

Johnsons claim second MSA win

For the second consecutive time, North-West Tasmanian beef producers Kevin and Gill Johnson have been recognised as among the State's best producers of high eating quality beef.

The Johnsons have won the award for Tasmania's top Large Non-Grainfed beef producer in the 2023 Meat Standards Australia (MSA) Excellence in Eating Quality Awards.

At their property at Preston, the Johnsons' finishing operation produces 100% grassfed predominantly Angus cattle as part of the Greenham Never Ever Beef Program for Greenham's premium Cape Grim branded beef.

The Johnsons won the MSA award base on the performance of their cattle over the two-year period of 2021-23. The 355 cattle they consigned for processing in that timeframe achieved an average MSA Index of 63.62 and compliance of 99%.

Their MSA Index actually increased from the 62.97 they achieved in the previous two-year period of 2019-21, while maintaining their 99% compliance rate.

Registered MSA producers since 2012, the Johnsons credit their ongoing success to a combination of quality nutrition and managing their cattle in a low-stress environment.

"We buy in mainly Angus steers that weigh between 330-380kg through AuctionsPlus or Tasmania Livestock Exchange at Powrana," Kevin said.

"When they arrive at our property, they receive vaccinations of 5-in-1, Vetmec F and Multimin."

Kevin and Gill run between 180-230 head of cattle, and as former dairy farmers, carefully manage their pastures.

"We put them in a 30-day feeding rotation through the paddocks to be finished at a target carcase weight of between 360kg to 400kg," Kevin said.

"Our growth targets are 1kg per day or up to 10kg per week during the finishing period.

"Our pastures comprise perennial ryegrass and some clover, and we produce our own silage. We produce hay as well, but mostly use silage for fattening."

"Our average annual rainfall is 1300mm or more, so we're fortunate to be in a good reliable rainfall area here where we can grow grass for most of the year," Gill said.

"We feed silage from about March to late October. If it dries off over summer, we also feed some silage, but the last couple

of summers have been really good."

The low-stress approach to livestock management includes not mixing mobs for at least three weeks in the lead up to processing.

"About eight or nine days prior to sending them for processing, we put them in a paddock close to our stockyards and keep them as quiet and calm as possible," Kevin said.

"We've got a really good livestock carrier who we always use to transport them to Greenham's Smithton."

Once their cattle are processed, the Johnsons use the carcase feedback reports from Greenhams to analyse MSA grading feedback.

"We look closely at their MSA results, particularly the Index, weight, marbling, and overall fat, so we can assess what cattle came from where and how well they performed in the period we had them," Gill said.

