainable food production; producers should also listen to what consumers think about red meat production, so we can proactively respond."

David Maconochie (right) with US agricultural advocates Troy and Stacy Hadrick, at Hopkins River, Dunkeld, in May 2012.

In May, David hosted US beef producers and social media advocates Troy and Stacy Hadrick. He was inspired by their advice on how to communicate with the urban community.

"Farmers are the professionals of agriculture. If people are sick, they see a doctor; in the same way if people have questions about food production they should ask a farmer. Farmers need to be the ones telling the story, not animal and environmental activists or celebrities," he said.

"Target 100 is a way for Australian producers to build confidence in their role as agricultural professionals."

Although David is a social media enthusiast and recently added a blog to Hopkins River Beef's Facebook, Twitter and YouTube presence, he reassures other producers that connecting with consumers doesn't have to be a big time commitment.

"Technology makes it simple to take and upload a photo anywhere. It is natural for producers to think what they do is boring or not interesting - but remember, you are not communicating to your peers," he said.

"Most consumers have never been to a farm, so what we take for granted is really interesting to them.

"We need to stop thinking of livestock as a commodity and remember that what we produce ends up on someone's plate."

David Maconochie // T: 0417 384 464
E: david@hopkinsriver.net.au
Twitter: @hopkinsrivbeef
Facebook: Hopkins River beef
YouTube: Inside the gate
Blog: aussiebeefboy.com
Troy and Stacy Hadrick
www.advocatesforag.com

David's tips for starting the conversation:

- Be careful what you write online – it is there forever.
- Be honest about what you do on-farm, and why.
- Remember your audience is urban, not rural.
- Don't worry about taking the perfect picture – real images are more believable.
- Listen to your audience and build a constructive dialogue.
- Use Target 100 to proactively showcase your role in sustainable production.
- Link your website or social media presence to your Target 100 profile.

David's blog, www.aussiebeefboy.com, is a relaxed chat about life on the land. Supported with candid photos and quick videos (taken on his phone) of people, animals and the landscape, he writes about a wide range of topics:

How cattle are managed:

"When we receive cattle we put them through an induction process. They are given a drench, 5-in-1 vaccination and a combined vitamin ADE. These are all very standard and are used to ensure the animal stays healthy."

Life in regional Victoria:

"It is easy at times to take landscapes like this for granted as we get bogged down in day to day life. People travel from far and wide to visit our local small town of Dunkeld. With great food at the local Royal Mail Hotel and great views all around it is easy to see the attraction."

His upcoming trip to the US:

"I will be visiting Midwest Biosystems in Illinois as they are the people who manufactured our compost turner and have taught us the foundations of how to make high quality humus compost. From there no trip is complete without a tour of the John Deere Factory... I will go and see where the big green machines are born!"

MLA's 15 x 15

Where should MLA focus its efforts in the next three years to deliver the best return to producers? MLA has embarked on a rigorous process to identify the 15 key focus areas we must deliver upon by 2015 to maximise the return we provide to Australia's cattle, sheep and goat producers from their collective levy investment in research and marketing services.

Given this diversity, it is critical the return on levy investments is maximised and this means investing in activities likely to create the greatest opportunities for producers.

Building on existing marketing and research programs, MLA has evaluated and hand-picked 15 areas offering the greatest returns to livestock producers in the coming three years. They are:

Maintaining and improving market access

Improving access to traditional and emerging markets for beef and lamb is one of the major opportunities for the livestock industry in the coming years – particularly through free trade agreements (FTAs) and our unique on-farm risk management systems.

In the lead-up to 2015, MLA will focus on:

Assisting industry to better integrate and sustainably deliver its on-farm risk management systems (Livestock Production Assurance, National Vendor Declarations, National Livestock Identification System).

Assisting government and peak industry councils to secure free trade agreements that eliminate the current tariffs on red meat exports to Korea and Japan.

Identifying high priority technical trade barriers that are impeding red meat export sales, and assist government to alleviate their impact through the provision of science and technology.

Maintaining access to live export markets by assisting supply chains to implement and comply with Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System regulations through the provision of gap analysis, risk analysis, training and technical advice.

Growing demand

Purchasing decisions made by consumers living in cities from Sydney to Seoul have ripple effects on the livestock industry. With intensifying competition from other proteins, delivering marketing activities with real cut-through is essential to maintaining a strong presence in major markets.

Over the next three years, MLA will continue to focus on marketing activities that:

Increase consumers' demand for beef through compelling marketing campaigns encompassing eating quality, enjoyment and nutrition.

Create new business for Australian beef in emerging global markets by working with exporters to win at least 20 new major accounts and at least 20 large new product opportunities for branded beef.

Create incremental business for Australian lamb in domestic and global markets by increasing consumer perceptions in key markets and working with exporters to win 20 new major accounts for Australian lamb.

Potential return from MLA programs for every dollar invested:

Market access:
$8

Marketing in Japan and Korea:
up to $5.80

Increasing productivity across the supply chain

Innovatively producing more with less has long been a trademark of the livestock industry with productivity in broadacre agriculture growing between 1% and 2.5% per year in recent decades.

With the continuing cost-price squeeze impacting bottom lines, producers need to continue innovating to improve profitability. This includes building on gains in animal genetics, breeding, feedbase management and labour efficiencies.

From now until 2015, MLA will focus on:

Creating opportunities through research and extension to improve reproduction efficiency in northern beef (by five percentage points) and maternal sheep breeds (by two percentage points).

Creating opportunities through genetic research and management practices to improve pasture and forage crop productivity, quality and persistence.

Creating opportunities with new practices or technologies to improve labour efficiency by 5%, encompassing occupational health and safety, labour resource need and yield.

Create opportunities to improve compliance to market specifications by 3% by providing information and tools that encourage practice change on farm, such as Livestock Data Link and BeefSpecs.

Create opportunities through research to minimise the threat and impact of exotic, emerging and endemic diseases on Australian livestock enterprises.

Potential return from MLA programs for every dollar invested:

Beef and sheep R&D: between **$3.40 – $3.70**

Supporting industry integrity and sustainability

Research shows livestock producers are highly trusted by the broader Australian community. Producers are the industry's greatest advocates in showcasing their own commitment to sustainability and integrity issues such as animal welfare and the environment.

Over the next three years, MLA will focus on:

Creating opportunities through research that will deliver a 10% improvement on production efficiency through new tools and management that will decrease greenhouse gas emissions from livestock systems by up to 30%.

Creating cost effective opportunities to replace, relieve, refine animal husbandry practices to continuously improve animal welfare.

Creating opportunities through media, social media and events for producers and industry to engage with the community and maintain current high levels of trust (over 80%).

For more information go to **www.mla.com.au/top-15-focus**

More information about MLA's research and marketing activities to 2015 can be found in our new Corporate Plan at **www.mla.com.au/corporatedocuments**

Research at work

The latest on-farm strategies emerging from industry's investment in research

In this issue

Meeting market specifications
Learn more about what the customer demands and how to produce an animal to meet those requirements

Fence me in
A Victorian producer demonstration site is using simple fencing strategies for growing lamb production in a traditional cropping area

MSA bonus
Research in Queensland reveals how turning off cattle at a younger age and making the MSA grade can grow the bottom line

Pasture improvement
Adding legumes to grass pastures is boosting persistence in northern pastures

And now for the weather...

Producers spend at least part of every day thinking about the weather but how does tomorrow's predicted temperature fit into the long term planning to manage climate variability.

For the first time, research has provided some answers and raised challenges for the southern livestock industry in managing climate variability over the next 20 years. →

Adaptation

→

What impact could climate variability have on livestock production and what can you do about it? It is questions like this that the Southern Livestock Adaptation 2030 (SLA 2030) is finding answers for with locally relevant climate information.

Dr Rob Banks, MLA's Manager of R&D Strategy and Evaluation, said the SLA2030 research program did not forecast one future, but examined possible trends under forecasted scenarios. "This project was about increasing producers' awareness of the range of impacts future weather may have and giving them access to information, people and tools which can help them adapt to climate challenges."

SLA2030 National Coordinator Russell Pattinson said the three-year project, finalised in June 2012, combined global climate models, local weather data and producers' own production and financial data to create 'future scenarios' of what the weather may look like in 2030 and beyond and what the impact may be on farm production and profitability.

"If the modelling and climate change predictions prove correct, most existing grazing systems in southern Australia in 2030 will be challenged.

"However, there is strong evidence that with prudent R&D and changes to management practices these systems can maintain or even increase profitability, in spite of adverse changes in climate," Russell said.

How could changing climatic conditions impact producers?

At most locations, SLA2030 modelling indicates:

→ If there are increased temperatures and reduced rainfall, pasture productivity could reduce by up to 15–20% by 2030 (with warmer winters, shorter springs and longer summers).

→ Significant variability within and between states and most severe impacts in the drier margins of the sheep/wheat zone.

→ Producers will need to utilise a combination of adaptations that suit their location and enterprise to help alleviate the effects of any climatic changes.

→ Some of the best adaptation strategies are already current best practice (such as increasing soil fertility and genetic improvement).

→ Other adaptations (earlier lambing/calving, confinement feeding, pasture sward composition) may become more applicable depending on the degree of climatic change.

The SLA2030 project was coordinated and part-funded by MLA, with funding through the Australian Government's Climate Change Research Program, Dairy Australia and Australian Wool Innovation. Partners in the project included CSIRO, the University of Melbourne, Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA) plus five state agencies (Victoria DPI, SARDI, NSW DPI, TIA and WADAF) and hundreds of livestock producers across southern Australia.

Russell Pattinson // T: 0419 872 684
E: miracledog@bigpond.com

www.sla2030.net.au – outcomes from the SLA2030 research program in mid-September

www.climatekelpie.com.au – climate tools and information for Australian farmers

www.mla.com.au/climatechange – climate resources for red meat producers

Figure1 **Impact of climate change on different pasture species**

Location	Pasture species	Likely impact of climate change in 2030
Southern Victoria[1]	Perennial ryegrass based pastures	• Moderate increase in winter and early spring pasture growth rates • Earlier spring peak pasture growth rate • Earlier spring finish (approx 7 days)
Dookie, VIC	Phalaris, sub clover	• Moderate increase in winter and early spring pasture growth rates • Earlier spring peak pasture growth rate • Earlier spring finish (approx 7 days)
Wagga Wagga, NSW	Phalaris, sub clover, native C4 grass	• Moderate increase in winter pasture production • Extended C4 species growing season
Barraba, NSW	Native C3, Native C4 grasses	• Moderate increase in summer pasture growth rates • Extended C4 species growing season
Albany, WA	Kikuyu, sub clover	• Moderate increase in winter and early spring pasture growth rates • Extended kikuyu growing season
Elliott, TAS	Perennial ryegrass, white clover	• Moderate increases in pasture growth rates in autumn, winter and spring

[1] specific sites modelled were Ellinbank, Terang and Hamilton

Note: Further climatic warming and rainfall declines projected beyond 2030 are expected to reduce annual pasture production.

Adaptation

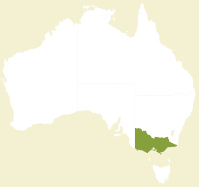
Crystal ball grazing

Some current predictions include

SLA2030 findings state by state:

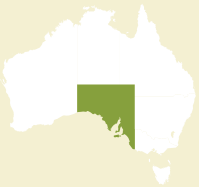
New South Wales: Shorter growing seasons are expected by 2030, requiring reduced stocking rates to manage summer/autumn groundcover. Tableland locations above 900m with high rainfall don't seem to be as affected because higher winter temperatures remove the current low winter pasture production restraint. Sheep enterprises will handle the increased climate pressure better than cattle in many areas.

***Adapt for profitability:** summer feedlots and continual genetic gain.*



Victoria: Pasture growth will be characterised by increased winter production but a shorter spring. Lucerne as a pasture base in the low rainfall mixed livestock/cropping zone offers producers the ability to generate increased profits.

***Adapt for profitability:** earlier lambing, optimising soil fertility, pasture production and utilisation.*



South Australia: Modelling in most locations indicated a shorter growing season with decreased pasture quality and increased variability in pasture growth. Pastures based on an annual perennial mix are able to sustain a higher stocking rate due to more pasture being available over summer.

***Adapt for profitability:** pasture utilisation through controlled, cell, rotational, confinement, or techno grazing systems; later lambing or calving (may require supplementary feeding; increasing flexibility by varying sale times, confinement feeding, animal trading, self-replacing systems and agistment).*

Tasmania: Pasture production is broadly indicated to increase to 2030 in key production areas, with increased temperatures, reduced frost frequency and similar or improved rainfall.

***Adapt for profitability:** optimising pasture utilisation through increased stocking rates and managing feed supply-demand; increased soil fertility, legume content, selling stock earlier and at a lower target weight.*

Western Australia: (Only two locations were modelled as WA joined the SLA2030 project later than other states) It is expected that there will be increased rainfall variability and increased temperature, resulting in higher winter pasture growth rate but shorter overall growing seasons. Increased carbon dioxide and temperature will result in an increase in legume content of pastures. The rate of decline of dry pasture residues over summer may increase, resulting in wind erosion and groundcover limits being reached in a shorter period.

***Adapt for profitability:** confinement feeding.*

Robust systems

Ralph Gebhardt adheres to strict performance measurements to maintain and grow productivity, regardless of the season. He already uses adaptation opportunities identified by the Southern Livestock Adaptation 2030 modelling, such as confinement feeding, genetic gains and managing feed supply/demand.

Ralph and his wife Nerolie run 2,000 composite ewes at their 530ha property 'Kanoona', at Harden between Canberra and Wagga Wagga. They crop cereals and canola in rotation and have sown half the property to lucerne/clover pastures, which can carry 19–20 dry sheep equivalents (DSE)/ha.

An on-farm feedlot allows them to finish 18-week old lambs at 50–55kg liveweight for sale over the hooks. The feedlot achieves more than 300g/day gains, taking two months off the turn-off time and allowing Ralph to run 25% more ewes.

Ralph believes 'money is made in the office' and maintains detailed livestock and cropping strategies, integrating long and short-term weather forecasting and other tools such as feed budgets.

"We learned so much about feeding stock during the drought," he said. "Traditionally we get one dry year in 10, so we went into the drought expecting to only feed stock for a short time.

for resilience

A drier future doesn't frighten NSW prime lamb producer Ralph Gebhardt, who describes the decade of drought as his climate adaptation training.

Snapshot

Ralph and Nerolie Gebhardt, Harden, NSW.

Property: 530ha

Enterprise: Prime lambs and cropping

Livestock: 2,000 ewes

Pasture: Cereals/canola; lucerne/clover pastures

Soil: Sandy loam

Rainfall: 650mm/year

"The feedlot allowed us to maintain 100% of our livestock finishing system; we even joined our ewes in pens while maintaining condition score 3 and retaining valuable groundcover in the paddocks. We came out of the drought in full production and it has shaped our prime lamb business today.

"We now feed for production at all stages of the ewe/lamb cycle irrespective of seasonal conditions, not just for maintenance."

An eye for detail

Ralph's meticulous management regime concentrates on producing the most efficient ewe possible with respect to confirmation, muscle and fertility. All breeding stock must hit trigger points and he culls on performance before age.

Mature ewes must achieve fat score 3 and maidens a minimum 45kg before joining in February and April (respectively). Joining is for five weeks. Ewes not in-lamb when scanned at 100 days are sold. Ewes which have lost their lamb at lamb-marking time (reflecting a lack of fecundity) are sold; and at shearing or crutching, any ewes with damaged teats are also culled.

"The benefits of an aggressive culling process can only be appreciated when breeding your own replacements," Ralph said. "This opens the door for rapid genetic improvement, while simultaneously eliminating sub-standard ewes.

"Over the past six years, our scanning percentages have increased from 125% to 176% and culling for fecundity has improved the percentage of lambs at weaning."

Lambs are creep-fed to hit 35kg at weaning, which happens at 12 weeks to give ewes time to recover before their next cycle. After 10–14 days on lucerne, wether lambs enter the feedlot and ewe lambs stay on pastures as potential maidens. Ralph usually sells 25% of lambs at weaning to the export market, but this year plans to push more into the domestic market as suckers.

"The feedlot is kept separate to the breeding side of the business," Ralph said. "The feedlot 'buys' all wether lambs from the farm on a liveweight basis at a minimum 35kg, so it is important for us to get the breeding, joining and nutritional aspects right."

The cropping side of the business is also time-sensitive. A two-week delay in planting could cost a month of feed, so preparation and forecasts are important.

"As commercial livestock producers, we need to stay ahead of the game. We concentrate on the big issues supported by self-discipline, so we have flexibility to cater for seasonal variability."

Ralph Gebhardt // T: 0427 865 665
E: kanoona1@bigpond.net.au

Climate impact on pasture

Australia's current pasture systems will offer resilience to changes in forecasted temperatures up until 2050 – however, changes to rainfall patterns could affect the distribution of growth.

Project Leader Associate Professor Richard Eckard, University of Melbourne (UM), said an SLA2030 sub-project addressed questions on the impact of climate variability on pasture species in southern Australia, such as:

- How will current grass species perform in future climates compared to other species?
- Is there an optimum time to change species based on climate forecasts?
- Should we invest in breeding new species or in developing current ones?

Researchers from UM and Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA) drew on existing climate and pasture growth data to validate grazing systems models and assessed how pastures at different locations would respond to increased temperature over a range of rainfall scenarios. This work mainly looked at medium to high rainfall zones.

"These results give producers and plant breeders confidence the current species will remain the mainstay for the next 40 years, however specific traits will be important under future climate scenarios," he said.

"If the forecasts are correct and we experience warmer, drier climates, then rooting depth and heat tolerance traits in pasture plants will become increasingly important. Livestock producers will also have to adapt grazing to maintain efficient utilisation of annual pasture growth in the face of predicted shorter spring growing seasons."

Richard Eckard // T: 03 9035 8265
E: richard.eckard@unimelb.edu.au

Improve market compliance

Meating the market

Domestic or export? Heavy or light? Background or finish? Organic, grassfed, grainfed, MSA... the myriad of options for marketing livestock is complex for Australia's producers.

However, one thing is certain. Meeting the specifications of your target market is one way to improve profitability.

MLA's Manager Market Information and Analysis Tim McRae recommends numerous tools for producers to use in planning the destination for their production.

"In February and August each year, MLA releases market projections which outline what our customers are up to - who is buying more, who is buying less, what type of animals they are after," he said.

"The marketplace can change quickly as we have seen in recent times, for example, with the decrease in global demand for grainfed heavy steers but an increase in manufacturing beef demand from the US."

As to the lamb market, Tim advised producers to keep abreast of market indicators.

"Specifications vary from market to market, from lighter lambs to the Middle East, through to heavier lambs for the US market," he said.

"The signals combined with seasonal factors need to be taken into account when managing the turn-off of lambs."

Tim said producers can use projections, along with information about the global and domestic economy, exchange rates, weather forecasts and local supply information, to plan how and when their stock is sold.

"At times producers have the ability to hold on to stock for longer, which can increase profits. Other times there is more to be made by selling them lighter," he said.

"Sometimes it's seeing that cows in calf are selling just as well as cows with a calf at foot and making the call to sell into that market."

From the latest industry projections, Tim identified five key take home messages for producers.

- → **Australian livestock numbers continue to grow**
- → **Australia's increased production will be largely exported**
- → **Exports to continue to grow to newer markets, along with increased growth to the US**
- → **The global economic conditions continue to impact consumer demand - particularly for beef**
- → **Export conditions remain difficult to Japan, Korea and Indonesia**

Tim McRae, MLA // T: 02 9463 9112
E: tmcrae@mla.com.au

Watch Tim explain the value of industry projections in *feedbackTV* episode 17 at **www.youtube.com/watch?v=PDM6A21MgO4&feature=plcp**

MLA suggests three steps to meet market specifications:

1. Manage the nutrition, health and welfare of sale animals to meet target market specifications on time.
2. Manage livestock in a low stress manner two to three weeks prior to sale and during mustering and transport to achieve optimal carcase dressing percentages and avoid downgrading.
3. Regularly evaluate market opportunities as feed supply, cashflow or market prices change and select markets which maximise profits.

Tools to help producers meet market specifications include:

- → The BeefSpecs calculator at **www.mla.com.au/beefspecs**
- → The beef cost of production calculator at **www.mla.com.au/cost-of-production-beef**
- → The lamb cost of production calculator at **www.mla.com.au/cost-of-production-lamb**
- → Module 8: Meeting market specifications from More Beef from Pastures **www.mla.com.au/morebeef**
- → Module 3: Market focused lamb and sheep meat production from the Making More From Sheep Manual **www.mla.com.au/makingmorefromsheep**
- → MLA's Lamb Guide available at **www.mla.com.au/production-feeding-for-lamb-growth**
- → Information on MSA is available at **www.mla.com.au/msa**
- → MLA market information is available from **www.mla.com.au/marketinformation** and projections are available at **www.mla.com.au/Trends-and-analysis**

Meeting market specs comes naturally

Snapshot

The Peart family, 'Bundaleer', 90km north of Injune, Central Qld.

Property: 3,800ha

Enterprise: Organic beef

Livestock: Composite herd, averaging about 1,800 head

Pasture: Predominantly buffel grass with an increasing percentage of kangaroo grass, blue grasses, green panic and summer and winter-growing legumes

Soil: Red and brown cracking clays

Rainfall: 600mm

One of the growing markets for Australian red meat is organic beef and one Queensland family has found meeting the specifications of this sector a natural progression for their enterprise. →

Sales of all organic products in Australia grew by over

50%

in the two years up to 2009

Value of organic industry in Australia in 2009 was

$940 million

→

Matthew Peart sums up the experience of converting his family's beef property to organics in one word: rewarding.

For the three-generation enterprise, the move to an organic enterprise was a natural one and has reaped dividends.

"We were already interested in natural grazing systems and natural land systems anyway. Becoming organic basically formalised that interest," Matthew said, adding that any concerns about production being compromised by the constraints of organic production were unfounded and today the enterprise is operating at its most efficient.

"It (the price for organic cattle) is running at about 15% above the price for EU (accredited cattle) and we have been enjoying that. It is nice to be recognised for the management and planning that you put into an organic system."

Matthew, and his wife Maryellen, were undaunted by the 36-month conversion period and the organic auditing process. With their four children, Jennifer, 20, Christopher 16 and 13-year-old twins Joshua and Lachlan all involved, and Matthew's parents still living on the property, they found many of the necessary requirements already in place.

Step-by-step

Converting to accredited organics began after research, then talking to an organic auditor as well as neighbours who farm organically. The Pearts stopped using Hormone Growth Promotants (HGPs) some years ago and then became EU accredited.

"Other producers were supportive and helpful," Matthew said.

"We were a Cattlecare accredited producer, so we were familiar with record keeping and the auditing process. That gave us a good foundation for organic accreditation."

The family sold their first organic cattle this year. Matthew said meeting the other market specifications was "not arduous at all". The product is also generally MSA graded.

It is early days for his organic beef production and Matthew said they were focused on finding out about the organic processors, how they operate and establishing relationships with them.

"You find out what your prospective purchaser is looking for, and whether they can handle your type and size of cattle," he said.

Robust production systems

The move to fully organic production has meant the Pearts have had to ensure all elements of their farming practices are well managed with various tools employed to avoid limited choices for managing issues such as weeds.

They have worked hard to get greater diversity in their pastures, shifting from predominantly buffel grass to encouraging kangaroo grass and several species of blue grass. Now the focus is also on establishing summer and winter-growing legumes, and the property is part of an MLA producer demonstration site (PDS) project run by the Fitzroy Basin Association looking at innovative approaches for the improvement of buffel grass pastures.

The biggest challenge has come from woody weed regrowth over the past two wet years, which has meant increasing reliance on a heavy-duty slasher.

"I am very confident that the organic market is more or less supply restrained. We are working hard to supply the growth in the markets we do have, let alone going out and looking for other markets.

"Worldwide, the growth in the organic market has been staggering. A growing number of people are certainly very conscientious about how and where their food is produced and I feel the same way about producing it."

Matthew Peart // T: 07 4626 7182
Fitzroy Basin Association
T: 07 4999 2800

Improve forage crop productivity

No more sitting on the fence

A fresh approach to fencing has shown producers in what was a predominantly cropping area of the Victorian Mallee how to make more money from sheep.

For the past two years the Nullawil Best Wool Best Lamb (BWBL) group has co-invested with the MLA Producer demonstration site (PDS) program to investigate ways that sheep could be better incorporated into cropping programs.

Garry Armstrong, Program Manager North West Meat and Wool branch for the Victorian Department of Primary Industries, (DPI) said sheep production in the Mallee had been ad-hoc due to a lack of infrastructure and the challenge of grazing livestock effectively on large open paddocks.

"Basically the group members were croppers who ran a few sheep when they could because they didn't have the infrastructure to support a stable livestock enterprise," Garry said.

"Yet, when questioned, these producers acknowledged that in the past 10 years particularly, the reason they'd survived was due to the cash-flow sheep had generated."

Garry said finding a way to control graze sheep in the Mallee was the original impetus for the PDS research, although it had since branched out to include crop and pasture types for improved nutrition and longer grazing periods, and animal genetics.

Fencing finessed

"The first part of the PDS was to look at portable electing fencing as a tool to more efficiently graze cereal crops," he said.

"It has proven to be so successful that virtually all the farmers that have participated in the group are doing something with electric fencing and controlled grazing."

Various forms of electric fencing were successful in the trials, including permanent three-wire fences through to portable tapes.

Garry said it was recommended producers train their sheep to respect electric fences at weaning time by putting them in a containment area for two days, with ewes on one side of an electric wire and lambs on the other.

"When this was done during the trial not one ewe walked through an electric fence when released," he said.

A good graze

The PDS found the most efficient way to run sheep in the Mallee was to plant a purpose grown grazing crop prior to the main cereal planting, to fill the feed gap before the cereals can be grazed.

Garry said there was only about an eight-week window of opportunity to graze traditional grain varieties of wheat and barley, without affecting grain yield and production, in the Mallee.

As a guide, he said, an area of 40–50ha planted to a grazing crop should comfortably handle a mob of 400 ewes and lambs, although seasonal conditions would dictate the amount of feed produced.

It was recommended the grazing crop be divided into four equal sized blocks using electric fencing so each segment could be grazed on a six to eight-day rotation.

The profitability of this shows up in the Mallee PDS results, with a Moby barley grazing crop returning a gross income of $1,767/ha when continuously grazed during the 2010 trial season. This compares to a gross income of $671 for a crop of Hindmarsh barley, grazed once before being stripped for grain in the same year.

"The results really highlight the impact controlled grazing of a purpose grown crop can have, as at times during the trial these areas were stocked at up to 45dse," Garry said.

"It gives farmers the flexibility to take stock off their cropping country and make a greater return off a smaller area of their farm."

PDS key findings

The recommendations from the Nullawil PDS are:

- Complete a feed budget to assess the feed requirements of sheep for the period in question.
- Sow an area of grazing cereal (or other fodder variety) prior to the start of cereal crop sowing to meet these needs based on the potential dry matter yield of the material being sown.
- Utilise the conventional cereal crop with solar electric fencing to effectively graze the crop following Grain & Graze methodology in rotation with grazing variety (about six weeks for traditional cereal grain variety). Monitor cereal grain variety closely to avoid grazing past growth stage (GS) 30.
- Fence off the grazing block into four equal sized blocks using solar powered electric fencing and rotationally graze through the paddocks allowing for about six to eight days per grazing depending on dry matter availability and recovery time.

Garry Armstrong, // T: 03 5482 0421
E: garry.armstrong@dpi.vic.gov.au

Interested in the PDS program? Go to **www.mla.com.au/producersupport** For application details or to contact PDS coordinator Gerald Martin on T: 08 8556 2900

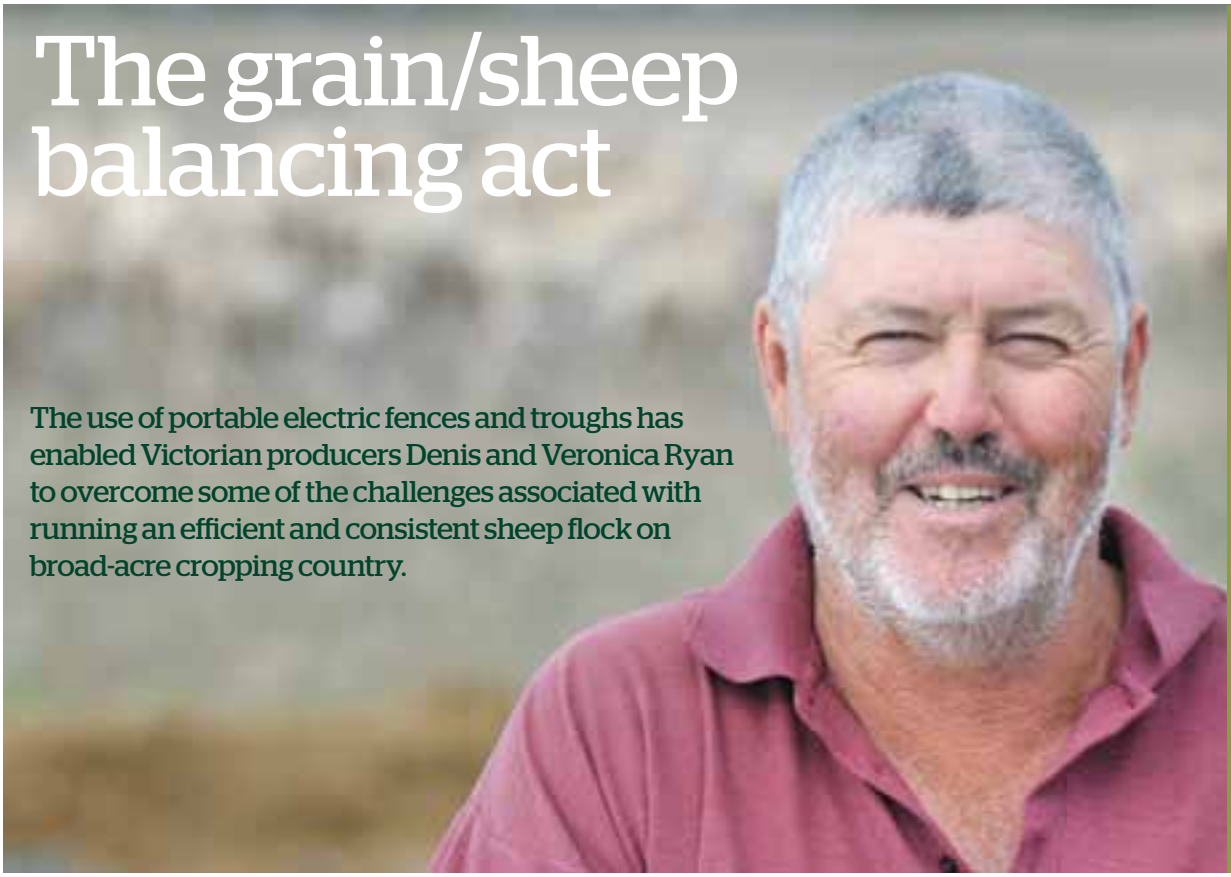
Making More From Sheep **www.makingmore fromsheep.com.au/module-index.htm** has a number of modules to help producers gain more from sheep production.

The MLA Stocking rate calculator **www.mla.com.au/stockingrate**

The MLA Cost of production calculator **www.mla.com.au/lambCoP**

www.mla.com.au/grazing

The grain/sheep balancing act



The use of portable electric fences and troughs has enabled Victorian producers Denis and Veronica Ryan to overcome some of the challenges associated with running an efficient and consistent sheep flock on broad-acre cropping country.

Snapshot

Denis and Veronica Ryan, Nullawil, Vic.

Property: 1,120ha

Enterprise: Cropping and prime lambs

Livestock: 420 Merino ewes joined to Poll Dorset rams

Pasture: Vetch, barley for grazing and stubbles

Soil: Sandy loam

Rainfall: 325mm

A decade of droughts and fluctuating grain prices showed the Ryan family, who run cropping and prime lamb enterprise in the harsh Mallee region with its low 325mm average annual rainfall, the value of diversity.

However with minimal fencing infrastructure, large paddocks and limited surface water, maximising sheep production had been difficult.

"Sheep have been very good to us financially, but the biggest problem we've always had is how to run sheep efficiently and securely in this environment," Denis said.

"There's nothing worse than buying a good mob of young ewes and doing all the work to get the first lamb on the ground and then being forced to sell them onto someone else to make a big quid out of."

It is why Denis has been an active member of the Nullawil Best Wool Best Lamb (BWBL) group, which has engaged with the MLA Producer demonstration site program to research ways to improve the productivity and profitability of prime lamb production in the Mallee.

Lessons learned

Denis said the BWBL group's trials of portable electric fences to control grazing of broad-acre cereal crops had been a real eye-opener, and as a result he invested about $1,700 in a solar unit and tapes that could be easily wound-up and moved.

"More than half our farm would be in paddocks that are 100ha or larger, and one of the main things we've talked about over the years is how we could maximise our feed in such big areas," he said.

"The solar powered fence has really changed the way we manage our sheep, as we can now strip graze to obtain better feed utilisation."

"The big difference is we can now run our stock on less country and better utilise what we have sown.

"We have had no problems with sheep going through the electric fences, and the fences are easy to move and set-up – half an hour or so and we can relocate 500m of tape."

The Ryans run 420 Merino ewes, joined to Poll Dorset rams for prime lamb production. Lambing is in March with the aim of turning off the majority of the lambs as suckers by August.

On farm infrastructure

Using a combination of electric fencing with portable troughs and purpose grown grazing crops such as moby barley and vetch, the Ryans have been able to reduce the area of land the ewes are grazed on down to about 40ha.

A three-strand fence, two electric tapes and an earth-wire in the middle is used to split the area into suitable grazing plots, depending on the season and pasture and crop growth.

Water is supplied via portable plastic troughs, with the Ryans using a tank mounted on a truck to get water to parts of the property unable to access holding tanks filled from the Wimmera-Mallee pipeline.

Looking ahead, Denis said the system meant they could opportunity trade or finish lambs in a good season, or conversely run more breeding ewes.

"There is a question mark over how such an intensively stocked area would cope in a dry season or drought, but all the research (from the BWBL group) is showing that there is a lot of scope to run sheep more efficiently in the Mallee," he said.

Denis Ryan
T: 03 5493 5214
E: veronicaryan1960@live.com

Improve market compliance

MSA makes dollars and sense

Northern beef producers are being urged to look to MSA grading to increase profitability.

22,260
registered MSA producers in Australia

42
licensed MSA processors nationally

1,603
licensed MSA end users nationally

Average results from the two PDSs

10¢/kg
carcase premium for cattle graded MSA

15kg
increase carcase weight gain over four years

$34/head
increase carcase weight gain over four years

30-50%
drop in MSA compliance for each extra overnight stay in yards

Major learnings from the Burdekin and Charters Towers MSA PDS:

- → Handle cattle less pre-slaughter – reduce yard and transport time
- → Use BREEDPLAN EBVs to fast-track genetic progress
- → Target traits for fertility, growth, fat cover and marbling (intramuscular fat)
- → Supplementing steers can be profitable
- → Depending on the price, feeding molasses in the dry season can pay off

Rewards of up to $34 a head are awaiting northern beef producers who gain the full benefit of the Meat Standards Australia (MSA) system, according to the findings of four years of research.

In fact, two MLA-funded producer demonstration sites (PDS) in Queensland found adopting strategies to improve MSA compliance can increase bottom line profits by up to 2%.

Queensland Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF Qld) senior beef extension officers, Alan Laing and Felicity Hamlyn-Hill, who supported the producer groups, said it was the result of higher weight-for-age steers and heifers.

"By focusing on genetic selection for growth, fat and marbling and adopting best practice management and animal nutrition strategies, producers were able to turn-off heavier cattle earlier and meet MSA specifications," they explained.

Between 2008 and 2012, the PDS set up on 'Lisgar station' in the Burdekin and 'Trafalgar station' near Charters Towers, evaluated the benefits of adopting MSA grading, improving compliance and reducing ungraded MSA percentages.

Critical MSA compliance factors of breed, age, use of hormone growth promotants (HGPs), temperament, handling and mustering were assessed against MSA grades achieved through export meat processor, JBS Australia at Townsville.

The PDS showed genetic selection within breeds for early growth and supplementary feeding could allow producers to turnoff 300–340kg carcase animals a whole year earlier as two-and-a-half year olds and hit MSA premium boning groups.

DAFF Qld Economist Timothy Moravek, who crunched the numbers for the PDS, said in the short term, options to boost compliance could include removal of HGPs, using molasses to finish steers if this was economical and minimising time cattle spent in yards pre-slaughter.

In the longer term, MSA compliance could be improved by early feeding of molasses supplements, selection pressure for a range of desirable carcase and growth traits and reducing age of turnoff – with an associated reduction in ossification and dentition.

The processor perspective

JBS Australia Livestock Manager Brett Campbell welcomed greater uptake of MSA, but added this required producer education and support through analysing carcase feedback and premium prices.

"In boning groups 1–9 there are often premiums of 5¢/kg to 25¢/kg, but the bulk of MSA cattle going through in Townsville are not hitting those specifications," he said.

"With efforts in genetics, growth and nutrition to reduce turn-off age, I think local producers can work towards increasing grading percentages in those higher paying groups if grazing conditions and cattle are suitable."

Alan Laing // T: 07 4720 5115
E: alan.laing@daff.qld.gov.au

Felicity Hamlyn-Hill // T: 0428 113 732
E: felicity.hamlyn-hill@daff.qld.gov.au

Timothy Moravek // T: 07 47615156
E: timothy.moravek@daff.qld.gov.au

Brett Campbell // T: 07 3810 2206
E: brett.campbell@jbssa.com.au

David Reid and Alan Laing demonstrate scanning techniques at Charters Towers Field Day.

Nutritional strategies for cost effective compliance

Researchers are investigating the best ways to supplement cattle in northern Australia to boost growth rates and produce younger, heavier stock for turnoff into higher value markets.

Reducing the age of bullocks for slaughter by 12 months, to about 30 months of age, has been shown to substantially lift MSA compliance rates.

This lessens the chances of cattle exceeding four teeth (although dentition is not an MSA grade input), lowers ossification scores and increases the likelihood of stock achieving MSA premium boning groups of 10 or less. These boning groups have been out of reach for many northern cattle because of a combination of tropical breed content and slow annual growth rate issues.

Queensland Alliance for Agriculture and Food Innovation (QAAFI) principal research fellow, Dr Stuart McLennan, heads a team of scientists investigating how to cost-effectively lift whole-of-life growth rates in cattle grazing tropical pastures.

He said increasing growth rates and reducing time to turnoff invariably involved improved nutrition at some stage of the animal's life.

A four-year grazing trial, co-funded by MLA and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, has been set up at Swans Lagoon Research Station, near Ayr, to track lifetime steer growth paths against the timing of additional dietary treatments – in the form of supplements or improved pasture.

Supporting pen trials at Brian Pastures Research Station, near Gayndah, are also analysing delivery options and cattle responses to protein meal, grain and molasses-based feed supplements.

Stuart said results from the grazing trial showed a high-input post-weaning supplement – such as a mix of molasses, urea and protein meal – or use of leucaena pasture could boost cattle growth rates and finish cattle 12 months earlier for premium markets.

He said using high input supplements only in the second dry season reduced costs by about $60/head without sacrificing animal performance, compared to feeding in both the first and second dry seasons.

"It was also found that reducing the age of finishing from three-and-a-half to two-and-a-half years old by supplementation reduced overall pasture intake by more than 50%," he said.

MSA grading carcases

What is a boning group?

An MSA Boning group is computer generated for carcase cuts calculated from the measurements taken by the accredited MSA grader and from information supplied on the MSA vendor declaration form. MSA assigns numbers to groups of cuts that share similar eating qualities or grading outcomes.

These numbers represent boning groups and are used to allow the boning room at the processing plant, to utilise cuts from similar bodies during packing. Boning groups range from 1–18 and U, where U represents ungraded carcases. Boning group numbers descend in quality, where boning group 1 represents the group having the highest quality grading outcomes.

MSA feedback is provided to producers for cattle which have met company specifications and then have been allocated a MSA Boning group, or are 'ungraded' (U). This feedback is also available online at: **www.msagrading.com.au**. Click on the feedback and benchmarking login button.

higher growth responses from barley/urea feed mix

40%

"This would provide options to carry more stock or reduce grazing pressure."

HGP challenges

Stuart said cattle finished at 30 months without the use of HGPs generally graded MSA and thus received the applicable price premium.

But he said MSA compliance was difficult to achieve when HGPs were used continuously from weaning to slaughter. This was because of the automatic penalty imposed in the MSA system and associated higher ossification that affected the MSA score.

"Still, the HGP implanted steers in the trials returned an average $50/head more than those not implanted because of higher carcase weight," he said.

"The challenge will be to devise implant strategies that have a lesser impact on MSA grades, without jeopardising the growth responses to the HGP."

The right mix

Pen trials have shown up to 40% higher cattle growth responses to a barley/urea mix than to the molasses/urea/copra meal mix used in the grazing study (figure 1).

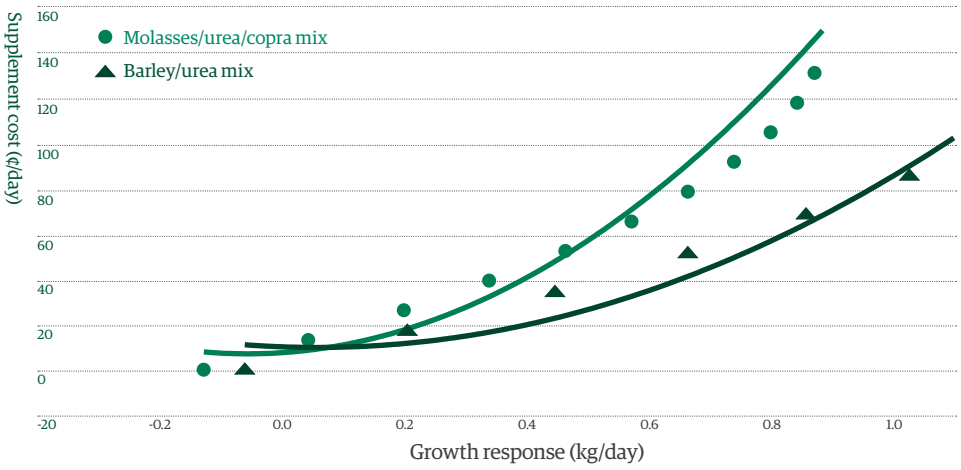
"Researchers are now looking at ways to increase the growth response to the molasses mix – which is the preferred option for safe feeding in northern regions."

Pen trials also found older cattle of about 30 months had similar growth responses to young cattle of about 10 months. This means for every kilogram of supplement fed, growth responses would be the same for the two age groups.

Dr Stuart McLennan
T: 07 3255 4272
E: s.mclennan@uq.edu.au

Trial cattle on display at the Charters Towers Field Day.

Figure 1 **Relationship between the growth response targeted and the cost of feeding supplements of either barley/urea or a molasses/urea/copra meal mix with added minerals to young steers in pens.**



What is ossification?

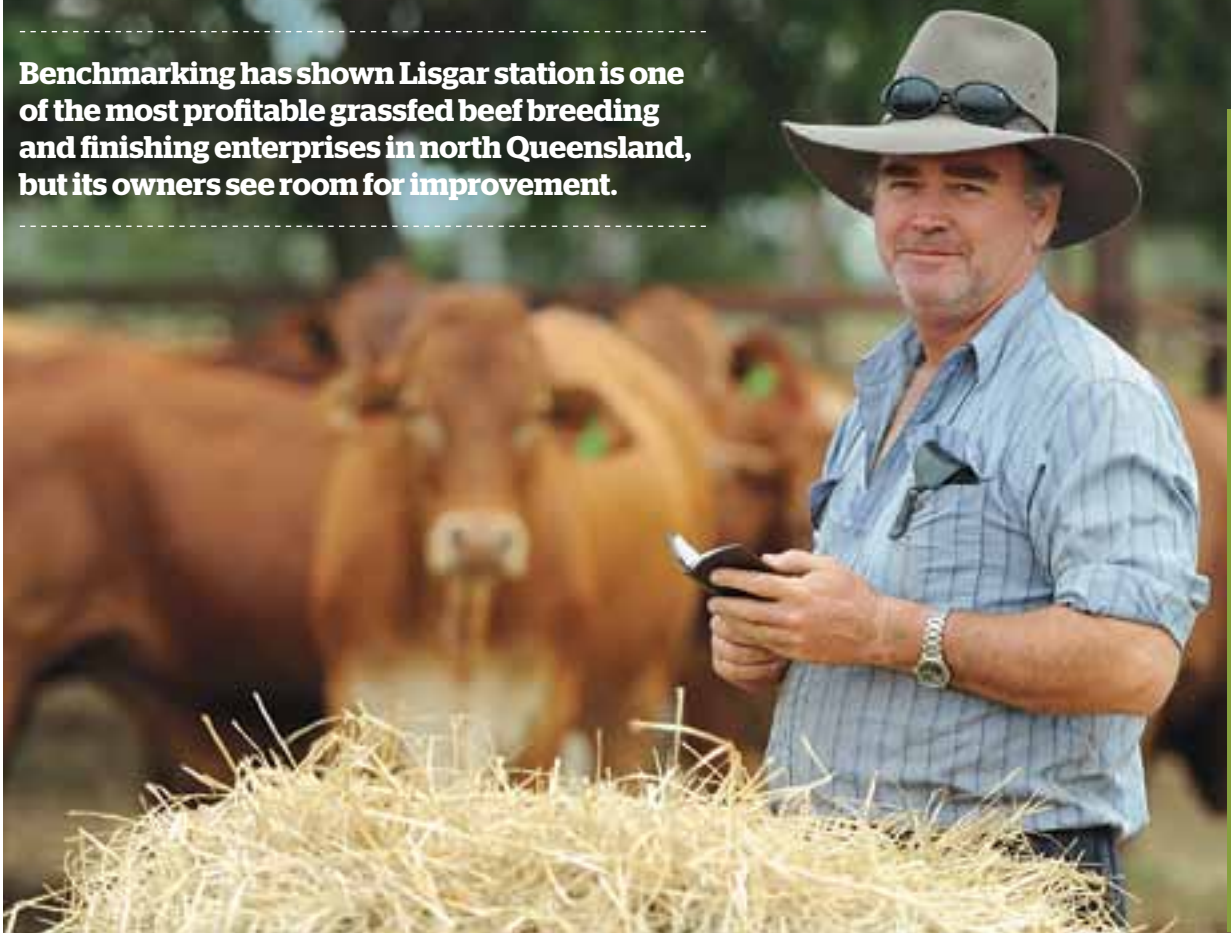
Ossification is a measure of physiological maturity of the beef carcase. As an animal matures, cartilage around the vertebrae gradually fills with blood and develops into bone. Although this development occurs in association with the animal's chronological age, it is affected by nutrition and development. Ossification is measured visually in the chiller by the MSA accredited grader.

Tips & Tools/Modules/ further information:

- → MSA grading calculator – **www.msagrading.com.au** Select an option or enter a score for each parameter (eg hump height or ossification) and click the calculate button. It will indicate scores required to achieve targeted boning groups.
- → MSA information kit, including Tips & Tools – **www.mla.com.au/msabeef** T: 1800 111 672 E: msainquiries@mla.com.au
- → MSA registration – **http://registerproducer.msagrading.com.au**
- → MSA feedback – **www.msagrading.com.au**
- → Future Beef website for northern cattle producers – **www.futurebeef.com.au**

MSA bonuses inspire changes on property

Benchmarking has shown Lisgar station is one of the most profitable grassfed beef breeding and finishing enterprises in north Queensland, but its owners see room for improvement.



Snapshot

Robert and Donna Rea, 'Lisgar' station, Burdekin, Qld.

Property: 10,800ha

Enterprise: Droughtmaster beef breeding and finishing

Livestock: 2,400 head

Pasture: Indian couch, improved stylos and Burgundy bean legumes

Soil: Variable, from sandy loams to marine plains

Rainfall: 750mm

Second generation producers Robert and Donna Rea are continuing 50 years of genetic improvement in carcase quality traits but involvement in the Meat Standards Australia (MSA) Producer Demonstration Site (PDS) trial has shed light on the future direction for their enterprise.

During the PDS trial, 89% of the family's 241 Droughtmaster heifers and 60% of 370 steers consigned to JBS Australia in Townsville met company specifications for MSA and 46% and 21% respectively received an MSA premium.

A small proportion were ungraded MSA because they did not meet pH, meat colour or rib fat specifications.

Robert said, ultimately, the ability to supply premium grade MSA cattle could provide a bonus of up to $34/head at certain times of the year (at maximum weights of 340kg).

Robert Rea, 'Lisgar Droughtmasters', Home Hill, with steers used at the marketing and MSA forum.

"Our main challenge is fine tuning the parameters of achieving weight for age, marbling and ossification," he said.

Breeding emphasis in the Lisgar herd was aimed at boosting fertility, growth rates, intramuscular fat (IMF) and external fat cover.

"Our turnoff age has dropped to three years old from four-and-a-half years old and we want to bring it down to two years old and 0–2 teeth, while maintaining 320–340kg dressed weight and good MSA premium grade compliance," Robert said.

We've introduced legumes to our pastures and we wean calves on to a molasses supplement until the season breaks. Weaners go into the wet season with a 20–30kg weight advantage.

"It is cost efficient because of increased herd productivity."

The Lisgar herd averaged about 88% pregnancy rates in the past three to four years and 2012 maidens achieved a 94% average after a three month joining period.

Meeting MSA specs

The Reas strongly believe in low stress animal management and muster sale cattle up to three weeks ahead of slaughter into a paddock closer to the yards, which has helped overcome meat pH problems.

Stock are scanned at 18-months for IMF and rib fat to identify sires for progeny with rib fat averages of 5–9mm and good marbling. Robert saw marbling as a trait which would reduce the impact of ossification scores.

"The PDS highlighted that using HGPs was creating ossification levels penalising us, so we'll now use them more strategically," he said.

They are also continuing to provide valuable genetic information to researchers through their use of DNA testing and evaluation of scanned carcase data against a range of BREEDPLAN Australian Breeding Values.

Robert and Donna Rea
T: 0438 848 203
E: lisgar.droughties@bigpond.com

Genomics

The Beef Information Nucleus program is laying the foundation for an exciting future in sire selection.

Genomics beef up BREEDPLAN

Australia's largest beef breed progeny test program, the Beef Information Nucleus (BIN), is showing producers the huge potential of genomic selection.

"This is a great opportunity for breeds to make more progress on EBVs for economically important but difficult-to-measure traits such as feed intake, eating quality and some fertility traits," said Dr Rob Banks, MLA Manager for R&D Strategy and BIN Program Coordinator.

"The information gathered is not only needed to verify genomic tests but will greatly improve industry confidence in genomics."

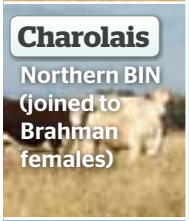
Rob said the accuracy of genomic EBVs, which to date is typically in the 30 to 45% range, is completely dependent on how many animals have been recorded and genotyped in reference populations – as this population rises, so does the accuracy of genomic EBVs.

Consequently, the BIN programs, funded by the MLA Donor Company and five co-operating breed societies, will remain essential to genomic progress and are already impacting on BREEDPLAN with feed efficiency EBVs becoming available soon for some breeds.

Dr Rob Banks, MLA // T: 0417 679 095
E: rbanks@mla.com.au

Download Module Five *Genetics* from More Beef from Pastures at **www.mla.com.au/morebeef**

Figure1 **The ins and outs of the Beef Information Nucleus Herds**

Average breed	No. of progeny	No. of cohorts or gener-ations	No. of sires tested	Traits measured	Traits still to be assessed	Outcomes	Breed information
 **Angus**	4,000	3	140	Birthweight, 200-day weight, docility	All Breedplan traits as well as feed efficiency	Accuracy of some sires' EBVs now between 90 and 100%	T: 02 6772 3011 E: office@angus australia.com.au **www.angus australia.com.au**
 **Brahman**	2,000	3	65	200-day weights, docility	Female reproduction, 400-day weights, carcase merit, eating quality	400-day weights to be incorporated into BREEDPLAN by end of 2012	T: 07 4927 7799 E: abba@ brahman.com.au **www.brahman. com.au**
 **Charolais** Southern BIN (joined to Angus females)	405	3	50 over the entire Charolais program	Weaning weights, 400-day weights, fat depth, EMA	Birth weights; gestation length; 400-day growth kg/ day; weaning IMF; 400-day P8 fat; weaner EMA; 400-day EMA; flight time; muscle pH; shear force	Pasture-based production systems should choose positive fat EBVs; select for docility to improve meat quality	T: 02 6771 1666 E: office@ charolais.com.au **www.charolais. com.au**
 **Charolais** Northern BIN (joined to Brahman females)	485	3		Growth weights to weaning; weaning weights; flight times	Second flight time on calves; flight time on dams; 350-day weights and scan for fat; feedlot weight gains; slaughter weights and fats; ultimate muscle pH; shear force on loin sample	Birth weights 7kg lower with Brahman cows relative to Angus cows although weights expected to increase by up to 4kg in a good season	
 **Hereford**	425	3	Up to 15 each joining	Carcase merit; 200 day weights	Net feed efficiency; female reproduction such as age of puberty and days to calving	The collection of phenotypic carcase data to verify genomic predictions; opportunity to improve marbling and retail beef yield	T: 02 6772 1399 E: info@herefords australia.com.au **www.herefords australia.com.au**
 **Limousin**	220 per year	4	10 sires per year	Growth; carcase merit	Calving ease; feed efficiency; eating quality traits; genetic variations in methane emissions	Hoping to complete 5 cohorts; collection of phenotypic data to form basis of genomic prediction data base	T: 02 6771 1648 E: office@limousin. com.au

Genomics

Friendly approach to better beef

Whether or not they support or understand it, all beef breeders will gain from the Beef Information Nucleus research, suggests northern NSW seedstock producer Matt Friend.

"Whether you believe in EBVs or not, the beef industry is a winner from the work being done through the Beef Information Nucleus herds on production traits and eventually their DNA markers," he said.

At this stage Limousin breeders have only two genomic tests available to them, one for colour and another for the polled gene, however, Matt has high hopes that in years to come economically important traits will be assessed from DNA alone.

"Genomics can sound complicated but the commercial market has a way of taking what it needs from genetic progress and anyone who is interested in improving their cattle and the amount of beef they turn off per hectare, regardless of whether they're into the science, will benefit."

Matt (pictured above with sons Ben, 10 and Will, 6), is chairman of the Limousin Information Nucleus Committee which oversees a multi-breed project aiming to collect progeny data for all current production traits that have an economic importance in today's beef industry, including hard-to-measure traits such as feed efficiency.

"We've got one bull in the project from our Froghollow Stud. He's a two-year-old sire we've selected to retain in our breeding program because we've identified him as having the combination of traits we require and he meets all the spec's of our target market," Matt said.

"It's a great opportunity to verify the accuracy and diversity of his EBVs and see how he performs against other bulls in the project."

According to a recent Take Stock analysis, provided by BREEDPLAN, genetic selection based on EBVs has significantly boosted Froghollow's bottom line.

"According to the self-replacing dollar index for sires, our genetic gain was $41.87 compared to the breed average of $27.63," Matt said. "What this means is that the sires we've been using in our breeding program are way above breed average for genetic progress and, as genomics increase the accuracy of EBVs and improve selection tools, we hope to improve this even further."

Ready to expand

Matt and his wife, Jenny, have been breeding Limousins for the past 14 years and started the hard way, leasing seven blocks up to an hour's drive apart before taking the plunge and buying their 200ha property 'Rose Valley' at Black Mountain, about 10km south of Guyra.

Up until a year ago, they ran a commercial herd of 200 breeders as well on another lease block but ill health meant they had to wind back operations to focus on their 110 stud cows which produce about 35 bulls a year for sale. With Jenny's health back on track they plan to expand once again.

Matt has supported the information nucleus concept from its infancy.

Snapshot

Matt and Jenny Friend, Black Mountain, NSW.

Property: 200ha

Enterprise: Limousin stud

Livestock: 110 stud cows to produce 35 bulls for sale annually

Pasture: Fescue, red and white clover

Soil: Granite and basalt

Rainfall: 1,000mm

"Being able to pinpoint sires whose offspring will produce more retail beef per hectare using DNA marker technology will be a huge step forward for producers and that data is not something we've been able to achieve as individual breeders to date," he said.

"We now have a heavily recorded population of Limousin-cross genetics that can now be used to verify the DNA marker technologies currently being developed. The speed of change in this field is amazing and this project places the breeds involved at the forefront of this. This is a fantastic opportunity for the development of the entire cattle industry."

Matt Friend // T: 02 6775 0138
E: mfriend@northnet.com.au

Australia's genetic success story

The day when producers can select rams on the basis of a single drop of blood is almost here.

The sheep industry has produced a genomic juggernaut which can rapidly advance genetic gains, improve profit and provide a unique marketing edge for Australian lamb.

It may sound like an ambitious pitch but the results of the five-year Sheep Information Nucleus Flock project involving Merinos, White Suffolks, Poll Dorsets and Border Leicesters, speak for themselves.

According to Sheep CRC Chief Executive Officer, Professor James Rowe, the achievements - which far exceeded the project's goals - are testimony to the power of cooperation.

"It's been a whole-of-industry exercise which included practically all of the 21 organisations who are official participants in the Sheep CRC, as well as about 250 ram breeders who provided semen from leading rams," he said.

"At the start, in 2007, the sheep industry lagged behind the genomic progress of other livestock industries. Today we are abreast and, in some areas, ahead.

"Our intramuscular fat (IMF) data accuracy for terminal sires is 41%. In beef cattle it's 40%, so we're right up there with an industry that has been working on this trait for a lot longer."

The project, which has focused on key economic traits which can't be measured on farm, has improved the accuracy of many breeding values, as well as introduced genomic predictions for new traits that, because they are difficult to measure, have not been available.

According to MLA, the additional value to industry of genomically-enhanced yield and eating quality traits, alone, could be as much as $24 million a year.

Delivering on farm

The project has also progressed understanding of the genetics of traits important for human nutrition, such as omega 3, zinc and iron, creating potential for consumer-focused marketing in the future.

Sheep CRC's Sheep Genetics Manager Sam Gill said commercial producers should see the impact of this research on farm within three years.

"With increased rates of genetic gain (about 25% in sheep), seedstock producers will be able to identify superior rams earlier that score highly in consumer-valued traits such as eating quality and yield," he said.

"The level of expected accuracies for genomic values is still under development, however, there is no doubt the accuracy for hard-to-measure traits such as IMF, which are presently very low, will be greatly improved to help producers deliver a better product."

The price of genomic testing is expected to drop to below $40 within two years, making large scale testing more accessible to ram breeders.

MLA, which has supported the project since its inception and has pledged a further $2.2 million for ongoing research, helping transform the project to an industry-driven model.

Prof. James Rowe // T: 02 6773 1317
E: jrowe@une.edu.au

Sam Gill // T: 02 6773 2948
E: sgill@sheepgenetics.org.au

Visit: **www.sheepcrc.org**

Download the *Gain from Genetics* module of Making More From Sheep at **www.makingmorefromsheep.com.au** or order a copy from 1800 675 717.

Improve pasture productivity

Grass-legume pastures to combat rundown

Adding legumes to sown grass pastures is the most viable option for Queensland producers to combat pasture rundown, a phenomenon that reduces pasture production and animal performance by up to 50% over 5-20 years.

Incorporating legumes into grass-only pastures was the best long-term option for increasing pasture production, animal performance and economic returns on ageing sown grass pastures in central and southern Queensland, an MLA-funded project has revealed.

The research completed by Queensland Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) found the mitigation of pasture rundown effects by introducing pasture legumes returned a net value of $400-1,400/ha, far exceeding other options such as mechanical renovation, protein supplements, herbicides and fertilisers.

DAFF conservatively estimated the cost to industry of pasture rundown would exceed $17 billion in the next 30 years. This is based on productivity decline across 12 million hectares of established improved pastures in northern Australia, around 75% of which is buffel grass.

DAFF Senior Pasture Agronomist (Sown Pastures) in Toowoomba, Gavin Peck, said symptoms of pasture rundown are widely recognised, but often wrongly attributed to water or seasons.

He said pasture rundown is not due to a loss of nitrogen from the system. The initial high production of sown pastures results from increased available nitrogen and water that accumulates in the soil during a fallow. After sowing, available soil nitrogen is progressively incorporated into soil organic matter which breaks down slowly, nitrogen is effectively tied up in the soil and unavailable for plant growth.

Previous trials have shown that incorporating stylos into grass-only pastures can increase animal performance by 40-60kg/head/year and well-managed leucaena by 70-110kg/head/year. DAFF also estimated stylos could increase nitrogen fixation and cycling by 20-50kg N/ha/year, leucaena by 60-75kg N/ha/year and medic by 20-50kg N/ha/year, leading to improved grass growth and pasture quality.

DAFF's review identified persistent and productive legumes for permanent grass pastures on clay soils. However, Gavin said options for the Brigalow Belt were commercially released relatively recently, and commercial plantings have had mixed results.

MLA is funding a five-year project with DAFF to increase the adoption of legumes and other options for improving productivity of sown-grass pastures in central and southern Queensland.

Another project is looking at how alternative rhizobia inoculation practices could increase pasture productivity three-fold across the northern beef industry.

The effectiveness of 'native' rhizobia in soils collected from across the region will be assessed in glasshouse trials. New inoculation approaches in the hot, dry environments in which perennial tropical legumes are typically grown will be assessed through field trials. Trial results will be discussed with producers participating in the 'Pasture Rundown' project to determine the most practical methods for commercial properties and develop recommendations for their use across the region.

Gavin Peck // T: 07 4688 1392
E: gavin.peck@daff.qld.gov.au

$17 billion
cost of projected pasture rundown in northern Australia in next 30 years

Snapshot

Mike and Judy Johnson, Dulacca, Qld.

Property:
2,428ha

Enterprise:
Beef cattle, cropping

Livestock:
300 breeders plus progeny

Pasture:
1,800ha buffel grass pastures, 100ha leucaena, some desmanthus and burgundy bean, 200ha cultivation (oats, barley, forage sorghum), 300ha scrub forest country

Soil:
Heavy loams to dark cracking clays

Rainfall:
580mm (40-year average)

Sown in the 1970s and '80s, the Johnsons' buffel grass pastures were becoming the limp lettuce left in the bottom of the bowl. Mike had found signs of pasture rundown and associated production losses from lower dry matter production and reduced carrying capacity.

It was time for new and interesting choices. Mike first established stands of leucaena around eight years ago, planting twin rows 7m apart on old cultivation country and 15m apart into pasture. He now has around 100ha planted.

He said that establishing legumes required careful planning. Mike inoculates leucaena and desmanthus seed immediately prior to sowing, into carefully prepared land.

"To create the rows, I sprayed the native pasture out, deep ripped it with a Yeomans ripper and worked it with a 4m wide scarifier and harrows to prepare a fine seed bed," he said.

"It's important to get rid of all the buffel in the strips, because until it is established, the leucaena won't compete with it.

Adding legumes for long-term gains

Mixed greens are on the menu today for the cattle on Mike and Judy Johnson's Queensland property after it was discovered the earlier offerings were not hitting the mark.

Mike Johnson and granddaughter Piper.

I spray Spinnaker* (imazethapyr) 3m wide down the rows to prevent early weed growth."

Mike has noticed that leucaena is more productive on heavier clay soils with better water holding capacity, than on the lighter soils.

Ongoing management is fairly intensive for legume-grass pastures, and Mike treats the leucaena like a crop. The leucaena is planted across five small paddocks of 20–40ha, and steers are rotationally grazed on these pastures throughout the summer. At the end of the season, Mike runs a mob of cows and calves across the five paddocks to knock down the leucaena more effectively.

Other options

Amongst the leucaena, Mike has also had success with desmanthus.

"Every eight rows I planted desmanthus instead of leucaena – just to try it – using the leucaena planter," Mike said.

It's spreading fairly well through the paddock via shooting seeds and cattle.

"To fix nitrogen, the desmanthus requires the same rhizobia inoculant as leucaena, so it's going to get the rhizobium from the leucaena if it spreads nearby."

Although Mike has not measured the extent of the productivity increases, he has noticed a significant increase in steer carrying capacity on buffel grass pastures with leucaena plantings.

"The benefit is in the improved quality of pastures. Leucaena has a high crude protein content (up to 30% in the leaf) which allows the animals to use the grass more efficiently and gain weight faster as a result," Mike said.

Five years ago, Mike planted burgundy bean and it has persisted, despite being a short-term legume option.

**Spinnaker is a Nufarm registered herbicide.*

Mike and Judy Johnson
T: 07 4627 6376
E: bidson@activ8.net.au

Tips for establishing persistent pastures in central and southern Queensland

- Plan pasture sowings early and treat it like a crop
- Choose the best adapted varieties considering soil type and rainfall
  - on clay soils, try leucaena, desmanthus, Caatinga stylo, butterfly pea, burgundy bean or medic
  - on lighter soils, try shrubby stylo (eg Seca), Caribbean stylo (eg Verano) or siratro
- Prepare a good seedbed and purchase high quality seed
- Provide correct nutrition
- Avoid residual herbicides
- Get the time of sowing right for tropical and temperate species
- Inoculate legume seed with correct rhizobia immediately before sowing
- Sow enough seed
- Sow small seeds shallow (optimum sowing depth is < 1cm)
- Use presswheels or rollers to improve seed–soil contact
- Reduce competition from weeds
- Graze only after plants have developed crowns and secondary roots, and allow all pasture species to set seed
- Manage grazing of established pastures to retain a proportion of leaf and stem stocking maintained pastures in B+ land condition and was almost as profitable as moderate stocking.

Stands of leucaena planted in old cultivation paddocks at 'Bidson', Dulacca Qld

Carcase utilisation

Creating two new Masterpieces

The latest phase of MLA's Masterpieces program puts the spotlight on two beef cuts that are often underrated and under utilised in foodservice – chuck and skirt.

"Masterpieces is all about adding more value to the entire carcase and keeping plate costs down, so beef remains firmly embedded on menus in foodservice, casual and fine dining."

Claire Tindale, Marketing Manager – Foodservice for MLA said the Masterpieces program was designed to add further value to the entire carcase, keep plate costs down and ensure beef remains a core component of foodservice menus across Australia.

"Consumers are becoming increasingly savvy, always looking for innovative dishes to try. This poses both a challenge and an opportunity to come up with exciting dishes and source well priced ingredients that will keep customers happy and bottom lines healthy," Claire said.

"Chuck is a great cut and it makes up approximately 7% of a carcase, compared with 1.5% for fillet, so there is plenty of opportunity to expand its use. In Australia we tend to cube it and throw it in a casserole, but it can be broken down into multiple muscles to create a variety of tasty dishes, including roasts and even grilling cuts.

"Skirt is another underrated cut, which is so full of flavour, wonderfully textured, and able to provide a real point of difference for chefs on their menus."

The Masterpieces program positions non-loin cuts of meat as fashionable and versatile ingredients that allow chefs to showcase their skills and reduce plate costs. It provides support and resources to restaurateurs, wholesalers and chefs that includes butchery information and menu ideas.

"Non-loin cuts are used widely in overseas markets, but a lack of chef experience using these cuts, and perceptions of low quality and limited versatility has meant they are not commonly used on Australian foodservice menus," said Claire.

Masterclasses conducted by MLA in partnership with foodservice wholesalers around Australia throughout the year will assist the rollout of the second phase of the Beef Masterpieces program. An advertisement promoting the revamped cuts ran in major foodservice magazines during August including *Foodservice* magazine, *Restaurant & Catering*, *Café Culture* and *Clubs NSW*, further supporting the launch of the program's second phase.

The new Masterpieces booklet draws inspiration from global cuisines and demonstrates the versatility and creativity that can be achieved using chuck and skirt for all types of menus, from casual pub meals to fine dining elegance.

"Masterpieces is all about adding more value to the entire carcase and keeping plate costs down, so beef remains firmly embedded on menus in foodservice, casual and fine dining," added Claire.

Following the release of the first volume of Beef Masterpieces, which promoted the nontraditional cuts – oyster blade, bolar blade, flank steak and point-end brisket – many foodservice outlets and wholesalers reported an increase in sales of the 'new cuts'.

One wholesaler reported a year-on-year sales increase of 1,771kg of oyster blade from 158kg following the first instalment of Masterpieces, and an increase from 18kg to 579kg of flat iron steak.

Claire Tindale, MLA // T: 02 9463 9380
E: ctindale@mla.com.au

Download volumes of *Masterpieces* at **www.mla.com.au/Masterpieces**

Creating Masterpieces | In profile

Glenn Flood // *Food mastermind*

Every day about 180,000 people dine on a meal prepared by Alliance Catering. It could be a sandwich in an airport lounge, a canape at a cocktail party or a roast dinner at a boarding school.

To help satisfy those hungry hordes, MLA began working with Alliance Catering three years ago to introduce them to the Masterpieces program to make the most of the more underutilised cuts of beef and lamb on their menus.

Here we talk to chef Glenn Flood, Alliance Catering's Food Development Manager, whose job it is to satisfy the appetites of thousands of people every day. Most recently he was also part of Channel 10's *Masterchef* television program, devising and producing challenges and masterclasses for the contestants.

Where are Alliance Catering meals served?
We focus heavily on education, business and aged care sectors, including top end boarding schools, canteens, corporate boardrooms, airport lounges and cocktail functions. We run a lot of internal staff canteens at these sites. Menus are rotated daily.

What led to putting red meat Masterpieces on the menu?
Alliance has been working closely with MLA for a number of years to develop menus using lower priced and versatile non-loin cuts of beef and lamb. More recently we adapted our menus in line with the Masterpieces *Street Food* cook book using unique cuts of beef and lamb and with MLA's assistance, ran demonstrations for our chefs and site managers around Australia. We cooked brisket, bolar blade, Creole beef, sticky lamb ribs and a Latino lamb burger. Street food is a growing trend in Australia and using non-loin cuts that offer really good flavour, texture and appearance suits these dishes.

How effective was the training program for staff and site managers?
Training our chefs and site managers on the use of non-loin cuts to maximise creativity, lowering plate costs and achieving great flavours was a great success. It helped us put together a really effective corporate team-building program, which included demonstrations, tastings and cook-off elements. We ran the program nationally, successfully training more than 300 chefs and site managers.

We have since showcased the versatility of these cuts to our clients and we've experienced a massive increase in demand for lamb mince, brisket, oyster blade (not previously used) and bolar blade. Working creatively with non-loin cuts has made a big difference to our bottom line.

Gerard Doherty, MLA
T: 03 924 99567 // E: gdoherty@mla.com.au

www.alliancecatering.com.au

Following the success of MLA's *Entice* magazine, with two million copies printed biannually, MLA has launched a new beef magazine targeting 'foodie' consumers called *MEAT & CO*.

25%

of Australians consider themselves "foodies"

Meat & Co signs up the foodies

Over 25% of Australians now classify themselves as 'foodies'*, meaning they are passionate about food and where it comes from and are keen to create restaurant quality meals at home. This newfound zest to improve culinary skills has inspired the launch of *MEAT & CO*, which provides a more in depth product message about farming integrity and promotes recipes using under utilised cuts.

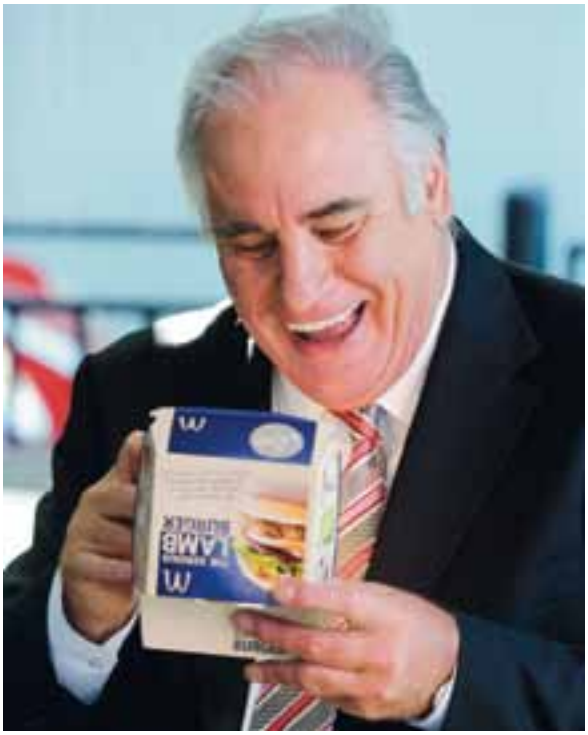
"While *Entice* magazine, has been successful in educating the general public on quick and easy beef cuts and meals, there is an opportunity to target highly skilled home cooks who have the desire to try more complicated recipes and learn even more about their food," said MLA Group Marketing Manager - Consumer, Andrew Cox.

"It will also be a great vehicle for telling the urban community more about how their beef is produced and how farmers care for their land, their animals and the environment and for promoting the use of under utilised cuts."

The inaugural issue of *MEAT & CO*, branded the 'beef lovers' journal', is now available from 100 high-end meat retailers across Australia, and features a beef cuts diagram, a Target 100 producer profile, a range of recipes including beef tartare and carpaccio, a feature on veal and information on the Meat Standards Australia (MSA) program.

** Meat Expectations Study 2012*

Andrew Cox, MLA // T: 02 9463 9158
E: acox@mla.com.au



Sam eyes up the new Serious Lamb Burger

McDonald's adds first lamb burger to Aussie menu

One of the world's largest fast food chains, McDonald's, has added a new lamb burger and a smaller lamb taster wrap to their Australian menu range. It is the first time lamb has been offered on the menu in a western market.

MLA's lambassador Sam Kekovich has been enlisted to promote the limited edition lamb items available from mid-August.

"We know Australians love their lamb so it would be great to see the lamb burger remain a permanent fixture on the McDonald's menu," said MLA's Andrew Cox.

"It's also a handy reminder for consumers of the versatility of lamb. It can be turned into a burger or used in a wrap, it doesn't have to be a roast or cutlets to be delicious," added Andrew.

The new lamb burger is targeted at the fast growing 'foodie' segment and comes with a seasoned lamb patty, lettuce, beetroot, aioli, egg and ketchup and will be offered for 12 weeks.

Magali Duveau, MLA // T: 02 9463 9279
E: mduveau@mla.com.au

Recipe

Beef and pumpkin curry

Serves: 4
Preparation time: 15 minutes
Cooking time: 20 minutes

Ingredients

500g beef rump, thinly sliced
2 tbsp oil
1–2 tbsp Thai red curry paste
1 cup coconut cream
½ cup beef stock
2 tsp brown sugar
400g butternut pumpkin, peeled, cut into small cubes
½ cup small fresh basil leaves
1–2 tbsp Thai fried shallots (optional)

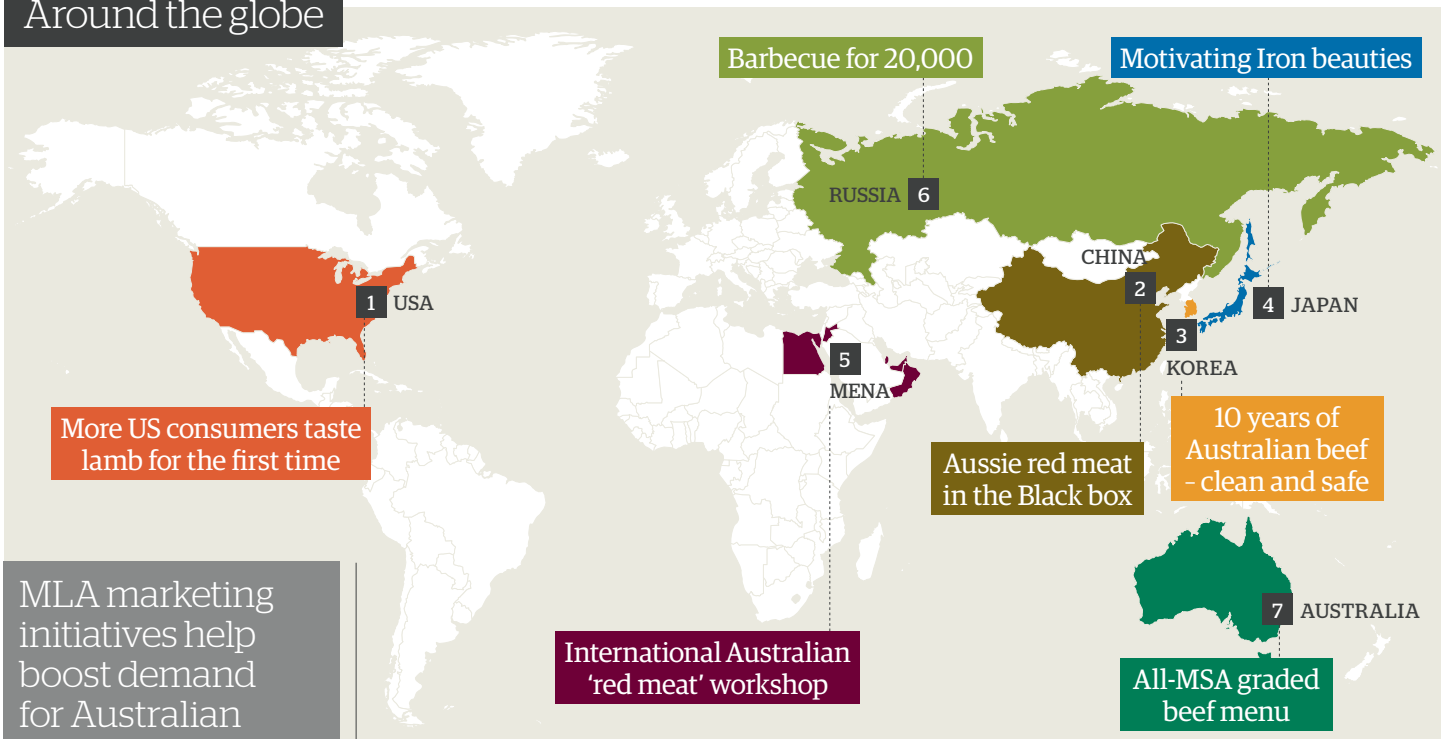
Method

1. Add half the oil to the beef and mix well. Heat the wok, ensure it is hot. Stir-fry the beef in three batches, and set it aside. Reheat wok between each batch.
2. Reheat the wok, add remaining oil, add the curry paste, stir-fry for 30 seconds. Add the cream, stock, sugar and pumpkin. Stir to combine. Reduce the heat and simmer for 5–8 minutes or until pumpkin is tender.
3. Return the beef to the wok and simmer for 1–2 minutes. Do not let the mixture boil. Sprinkle with basil leaves and fried shallots to serve. Accompany with rice.

Tips

Best beef cuts for this recipe are rump, rib eye/scotch fillet/tenderloin, sirloin/porterhouse/New York, boneless blade, round, oyster blade or topside steaks.

Around the globe



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

1 US

Australian lamb in barbecue battle

More than 120,000 Americans lined up for up to two hours to sample Australian lamb at the renowned . MLA partnered with an importer and national supermarket chain to sponsor the competition and sampling pavilion, which showcased Australian lamb and included lamb cooking demonstrations. As annual lamb consumption in the US continues to remain at a very low level of 1lb (500g) per capita (USDA) and with more than 70% of US consumers indicating they have never eaten lamb, this was an opportunity for many to taste lamb for the first time.

More than
30%
of US consumers have never tried lamb

2 CHINA

Black Box in Beijing

MLA co-sponsored the eighth Intercontinental Hotels Group culinary competition and charity gala dinner in Beijing. More than 15 hotels from the Beijing region competed. Prior to the competition, MLA provided the competing chefs with training on utilising non-loin Australian beef and lamb cuts. Australian oyster blade was amongst the many 'mystery' ingredients supplied to the competitors in their 'black boxes' as the key main course product. Chefs from the Intercontinental Beichen, Crowne Plaza Wuzhou and Holiday Inn Changfeng were crowned winners.

3 KOREA

A grand celebration in Seoul

More than 320 people attended this year's MLA Grand Seminar in Seoul, including major meat companies, media, Korean and Australian government officials, foodservice and retail personnel, who heard about the vital trade relationship between Australia and Korea from Australian ambassador H.E. Sam Gerovich. The seminar is an important networking and information exchange event to showcase Australia's beef and lamb industries and MLA's activities and commitment to the Korean market. It was also a celebration of the 10-year anniversary for Australia's Hoju Chungjung Woo (Australian Beef, Clean and Safe) positioning in the Korean market.

10-year
anniversary of Hoju Chungjung Woo

4 JAPAN

Iron clad promotion

Japan's Bronco Billy Steakhouse held an Aussie beef fair in its 68 chains as part of an Aussie beef fair promotion held from April to June. The promotion aimed to motivate its female customers, who usually eat hamburg (similar to a flattened large meatball) to try steak. As April to June is typically a high demand season for beef in Japan, MLA collaborated with retailers and foodservice establishments including Bronco Billy Steakhouse, to promote Australian beef during this time to strengthen the image and awareness of Aussie beef and iron in beef, before US beef's return to the market.

5 MENA

A five-star workshop

Executive Chefs from Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain and Kuwait, accompanied by 20 Banquet and Sous chefs took part in an Australian red meat workshop exclusively for the Marriott Corporation in June. The chefs hailed from an impressive list of hotels in the region including the Marriott Renaissance (Qatar), Ritz Carlton (Dubai), Marriott Jeddah (Saudi Arabia) and Marriott Hurghada (Egypt). MLA's MENA region Business Development Manager and resident chef Tarek Ibrahim hosted the workshop, presenting an overview of the Australian red meat industry, new global red meat trends and carcase utilisation training demonstrating 'cut by cook method' muscle seaming.

6 RUSSIA

Celebrating the barbecue

A barbecue festival attended by 20,000 people in Yekaterinburg – a city with a population of approximately 1.4 million, around 2,000km from Moscow – was the showcase for Australian red meat. A total of 36 teams including mass-media, citizens, and culinary college students took part in the barbecue competition using Australian beef and lamb. Participants were awarded different sponsor prizes including MLA branded souvenirs.

20,000
people attended MLA's Russian barbecue

7 AUSTRALIA

MSA on the menu

Patrons of the Kincumber Hotel in NSW will have the pleasure of dining on more MSA product as the hotel moves to an all-MSA graded beef menu.

In preparation for the change, 80 guests were recently treated to two 'paddock to plate' consumer information nights, held in conjunction with MLA covering everything consumers want to know about red meat. The night included a butchery demonstration on how to bone out a leg of lamb, seam a rump and helpful tips on what to look for when purchasing red meat.

Chefs also taught guests how to cook the perfect steak, while MLA's NSW Program Coordinator Mel Marshan provided information about production methods, grass versus grain feeding, where certain cuts come from on a carcase and what cooking methods are best suited to each cut.

Market observations

Lamb on a high

After two decades of a rapidly declining flock, Australian sheep numbers are forecast to exceed 80 million head over the next five years, with export growth predicted to absorb higher production levels.

Tim McRae
MLA Economist

In response to the higher flock numbers, total lamb slaughter and production is expected to increase, reaching 19.5 million head for 2012 and increasing to 20 million head in 2013. With the flock forecast to grow over the next five years, lamb slaughter rates are tipped to exceed 21 million head, with much of the increase in production expected to go into export markets.

Given the demographic shift in the Australia flock in the past two decades towards meat production, the amount of sheepmeat produced for 2013 will exceed that from 1990 – when the Australian sheep flock was almost 90 million head.

Assisting the higher lamb production forecast in 2012 are higher carcase weights. For the first five months of 2012, lamb production was equal with the same period in 2008. However, 700,000 head fewer lambs were slaughtered in 2012, compared to 2008.

While export returns for the first half of 2012 have been impacted by an increase in competition from NZ product, the amount of lamb exiting Australia continued at a record pace, driven by exports to major lamb destinations of China, the Middle East and US. With production expected to be sustained for the second half of 2012, exports will most likely exceed the previous high set in 2009.

One of the main influences on the returns for Australian lamb in export markets, along with the A$, will be the level of consumer demand in the EU and subsequently exports from NZ.

As Australia's main competitor in the global sheepmeat trade, the softness in the EU market in 2012 has seen NZ product diverted into other markets, namely the Middle East and China, reducing the price received by both suppliers. Over the longer term, this factor is expected to subside, with Australian lamb continuing to be in high demand from major importing nations, with the exception of the EU (where Australian shipments are limited by quota).

For the mutton trade, while the expanding flock will help to see some increase in sheep slaughter and mutton production, numbers will remain well below the flock liquidation levels registered between 2000–2009.

Download MLA's *Australian sheep industry projections – mid year update* at **www.mla.com.au/industryprojections**

On the ground

Japan

Melanie Brock
MLA Regional Manager Japan
E: mbrock@mla.com.au

The Japanese are busy and under lots of pressure to look after their families and themselves. This pressure is multiplied in summer when they need to maintain their energy levels to withstand the hot and muggy Japanese summer. With this in mind and remembering the Japanese are increasingly concerned about their health, MLA recently launched a promotion in one of Tokyo's major train stations with the theme 'Let's get energised with iron in Australian beef'.

Shinagawa station, Tokyo's sixth largest train station, proved the ideal location as it is frequented by almost 650,000 people daily – more than the population of Canberra and Hobart put together!

Given the massive foot traffic and numerous numbers of supermarkets and delicatessens located within the station complex, it was the right place to remind people that a good dose of Australian beef will keep them going.

A broad audience was targeted during the promotion – which involved 50 giant screens set in the station walkway – including business people, students and shoppers who pass through daily. However, Japanese women, as the primary grocery purchasers for families with a keen interest in health, beauty and wellbeing, were the primary focus of the campaign.

The campaign, part of the 'Iron Beauty' program launched in 2011, communicated the positive attributes of Australian beef. Images of the Aussie beef logo and people of all ages enjoying Australian beef canvassed the highly visible screens, reinforcing MLA's key messages regarding the importance of iron in beef for a healthy everyday diet.

The 'Iron Beauty' program was developed to encourage Japanese women, a number of whom are iron deficient, to eat Australian beef by promoting its iron content.

MLA will continue to expand the Iron Beauty programs in 2012–13, working closely with Japanese retail, foodservice and the growing *nakashoku* (take-away, delicatessen meals) sectors.

Market insight

Japan: Australian red meat supporter

Japan is the number one export destination for Australian beef with more than 38% of Australian beef exports heading to the Land of the Rising Sun. But what about lamb?

The value of lamb exports increased

4% to A$64.2 million

The fondness for Genghis Khan-style dishes (Mongolian barbecue) has been a key driver for consumption of sheepmeat in Japan over the past decade.

Sheepmeat is not the number one protein choice for the Japanese, who much prefer seafood. Annual sheepmeat consumption per capita in Japan is estimated at under 200g – equivalent to what the average Australian consumes every fortnight. In comparison, seafood consumption is around 30kg and beef consumption is just less than 6kg per capita.

Further rises in sheepmeat consumption have been hampered by the natural disasters which devastated Japan in 2011 and the tough economic conditions that followed and continue to burden the country.

Australian sheepmeat (lamb and mutton) exports to Japan have traditionally risen 4% year-on-year, however subdued demand following the natural disasters in March 2011 have seen lamb exports fall 4% year-on-year in 2011, to 7,381 tonnes swt. The decline was mainly in chilled lamb shipments, which make up the majority of lamb shipments to Japan. Frozen lamb volumes however increased 4% to 2,700 tonnes swt.

Contrary to volumes decreasing, the value of lamb exported rose 4% to A$64.2 million due to strong lamb prices in Australia and a robust Australian dollar. Meanwhile, Australian mutton exports to Japan surged in volume and value with a 19% year-on-year increase to 4,505 tonnes swt and a 33% lift in value to A$32.4 million.

The Japanese economy, like many others around the world remains sluggish, further impacting sheepmeat consumption as consumers prefer to spend their money on what they're familiar with rather than experiment with something new like lamb. Also impacting demand are reduced tourist numbers to the Hokkaido region following the natural disasters. It is estimated that 50% of Australian sheepmeat,

predominantly mutton, imported to Japan is consumed in Hokkaido as Genghis Khan cuisine.

Australia is the main supplier of sheepmeat to Japan, accounting for 70% of imported product, followed by New Zealand at 30%.

What do Japanese consumers think about Australian lamb?

Japanese consumers regard Australian lamb as 'healthy', however it is generally eaten when dining out. Healthiness remains a key purchase driver for lamb among Japanese consumers but a limited understanding of how to cook lamb and the resistance to high value meat due to the slow economy are barriers to expanding lamb sales, particularly at the retail level.

The Buyer's Table

The Buyer's Table was held on 26 June inviting 30 key managers of the top 10 Japanese retailers to the luxury restaurant R2 in Tokyo to hear up-to-date information on the safety, quality and marketing activities of Aussie beef and lamb in Japan, especially iron focused promotions.

One of the highlights was the blind tasting of Aussie beef - three types of grassfed beef from different regions and one grainfed sample. The blind tasting successfully emphasised and reassured the retailers of the high quality of Aussie beef. Overall, the seminar successfully delivered timely and valuable information to the attendees, leaving them equipped to make plans for Aussie beef promotions over the coming months.

A health focused nation

Life spans are longer in Japan than anywhere else in the world and many Japanese are concerned about metabolic syndrome, a collection of disorders that occur together and increase the risk of developing type 2 diabetes or cardiovascular disease (stroke or heart disease). The incidence of metabolic disorder is high among adults aged 40 and over.

In Japan, medical check-ups post-2008 have routinely included measurements of the waistline, as abdominal fat can be a sign one suffers from metabolic syndrome. This has had the effect of making people more conscious about their weight and helped to ignite a boom in healthy foods. As such, MLA is promoting the nutritional attributes of beef and lamb to Japanese consumers, to help grow demand for Australian product.

7th **largest export market** for Australian lamb

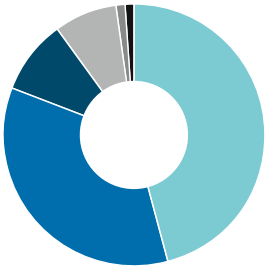
130 **tonnes cwt** of sheepmeat produced by Japan in 2009

200 **grams per capita** consumption of sheepmeat annually by Japanese

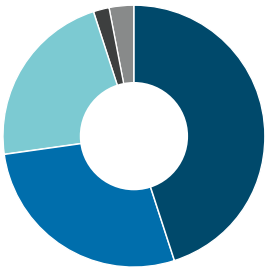
30 **million** Japanese are aged 65 years or over (nearly one quarter of the population)

45,000 **new convenience stores** opened annually

In the container



Lamb:
7,381 tonnes of lamb were shipped to Japan in 2011.
46% shoulder
35% shoulder meat
9% rack/loin
8% leg/shank
1% carcase
1% other



Mutton:
45% manufacturing
28% leg
22% backstrap and loins
2% shank
3% other

On the plate

Genghis Khan-style lamb barbecue is the seasonal dish for summer, especially in northern Japan. It is a popular dish consisting of sliced lamb cooked with plenty of vegetables in a round metal skillet with a bulge in the middle (reflective of the helmets worn by soldiers in Genghis Khan's army and also used at that time for cooking when on duty). At home it is cooked in a saucepan and served on rice.

In metropolitan areas, seasonal outdoor restaurants, also known as 'beer gardens', open in the summer evening, where beer, other drinks and barbecue foods are served. This is an opportunity for men and women of all ages to enjoy a lamb barbecue with family, friends and colleagues.

More than 80% of lamb exports to Japan in 2011 were shoulder and shoulder meat for use in Genghis Khan-style cooking, while lamb racks made up 8% of shipments destined for fine dining.

LambEx 2012

LambEx 2012 was a great success with more than 600 delegates from all sheep producing states of Australia coming together to enjoy the two-day conference, trade show, and the Australian Wool Innovation Grands-Lamb Gala Dinner. There were two days of challenging conversations and information, not to mention entertainment and networking.

LambEx is a collaboration between JBS Australia, MLA, Department of Primary Industries Victoria, the Sheep CRC and Australian Wool Innovation.

On the road to LambEx 2012

Thirty-nine South Australians travelled to LambEx together by bus, holding a series of workshops and making a farm visit along the way.

Left: South Australian producers on their way to LambEx 2012

Below: Trent Loos, guest speaker at Lambex 2012. (Photo courtesy of Fairfax Agricultural Media)

Doug Piper (MLA), Kevin Green (Winner of Industry Achiever Award 2012) and Mikey Robins (MC) at the Red Meat Ball.

A lovely meat ball

Butchers swapped their aprons for suits in June when MLA hosted the second 'Red Meat Networking Club (RMNC) Red Meat Awards' night at Darling Harbour. More than 110 attended the event which allowed retail butchers from around NSW and ACT to not just show off their fancy footwork, but receive industry awards. There were many entries this year from butcher shops doing outstanding work in their communities and serving up innovative beef, lamb and goat products. The winners were:

Category 1 (small business 1–3 employee) – Simon's Gourmet Butchery, Bowral
Category 2 (medium business 3–6 employees) – Ulladulla Butchery
Category 3 (large business over 6 employees) – Hummerston's Gourmet Meats, Lane Cove
Industry achievement award – Kevin Green
Apprentice achievement award – Diana Edwards, Hudson's Meat Surry Hills

Upcoming events

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

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

When and where:
13 September, Three Springs WA
13 September, Kybybolite SA
15 September, Wellington NSW
18 September, Strathalbyn SA
28 September, Cooma NSW

Bookings: www.makingmorefromsheep.com.au/events.htm

Next Generation MeatUp forum
Focuses on the key profit drivers of your red meat enterprise and provides information and tools that can make a real difference to your bottom line.

When and where:
21 September, Longreach Qld

Bookings:
1800 675 717

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:
24–28 September,
West and North Qld

Bookings:
07 3236 3100
prattr@agforceqld.org.au

Bred well. Fed well.

June saw three Bred well. Fed well. workshops delivered in Queensland's Central West at Winton, Muttaburra and Blackall. The days were well received by the 60 attendees. Producers were shown how appropriately selected genetics can be combined with feeding regimes to optimise production in their particular environment. With the majority listing increasing lambing success as a number one priority; the key message of ewe nutrition for reproduction and survival was one that really resonated with local producers.

Using ASBV's for informed ram buying decisions at 'Benalla', Blackall.

Discussion of breeding values as a tool for buying desired genetics at 'Verastan', Muttaburra.

Beef@Injune

Dawson Catchment Coordinating Association (DCCA) organised Beef Day at Injune, with 75 people attending. There was a diverse range of speakers and it was also supported by trade displays including those from Landmark of Injune, Jones Welding Injune and Queensland Murray Darling Committee. Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA) provided landholders with maps of their property which highlighted the exploration licences of mineral resource companies. Tim Kelf from MLA spoke about the Australian beef industry and provided delicious MSA steak for lunch.

A trade display at Beef Day.

BeefUp forum

MLA, together with Northern Gulf Resource Management Group, hosted a Next Generation BeefUp forum in Croydon, attended by 50 people. Designed specifically for 18 to 35-year-olds, the program was developed by a local organising committee to help northern beef producers discover new ways to make more money from their beef production enterprise. Topics covered over the course of the day included animal performance, research and development opportunities, business management and new and emerging markets.

Forum participants try their hand at the team building exercise.

Understanding your farm finances

Delivered by Rural Directions Pty Ltd, the course aims to show you how to find, interpret and use financial data in your business.

When and where:
14 September, Freeling SA
25 September, Kingscote SA
9 October, Lucindale SA

Bookings:
08 8842 1103
nmorley@ruraldirections.com

Feed demand calculator workshop

Workshop on animal nutrition and pasture supply and demand. Strategies for implementing and managing grazing management.

When and where:
31 October, Mount Barker SA
2 November, Mount Barker SA

Bookings:
08 9780 6100
wabeef@agric.wa.gov.au

Vasse Beef Field Day

Results and economic implications of the research outcomes for producers of the Maternal Productivity Trial.

When and where:
26 September, Busselton WA

Bookings:
08 9780 6100
wabeef@agric.wa.gov.au

Ringarooma Towards 2000 with legumes open day

This Ringarooma producer demonstration site (PDS) will conduct a site walk and pasture inspection to discuss the first year of live-weight gain results.

When and where:
31 October, Ringarooma Tas

Bookings: 0418 375 994

MLA AGM and producer forum

Thursday 15 November 2012

Esplanade Hotel, Fremantle, WA

Have your say

Key action dates

4 October	return your Levies Notice or lodge online to receive your full voting entitlements
8 November	submit your questions on notice for the AGM
13 November	return your proxy form by 3pm WA time
15 November	MLA producer forum 12.30pm
15 November	MLA AGM 3pm

For more information visit www.mla.com.au/agm or call 1800 675 717