mla Your levies at work // March/April 2015

Feedback

Making it pay

A note from the MD...

Have you seen MLA's latest beef campaign – 'You're Better on Beef'? This is MLA's second major marketing campaign of the year driving demand for red meat, following the Australia Day lamb campaign.

'Better on Beef' is backed by robust consumer insights and data. It subsequently targets an audience with the greatest potential for growth – time poor busy Australian families who spend more than $2 billion on beef each year and hold nutrition in high regard. To find out more, see page 3 and the booklet that has been included with this edition of *Feedback*.

On the subject of beef, Beef Australia 2015 is just around the corner and MLA is proud to be a principal partner of this event. The MLA Board and I will be attending and we look forward to meeting with many of you. MLA has a varied and engaging program at 'Beef 2015' highlighting how MLA is delivering value to levy payers across the supply chain. For details visit **www.mla.com.au/beef2015**

Next month also sees the conclusion of a successful MLA program – Farm300. This initiative has involved over 300 producers partnering with specialist coaches to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while increasing productivity. You can watch six producers during their Farm300 journey at **www.mla.com.au/farm300** and also read about the program on pages 12–16.

MLA remains committed to clearly communicating to producers about where their levies are invested through channels such as *Feedback*, the MLA website, social media and at events. In order to reduce costs, Feedback will be sent to producers six times per year rather than 10. However, our weekly e-newsletter friday feedback is being enhanced to include a mix of articles that are seasonally relevant, containing expertise, advice and producer interviews; as well as articles about marketing activities and industry news. If you wish to receive friday feedback please email **info@mla.com.au**

Finally, MLA's website **www.mla.com.au** is undergoing a major relaunch later in the year in an effort to be more transparent about MLA activities. I will let you know more information nearer the time.

Richard Norton
MLA Managing Director

Contents

Cover: Father and son Rod and Andrew Purcell share the benefits of individual herd recording. Photo by Kim Woods, Outcross Media.

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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

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Beef marketing campaign

Better on beef

The new message behind MLA's latest marketing campaign, "You're Better on Beef" is built on reinforcing beef's health credentials.

Targeted at time-poor families who have nutrition high on their agenda, the campaign is backed by a strong message emphasising beef's health benefits as being high in protein, iron and zinc.

"We want to remind busy working families about the benefits of eating beef. These families make up one third of Australian households and spend more than $2 billion on beef every year. We know they have a strong emotional desire to feed their families healthy, satisfying meals," MLA's Marketing Manager Consumer Programs Andrew Howie said.

"To get the most out of every day you need the right fuel and beef is the most nutrient rich of the popular proteins, perfect for sustained energy and fuelling healthy Australian lifestyles.

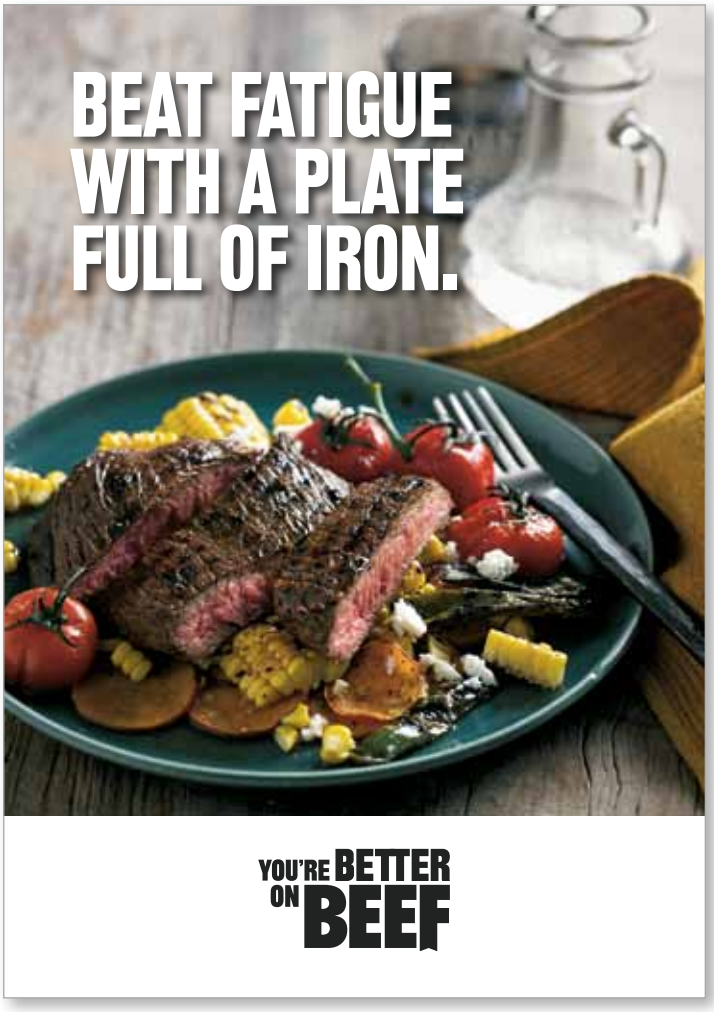
"We want Australians to feel inspired to eat more beef and be proud of their meal choices."

A recent review of MLA's consumer beef marketing program revealed the need to develop a stronger, revitalised message relevant to consumers all year round rather than at traditionally seasonally-focused campaign periods.

Launched on 1 March, the campaign's television advertisement draws parallels with the sporting world and the notion that life is a sport, showcasing Australians approaching everyday challenges, fuelled by the benefits of eating beef.

The television advertisement is screening on free-to-air and subscription channels and is being supported by a promotional campaign of outdoor and shopping centre advertising across major capital cities and key regional centres, 30-second radio ads, point-of sale posters, pack stickers and recipe cards in retailers and independent butchers and digital promotion across the **"You're better on Beef" Facebook page.**

Andrew Howie, MLA // E: ahowie@mla.com.au



Left: point-of-sale poster

Above: screen clips from the television commercial

Calculate your CoP in 15 minutes

What is your cost of production (CoP)? How does it compare with industry benchmarks? If you increased or decreased stock numbers – how would it affect your CoP?

These questions are easier to answer with MLA's CoP calculators now streamlined into a one-stop-shop calculator for cattle, sheep and goats.

The new calculator is easy-to-use, provides helpful prompts along the way (great for those who haven't calculated their cost of production before), is mobile-friendly and can be used off-line.

It allows cattle, sheep and goat producers to input data for one, two or all three species. For two or more species, producers can compare and contrast the CoP for each and also get the results for the entire enterprise.

It also allows users to save various scenarios to access at a later time.

Beef and sheep producers can compare their performance with up-to-date industry benchmarks.

It takes around 15 minutes to work through the calculator once you have a few necessary pieces of information at your fingertips.

CoP, measured in cents/kilogram, is an indication of the outlay required to produce each kilogram of meat for beef, sheep and goat.

Managing your CoP is a key factor affecting the profitability of livestock businesses. Calculating it is an important step in assessing herd and flock performance and making changes.

Try it for yourself at **www.mla.com.au/tools**

Let us *Entice* you

The latest edition of the new-look *Entice* magazine has been released to coincide with the launch of the latest beef marketing campaign (see page 3), and is designed inspire you to cook simple beef and lamb meals with a twist.

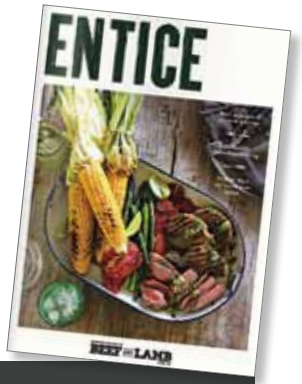
It is available now online, and 1.27 million copies were distributed to consumers at independent meat retailers, including 400,000 through Woolworths and 180,000 through ALDI supermarkets.

This edition boasts a bold new look and features "inspiring meals made deliciously simple."

One of the featured recipes is grilled beef scotch fillets with smoky eggplant and pomegranate salad. You can also watch it being cooked at **www.beefandlamb.com.au/Video/Beef_Videos/Scotch_fillet_smoky_eggplant_salad**.

Other tempting recipes in this edition of *Entice* include:

- Chilean style lamb with tomatoes, asparagus and chargrilled corn
- Beef rump po' boys
- Barbecued butterflied lamb roast
- Meatloaf with quinoa and zucchini
- Char grilled five spice lamb chops



You can read *Entice* online at: **www.beefandlamb.com.au/How_to/Online_magazines/Entice_spring_summer_14_15**

Record breaking beef

The results are in. Last year saw more records broken for Meat Standards Australia (MSA), including the measure of average eating quality of Australian beef in 2014:

18%
increase in number of cattle graded MSA

3.137
million head cattle graded MSA

841
additional end user outlets licenced to promote the MSA trademark

21
additional licenced brands for MLA beef and/or lamb in the market place

40,260
MSA producers

$0.33/kg
average premium for MSA yearling cattle over-the-hooks

Read more about MSA at: **www.mla.com.au/msa**

Preserving pasture seeds for the future

Varieties being tested for seed viability (which includes germination)

MLA levies are contributing to the collection and preservation of Australian pasture genetics in a new genebank.

The Australian Pastures Genebank, located at Adelaide, will house more than 70,000 varieties of pasture and forage species.

The collection will include seeds of important pasture species that have been bred and/or collected for use in Australia. Seeds from tropical, Mediterranean and temperate regions will form part of the collection.

MLA's Sustainable Feedbase Resources Program Manager Cameron Allan said the genebank was an important investment on behalf of producers on many fronts.

"Australia has the world's largest unique collection of pasture and forage genetic resources," he said.

"Many of these genetic resources have come through visits to countries with the sole purpose of collecting pasture species with the potential to add value to Australia's livestock industries and help overcome challenges from a changing climate.

"Having such a diverse base of plant genetics will be critical to helping researchers pinpoint pastures which are drought-tolerant, tolerate pressure from pests and diseases, are adaptable to changing environmental conditions and reduce greenhouse gas emissions."

Cameron said preserving these assets in a well resourced, well catalogued central collection was critical to assuring access to plant genetic diversity going forward.

The genebank will also help meet Australia's obligations to the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture by making the contents of the genebank accessible worldwide.

The South Australian Research and Development Institute will manage the centre, with support from all state governments.

Cameron Allan, MLA
E: callan@mla.com.au

www.sardi.sa.gov.au/pastures/australian_pastures_genebank

The genebank is funded by MLA, the Grains Research and Development Corporation, Australian Wool Innovation, Dairy Australia and the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation and the South Australian Research and Development Institute.

70,000
varieties to be stored in the bank

Reporting back

Levy payers, researchers and anyone else interested in tracking MLA's research and development (R&D) investments now have easy access to an extensive online 'library' of R&D reports and summaries.

While many R&D project reports were previously available online, the new R&D reporting library and search tool have made finding the right report a much quicker and easier exercise.

MLA's Managing Director Richard Norton said the R&D reporting library went live on the MLA website late last year, with reports covering more than 5,400 projects uploaded so far.

"We've already had great feedback from producers and research organisations who say it's a fantastic resource," Richard said.

"Producers can use it as an education and training resource by accessing research results they can apply to their own operations.

"People in the scientific community can search previous projects to avoid duplication of research, and also to inform future projects."

The reports library includes both on-farm and off-farm R&D projects and classifies them under topic headings which relate to current and previous MLA R&D investment areas.

Top tips

The R&D reporting search tool has improved functionality to make it much more user-friendly than the old system. MLA's top tips for using the search tool are:

1. Narrow your search by first selecting a topic or topics, eg eating quality, market information and animal welfare.
2. Treat it like a Google search ie narrow down your search by putting words in quote marks.
3 Check out the 'How to Search' page.
4. If you're having trouble with your search, check the frequently asked questions.

George Waldthausen, MLA
E: gwaldthausen@mla.com.au

MLA R&D Reporting online library:
www.mla.com.au/Research-and-development/Search-RD-reports

Business management

Use it or lose it

Agribusiness consultants Sandy McEachern and Ian McLean share the basics of record keeping for sheep and cattle enterprises.

There's a popular adage in business: if you can't measure it, you can't manage it.

This doctrine applies as much to a livestock business as any other and, according to farm business consultants Sandy McEachern and Ian McLean, measuring without using the results is pointless.

Sandy is co-director of Wagga Wagga-based agricultural consultancy Holmes Sackett and NSW coordinator for the MLA co-funded *Making More From Sheep* program.

"It's important to keep records of anything important to your business, but there are also people who keep records of things they never use," Sandy said.

"What's the point of that?

"A lot of information is recorded out of necessity to meet annual compliance requirements, such as tax requirements, Livestock Production Assurance or National Livestock Identification System requirements.

"The missing step for many producers is having this information available in a format that allows them to use it. Sometimes this means insisting on the use of a chart of accounts that is different from what the accountant wants to use."

Sandy said an example may involve comparing gross margin or profit analysis of individual enterprises within a farm business, whereas the producer's accountant might be content to lump all livestock expenses into one category and all cropping and pasture expenses into another.

Sheep enterprises

Outside the compulsory compliance records, Sandy said the most critical numbers for a sheep producer to record were flock numbers.

"It's very important to have a system in place that allows you, at any point in time, to reconcile your sheep numbers," he said.

"Have a point of the year where you do a whole-farm audit and this will give you good information on things like lamb and ewe mortality, ensure your stocking rates and feed budgeting decisions are on track, and can also highlight other areas where management changes may be needed."

Sandy said the first step in any record-keeping process was to be clear about the purpose of the records you're keeping.

"The next level of information required for producers who are interested in more than the financial performance of their business is production information," he said.

"Purchase and sale weights of livestock, to allow analysis of production/hectare, is important. This information is usually found on purchase and sale receipts, but it's not kept within most accounting software packages."

Sandy said regular recording of livestock condition score was also important.

"A good idea is to condition score mobs every time they are in," he said.

"This means putting your hand on 50 animals from the middle of the mob each time they're yarded. It may seem like an imposition at the time, but it allows the producer to reconcile production performance against how well the animals were fed.

"For the real farm business enthusiast, a record of time spent in the business and where that time is spent will also be enlightening.

"Labour and the labour-related costs, such as vehicles, are the largest expense category in most businesses."

Cattle enterprises

Bush Agribusiness director Ian McLean has been delivering MLA's BusinessEDGE course to northern cattle producers since 2012.

He agreed that too often people collected information, but then did nothing with it.

"I suggest to these people they put it all to one side and instead ask themselves 'what do I want to know about my business?'," he said.

"Do they want to know how the herd is performing? How their business has performed? Whether they're generating profits? Whether they're generating cash flow? Whether their herd performance and business performance is improving or not?

"Once they know what question they're asking they can work back and say 'okay, what information do I need to collect and analyse to answer that?'"

From that point, Ian suggested the record keeping requirements would fall under two headings: financial information and herd information.

He's created a brief guide on his website for BusinessEDGE participants who need a refresher.

He suggested the following high-level headings will help producers keep track of the most vital financial information:

Income

→ Cattle trading (sales and purchases)

→ Other enterprises (sales and purchases)

→ Other income

Expenditure

- → Operating expenditure
  - • enterprise expenditure
  - • overhead expenditure
- → Capital expenditure
- → Interest
- → Tax
- → Owner expenses
- → Provisioning

"It's important to have a system that will give you the numbers against these headings quickly and easily," Ian said.

"Having five years of numbers against these headings, on a single page, is powerful and will tell you a lot about your business.

"Producers don't need to try and be accountants themselves, but they must be able to access the key, high-level information that, as managers of multi-million dollar businesses, they should have on hand."

In terms of recording accurate herd information, Ian doesn't advocate investing in 'whizz bang' herd management software unless you already have a good, simple system in place to keep track of numbers and herd composition.

"An old ledger book is one of the most effective I've seen," he said.

Sandy McEachern
E: sandy@holmessackett.com.au

Ian McLean
E: ian@babusiness.com.au

www.babusiness.com.au

Cost of production calculator:
www.mla.com.au/tools

Record keeping 101

Some producers prefer a notebook or diary. Others like spreadsheets.

Regardless of where producers store their records, it is vital that records are kept, particularly if producers are involved in industry assurance programs, such as Meat Standards Australia (MSA) and the Livestock Production Assurance (LPA) program.

MSA

While some of the following records are required for MSA, others are suggested as best practice:

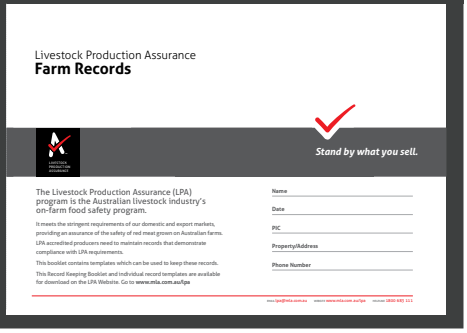
- → **MSA vendor declarations (beef)**
- → **National Vendor Declaration**
- → **MSA registration details** – to access online feedback as well as details to record on vendor declarations.
- → **Carcase grading feedback sheets (beef)** from either the abattoir or accessed through myMSA – to identify areas of non-compliance/seasonal trends, as well as opportunities to improve performance.
- → **MSA Index results (beef)** – to allow performance benchmarking over time to identify if eating quality is improving and on-farm practices are making a difference.
- → **MSA and processor specifications** – processor specifications can change regularly depending on their markets, so it's important to keep up to date.

LPA

The LPA program is the red meat industry's on-farm food safety program. Key aspects of management that should be recorded include:

- → **Property risk assessment** – conduct a property assessment and record any possible contaminated sites, the reason or risk identified, the results (if soil samples were conducted) and a description of how the site is managed to eliminate the risk of livestock contamination.
- → **Livestock treatments** – include date, identification of mob, number of stock, product, batch number, expiry date, withholding period (WHD)/export slaughter intervals (ESI) and date safe for slaughter.
- → **Record of purchased or introduced livestock** – keep the sender copy of the LPA National Vendor Declaration (NVD)/Waybill, which records the date, LPA NVD/Waybill number, number of stock, identification, breed, sex, age, agent/sale, vendor (name and address) and Property Identification Code (PIC).
- → **Livestock feeding record** – include date, commodity vendor declaration (CVD) number, origin of feedstuff, description of feedstuff, amount, storage location, identification of livestock fed and time of feeding (start and finish dates).
- → **Records of livestock sold** – keep a copy of the LPA NVD/Waybill as this records the date, LPA NVD/Waybill number, number of stock, identification, breed, sex, age, purchaser/agent/sale, date and time of yarding, transport company and vehicle registration number.
- → **Grain and fodder treatment record** – include date, silo/storage identification, amount, product, batch number, expiry date, WHP/ESI and date safe for use.
- → **Crop, pasture and paddock treatment record** – include date, paddock identification, area, product, batch number, application rate and method, expiry date/ date of manufacture, WHP/ESI, and the date paddocks are safe to graze.

Templates to assist producers with record keeping for LPA can be downloaded at **www.mla.com.au/lpa** and hard copy record keeping books can be purchased by LPA-accredited producers online by logging on to **lpa.ausmeat.com.au**


Livestock Production Assurance
Farm Records

Stand by what you sell.

The Livestock Production Assurance (LPA) program is the Australian livestock industry's on-farm food safety program.

It meets the stringent requirements of our domestic and export markets, providing an assurance of the safety of red meat grown on Australian farms.

LPA accredited producers need to maintain records that demonstrate compliance with LPA requirements.

This booklet contains templates which can be used to keep these records.

This Record Keeping Booklet and individual record templates are available for download on the LPA Website. Go to **www.mla.com.au/lpa**

Name
Date
PIC
Property/Address
Phone Number

Business management

Creating records

Tasmanian producer Simon Foster said record keeping was vital for keeping track of how each enterprise is performing and for informing decision-making.

With his wife, Penny, and two full-time staff Simon runs a 7,780ha mixed farming operation across several properties.

Simon shares his record-keeping routine with *Feedback*:

What information do you record? Stock numbers, stocking rates, condition scores, body weights, fleece weights, faecal egg counts, treatments, soil test results, tissue test results, fertiliser/chemical applications, pasture assessments (dry matter), machinery tasks performed, crop yields, irrigation water usage and financial information.

What is your routine for recording this data? Most of the information is collected when a task is performed and is recorded by all staff in their farm diary.

Relevant information is then transferred to a computer and is usually recorded in spreadsheets or the farm program, Paddock Action Manager.

Financial information is updated weekly using cloud-based accounting software.

Production and financial information is also entered into spreadsheets for benchmarking and cash flow budgeting. We store these in Dropbox so multiple users can access them.

How do you use the data? The pasture dry matter assessments are entered into various feed budgeting tools (an Excel spreadsheet for whole farm level and paddock level assessment, MLA's pasture growth calculators for planning and Grazfeed for mobs) and the information is then used to make adjustments to our stocking rate at the whole farm level.

Pasture assessments and condition scores are also entered into Grazfeed to help us determine supplementary feed requirements.

Drenching decisions are based on faecal egg count results and stock and pasture condition.

Fertiliser applications are determined from soil and tissue tests.

Benchmark information is used to determine where the opportunities are for improvement in enterprises and also to make strategic decisions about the mix of enterprises.

Tasmanian producer Simon Foster runs a mixed farming business and says detailed records are vital for keeping track of how each enterprise is performing. Image courtesy of Hot Tin Roof Communications.

Simon Foster
E: sifoster@bigpond.com

Access the Rainfall to Pasture Growth Outlook Tool and the Feed Budget and Rotation Planner at **www.mla.com.au/tools**

Snapshot

Simon and Penelope Foster, Campbell Town, TAS.

Property: 7,800ha

Enterprise: Merino wool and ram breeding (16,500 DSE), prime lamb (6,000 DSE), beef cattle (4,500 DSE), irrigated poppies, lucerne and grass seed (250ha), environmental stewardship

Pasture: Phalaris, cocksfoot and sub-clover and native pastures including themeda, danthonia and microlaena

Soil: Highly variable ranging from sands to black cracking clay

Rainfall: 450mm

What is:

Cloud-based accounting software? The 'cloud' is another way of saying the 'internet'. Cloud accounting does the same job as accounting software installed on your computer, except your financial information is stored on servers which you can access from anywhere, on any device, as long as you're connected to the internet.

Dropbox? Dropbox is a file-hosting service that allows you to store files such as videos, photos and documents in a web-based folder that you can access from any device and share with others.

GrazFeed? GrazFeed is a decision-support tool developed by CSIRO. It is an easy-to-use computer program that calculates the energy and protein requirements of sheep and cattle grazing a particular pasture.

Business management

What makes a profitable northern producer?

A new MLA producer manual provides a clear roadmap for northern cattle producers who want to put their businesses into the black by highlighting what the top 25% producers focus on.

Improving the performance of northern beef enterprises – key findings for producers from the Northern Beef Report also helps motivated producers to:

→ Assess and understand their own business and its strengths and weaknesses

→ Focus efforts by identifying important factors which have a big impact on performance

→ Remove distractions, by identifying factors which do not have a big influence on business performance

→ Develop their own roadmap to becoming a 'good business', or a better business.

The attributes of the top 25% northern producers are summarised below.

Charlotte Fox, MLA
E: cfox@mla.com.au

Download the producer manual:
www.mla.com.au/northernperformance

The top 25% of northern producers focus on what they can control

By influencing their herd productivity:

→ Reproduction rate
(↑1% → ↑1.50 kg/AE response)

→ Mortality
(↓1% → ↑2.28 kg/AE response)

→ Turnoff weight
(↑1kg → ↑0.18 kg/AE response)

By being business savvy:

→ Think differently and independently

→ Their property/station is primarily a business and they take a businesslike approach

→ They have and stick to a plan

→ They actively seek new information, rationally assess it and apply elements of benefit to their business

→ They get the simple things right (reproduction rate, mortality and turnoff weight)

By managing their operating expenses:

→ Variable costs on the herd are targeted and effective
($ returned > $ spent)

→ Overheads – scale
(↓costs for herds > 3,000 AE)

→ Overheads – labour efficiency
(running > 1,500 AE/FTE)

Market access

Levelling the playing field

Industry taskforces representing producers, processors and live exporters have played important roles in recent free trade agreement (FTA) negotiations, according to MLA Trade and Market Access Manager Andrew McCallum.

The unified industry position on trade priorities has paid dividends, he said, with the China agreement alone expected to deliver benefits worth billions of dollars to the sector over the next 16 years.

"The China-Australia FTA has the potential to boost the gross value of beef production by $270 million a year by 2024," Andrew said.

"By 2030 the total benefits for beef will approach $3.3 billion.

Australia's existing FTAs

1983
Closer Economic Relations (CER) Agreement between Australia and New Zealand

2003
Singapore-Australia FTA

2005
Thailand-Australia FTA

2005
Australia-United States FTA

2009
Australia-Chile FTA

2010
ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand FTA: Association of South East Asian Nations and comprises Burma, Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam

2012
Malaysia-Australia FTA

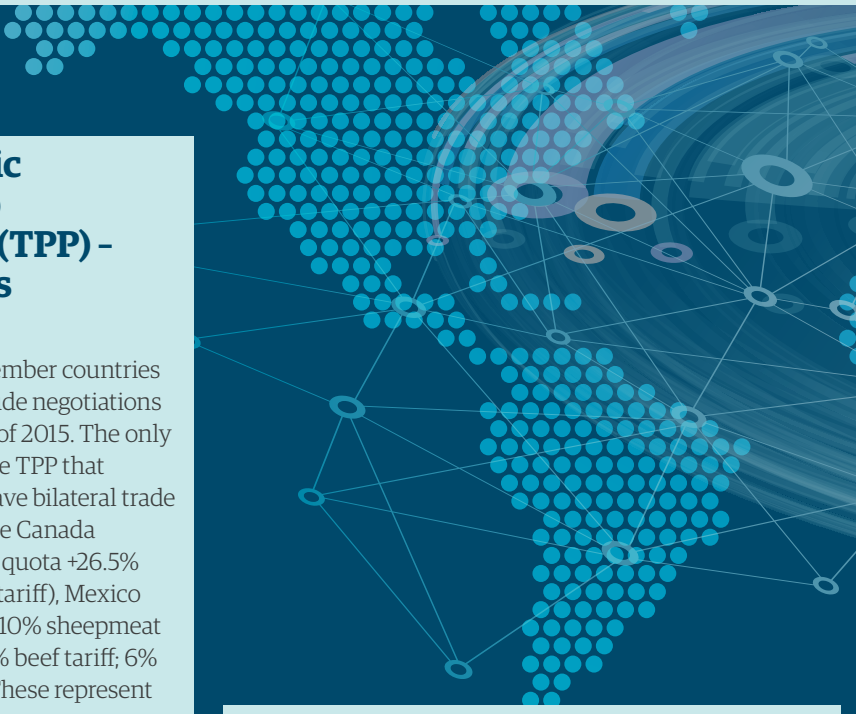
2014
Korea-Australia FTA

2015
Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement

Australia-European Union (EU) FTA – proposed

The Australian Government is canvassing industry views on an Australia-EU FTA. At the G20 meeting in 2014 Australia's Prime Minister met with his British, German and French counterparts and all indicated they were supportive of Australia and Europe moving to a closer trade partnership. Australian beef and sheepmeat access to Europe is currently subject to quota constraints, with above-quota tariffs of 70–100%. Improving grassfed and grainfed beef access, as well as securing improved lamb and mutton access, into the EU is a high priority, so the Australian beef and sheepmeat industry will be encouraging the government to pursue an FTA with the EU at the earliest opportunity.

EU members: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom.



Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP) – negotiations began 2010

This involves 12 member countries who hope to conclude negotiations by the first quarter of 2015. The only countries within the TPP that Australia doesn't have bilateral trade agreements with are Canada (35,000 tonne beef quota +26.5% tariff; 2.5% mutton tariff), Mexico (20-25% beef tariff; 10% sheepmeat tariff) and Peru (13% beef tariff; 6% sheepmeat tariff). These represent priority markets. Improvements to current FTA access arrangements are also being sought with Japan and the US.

TPP members: Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, United States of America, Vietnam.

Australia-India Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (AI-CECA) – negotiations began 2011

The Australian Government has indicated a desire to conclude these negotiations as soon as possible – potentially by the end of 2015. There are currently 30% tariffs on all Australian red meat products entering India.

A unified industry approach to international trade negotiations is paying dividends for Australian cattle and sheep producers.

"For the sheepmeat sector the potential benefits are over $150 million each year by 2024, with the value over the next 16 years being more than $1.8 billion."

In the past 12 months Australia has completed negotiations with Korea, Japan and China, all vitally important FTAs for the beef and sheepmeat sector.

"MLA coordinated an Industry Taskforce for each of those key FTAs. The taskforce members agreed on and subsequently implemented an advocacy strategy for each FTA. This involved working closely with our government trade negotiators and the offices of the Minister for Trade and Investment, and the Minister for Agriculture," Andrew said.

Australia is party to a number of FTAs and other trade agreements, both in force and in the pipeline.

Below is Andrew's snapshot of where current negotiations are up to and what the expected benefits will be:

Andrew McCallum, MLA
E: amccallum@mla.com.au

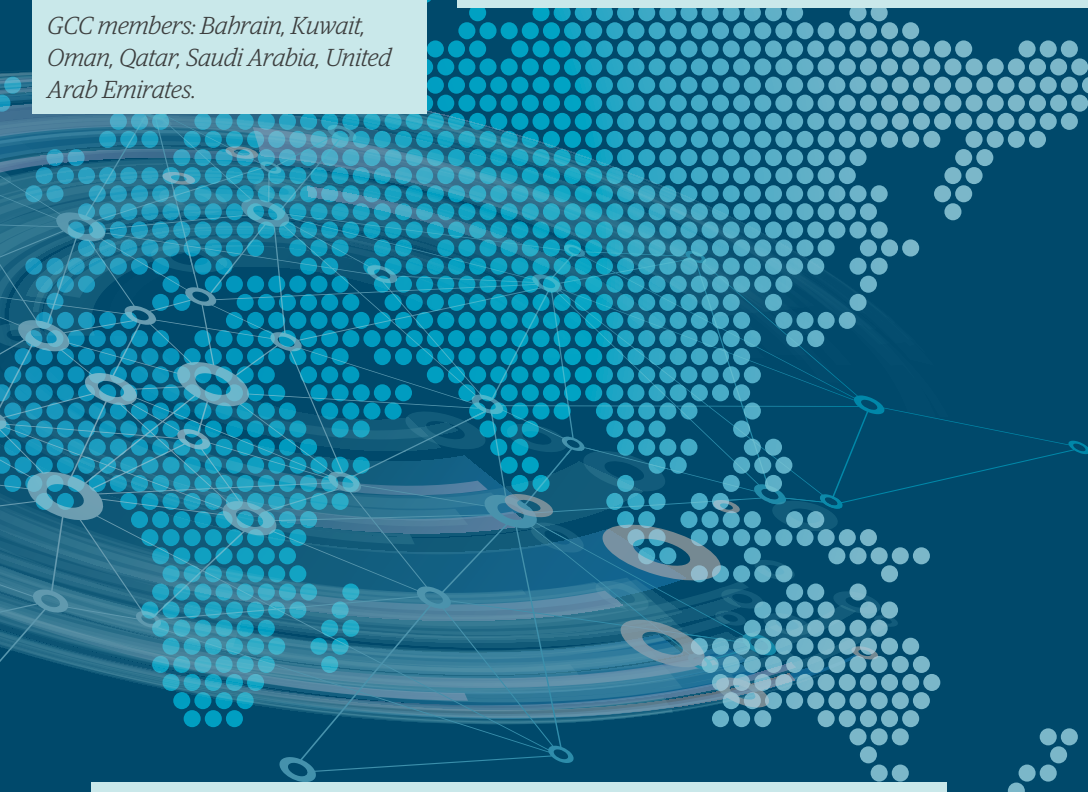
Australia-Gulf Cooperation Council FTA (GCC FTA) – negotiations began 2007

There has been a recent lull in these negotiations, due to the GCC reviewing all its trade agreements.

GCC members: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates.

China-Australia FTA (ChAFTA) – negotiations concluded 2014

Following the announcement by the Australian and Chinese governments that the FTA negotiations had been successfully concluded, domestic approval processes to allow the ChAFTA to enter into force are currently underway. The red meat sector stands to gain around $11 billion from improved access arrangements with all tariffs imposed by China on our products to be eliminated. The agreement delivers: elimination of the 12-25% tariffs on Australian beef over nine years; elimination of the 15-23% tariffs on sheepmeat and goat meat over eight years; elimination of the 12-25% tariffs on offals over four-10 years; elimination of the the 5-14% tariffs on hides and skins over four-eight years; and elimination of the 10% tariffs on live cattle and live sheep over four years.



Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (IA-CEPA) – negotiations began 2012

Indonesia is incorporated under the existing ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand FTA, so there has already been some trade reform in Indonesia as a result. The few remaining tariffs on Australian beef and sheepmeat are 5% or lower. Under an FTA, industry is seeking to strengthen and expand the cooperation relationship with Indonesia.

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) – negotiations began 2012

Australia has FTAs with all the parties in the RCEP negotiations, except India. This gives Australia another opportunity to negotiate with India, plus seek improvements on previous agreements with the aim of harmonising regulations and customs procedures.

RCEP members: Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Research at work

The latest on-farm strategies emerging from MLA's investment in research, development and extension.

In this issue

Producing with less gas

More than 300 beef and sheep producers across Australia are boosting their bottom line while reducing their environmental impact. They are participating in the Farm300 program, initiated and managed by MLA and funded by the Australian Government, to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of cattle and sheep businesses while boosting profitability and productivity. →

Farm300 numbers

Participation:

320
beef and lamb producers participating in Farm300

128
farm advisers trained to support producers

23
coaches delivering group workshops plus one-on-one extension

Aims:

10%
increase in profitability

30%
reduction in GHG intensity

Climate variability

Farm300, a two-year program, is due to finish in May 2015 and aims to leave a lasting legacy by equipping producers and their advisors to:

- → Manage emissions on farm
- → Understand and respond to challenges from seasonal climate variability and longer-term impacts of climate changes
- → Potentially benefit financially from generating carbon credits
- → Minimise their environmental footprint.

As part of Farm300's focus on 'real solutions for real life', farm advisors have enhanced their practical knowledge and skills, and in turn supported producers to introduce productivity measures that also reduce emissions.

Through the program, 128 advisors have been upskilled with 23 receiving additional training to become Farm300 coaches and establish their own producer groups. They have been holding group workshops and one-on-one sessions with producers in their region to identify how on-farm changes through skill development could achieve the triple benefit of productivity, profitability and emissions reduction.

"The overall aim of the program is to give producers the skills to increase their profitability by 10% while reducing GHG emissions by up to 30%," Irene Sobotta, MLA Research Extension Manager - Sustainability, said.

Farm300 guides producers to take strategic steps that suit their individual enterprises, with positive benefits to productivity, risk management and emissions footprint.

"Making many small adjustments to the enterprise is more effective than waiting and being forced to make large, more radical or costly decisions under stress," Irene said.

"Farm300 aids producers to implement a three-step process (monitor, set triggers and strategies, and put their plan into action), so the process is manageable."

Farm300 is funded by the Australian Government and managed by MLA in partnership with the Australian Farm Institute, Australian Wool Innovation and Dairy Australia.

Basil Doonan, Farm300 National Coordinator,
E: farm300@macfrank.com.au

Irene Sobotta, MLA
Research Extension Manager - Sustainability,
E: isobotta@mla.com.au

Making change

Australia has an overall target of reducing total GHG emissions by 5% in 2020 compared to the level in 2000. A significant amount research has gone into reducing emissions from livestock to support Australia meeting its target including through the MLA-managed National Livestock Methane Program (**www.mla.com.au/nlmp**).

The Farm300 project is encouraging emissions reductions from the livestock sector through its extension work.

Research has demonstrated that the main opportunities for livestock producers are to improve production while reducing emissions. This also can reduce the *intensity* of livestock emissions, which is the GHG emissions/kg of meat produced. Therefore, emissions intensity is strongly correlated with increased production efficiency.

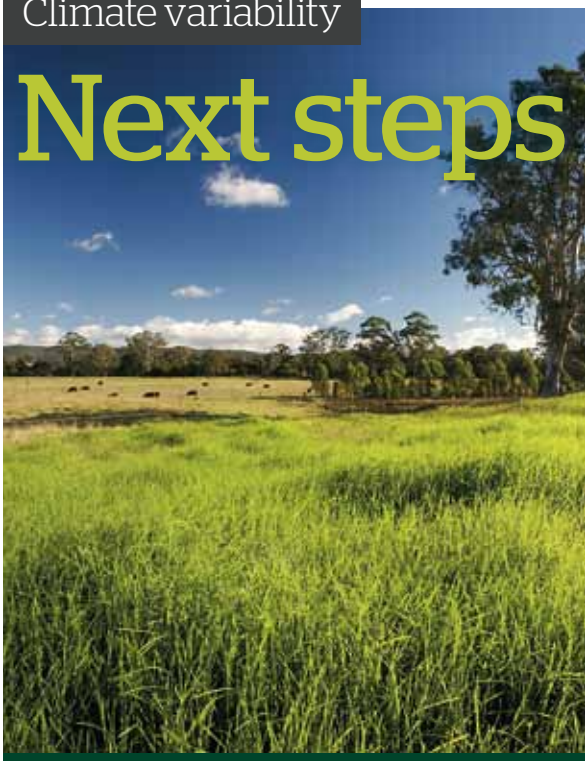
A livestock producer can introduce a particular action, such as grazing management (see below), which reduces emissions intensity by 30%. If the stock numbers are not increased, this could also result in a 30% reduction in net emissions.

Some of the ways producers are increasing productivity and reducing emissions are shown in the table below.

By making this on-farm management change...	Productivity/ profitability can be increased because...	And emissions can be reduced because...
Managing grazing to increase native grasses	More calves can be weaned and sent to market earlier	Stock are turned off sooner
Establishing higher quality pastures	Makes livestock production systems more efficient	Leads to reduced methane emissions per kg red meat
Improving soil health	Improves pasture utilisation	Improves carbon sequestration
Genetic selection for quicker growth rates	Growth targets achieved sooner	Stock are turned off sooner
Enterprise change, from breeding to finishing or vice versa depending on the farm's resource base	Potential to increase income or achieve better cash flow	Animals are turned off earlier and maintenance requirements are reduced
Tools such as scanning, priority feeding etc to improve calving/ lambing rates	Increases production	More production per 'methane emitter' (ewe/cow)
Revegetation of less productive land	Improves soil health, increases pasture and provides additional shelter protection for stock	Improves carbon sequestration

Climate variability

Next steps



Although more than 300 producers have engaged directly in Farm300, all Australian producers can benefit from the program's tools and resources via www.mla.com.au/farm300:

- **Watch:** MLA has produced a video tutorial which outlines three key steps to managing climate variability and the longer term impacts of climate change in livestock enterprises and highlights where productivity gains can also be achieved.
- **Follow:** Through a 12-part video series, track the progress of six producers at the beginning of their Farm300 journey and again at the end as they make on-farm changes.
- **Learn:** The Sustainable Grazing producer manual explains how grazing management techniques can be used to achieve productivity and emissions benefits.
- **Seek:** Contact your nearest Farm300 coaches
- **Calculate:** The Australian Farm Institute has developed on-line tools for modelling greenhouse gas emissions and financial performance for carbon farming projects. The FarmGAS tools are free of charge and provide producers, their advisors and researchers with a full picture of how changing farm practices will impact on a farm business both environmentally and economically. **www.farminstitute.org.au/calculators/farm-gas-calculator**

Climate change policy at a glance

Since its commencement in 2012, the Australian Government's Carbon Farming Initiative (CFI) (a voluntary carbon offset scheme) has provided opportunities for producers and land managers to generate Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUS) by reducing land sector GHG emissions or storing carbon in vegetation and soils.

On 24 November 2014, the CFI transitioned into the Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF), which is a part of the government's Direct Action Plan. The ERF is now the primary mechanism for Australia to meet its target of reducing total GHG emissions by 5% below 2000 levels by 2020. The government has provided $2.55 billion to establish the ERF, with further funding to be considered in future budgets.

So what does this mean for the CFI? Existing CFI projects will continue under the ERF. Changes to current and new methods will not affect existing projects. However, existing projects will have the option to continue to use the version of the method in place when their project was approved, or to apply to use another applicable ERF method.

The ERF will provide an opportunity for landholders to receive payments for reductions in GHG emissions by selling their ACCUs to the Clean Energy Regulator, acting on behalf of the government, through a reverse auction process.

Currently, there are several types of projects covered by methods eligible to earn carbon credits that may be relevant to livestock producers, including:

- Early dry season savanna burning (for regions above 1,000mm average annual rainfall)
- Feeding nitrates to beef cattle
- Native forest protection (avoided deforestation)
- New farm forestry plantations
- Sequestering carbon in soil in grazing systems
- Permanent environmental plantings of native tree species.

There are a number of other methods under development that may also be applicable, including improved herd management of beef cattle, early dry season savanna burning (600–1,000mm rainfall) and a new 'avoided deforestation' method.

For livestock producers, the ERF rules enable methods to include recognition of improvements in emissions intensity (not just reductions in total emissions). The improved herd management for beef cattle method includes this approach and it is hoped that this will improve opportunities for adoption by producers.

Updates on implementation of the ERF are available at: **www.cleanenergyregulator.gov.au/Emissions-Reduction-Fund/News-and-events/Pages/Default.aspx**

Updates on ERF methods are available at: **www.cleanenergyregulator.gov.au/Emissions-Reduction-Fund/Types-of-projects/Pages/default.aspx**

In profile | Climate variability

Mick and Noela Alexander //

Northern producers in a Farm300 coaching group

Snapshot

Mick and Noela Alexander, Rockhampton, Qld.

Property: 1,400ha grazing block on the Fitzroy River floodplain

Enterprise: 300 Brahman x Droughtmaster females, crossed with Angus bulls, sell cull females and steers 550- 600kg liveweight

Why is Farm300 important?
It's exciting to be at the forefront of an industry-wide emissions reduction program. Agriculture has taken a lot of hits in recent years - floods, droughts, prices - so it's great to have a good news story that is based on science. It's an opportunity for producers who are doing the right thing to earn carbon credits which can potentially be turned into income.

We knew that we could improve productivity using rotational grazing techniques, but until the Farm300 workshops didn't realise this could also be reducing emissions. Further, we could now generate Australian Carbon Credit Units which we could sell to the government via the Clean Energy Regulator if we use the Emissions Reduction Fund method. This could be the boost that producers really need.

Farm300 has given us a greater understanding of methane emissions as well as measuring and monitoring soil carbon. While we don't know all the details of how the carbon credit scenario will eventually play out, I think it is important to be on the front foot.

What motivated you to participate?
Noela and I took over 'Bindaree' (from Noela's late father, Trevor Jones) two years ago. Although the property has been well run, it was imperative to make major changes to be profitable long-term. Our goals are to improve animal and pasture productivity, profitability and soil/pasture health.

We're in our second year of conversion to an organic operation and are establishing an intensive rotational grazing to turn off cattle quicker.

How have you already increased productivity and reduced emissions?
Due to rotational spelling we are carrying more stock and came through last year's dry period last year with healthy pasture. We are reducing emissions intensity by faster turn off. In the past, it took four years or more to finish steers for the Japan ox market. Many steers had 6-8 teeth and missed the EU market, even though they met every other requirement.

Our goal is to reduce the age to 2-2.5 years and target the premium organic market. To produce more kilograms of beef/animal/year, we are lifting the legume content of our pastures, introducing Angus bulls with genetics for faster maturity and further developing the rotational grazing system.

How will pasture improvement and rotational grazing benefit your business?
Since 2005, we've operated a four paddock/mob grazing management program. We're now taking it to the next level. We began with 11 paddocks and will fence them into 80 (15-20ha each) in the next year or so and run our breeders as one mob. Mobs will move between paddocks every one to three days in summer and three to five in winter. This short grazing will increase liveweight gain and reduce methane emissions.

Only about 10% of the paddocks are improved to stylos and the remainder are native grasses - kangaroo, black spear, forest blue. Nutrient improvement will include:

- → Planting a new pasture legume, Progardes
- → Using intensive grazing and long rests to increase mycorrhiza and free living nitrogen fixing soil bacteria in our soils.
- → Trialling soft rock phosphate fertiliser to improve deficiencies (following soil nutrient analysis).

The improved legume pastures will reduce nitrous oxide and methane losses from the soil, as well as improve digestibility and therefore methane emissions, which is likely to improve the efficiency of energy utilisation and increase productivity.

How are you monitoring emissions and/or carbon on your property?
With support from CQ University and Farm300 coach Dr Thakur Bhattarai, we will conduct whole property soil carbon analysis, nutrient audit and overall farm profitability analysis this year.

We have already taken preliminary samples which show our lighter sandy country has up to 40 tonnes of carbon/ha (0-100cm), while the heavier country is 120tC/ha (0-100cm). Our Farm300 group is using tools, such as the FarmGAS calculator, to assess our baseline emissions and model different reduction activities. Our baseline emissions, calculated on 2014 activities and using a default model total 851.2 tonnes CO^2 equivalents.

We'll reassess them before completing the Farm300 coaching to see how our grazing impact emissions. A couple of model scenarios show a reduction of methane emissions by 23%, with possible 15% additional profit. The six months' coaching could be too short to see the implications, so we will continue assessment. We are also using the tool to assess the changes to legume content in pastures, carrying capacity, plant growth and others as required.

Mick Alexander
E: mick@grazingbestprac.com.au

Watch videos showcasing the journey of six producers participating in Farm300 at **www.mla.com.au/farm300**

In profile | Climate variability

Graham and Polly Sudholz //

Southern producers in a Farm300 coaching group

Snapshot

Graham and Polly Sudholz, Kotupna, Vic.

Property: 450ha of improved pasture and irrigation

Enterprise: 2,200 composite (East Friesian, Texel, Merino and White Suffolk) ewes. Wean 3,100 lambs/year, sold for export at 25-28kg dressed weight

What motivated you to participate in Farm300? We wanted to know how we can continue to increase our efficiency.

What did you expect from the first workshop? I thought it might be a bunch of greenies, so I was pleasantly surprised that it was a productive session. We were not arguing about the science, we were tackling the issue of how livestock producers can work within the environmental and production parameters we face.

How have you already increased productivity and reduced emissions in your business? In the past five years we have focused on lifting our flock's reproductive performance to increase the efficiency of our business. We used tools from Lifetime Ewe Management to maximise fertility, such as feeding based on condition score and scanning ewes so we can separate them into single, twin or triplet paddocks and manage accordingly. We achieve 80% conception rates with our ewe lambs (joined to lamb at 13 months of age) and mark 115%, while our adult ewes scan at 169% and mark at 149%.

Improving reproductive performance means we're producing more lambs from the same number of ewes – this significantly reduces emissions/kg meat produced. We also have planted wildlife corridors, fenced creeks and preserved remnant vegetation to keep a balance between the environment and grazing. Improving management of vegetation is also a way of offsetting our farm's emissions by storing more carbon on our land.

What is your next target to improve productivity and reduce emissions? The next gain for us will come from producing more high quality feed, to improve pasture utilisation so we can grow lambs more quickly and turn them off sooner. High quality feed means feed with high digestibility. Livestock grazing feed with high digestibility produce less methane than those grazing lower quality feeds. It's a more efficient system that enables early-turnoff.

What are you up to now? Last year, we ran a trial mob of lambs from terminal sires. We turned them off at 14 weeks to dress at 24kg. They achieved average weight gains of 356g/day. We want to replicate this across our business to reduce the emissions intensity from the same flock size. As we are not increasing our flock size, this should also result in a reduction of our flock's total emissions.

What steps are you taking to achieve this goal? We've conducted soil tests to assess the health of our soil and current levels of carbon and are now looking for an agronomist to advise us on how we can lift the quality and quantity of our pastures.

We also want to investigate how we can make rotational grazing work for our lactating ewes. It is a good tool for our dry sheep but can cause mismothering with lambs, so we want to balance pasture management with flock management.

What do you see as other useful tools for your business? We will use FarmGAS to calculate our emissions profile and evaluate the financial performance of different emission reduction activities in our business. We can also make gains with genetics, such as using more terminal rams, to achieve faster turn-off.

Kotupna producers Graham and Polly Sudholz are looking to increase their on-farm efficiency. Photographer: Simon Bingham. Copyright McPherson Media Group.

Graham Sudholz
E: sudholzfarm@activ8.net.au

Forage budgeting

Bringing down the forage budget

Megan Willis, Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Queensland Stocktake Coordinator, demonstrating the Stocktake Plus app at Wandovale Station, Charters Towers.

Assessing pasture yield to assist with adjusting stocking rates allows producers to make informed decisions about how to manage their available pasture until the end of the dry season. One way to do this is with a forage budget.

Forage budgeting is a process for calculating sustainable stocking rates based on available pasture and animal intake over a period of days, weeks or months.

It lets producers balance forage supply (existing and anticipated pasture yield) and forage demand (how much the animals will consume) over a defined period.

To make the job easier, the MLA-supported FutureBeef program has developed the Stocktake Plus app, a grazing monitoring and management decision support tool for producers and advisors predominantly located in northern Australia.

The app calculates a forage budget to determine the appropriate balance of stock to the available pasture. The app produces reports, based on pasture estimates, including long-term carrying capacity and land condition benchmarks.

Developing a forage budget is recommended at the end of the growing season (April or May for northern Australia) or each time livestock are moved between paddocks.

A forage budget will help determine if a paddock can either sustainably carry more stock, carry the same number for longer, or if there is not enough pasture to safely carry the current number for the length of time required.

For example, a forage budget may indicate that between May and December a producer can carry 400 adult equivalents (AE) in a particular paddock based on the total pasture yield. If the paddock historically carries 300 AE, then there's an opportunity to increase your stock numbers.

On the other hand, if the paddock generally carries 500 AE, and a producer has identified forage to support only 400 AE, then there's a high risk running out of pasture, reducing livestock performance and eating into planned residual feedbase.

The app's mobility allows users to capture data while in the paddock and then later securely sync their device (via Wi-Fi or 3G access) and upload the data to their personal account. This allows users to:

FutureBeef STOCKTAKE PLUS

- → Capture important production data for analysis
- → Manage property resources
- → Understand their property environment over time
- → View and export their data through a personal and secure portal.

Leading up to April, northern producers can:

- → Map paddocks and understand how they are being used by stock, considering how water distribution and land type differences are affecting stock grazing patterns
- → Prioritise areas for forage budgeting
- → Decide which stock to sell or move first and which stock might be retained.

For more information, or to express an interest in attending a Stocktake workshop to learn more about forage budgeting and how to use the Stocktake Plus app contact
Megan Willis
E: megan.willis@daff.qld.gov.au

If you have an Apple or Android device you can download the Stocktake Plus app from **www.stocktakeplus.com.au**

Turn to pages 6-7 for more on record keeping.

Reproductive efficiency

Backing it up with science

Kylie Schooley (pictured below) is convinced scientifically proven principles for beef management not only work, but provide a reassuring framework on which producers can base their decisions.

Participating in the MLA-funded CashCow project as a producer and researcher (she is also a veterinary surgeon) illustrated to Kylie Schooley the need to rely on more than 'gut instinct' in cattle production.

"For me this was one of the great outcomes of CashCow. It was a relief to see there are basic rules and strategies producers can stick to, through good times and bad, that will progress your herd," Kylie said.

"Managing a beef enterprise doesn't have to be intuitive or flying by the seat of your pants. Good planning plus trigger points matched to objective measuring of cattle and pasture condition make decisions much easier.

"I think the strongest message from CashCow is there is a tremendous amount you can do through management and measuring some variables in your system that will translate to more money."

Kylie and husband, Simon, are not afraid to do things differently and run a British-based composite herd (a blend of Angus, Hereford, Shorthorn and Senepol) in a tick-infested, *Bos indicus* dominated area. They manage to do this profitably through careful management and by being part of a tick eradication program. They believe the economic benefit of being able to sell fast-growing *Bos taurus* animals is worth the extra effort.

The couple target premium markets, joining 580 females annually to produce 500 calves that meet EU and PCAS (Pasturefed Cattle Assurance Scheme) specifications.

The steer portion is sold to EU and PCAS specifications as either heavy feeders or as bullocks, averaging 330kg dressed at two-teeth and 12mm of fat.

Cull heifers are sold at two to two-and-a-half years, averaging 280kg dressed at milk/two-teeth while cull cows are fattened and usually weigh 260kg dressed.

Most years they custom feed heifers for supply to Coles.

Kylie has completed all the EDGE Network workshops and several pasture courses and said CashCow was not a revelation. However, it reaffirmed her conviction that good pasture and reproductive management were profit drivers in a breeder operation.

The Schooleys have simplified their business to four vital components, as explained here by Kylie:

Grass: Management for us always addresses our pastures first. Land management is critical and that really hit home during the CashCow project – how important it is not to overstock and to keep pasture in good condition. Our system is completely driven by the quantity and quality of grass, so that is always the main thing to watch.

Condition: Body condition score of calving cows is also really important – you want a good, solid three or above at calving or fertility and production will suffer. And it is something you can manipulate through management by either reducing your herd size or weaning calves earlier. We join our females in November (heifers at six weeks; cows at 12-16 weeks) and foetal age them in April. Late calvers are drafted off and managed separately and empties culled. Foetal ageing is a good tool for not only managing your herd more efficiently by being able to sort females into early, late and empties but also for alerting you to reproductive diseases or bull failures in your herd.

It is also helpful to keep your cow genetics moderately sized. Larger cows need more feed – it's pretty simple.

Weaning: The cows calve from the end of August to early November and weaning is in April. Calves are yard weaned, worm drenched, and separated on weights. Those under 240kg (usually about 25%) are fed whole cottonseed, or similar, while the larger weaners are fed a urea supplement, once pasture quality declines. We usually plan to have fresh spelled pasture for weaners.

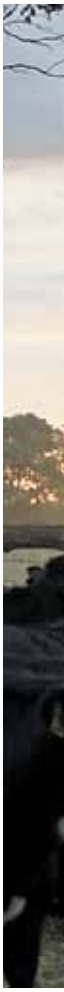
Measurement: We took part in benchmarking in the Southern Forest region of CashCow and used some of the project's suggested measurements such as average weaner weight, beef production/cow and weaning percentage to measure productivity. The herd scored well, which has strengthened our resolve to stick to herd management plans even when traditionally things may have been done differently. This includes objectively measuring pasture and cattle production, be it either weight or fertility. Pushing the system too hard in our harsh environment generally leads to less dollars made. We find always weaning on time or earlier and always culling empty cows preserves profitability; it's simple principals really. Benchmarking is also helpful for pointing out areas where you may be deficient, and maiden heifer fertility and foetal loss are two areas we are working on.

Kylie Schooley
E: schooley@bigpond.com

www.futurebeef.com.au/resources/newsletters/futurebeef-ebulletin/cash-cow-which-cows-produce-the-most/

Learn more about MLA's EDGE Network courses at: **www.mla.com.au/edgenetwork**

Pasturefed Cattle Assurance Scheme **www.certifiedpasturefed.com.au**



Snapshot

Simon and Kylie Schooley, Mundubbera, Qld.

Property:
6,000ha

Enterprise:
Breed and fatten for feeder and EU markets; EU and PCAS accredited

Livestock:
1,500 mixed cattle

Pasture:
Legumes, Buffel, Rhodes, blue grass, black spear grass

Soil:
Scrub soils, softwood scrub and Brigalow country. Silver leaf ironbark on clay moving to ironbark and spotted gum ridges.

Rainfall:
675mm

Clockwise from top: Kobi Schooley with weaners in the yards; Simon, Kobi and Amilia Schooley in fresh pasture; Schooley calves on improved pastures.

Reproductive efficiency

Focusing on performance

Snapshot

Lachlan and Dugald Campbell, Wellington, NSW.

Property: 7,300ha

Enterprise: Self-replacing Merino ewes, trade stock

Livestock: 20,000 DSE

Rainfall: 660mm

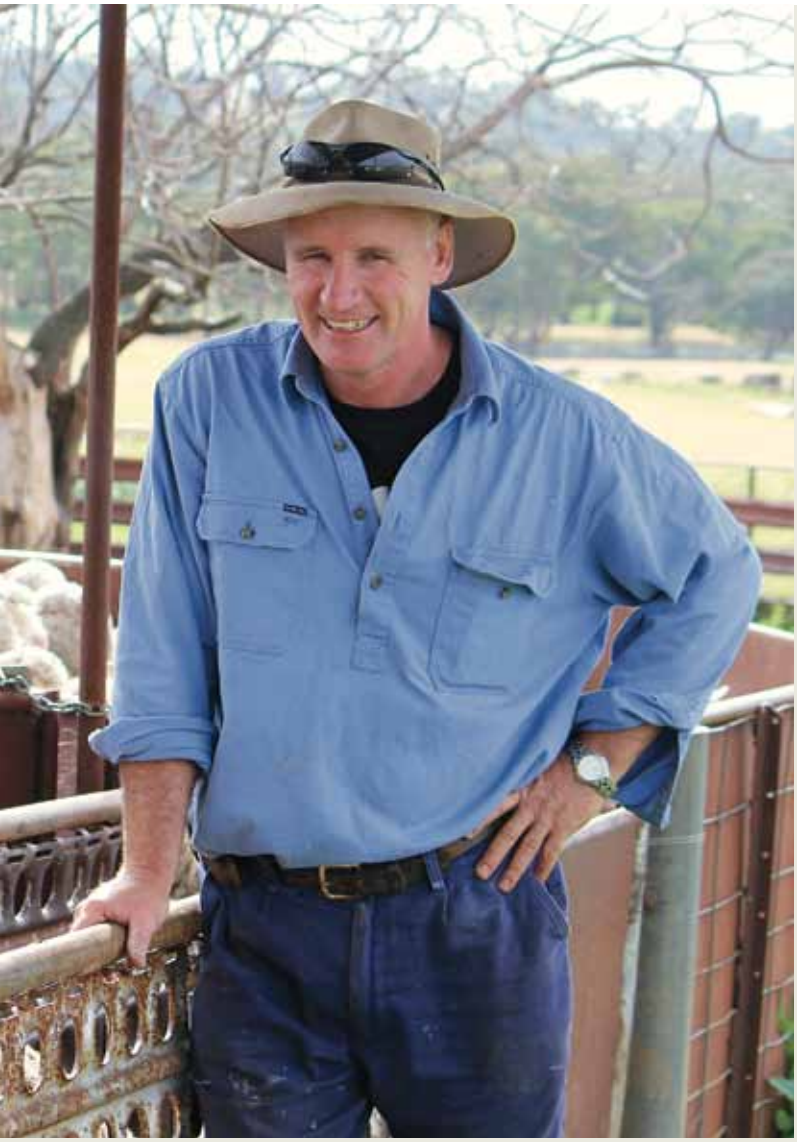
Can one workshop really change your business? It certainly did for NSW brothers Lachlan and Dugald Campbell.

When Lachlan attended his first Bred Well Fed Well (BWFW) workshop in 2012, he expected to pick up a management strategy or two. To his surprise, it ended up being the catalyst for a management change that is delivering more lambs and higher weight gains.

The Campbells run a breeding flock of merino ewes and trade cows and calves. Their target carrying capacity is 20,000 DSE.

Their long-term average has been 90% lambing rate at marking but, in just one year after the BWFW workshop, they have converted this to 105%. Following a second BWFW workshop in 2013, they have set their sights on 115% for the next season.

"I come from an agricultural consulting background, and I thought it was one of the most concise and well-articulated one-day courses I've ever been to, due to (deliverer of the course) Jason Trompf's knowledge of figures and how management impacts the bottom line," Lachlan said.



He credits BWFW with highlighting the 'low-hanging fruit' in their business.

"There is no point in running an underperforming enterprise," Lachlan said.

"An underperforming self-replacing Merino flock is a waste of time and money. We are conscious of the opportunity costs from not having a prime lamb enterprise, where we could get 130% lambing."

Lachlan and Dugald made several changes after the BWFW workshop.

They looked at what they did have in their business – ewes – and focused on lifting their efficiency by increasing body condition scores and the availability of feed at joining, prior to lambing and during lactation.

They lifted body condition score of ewes at joining to 3/3.5 (from as low as 2.5), by calculating metabolic energy requirements and feeding barley. They also shortened joining from six-and-a-half weeks to five weeks, which enables earlier weaning at 20kg.

The results speak for themselves. In the first year of changes:

- → Lambs reached target weights of 42kg at 180 days post-weaning, for an average daily weight gain of 122g
- → The number of lambs marked increased from 2,800 to 3,375
- → There were no metabolic diseases or assisted births
- → Ewe mortality was less than 0.5%.

"Not only are we producing more lambs as a result of this workshop, we are weaning lambs at heavier weights," Lachlan said.

"It came down to identifying the parts of our business we know well, and focusing on doing a much better job at it.

"We didn't have to use any sophisticated feeding programs or expensive additional pastures, but every additional Merino lamb we get to trade weight is $100, so that is a pretty good return on a one-day workshop."

Another big change to the business has been involving an agricultural consultant, Rob Bell, to help the Campbells better understand the energy requirements of their breeding stock.

"We came away from the BWFW workshop and realised we had some weaknesses in our chain of production," Lachlan said.

"We asked ourselves: if we can go to one workshop and create these results, what can we do with some mentoring? It is another tool for our business."

Looking ahead, Lachlan said the goal was to lift the breeding flock from 3,000 to 4,000 ewes and continue focusing on producing Merino lambs to meet market weights of 43–45kg within six to eight months.

Lessons learned

- → By understanding what the weaknesses are and how to overcome them, you can change your business without a great deal of money or effort.
- → Be clear on what you are trying to achieve and start with the end in mind. Do you want to run fewer ewes and produce the same results or the same number of ewes and produce more lambs?
- → If your goal is clear, it comes down to a series of steps throughout the year: body weight, joining time, feed availability and energy requirements.
- → Employ people who are smarter than you – we focus on what we do best, and let our consultant calculate things like metabolic energy requirements.

Lachlan Campbell // E: bonada1@optusnet.com.au

BWFW is a MLA-funded program.

To host a BWFW workshop in your area, contact **Serina Hancock** // E: S.Hancock@murdoch.edu.au
The workshop participation fee is $50/person.

Building capability

Workshops kick-start change

A two year review of the gains from participating in the MLA-funded More Beef from Pastures (MBfP) program estimates participation in the program has contributed to an average net income increase of $6,000/farm.

Researcher Dr Kristy Howard, of Inspiring Excellence, found that practice change resulting from producers' workshop attendance led to the increase.

"The response of producers has been really positive and showed the workshops work on a number of levels – educationally, environmentally and personally – and do effect change," she said.

"Of the producers interviewed, 75% either made the changes they said they would within 12 months, or made another change, as a direct result of attending MBfP."

Producers most commonly embraced change in the areas of pasture growth (20%), herd health and welfare (18%) and meeting market specifications (17%).

"We found that simpler changes were more readily adopted and more complex changes occurred over longer periods of time and were influenced by factors other than the workshops," Kristy said.

"These included other producers (35%), being a member of an ongoing group (32%) and other professionals (33%)."

More than money

Kristy said producers also highlighted less tangible benefits from attending the workshops such as: broadening networks and building new relationships; increasing confidence and reducing stress.

"Many said they found the workshops uplifting, particularly during tough times, and they gave them time to reflect on the farm business and the direction it was heading," she said.

Workshops on topics such MSA or EU accreditation resulted in high levels of practice change compared to workshops involving longer-term projects such as pasture improvement. Also, seasonal conditions had a significant impact on practice change.

"In the second year of the interviews, Queensland, Western Australia and parts of NSW were experiencing drought or tough seasonal conditions, and this was a major factor in fewer changes being implemented," Kristy said.

Dr Kristy Howard
E: kristy@inspiringexcellence.com.au

Watch videos to find out how two producers participating in the More Beef from Pastures program have improved their businesses go to **www.mla.com.au/mbfp**

To find out more about the MLA-funded More Beef from Pastures' activities in your region contact your state coordinator

NSW	John Francis	john@holmessackett.com.au	02 6931 7110
Vic	Darren Hickey	darren.hickey@depi.vic.gov.au	03 5152 0496
Tas	Mel Rae	mrae@macfrank.com.au	03 6427 5300
SA	Simon Vogt	SVogt@ruraldirections.com	08 8841 4500
WA	Glen Brayshaw	glen@planfarm.com.au	08 9622 8202

Surprise packet

Father and son Rod and Andrew Purcell started their EU-accreditation journey with their eyes on the market premium but found lifetime traceability of animals delivered unexpected benefits.

The European Union Cattle Accreditation

Being EU accredited won't suit every producer, particularly those who regularly trade cattle or who find the logistics of tracing individual animals difficult. However, one of its benefits is that it provides potential access to market premiums.

To be accredited, producers need to:

- → Ensure their animals are lifetime traceable through the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) and are HGP-free.
- → Have only eligible cattle on their property at all times (with the exception of bulls, a small number of house cows, and non-scheme,

Rod attended a More Beef from Pastures (MBfP) workshop at Gundagai to find out what was required to achieve EU accreditation and said although his family is not there yet, they realised the benefits of individual recording and used it to improve the herd.

Rod and Andrew are third and fourth generation producers at 'Elouera', at Brungle, between Tumut and Gundagai, NSW.

They supply the feeder market with steers, turning them off at 450kg at 15–16 months. Their heavier animals, weighing 500kg plus, are sold over-the-hooks.

About 85% of their heifers are retained as replacement breeders.

Following the MBfP workshop, the Purcells bought a hand-held National Livestock Identification System tag reader and started recording their animals' individual electronic identification numbers in spreadsheets to begin fulfilling the European Union Cattle Accreditation Scheme (EUCAS) requirement for lifetime traceability.

At the same time, the Angus recessive genetic condition, Developmental Duplications (this abnormality was recently found to be a simply inherited recessive genetic condition passed through certain lines of Angus cattle. Animals affected with this condition can sometimes be born with an extra limb or part of an extra limb – a condition referred to as polymelia), started to appear in their herd. The individual herd recording allowed them to quickly identify the source of the problem and eliminate that sire and other potential carriers from the herd.

"We knew which cows had been mated to which sire, so it proved an easy problem to fix," Rod said.

The Purcells biggest hurdle to gaining EUCAS accreditation has been achieving lifetime traceability of their herd.

"During the drought in 2006, we decreased our numbers and have had to rebuild the herd to its present 780 cows," Rod said.

"Cows we bought in during that phase were not lifetime traceable, so we will have to wait another 12 to 18 months for them to work their way out of our production system."

Benefits of benchmarking

Rod and Andrew are keen on measuring and rating their enterprise performance and for the past three years have actively benchmarked (see MBfP module Setting Directions at **www.mla.com.au/mbfp**).

As part of a producer group, they monitor key performance indicators, including their cost of production and feeder sale weights.

"Our cost of production performance was excellent; we're in the top 20% for our group at $1.20/kg," Rod said.

"Our selling weights are also in the top 20% with our average of 526kg.

"However, the analysis tells us that we are probably putting too much weight into our animals and could be running more breeders and more weaners to create more profit."

The Purcells are considering increasing their numbers slightly during the next 12 months but are also wary of overstocking.

"In 2012, we got up to 880 breeders, but the following spring we had to offload to preserve feed," Rod said.

"I know 780 isn't pushing the envelope but it is a sweet spot for us. We'll approach herd building cautiously."

Snapshot

Rod, Cath and Andrew Purcell, Gundagai, NSW.

Property: 1,700ha

Enterprise: Angus beef production supplying the feeder market

Livestock: 780 breeders

Pasture: 65% improved pastures (phalaris, sub-clover, fescue, cocksfoot); 35% native perennials with sub-clover base

Soil: Heavy, black soils, red basalt loams, brown loams, pipe clay and granite-based soils

Rainfall: 800mm

Scheme

vendor-bred animals, identified with white NLIS tags, are lifetime traceable and have never been treated with HGPs).

- → Only buy cattle from other EU-accredited properties or saleyards.
- → Keep all cattle on the property tagged with an NLIS device from weaning age or earlier.
- → Maintain an accurate NLIS database account where all devices attached to cattle and all devices purchased but in the office/car/shed must match devices registered to the PIC on the NLIS database.

For more information on how to reconcile a PIC with the NLIS database contact the NLIS Database Helpline 1800 654 743.

For more detailed information on becoming EU accredited, phone EUCAS on the toll-free helpline Monday to Friday AEST (8am–4pm) on 1800 305 544 or visit: **www.mla.com.au/EUCAS**

www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity/export/meat/elmer-3/eucas

Rod Purcell
E: cathandrod@wirefree.net.au

For more information on More Beef from Pastures visit **www.mla.com.au/mbfp** or contact your state coordinator.

Invasive weeds

Two-pronged attack on parkinsonia

MLA is supporting two research projects taking different approaches to the widespread problem of parkinsonia infestation.

The most recent trial work to support the development of a bioherbicide was supported by $300,000 worth of MLA funding, while a new MLA-funded CSIRO project recently saw the release of 500,000 Parkinsonia looper moth larvae across three top-end states.

MLA's Environment and Natural Resource Management project manager Cameron Allan said research organisations, landholders and NRM bodies were working together to try and eradicate this costly weed.

"Parkinsonia is one of Australia's worst weeds," Cameron said.

"It infests more than 3.3 million hectares, with sparse occurrences over a much larger area across Queensland, the Northern Territory and northern Western Australia, it has high control costs and a need for follow-up to ensure success."

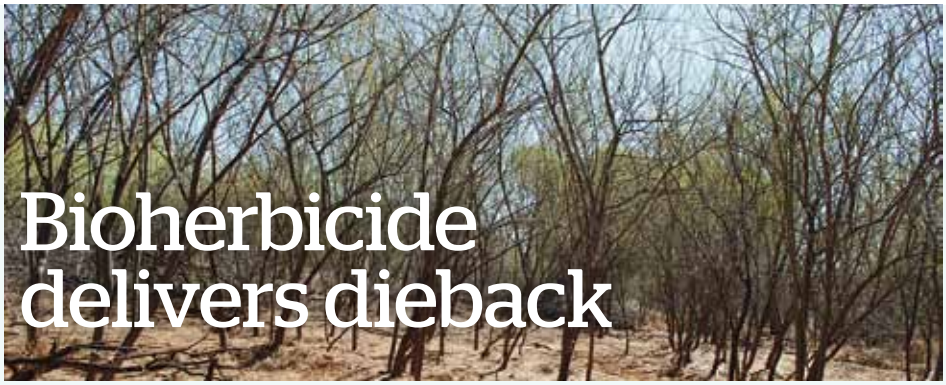
Parkinsonia forms dense thickets which impede mustering, restrict stock access to water, displace native plants and animals, alter stream flows and harbour feral animals.

"No one method of control will suit all contexts so we are seeking to provide landholders with options to support improved management," Cameron said.

"This may mean using a combination of approaches to get the best result.

"With the bioherbicide project we have learnt stressing the plant can improve the impact of the fungi. Perhaps the actions of the looper moth can provide a level of stress that will trigger a dieback event if the fungi are present."

Cameron Allan, MLA
E: callan@mla.com.au



Bioherbicide delivers dieback

Parkinsonia trees in a plot where 100% of trees were treated with dieback fungi at 18 months after trial establishment.

A three-year, large-scale trial of a native fungi, which can cause dieback events in parkinsonia, has shown the treatment works, and it doesn't appear to harm native vegetation.

The MLA-funded trial concluded in October 2014 and was aimed at providing required evidence to support the development and registration of a bioherbicide to control parkinsonia.

Project leader Dr Vic Galea, from the University of Queensland's (UQ) School of Agriculture and Food Sciences, said experiments were conducted at Bushy Park Station and Stradbroke Station, near Duchess in north-west Queensland, and Magowra Station, in the gulf country south of Normanton.

The field trial used the disease-delivery method of gelatin capsule developed by Vic and his team over the past decade and successfully tested in previous small-scale trials.

What they found

"We set up a number of experiments with the goal of establishing dieback in parkinsonia populations," Vic said.

"This is not a traditional herbicide, so we're not interested in quickly killing individual trees that will then be replaced by healthy seedlings.

"Our method puts a disease into the system that eventually wipes out the population, but it may be a five or six-year process."

One experiment involved combining fungal treatments with a small dose of glyphosate herbicide, to see if it would increase the efficacy of the fungi.

While it did increase disease level initially, after three years the difference was indistinguishable. However researchers suggest herbicide co-treatment may be valuable in sites where the parkinsonia is exceptionally healthy, and potentially more resilient.

An experiment at Stradbroke Station examined the ability of dieback to move from tree-to-tree in a densely populated location.

Tree-to-tree spread was clearly demonstrated at varying inoculation rates, showing the potential to inoculate every second tree, or fewer, to establish a strong dieback event.

At Magowra a bioherbicide safety study showed despite successful dieback establishment in a dense parkinsonia population, the adult hardwoods within the site were not affected.

A glasshouse safety trial was also conducted, with native species still producing seedlings despite being treated with fungi at up to 6,000 times the normal application rate.

Other experiments confirmed earlier decisions to combine the three fungi in one capsule, while a viability study recommended a six-month use-by date would allow the capsules to be stored under normal field conditions.

The impact on parkinsonia was assisted by stressing the plant, which supported a dieback event.

The commercial registration of a parkinsonia bioherbicide is being considered. Registration processes may be protracted as, following review, more field work may be required.

Vic is also exploring a similar biocontrol for prickly acacia.

Dr Vic Galea
E: v.galea@uq.edu.au

Bringing in the loopers

Half a million parkinsonia loopers are now on the loose in Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia.

UU larvae increase their chances of survival by mimicking parkinsonia thorns. Image courtesy: CSIRO

What is a looper? It is the latest weapon in the war against the noxious weed, parkinsonia. An enormous collaborative effort has seen the looper moth larvae and pupae released at 60 sites.

A three-year, MLA-funded project led by CSIRO's Dr Raghu Sathyamurthy is collaborating with more than a dozen organisations including Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australian government departments, local natural resource management groups and landholders.

The starting point

The looper moth 'rearing and release' project comes on the back of about 15 years of CSIRO research into the suitability of various insects for combating parkinsonia under Australian conditions.

"Two of these insects were identified and evaluated in South America, and then under quarantine conditions in Australia," Raghu said.

"What we're doing is classical biological control – trying to reunite the plant with its natural enemy."

The natural enemies in question are two species of looper moth in the genus *Eueupithecia*, nicknamed UU and UU2.

Year one of the current project mainly centred on the release of UU, which is commonly found in coastal areas of Argentina, while 2015 will see releases of UU2, which originates in more inland regions.

Both moths' larvae were observed damaging parkinsonia leaves in Argentina; under quarantine conditions they completely stripped all leaves until the plants became stressed. And despite testing on 67 different plant species, they were found to only eat parkinsonia.

"Another positive is the larvae mimic parkinsonia thorns, which we hope will increase their ability to survive predation," Raghu said.

Overcoming challenges

Predation by Australia's varied collection of wasps and ants is one of the challenges facing establishment of the looper moth.

"There are times when we've released larvae and we've basically seen wasps and ants queuing up at the buffet," Raghu said.

In order to overcome this the researchers have developed preliminary release strategies such as providing parkinsonia 'nests' to protect larvae, and releasing pupae in sheltered containers.

To assist establishment and promotion to more landholders, instructions for creating the nests and other structures are contained in a set of guidelines developed for the release collaborators.

Other challenges include a lack of lush foliage for the new releases to feed on and Australia's 'tyranny of distance'.

The guidelines address the foliage issue by recommending regular releases of larvae in 'nursery sites' which contain healthy parkinsonia plants, preferably on the banks of rivers, creeks or dams; once established at these nurseries, the insects will disperse and find surrounding parkinsonia plants.

"Efficiently and safely transporting these soft-bodied larvae from the rearing locations to the field sites is a challenge; we're optimising the mailing logistics and trialling shipments of other life-stages," Raghu said.

The science behind the project is much more than "identify and release" potential agents. Lessons from current releases will inform improved release strategies.

Current situation

Raghu has recently returned from a trip around northern Australia releasing the insects and monitoring establishment.

"My colleagues and I saw early signs of establishment in about a third of the release sites," he said.

"Our hope is this trend will continue and, if so, by the end of the three-year project we should have a self-sustaining population.

"From that point it may take up to a decade before the insects bring the plant under control."

According to Raghu, the biological control project could not be undertaken without the support of all the collaborators.

"We are immensely grateful for the time these groups put into the partnership," he said.

Raghu Sathyamurthy
E: Raghu.Sathyamurthy@csiro.au

Reproduction

BACK TO BASICS:

Managing pregnant cows in northern Australia

This is the first in a series of 'back-to-basics' articles which highlights best practice in different enterprise areas.

The first topic is managing pregnant cows in northern Australia.

In some parts of northern Australia, getting a cow to calve every year is no easy task – it takes careful planning and management. Beef consultant Geoff Niethe explains how to maximise breeding opportunities, starting before the calving period.

Condition is the key

It is essential that cows calve in good condition. A body condition score of two is acceptable for pregnant females as long as there is a body of good feed in front of them and they can achieve body score three by the time they are due to calve.

Get stocking rates right

One of the main tools for managing body condition is correct stocking rates, taking into consideration the feed available, seasonal conditions and the environment. If feed availability declines, it's important to adjust stocking rates accordingly.

Pregnancy test

Where feasible, pregnancy test and foetal age cows and segregate them into joining groups. For example, put those that are six to nine months' pregnant in one mob, three to six months in another and empty to three months in a third group. This enables mobs to be managed better for cow-calf survival and also reduces supplementation costs.

Supplements

Establish your phosphorus status

Supplementing with phosphorus in P-deficient areas during the wet season is one of the best value-for-money decisions to improve the performance of a cow herd.

Phosphorus enables cattle to consume more feed, increasing their body condition and milk production and improving the chances of re-joining within four months of calving. P status is best ascertained by blood testing growing cattle (heifers or steers) as they come out of the wet season.

Urea

If there is plenty of dry feed, urea is the most cost-effective supplement for encouraging cows' rumens to operate at maximum potential and to build up body reserves.

Trace element deficiencies

Copper and cobalt deficiencies are not as common as nitrogen and phosphorus deficiencies but, if suspected, they can be accurately diagnosed by blood testing.

Copper deficiency occurs in three main areas in Queensland: in sandy soils along the east coast; in some soils on the Downs extending from Texas to slightly west of Tara; and on the Brigalow Development Area around Taroom and Wandoan.

Affected animals will exhibit ill-thrift, scouring, a harsh coat that may lighten in colour, and infertility.

Cobalt deficiency may occur in young, growing stock on coastal calcareous sands and on some granite soils in higher rainfall areas. Animals will show signs of ill-thrift and may be emaciated.

Genetics – selection pressure for fertility

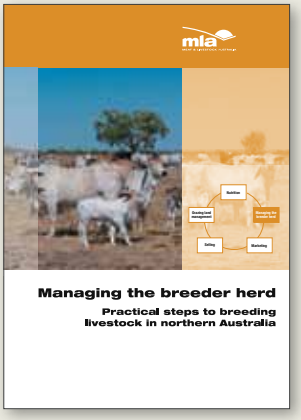
Speed of return to oestrus after calving is a heritable trait, so selecting females on pregnancy within four months and culling empties or late pregnancies will improve reproductive performance.

However, best results can be obtained by using bulls from highly fertile cows to breed more fertile replacements.

If fertility is an issue, only select bulls from dams that re-conceived within four months of calving as first-calf cows.

Geoff Niethe
E: gniethe@bigpond.com

Download *Managing the breeder herd - Practical steps to breeding livestock in northern Australia* at **www.mla.com.au/breederherd**



Animal health

Oral pain relief a reality

MLA's strategic goal to reduce, relieve and refine painful animal husbandry practices has taken a leap forward with the development of a new, easy-to-administer pain relief product for calves.

ILIUM® Buccalgesic OTM is due to hit the market in April and has been funded by a million dollar partnership between the MLA Donor Company (MDC) and Troy Laboratories Australia.

Troy Laboratories has developed a gel formulation that allows rapid absorption of the non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) meloxicam via the mouth. It has a withholding period of 14 days and an export slaughter interval of 21 days.

Producers will be able to source the gel formulation through their veterinarians.

Meloxicam was previously only available in the form of an injection, which presented operator-safety, carcase-quality and welfare issues.

Troy Laboratories general manager Ian Saunders said the new dosing gun had been designed for ease of operation. It has a hook delivery nozzle which places the product between the cheek lining and gums.

"The normal dose is less than 3mL and is stained blue, so it is easy to see the animal has been treated," he said.

"It can be given while the animals are in the race so the pain medication is kicking in at the time of operation.

"The calves then have 24–48 hours pain free and, as there are no needles involved, it's also safer for the operator."

"The anticipated price for a 60kg calf would be less than 90¢/dose, and we will be working with the supply chain to make it even cheaper," Ian said.

The MDC-Troy partnership has also produced a similar pain relief product for sheep, which is due to be released later in 2015.

Overcoming barriers

According to MLA Sustainability R&D program manager Jim Rothwell, the MDC-Troy partnership was necessary to address a market failure.

He said Troy Laboratories had conceived the product, but the high cost of development and registration presented an enormous barrier to its development.

"There is no longer patent protection for registered NSAIDs, which limited the commercial incentive to develop them further for sheep and cattle," Jim said.

"The development and registration process was expensive so, by sharing that cost, Troy and the MDC have created products that would probably not have been developed if left in the hands of market forces."

Jim said the sheep product, in particular, required an expensive residue study as there was no NSAID registered for sheep in Australia.

"There is significant interest from producers in best practice pain relief, so we anticipate there will be a lot of interest in these products when they become available," he said.

Ian Saunders
E: isaunders@troylab.com.au
Jim Rothwell
E: jrothwell@mla.com.au

MLA Donor Company research funds (not producer levies) were used to fund this project.

Grass seeds

The Manildra Meat Company (MMC) has opened its Cootamundra processing plant doors to 300 producers in the past two years to illustrate the impact of grass seeds on the lamb supply chain.

Sowing seeds of change

Attending a recent animal health field day at Cootamundra, which included a visit to the Manildra Meat Company's abattoir, were (left to right) MMC business manager Bill Scott; Leo Herbert, 'Avondale', Eurongilly; Cameron Macpherson, 'Myrtle Vale', Cootamundra; and Zoetis Animal Health sales representative Jock Munro.

MMC business manager Bill Scott is a representative on the National Grass Seed Action Plan. He said the idea of hosting producer workshops on a range of animal health issues, such as grass seed contamination, arthritis and cheesy gland (a contagious disease in sheep and goats), was driven by the need to increase awareness of how on-farm management can affect the whole red meat industry.

The Cootamundra plant processes 4,000 sheep and lambs (and 180 cattle) a day, sourced from across NSW.

"The stock we purchase reflect a range of management approaches, so grass seeds can be a problem," Bill said.

In late spring and through summer – the main grass seed window on-farm – producers should be aware of signs such as inflamed eyes, lumps in skin, matted wool, poor weight gain and reduced feed intake. Depending on when livestock are sold, grass seeds can be an issue in the processing sector for up to six months following the on-farm risk period.

In November 2014, Bill was already seeing 10% of lambs with grass seeds, resulting in chain stoppage, skin value discounting and product downgrades.

He estimated the cost to industry from grass seeds could be $12–15/head through:

→ reduced skin value ($1–2/head)

→ reduced throughput ($3–4/head)

→ trimming ($3/head)

→ downgraded sales ($5–6/head).

"We use the plant open days to show producers what a lamb carcase with grass seeds looks like – they are shocked at how much damage grass seeds can do to a carcase," Bill said.

"In some cases, we have to trim right to the bone, losing yield. Excessive trimming and carcase downgrades are a cost to the entire industry."

It starts on farm

Bill would like to see more producers use grass seed management tools that suit their enterprise, such as winter cleaning, changing lambing and turn-off times, or mechanical control.

He said it also came down to awareness of how the issue extended through the supply chain. For example, as a result of the workshops, he believes local producers were now aware that barley grass was not the only culprit.

"Barley grass seeds tend to get into animals' eyes so is more obvious on-farm, whereas seeds from native plants like corkscrew grass and spear grass work their way through the skin into the meat and are revealed during processing."

Reducing grass seeds is especially vital to the Cootamundra plant with its growing export focus. It already sends lambs to the Middle East and recently secured an export licence to access all international markets except for the EU.

"Gaining export market access is a huge investment for processors in terms of cost and effort, so we definitely don't want to put that at risk because of contamination," Bill said.

"Producers and processors work in the same industry, so we need a cohesive approach to animal health issues like grass seeds that cost the red meat industry millions of dollars every year."

The Cootamundra plant has begun a project with MLA to implement Livestock Data Link – a carcase feedback tool.

"Our business is based on good supply of stock, which relies on good relationships with producers. Livestock Data Link is another way we can improve our feedback to producers on animal health issues and carcase characteristics, and give them the ability to combat issues on-farm," Bill said.

MMC plans to continue hosting the producer days, which usually have 15–20 producers attending each half-day event. Local agencies and agronomists are encouraged to invite their clients.

Bill Scott
E: bill.scott@manildra.com.au

Watch a video on the impact grass seeds has on on-farm profitability, productivity and animal welfare as well as the challenges faced by processor JBS at **www.mla.com.au/grassseeds**

Grass seeds

Going with the seasons

Geoff Crabb looks for seasonal flexibility when it comes to managing grass seeds at 'The Grange'.

In the seven years Geoff has been livestock manager on 'The Grange', a property owned by agribusiness company Wellard, the grass seeds risk has been different each year.

"If grass seeds get into our wool and meat, it cuts our profits, so preventing contamination is a priority," he said.

"This requires constant monitoring in the lead-up to the main seed-set period of late September and early October."

Running sheep and cattle not only diversifies risk – the two enterprises are used strategically for grass seed management. Geoff runs cattle in paddocks where brome, barley and spear grasses are dominant, reserving better paddocks for sheep.

"We shear adult sheep from 1 September, followed by lambs, so the flock enters the seedy period with short wool," Geoff said.

"This reduces the risk of vegetable matter in wool and avoids discounting."

Genetics are also important. Geoff is moving towards an Affrino flock, as the South African dual-purpose breed has easy-care characteristics. The breed's bare points minimise seed pick-up, especially around the eyes. This reduces inflammation and is important for flock welfare.

The various soil types on 'The Grange' require different management strategies. In heavier country, Geoff slashes problem grasses like brome, barley and spear grasses, while spray topping is more effective on sandy plains. He sprays paddocks and weans during shearing, so all stock – especially lambs – can go into clean paddocks.

Another tool is infrastructure. 'The Grange' uses a 90m x 15m shed to house lambs to be finished on pellets. About 10,000 lambs a year are turned off for local trade and export markets, with the bulk sold between October and February.

Shedding lambs not only keeps sale stock away from grass seeds, but also plays an important role in pasture management.

"We graze stubble during summer but wind erosion can be a challenge, so the shed takes pressure off paddocks during this period," Geoff said.

Monitoring the season is another important tool to identify the grass seed risk, in case adjustments need to be made to flock management.

"We know by the third week of August if grass seeds are going to be a big problem," he said.

"If there is an early finish to the season, we have to book our shearing contractor early, but if it's a late finish – as was the case last year – grass seeds won't be such a risk so we can stick to our schedule.

"Grass seeds are very much a year-to-year challenge, so we manage them differently each season."

Lessons learned

- It pays to be flexible, so management reflects seasonal conditions
- Breeding sheep with bare points (such as Affrinos) reduces the likelihood of grass seeds entering their eyes
- Invest in infrastructure that removes stock from grass seed risk – such as a feedlot or shed

Geoff Crabb
E: G.Crabb@wellard.com.au

Snapshot

Geoff Crabb, Dongara, WA.

Property: 24,000ha

Enterprise: 55% cropping, 45% livestock

Livestock: Droughtmaster cattle, Affrino sheep

Pasture: 139ha irrigated pasture, 1,200ha perennial pastures such as couch, blue grass, legumes; and 800ha tagasaste

Soils: Mixture of light and heavy soils

Rainfall: 500mm

'The Grange' grass seed management calendar:

Mid to late August: Assess grass seed risk (based on seasonal conditions)

Early September: Shearing

Early September: Slashing, spray topping

Late September: Weaning

Late September to late October: Seed set, main risk period

October to February: Lambs shedded, main turnoff period

It's never too early to start planning to manage grass seeds on your property. Visit **www.mla.com.au/grassseeds** for immediate, short and long term strategies to manage grass seeds.

Meat Standards Australia

Moving ahead with MSA

200 cattle
MSA graded each week

40–50
producers send MSA cattle to plant

750 head
capacity of undercover soft floor area to reduce stress

For R Radford and Son, becoming one of the first Victorian processors to be Meat Standards Australia (MSA) accredited lined up with the company ethos of always looking for new opportunities.

MSA accreditation sits alongside the company's earlier organic certification and the current focus on export market opportunities. Robert Radford – who now runs the company started by his father, Robert Snr, in 1946 – said MSA accreditation meant not only responding to customer requests, but also retaining old suppliers.

"Adopting MSA has been important to maintain supply chain relationships," Robert (pictured) said.

"Our original MSA suppliers are still sending their cattle to us, but we would have lost them if we hadn't been open to new opportunities like MSA."

The Warragul plant began MSA grading 30 cattle a week, and steadily increased to 200.

While it's not a huge percentage of the plant's total weekly throughput of 1,400 cattle (and 2,500 lambs), Robert said the decision to grade MSA made good business sense.

Radfords process MSA beef under contract for about 10 different producer groups (representing 40–50 producers), then grades, packs and delivers beef to wholesalers and retailers in Melbourne and Sydney.

Specifications range from 180–230kg dressed carcases for boutique butchers through to 250–320kg carcases destined for the food service sector. Most of the cattle processed for MSA are British breeds. Robert said premiums for MSA beef have varied over time, but sit around 20–40¢/kg above conventional pricing.

Looking ahead, Robert believes his MSA production will steadily increase. Although the local market favours prime milk vealers, MSA demand is driven by boutique butchers and the increasing presence of MSA in major supermarket chains.

MSA all the way

Radfords employs three MSA-accredited graders, who have undergone extensive AUSMEAT and MSA training. The company has also spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on staff training and plant upgrades to reduce livestock stress prior to slaughter.

In 2000, Radfords invested in facilities to hold 750 cattle undercover with a soft floor, covered with wood shavings from a local sawmill (which are eventually turned into compost for fertiliser).

"This simple innovation has made a huge difference to the quality of our product by preventing sore feet and unnecessary pre-slaughter stress that can lead to dark-cutting," Robert said.

Plant upgrades have also included an electrical stimulation system and temperature-controlled chilling to enhance eating quality (by preventing cold-shortening) and facilities for tender stretching (a carcase-hanging method that increases meat tenderness compared to the traditional hanging by the Achilles tendon).

Robert provides processor and MSA grading data to producers, and said local carcase competitions such as the Gippsland Field Day Steer Trial, where cattle are finished under the same conditions, also provided great feedback to producers.

"Competitions are a useful benchmarking exercise as they give producers the opportunity to see how their cattle present in the chiller, and compare the various carcase traits," he said.

"All carcases are MSA graded, and I've seen producers change genetics and cattle management as a result of the scores."

The early adoption of MSA reflects the company's willingness to embrace research and development and new technology. Radfords participated in MLA's Livestock Data Link pilot program, and invested in water and energy recovery projects to increase plant sustainability.

R Radford and Son
www.radford.com

MSA Tips and Tools:
www.mla.com.au/msabeef

Hayden serves up beef and lamb

Former MasterChef contestant Hayden Quinn became a kitchen ambassador for Australian beef and lamb when MLA signed him up to front *The Dinner Project* a cooking show made for television and electronic media.

During *The Dinner Project* series, Hayden travelled the country to meet everyday Australians – from cattle and sheep producers in Armidale to a time poor, AFL-mad Sydney family through to an Elvis impersonator on the Gold Coast. Each host revealed their own challenge when it came to creating healthy meals at home and Hayden provided meal solutions incorporating beef and lamb to maximise a balanced and healthy lifestyle.

Here he shares with *Feedback* what he learnt from the project.

How did you teach everyday Australians that beef and lamb provide healthy dinner options?

The number one thing I tried to show people was that healthy meals don't have to be hard – or boring. By selecting the right cuts, cook method and flavours, you can put together a fresh healthy meal, no matter what your challenge.

What are the current food trends? Where does beef and lamb fit in?

I think one of the great food trends which is popping up at the moment is the move from spending so much time eating out and having people get back into the kitchen and do their own cooking. People are realising they're missing that time with family at the dinner table – lots of sharing plates and lots of love. This is transferring into restaurants as well, which are taking this same philosophy and applying it to their dining experience.

What did you learn during filming? In particular, what did you learn from your farm visit to Milly Hill? *(see story on page 31)*

Wow, I learnt a lot. I met some really interesting people on my travels and whenever you get thrown into someone else's life like that it's a real eye opener and a contrast to a lot of the ways we all live. At Milly Hill I had a blast! The family was so real and down to earth, and best of all they were incredibly passionate about what they do, about the land they live on and the product they're producing. When you're buying beef and lamb at the butcher or supermarket, you don't see all the hard work that goes into producing something we all take for granted. It was very special, plus I got to do some of my favourite things, stuff a city boy doesn't normally get to do like horse riding, motorbike riding and just being out on the land.

What's your favourite red meat meal?

A good thick beef rib eye on the bone, something to really treat myself. Why? Well because I think there is a little bit of an art to getting it just right and the best thing is, with that cut of meat, you really don't need to do anything with it. Salt, pepper and you're done.

What was your favourite recipe on the show and why?

I loved the Moroccan lamb chops, roasted smashed lemon potatoes and cauliflower, with green beans (see page 33). It is full of flavour, plus the sides with this dish are so versatile and easy to do – you can't beat it!

What are five ways to turn beef or lamb into a quick, tasty and healthy meal?

1. Make sure you allow your beef or lamb to come to room temperature before cooking.
2. Use a hot pan or grill or barbecue.
3. Try a cut you may not have had before, like flank or forequarter chops.
4. I love using different dried ground spices to make up rubs and marinades – for lamb try smoked paprika, cumin, coriander and salt and pepper, for beef try mustard and black pepper.
5. Make sure you are surrounded by your best friends and family.

See page 33 for Hayden's favourite Dinner Project recipe →

Tuning into *The Dinner Project*

Viewers of Foxtel's LifeStyle FOOD channel have a new appreciation of just how easy it is to cook fresh, simple and healthy beef and lamb dishes.

An MLA-produced cooking show, *The Dinner Project*, aired on LifeStyle FOOD at the end of 2014, and later this year will be available to watch for free on the www.beefandlamb.com.au YouTube channel.

MLA Digital Marketing Program manager Matthew Dwyer said the "branded content piece", hosted by popular former MasterChef contestant Hayden Quinn, is being used across other digital media platforms to get maximum return on investment.

"While the full episodes are exclusive to television for six months from the time they air, we also have other versions of the show's recipes and Hayden's video tips which anyone can view now on our YouTube channel," Matthew said.

We also have a partnership with Rob Nixon from the YouTube channel Nicko's Kitchen, which has more than 800,000 subscribers. We produced six episodes with Rob and Hayden which promoted the show and featured healthy recipes using beef and lamb. Each of those were released on Rob's channel as one of *The Dinner Project* episodes went to air."

The recipe content from the program was also supported by online advertising and through social media to promote the two main recipes after each show aired," Matthew said.

"Viewers were able to click a link to our YouTube channel and watch the full recipe being made. We averaged about 15,000 to 20,000 views for each recipe."

The Dinner Project also had its own show page on the LifeStyle FOOD website and was part of their social media and email direct marketing campaigns.

The show is also being integrated with Jetstar's inflight network, which will see cut-down versions of the recipes played as part of the airline's inflight programming from January to June this year.

Matthew Dwyer, MLA
E: mdwyer@mla.com.au

Check grabs and recipes from The Dinner Project at www.youtube.com, and search 'beefandlamb.com.au'

Starring Milly Hill

A family of cattle and sheep producers from Armidale in NSW enjoyed an insight into the mysteries of 'reality' television when they invited celebrity cook Hayden Quinn into their home to film an episode of *The Dinner Project*.

Sally and Peter Strelitz are no strangers to a little limelight, their Milly Hill Lamb brand having picked up a swag of national awards and media attention over the past five years.

But shooting a TV show in their home, said Sally, was a whole different ball game.

"We had 13 crew members in our house for three days," Sally laughed.

"We gave them the whole farm experience – horse and motorbike riding and stock work.

"It was fun and the kids really enjoyed it, and it was interesting to see how one of these programs is actually put together. There is certainly a lot more going on behind the scenes of reality TV than I ever expected."

Sally and her family 'starred' in episode three of *The Dinner Project*, which saw Hayden spend time on the farm and share some family-friendly recipes.

"I learned some great new recipes from the show, but to be honest I got involved because I saw it as a great marketing opportunity for lamb," Sally said.

"There is such a food culture out there now, but a lot of people who watch food shows don't actually cook themselves.

"It's great that Hayden can come along, visit all different types of people and show how easy it can be to cook beef and lamb.

Sally participated in an MLA social media workshop in April 2012 and is interested in leveraging new technology to further awareness of the Milly Hill Lamb brand and red meat in general.

"I think marketing via a reality TV show is a great concept," Sally said.

"It's all about video and YouTube these days and I love the fact MLA is getting out there and doing something different."

Sally and Peter Strelitz
E: millyhill@millyhill.com.au

Recipe

Moroccan lamb chops

with roasted smashed lemon potatoes and cauliflower, with green beans

Serves: 4
Preparation time: 20 minutes
Cooking time: 25 minutes

Ingredients

4 x 200g lamb forequarter chops

¼ cup olive oil

1½ tbsp Moroccan seasoning

500g baby new potatoes

1 red onion, finely chopped

2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced

1 lemon, peeled into strips

⅓ cup parmesan cheese, finely grated

2 tbsp finely chopped flatleaf parsley

2 tbsp chopped lemon thyme leaves

½ head of cauliflower, cut into small florets

450g baby green beans, trimmed

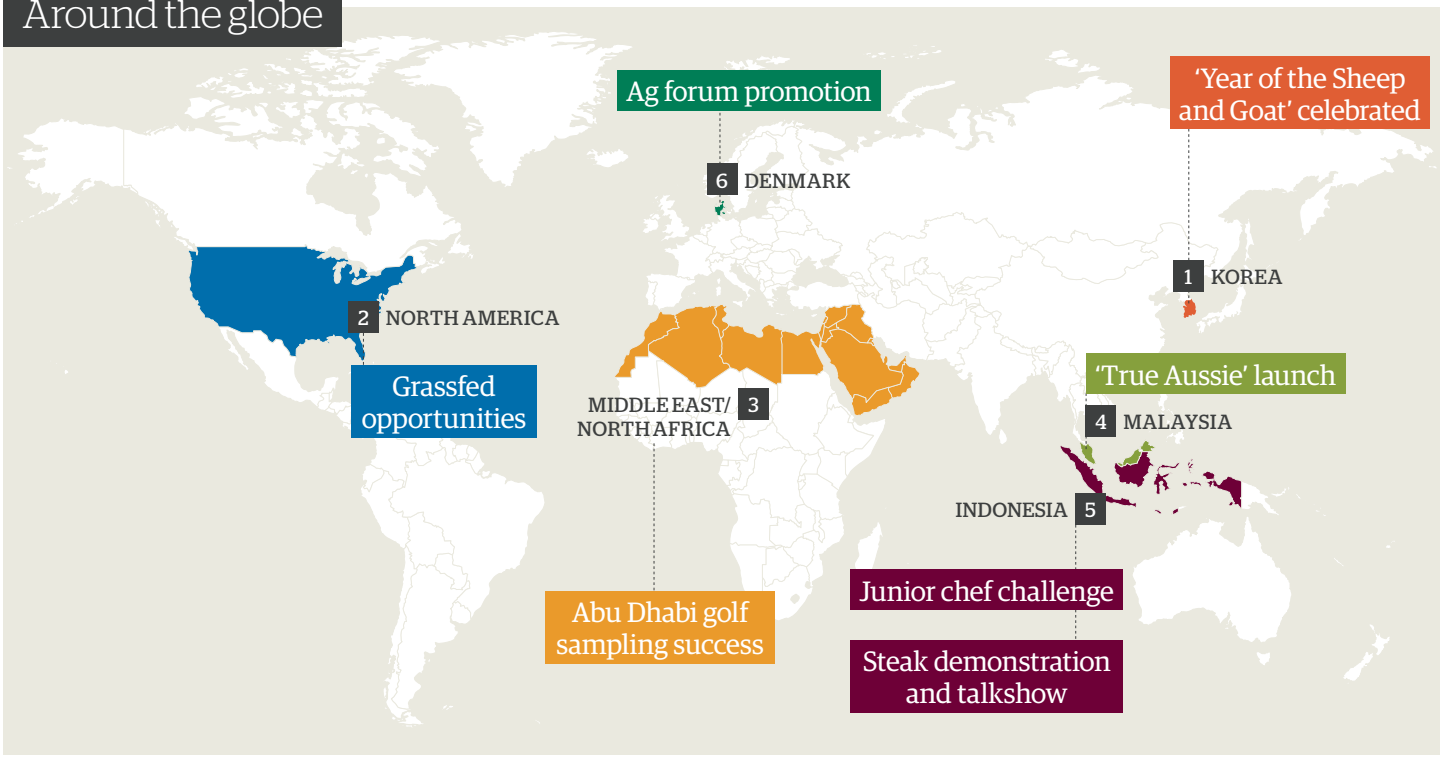
lemon wedges, parsley and yoghurt, to serve

Method

1. Place forequarter chops in a large bowl with 1 tbsp oil and Moroccan spice. Season to taste; leave to stand at room temperature for 10 minutes.
2. Boil or steam potatoes until cooked, drain and cool slightly. Using a potato masher or large wooden spoon, roughly break potatoes up into chunky pieces; cover with foil to keep warm.
3. Preheat oven to 220°C. Heat remaining olive oil in a large ovenproof pan over medium-high heat. Add onion, garlic, lemon peel, herbs and cauliflower and cook, tossing occasionally, for five minutes or until cauliflower starts to turn golden. Add smashed potatoes and toss until well to combine. Transfer to a large roasting and scatter over parmesan; season to taste. Roast for 10 minutes or until parmesan is melted and golden.
4. Heat a pan to hot and add marinated chops, cooking for three minutes each side. When cooked, remove from pan and set aside to rest for five minutes. Meanwhile, bring water to boil in a saucepan and add beans to steam for two minutes.
5. Serve and enjoy with family and friends.

Follow Hayden making this dish at:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=h3f35iHTyro

Around the globe



1 KOREA

The year of 'True Aussie' lamb

Australian lamb promotions in Asia were timed to coincide with the start of 'Year of the Sheep and Goat' in the Chinese zodiac. One of the earliest tie-ins was the second largest hypermarket in Korea, E-Mart, launching 'True Aussie' lamb products at 26 outlets.

23 media items on 'Year of the Sheep and Goat' promotions were generated with a PR value of

A$685,431

from the launch.

To support this, MLA developed point-of-sales materials to promote Australian lamb cuts and introduce the 'True Aussie' lamb logo to shoppers.

The main attributes promoted about lamb were the tenderness, the high quality, the young age of the meat, its nutritional value (high in protein and low in calories) and its versatility in cooking methods such as in barbeque, *bulgogi* or stew.

2 NORTH AMERICA

Grassfed message spreads

A large Canadian retailer and a prominent Florida-based cruiseline were two significant business leads generated by a 'Grassfed beef is green down under' webinar in January.

198

industry players viewed MLA's 'Grassfed beef is green down under' webinar

MLA partnered with MeatingPlace.com and research firm Technomic to co-host the webinar, viewed by 198 retailers and industry representatives.

The webinar specifically targeted retailers and foodservice operators about opportunities for Australian grassfed beef in North America.

A trends presentation from Technomic was followed by a presentation by MLA on the case for Australian grassfed beef. There were 21 follow up questions and significant leads generated.

3 MIDDLE EAST/ NORTH AFRICA

Taste test tees off

More than 66,000 golf fans had a taste of Australian beef and lamb when MLA held demonstrations and sampling at the Abu Dhabi HSBC Golf Championship - one of the United Arab Emirates' biggest annual sporting events.

Players and spectators were offered tastings of traditional chops and steaks and were shown innovative options for preparing and cooking slow roasts and non-loin cuts. MLA's Master Chef Tarek Ibrahim (pictured cooking above) hosted twice daily demonstrations over four days and the Arabian Radio Network broadcasted live from the event featuring Chef Tarek with daily on-air mentions.

All cooking was done on Weber barbecues, through MLA's partnership with the barbecue company.

66,000

Golf tournament attendees sampled Australian beef and lamb

4 MALAYSIA

Retail therapy

MLA's new global brand 'True Aussie' was launched in Malaysia in a tie in with the 'Year of the Sheep and Goat'.

A video presentation was made to more than 45 Malaysian retailers, who also previewed new point-of-sales materials and the a consumer-focused Facebook page, which will provide information on how to select, prepare and cook Australian red meat.

Retailers were briefed on the campaigns that they could participate in to increase sales and customer engagement. They also enjoyed a lunch of Australian lamb spiced shortloin chops and certified Australian Black Angus charred chilli rubbed beef rib eye, prepared by an Australian chef.

5 INDONESIA

Juniors cook with beef

Beginning with more than 300 contestants, 30 finalists were selected and challenged to create a 'True Aussie' beef-based menu when MLA held the final cook-off of the 'Australian Beef Junior Chef Challenge' in Jakarta.

Ten primary schools participated in the final, in front of around 200 audience members. Led by Family Ambassador and Celebrity Chef Vania Wibisono and Chef Stefu Santoso, groups were given 30 minutes to prepare and cook the menu of beef bolognaise and pancake beef cheese.

30 media outlets attended and subsequent media coverage was valued at more than A$12,200 – a return of investment of

305%

Talking up steak

MLA and Indonesian steakhouse restaurant 'Holycow Steakhouse by Chef Afit' and online food website detikfood.com held a cooking demonstration and talkshow on the benefits of Australian beef and MLA's 'True Aussie' branding.

The 70 consumers attending learned how to cook a wide variety of steak cuts, which were then prepared into three dishes of seared beef and tomato salad with *Chimicurri* dressing, Asian salad with sliced beef and beef *tataki* (a thinly sliced beef dish).

6 DENMARK

Dishing it up to the Danes

Twice cooked Australian rib eye steak smoked with wattle seed was just one taste of Australia served up to 60 people at a recent agriculture and food technology seminar in Copenhagen.

MLA organised a presentation on Australia's beef systems and 'True Aussie' branding for Danish agribusiness manufacturing, processing, consultant, technology and financial service representatives.

The event, organised with the support of a supermarket chain which has stocked Australian product in 81 of its stores, was held to improve knowledge of the Australian system and to identify trade opportunities.

Australian chef Gary Farrell ran a demonstration and offered samples of some of Australia's favourite beef and lamb dishes including slow roasted leg of lamb, char grilled fillet of Australian beef with brown onion jam and twice cooked Australian rib eye, smoked with wattle seed.

On the ground

Thailand

Andrew Simpson
International Business Manager
South-East Asia
E: asimpson@mla.com.au

Revived growth in the tourism sector, along with government introduced economic measures, is helping push demand for imported beef and lamb from some of our nearest neighbours, particularly Thailand and Vietnam.

Thailand has been a consistent customer of Australian beef and lamb, due to its desire for quality and safe meat. In addition, Australia has the advantage of being able to provide a variety of cuts which appeal to the foodservice sector. Well-to-do Thais enjoy high quality and safe meat - particularly Wagyu - from Australia, with retailers like Tops Supermarket boosting sales with promotional and customer loyalty programs.

With the import duty rate declining to zero in the next few years, there is certainly increased demand from importers and new players to establish sources of Australian beef and lamb to supply their customers. Newcomers like CP Trading, a dominant poultry producer and supplier, have jumped on the band wagon and initiated imports of chilled beef from Australia.

Neighbouring countries like Myanmar are undergoing massive construction growth to cater to tourism and business, and this has benefited Thailand, which has supplied food, particularly red meat and offal, as well as building products.

MLA will continue to create the awareness in Thailand of the variety of quality meat from Australia particularly for non-loin cuts, through product knowledge and utilisation training for Thai importers' sales staff, retailers and foodservice end users. 'True Aussie' branding will be introduced to the retailers selling Australian meat with pre-pack stickers to create consumer awareness.

Thai retailers are participating in campaigns such as 'Let's Meat Up' which encourages consumers to think of Aussie beef and lamb for functions, celebrations and get-togethers. MLA is supporting foodservice end users in this campaign with publications and posters on the utilisation of cuts.

Lamb projections

Lamb industry powers ahead

MLA's latest sheep industry projections (released in February 2015) forecast that lamb production is to decline in the short term, with demand remaining high – leading to predictions of strong prices in Australia's sheep industry.

As the transition continues from a Merino focused industry to one even more concentrated on producing prime lambs, production levels are expected to rise over the medium term. By 2019 strong export demand is likely to take the lion's share of production with domestic usage falling to less than 50%.

Stocktake

The flock has been contracting in the past couple of years (figure 1), primarily due to consistently high lamb and sheep slaughter throughout 2013 and 2014 (figure 2).

The Australian sheep flock is forecast to decline 1.4% on year-ago levels, to 71 million head at June 2015.

Prices

Real lamb prices in the past decade have encouraged the transition to prime lamb production, which, although volatile, have been slowly trending higher.

Given the strong demand for Australian lamb, especially in growing international markets, prices are likely to remain strong through 2015 and the remainder of the projection period (to 2019).

Production

Lamb slaughter has been consistently increasing for the past 15 years, with 20 million lambs processed likely to become the new low as the prime lamb transition continues, and as breeding ewes become more efficient. This has been exemplified by the recent improvements in national average marking rates. (The triannual MLA/Australian Wool Industry industry survey of October 2014 found the average lamb marking rate was 99% – up on the 96% of the previous October.)

Compared with the record production in 2014, a significant drop in supply is expected in 2015. This is likely to test market willingness to maintain higher prices. Looking forward to 2018, lamb production is expected increase, driven by higher slaughter, coupled with slightly heavier carcases (figure 4).

Global demand

In response to a forecast decline in lamb slaughter and production in 2015, Australian lamb exports are expected to decline 15% year-on-year, to 202,000 tonnes swt – though coming from what was a record export year in 2014.

By 2019, Australian lamb exports are anticipated to lift to 250,000 tonnes swt, underpinned by an increase in production (figure 4).

Demand from the US, Middle East and China is likely to remain particularly strong, while the smaller markets of Japan, South East Asia and the EU will remain important to the Australian industry.

Domestic

The domestic market is likely to remain stretched by the strength of global demand, with the increasing middle class, improved market access to China in particular, and the projected weakening A$.

Domestic utilisation is anticipated to decline from accounting for over 50% for the years prior to 2012, to 43% in 2019. This has been a long term trend, with the growth in production being absorbed by international markets, rather than a marked increase in domestic consumption.

Mutton

Mutton slaughter, production and exports are anticipated to decline this year, for reasons similar to those for lamb. In contrast to lamb however, the recovery and increase in production is not forecast to be as fast, largely due to reduced intentions for flock rebuilding.

Australian mutton exports in 2015 are anticipated to contract significantly, largely the result of a substantial reduction in sheep slaughter, following what were two high years. Exports are expected to decline 27% year-on-year, to 136,000 tonnes swt – but coming off what was the highest volume in 20 years. Mutton exports are likely to continue to account for over 95% of production for the coming five years, with 169,000 tonnes swt forecast for 2019.

Livestock exports

Live sheep exports are set to build on the momentum from 2013 and 2014, with another year-on-year increase expected in 2015, largely assisted by demand from the Middle East. This trend is set to continue for the remainder of the projection period, assuming uninterrupted market access.

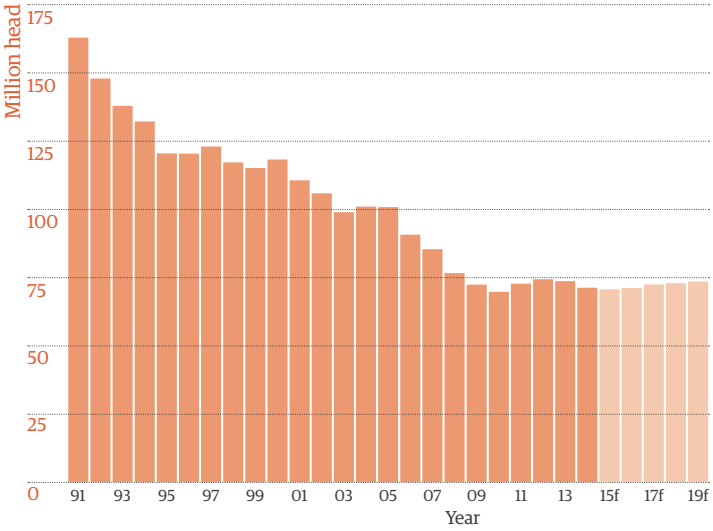
Ben Thomas, MLA Market Information Manager
E: bthomas@mla.com.au

The full report can be found here:
www.mla.com.au/industryprojections

Lamb forecasts for 2015

Slaughter	**19.8 million head** down 11.6% on 2014
Production	**432,000 tonnes cwt** down 11.9% on 2014
Exports	**202,000 tonnes swt** down 14.7% on 2014
Domestic utilisation	**194,000 tonnes cwt** down 6.8% on 2014
Sheep exports	**2.42 million head** up 5.3% on 2014

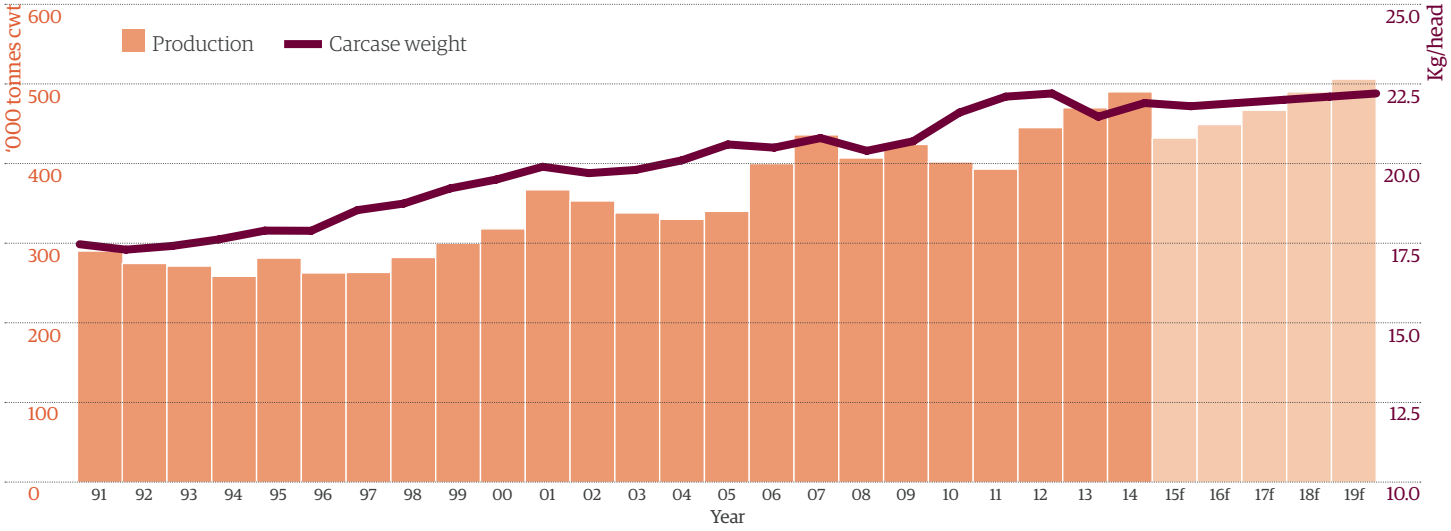
Figure 1 Australian sheep flock



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), MLA forecasts

f = forecast

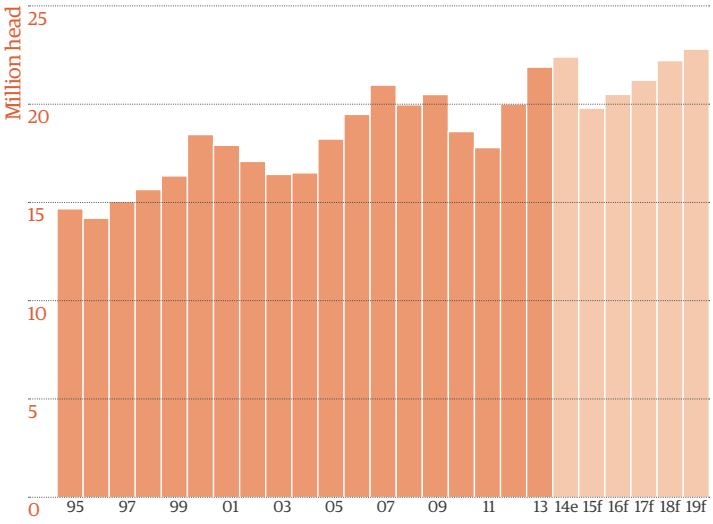
Figure 3 Australian lamb production and average carcase weights



Source: ABS, MLA forecasts

f = forecast

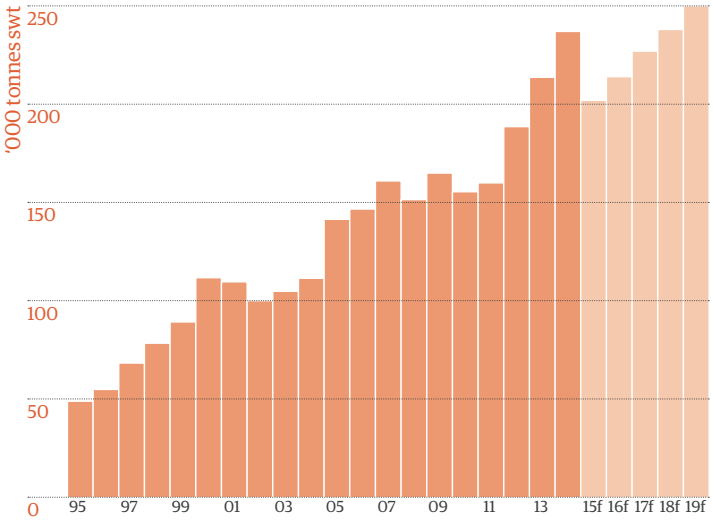
Figure 2 Australian lamb slaughter



Source: ABS, MLA forecasts

e = expected f = forecast

Figure 4 Australian lamb exports



Source: Department of Agriculture, MLA forecasts

f = forecast

Rockhampton// Beef Australia

Global demand for Australian beef has never been stronger and at Beef Australia 2015, MLA will be sharing consumer insights, data and evidence to help producers take advantage of opportunities in the marketplace, according to MLA's Managing Director Richard Norton.

"MLA is a principal partner of Beef Australia 2015 and is offering a wide range of activities, advice on practical tools and information for producers through numerous opportunities during the event.

"Beef Australia offers a unique opportunity for producers to gain valuable insights into an industry worth $12.75 billion to the Australian economy, employs more than 200,000 workers and produces 2.5 million tonnes of beef and veal," Richard said.

MLA invites attendees to visit two areas at Beef Australia 2015:

1. MLA Producer Forum

MLA will run a half-day forum on the Beef Australia seminar program.

Industry experts will talk at the forum on topics such as:

→ lifting profitability in the northern beef industry

→ the latest research into improving reproductive performance

→ using the MSA index in northern production systems

→ understanding consumer perceptions of beef and growing consumer loyalty.

The MLA Producer Forum is on Wednesday 6 May from 1-5pm at the James Lawrence Pavilion and will be followed by a barbecue in the MLA Innovation Marquee from 5pm.

2. MLA Innovation Marquee

The spotlight will be on innovation, with four one-hour sessions each day of Beef Australia in the MLA Marquee.

Sessions will cover:

→ tools to assist with making profitable business decisions

→ what opportunities does MSA offer?

→ the market outlook for supply and demand in 2015

→ the role genetics play in eating quality, reproductive performance and herd management

→ how can supplementation increase profit margins?

→ what do consumers really think of the beef industry and what can producers do about it?

There will be time in between sessions for producers to network, talk to MLA staff and interact with the various displays. Networking opportunities include:

→ Meeting with the **MLA Board** and **Managing Director** over coffee on Friday 8 May, from 10-11am.

→ MLA's evening **social program** which includes a barbecue for forum attendees on Wednesday evening (courtesy of Beef Australia) and an opportunity to network with key MLA staff and other producers on Monday and Tuesday evenings at 5-6pm.

The MLA Marquee is located next to the James Lawrence Pavilion.

MLA program highlights

Beefing Up the North: Gain an insight into the northern beef industry and its future direction. Industry advisor **Dr Phil Holmes**, who co-authored the Northern Beef Situation Analysis, will present the findings and insights from the analysis of 12 years of financial data. He will discuss the factors that separate the top 25% of producers from the rest, and what areas of management all producers should be focussing on to improve their profitability.

MLA's manager of on-farm production R&D, **Dr Wayne Hall**, will also shed light on the latest research to equip producers to boost reproduction in their beef herds – a key profit driver in the north. Wayne will showcase the findings from recent reproduction R&D supported by MLA including the Beef CRC and the CashCow and Breeder Mortality projects.

Wayne and Phil will both speak at the MLA Producer Forum. Phil will also present two sessions in the MLA Marquee.

Put your taste to the test: Participate in a live MSA Sensory Testing session and contribute your data to the MSA grading model. Taste and score a range of beef samples exactly as it has been conducted in nine countries around the world with almost 100,000 other consumers. Places are limited due to testing specifications. If you miss out on a seat in the testing, come along to watch and learn about the methodologies behind the testing and why it is a key component of MLA's R&D program – and taste a few of the samples yourself.

The MSA sensory sessions will be held in the MLA Marquee from 3pm on Monday and 11am on Tuesday. Register at **www.mla.com.au**

Is our reputation at 'steak'? What does the community really think of the beef industry? Advocacy champion **Catherine Marriott** and MLA's Manager of Community Engagement, **Pip Band** *(pictured below right)*, will present two sessions which delve into MLA's consumer research and tease out what it means for producers. They will look at how everyone in the supply chain can help build and defend the industry's reputation to ensure continued trust and support from the community.

'Maintaining the Aussie Beef Reputation' sessions will be in the MLA Marquee at 11am on Thursday and 9am on Friday.

What do forests and beef have in common? With a buzz in the industry around social licence, the question is how can the Australian beef industry respond to changing consumer expectations? For an international perspective don't miss US forestry identity **Bruce Vincent**'s address at the AgForce and Cattle Council of Australia Policy Seminar. Bruce will provide valuable insights based on his experience in regaining confidence in the US timber industry. He will explore the concept of 'social licence to operate' – or the community's consent for an industry to exist. Bruce will attend Beef Australia through funding from MLA.

The Policy Seminar takes place at 3–5pm on Tuesday 5 May in the International Lounge.

Cooking up a storm
MLA is also assisting with the attendance of three international chefs at Beef Australia to showcase how they cook with Aussie beef in their region. **Vindex Tengker** from Indonesia, **Alvin Leung** from Hong Kong and **Tarek Ibrahim** from the Middle East will participate in a variety of cooking demonstrations as part of the Celebrity Chef program.

Information: MLA will be offering visitors a wide variety of resources and publications to collect during the event including:

- *Weaner Management in Northern Beef Herds*
- *Heifer Management in Northern Beef Herds*
- *Phosphorus Management of Beef Cattle in Northern Australia*
- *Improving the performance of northern beef enterprises.*

For a full timetable of MLA events at Beef Australia 2015 go to: **www.mla.com.au/beef2015**

Upcoming events

Nutrition EDGE
The Nutrition EDGE workshop is tailored for your conditions and enterprise management. It is designed to equip you to make decisions to achieve your herd performance targets through improved breeder fertility, weight gains, optimal use of supplements and overall management.

When and where:
22–24 April, Derby, WA

Bookings:
Contact Kira Andrews on T: 08 9192 5507 or E: KiraA@rangelandswa.com.au

Cost is up to $1,150/person

Grazing Land Management
This workshop covers: understanding the grazing ecosystem; how to manage fire and the tree-grass balance; managing weeds; nature restoration; and the role of sown pastures.

When and where:
28–30 April, Rockhampton Qld

Bookings:
Contact Byrony Daniels on M: 0427 746 434

Cost is up to $1,760/person

Health and biosecurity workshop
Increase your understanding of how to manage drench resistant worms (sheep and cattle), bovine Johne's disease (cattle) and pestivirus (cattle) or footrot (sheep). The workshop also covers how farm biosecurity can help keep these pests and diseases off your property.

When and where:
21 April, Smithton Tas
22 April, Campbell Town Tas
28 April, Sassafras Tas

All events run from 1-4pm.

Bookings:
RSVP to Jess Coad on M: 0488 400 209 or E: jcoad@lbn.org.au

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

How have your levies delivered?

TO FIND OUT:

- → **ATTEND** up to four topical workshops a day
- → **LEARN** about the latest R&D findings
- → **INTERACT** with MLA's research and marketing managers
- → **ENGAGE** with tools and resources
- → **MEET** with the MLA Board

Do all this and more at MLA's Innovation Marquee and Producer Forum (James Lawrence Pavilion)

MLA IS PROUD TO BE A PRINCIPAL PARTNER OF BEEF AUSTRALIA 2015

Access the MLA program and related resources at

www.mla.com.au/beef2015

mla
MEAT & LIVESTOCK AUSTRALIA