

Feedback

A man in a blue shirt is sitting on a motorcycle, smiling. A dog is sitting on the motorcycle next to him. The background is a grassy field.

Former Wallaby's debut in the tropics

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New research looks at MSA four- and five-star beef cuts

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How to optimise stocking rates in a variable climate

A note from the MD...

MLA's 2012 cattle and sheep industry projections indicate a promising yet challenging year ahead, with strong global demand and favourable seasons driving optimism in the industry and the season providing the opportunity to maintain or improve breeding numbers.

In the paddock, managing for productivity will be key to making the most of the opportunities generated by these conditions, given that prices are expected to remain solid and many producers have signalled they intend to hold onto their breeding stock and continue rebuilding numbers.

In doing so, it's important to keep in mind that the most efficient and profitable producers do not necessarily have the individual highest production or price or lowest costs—rather they aim for an optimum combination to achieve higher productivity as measured by cost/kg produced.

Considerations such as choice of market, genetics, sale time, and all other inputs into

a production system are only a means to achieving a better combination of production, cost, and price than currently exists. The most profitable outcome involves identifying which of those opportunities in your enterprise has the potential to deliver the best return on investment.

While you are determining these strategies, MLA is also assessing the opportunities and strategies to optimise return on your levy investments this year and setting priorities across its R&D and marketing programs. Turn to page five to read more on our focus for 2012.

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



Scott Hansen
MLA Managing Director



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Your feedback

Following the success of pilots in Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia, MLA is set to roll out The real conversation social media workshops during 2012. The workshops are designed to teach produce the skills to use social media to share their story and promote the industry to the urban community. NT beef producer, Vicki Mayne attended the pilot workshop held in Katherine and shared her thoughts on the initiative.

WORKSHOPS A CONVERSATION STARTER

I came to the social media workshop because I could see there was a need for people in our rural community to start to connect with our city cousins and to build that bridge. Also, because I am not familiar with a lot of the social media applications that are out there.

Through the workshop I've learnt to be a lot more comfortable with the use of social media and to embrace it. I can see that it

enables you to educate people and share with them your way of life and what life is like on a cattle station. During the workshop I wanted to keep improving on what we did on our blog. I've also been able to put myself in someone in the city's shoes. For example, I was going to use terminology like 'weaner' but thought "people don't know what a weaner is", so then I actually enjoyed educating people on my blog about what a weaner cow was.

Vicki Mayne,
Annaburroo Station, Katherine, NT

Find out more about MLA's social media workshops by contacting Matthew Dwyer at mdwyer@mla.com.au

To share your views and questions, send your feedback to the editor at info@mla.com.au



Twitter talk

People are increasingly keeping up-to-date with the latest MLA news on Twitter. A few are even taking the time to mention the 'new look' Feedback magazine. See what they are tweeting about below.

Michael @farmersway
Read @meatlivestock Feedback magazine. Nice surprise to read price on SM. More so to see blog listed. Thanks. And good read on @ABCCoppin

Darryn Browne @kelpiestockdogs
@meatlivestock love the new look Feedback mag

Now it's your turn.
Follow MLA on Twitter @meatlivestock, have your say and join the conversation.

MLA online



MLA tools

Industry projections

Find out what's in store for the beef and sheepmeat markets in 2012 with MLA's industry projections.

www.mla.com.au/industryprojections

Upcoming events

Check out the list of upcoming industry events in March, including BeefUp forums, NSW beyond the gate tour, BusinessEDGE workshop and the ongoing national PestSmart roadshow.

www.mla.com.au/events

Meat Standards Australia

Read more about MSA, how it works and how to register with our freshly updated content on the MLA website.

www.mla.com.au/msa

fridayfeedback

Get the latest marketing information, industry news and weather directly into your inbox each Friday.

www.mla.com.au/fridayfeedback

Social networking

YouTube

Check out the latest episode of *feedbackTV* on YouTube including tips on improving on-farm management using NLIS.

www.youtube.com/feedbacktv

Flickr

View MLA's photo stream on Flickr in particular the Sam Kekovich Australia Day CD launch party.

www.flickr.com/meatlivestock

Twitter

Read the latest tweets by following MLA on Twitter.

www.twitter.com/meatlivestock

Facebook

Stay connected with MLA by friending us on Facebook.

www.facebook.com/meatandlivestockaustralia

In-brief

Muscling out dark cutting



Muscular cattle are more likely to produce the cherry-red coloured steaks preferred by consumers, according to Beef CRC researcher Dr Peter McGilchrist.

Research has found that more muscular cattle have a higher concentration of glycogen in their muscle at slaughter, resulting in a reduced incidence of dark cutting.

Beef CRC researcher and lecturer in Production Animal Health and Management at Murdoch University, Dr Peter McGilchrist, initially found this in Angus steers that were the progeny of a herd visually selected for greater muscling by the New South Wales Department of Primary Industry.

That finding is now supported by further analysis of 204,000 MSA carcass records from Western Australia.

"MSA records showed cattle with a larger eye muscle at the same carcass weight had a lower probability of dark cutting," Peter said.

Dark cutting cost the Australian beef industry around \$35 million in 2009.

"Cattle producers should aim for an eye muscle greater than 70cm² in a 250kg carcass," he said.



Peter McGilchrist // T: 0419 986 056
Get MLA's Preventing dark cutting in livestock information pack at www.mla.com.au/darkcuttingkit

Ticked off

Northern beef producers who infuse British, European or exotic *Bos taurus* genetics into their herds run the risk of escalating problems with ticks and tick fever.

The first detailed study of the susceptibility of Wagyu, Senepol and Tuli cattle to tick fever has highlighted these breeds—and resultant composites with *Bos indicus*—would be severely affected if exposed to the disease.

Tick fever is caused by three organisms carried and transmitted to cattle by ticks. The disease is endemic in warm, humid areas of northern Australia.

Tick fever costs the northern beef industry an estimated \$27 million annually in lost production and control measures.

Brahman-type *Bos indicus* cattle are known to be naturally more resistant than British and European *Bos taurus* breeds to the most common disease organism, *Babesia bovis*.

The MLA-funded breed susceptibility project confirmed this and showed that natural resistance declined rapidly as *Bos taurus* content increased in crossbreds or composites.

However, the project also found that more exotic-type *Bos taurus* breeds, such as Tuli,



Senepol and Wagyu, were just as susceptible to *Babesia bovis* as European breeds.

All breeds of cattle, including pure *Bos indicus*, were found to be very susceptible to the tick fever disease organism *Anaplasma marginale*—but this accounts for only about 13% of tick fever cases.

Queensland Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation's Phillip Carter led the research project. He said knowing the susceptibility of newer breeds to tick fever was crucial so that northern producers could better evaluate the risk to their herds and implement appropriate control measures.



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Order // *The cattle parasite atlas* from www.mla.com.au/cattleparasiteatlas

News flash: LambEx 2012

Australian lamb industry leaders are finalising the program for LambEx on June 28-29 in Bendigo.

The national convention brings together producers, processors, researchers and service providers to celebrate the industry and plan for its further growth.

LambEx chair, Victorian lamb producer and industry consultant, Jason Trompf, said the event would feature international keynote presenters and a collaboration with MLA and the Sheep CRC would also facilitate

some high end sheep science content in the program.

"We aim to have 800 producers and service providers attend LambEx, with a program of information and resolutions that has the capacity to really move the industry forward."



Register for LambEx at www.lambex.com.au

Have you used MLA's stocking rate calculator lately?

Using feed budgets can help turn pasture into product, determining if you can meet your pasture supply targets—and nutritional demands—for different classes of stock with your current or proposed stocking rate.

MLA's feed demand calculator can help you do these calculations online. Making More From Sheep modules offer tactics and strategies for matching feed supply to animal demand, managing any consequences and exploring opportunities when feed supply does not match enterprise demand.

There are some simple, short-term feed budgets you can calculate manually, without the need for a computer, to answer questions like this:

Q: How long will a 16ha paddock last stocked with 400 pregnant ewes ensuring pasture is kept above a minimum level to meet livestock requirements?

Pasture available

Present pasture mass: 1,000kg green DM/ha

Less required minimum pasture mass: 700kg green DM/ha

Available pasture: 300kg green DM/ha

Daily growth rate of pasture*: 27kg DM/ha/day

Total available pasture:

Stocking density (400 ewes divided by 16ha): 25 ewes/ha

Livestock requirements** (1.2kg green DM/head/day 25 ewes/ha + spoilage of 15%): 35kg DM/ha/day

Results

These calculations indicate a net pasture loss of 8kg green DM/ha/day (ewes are consuming 35kg green DM/ha/day which is 8kg greater than the pasture growth rate of 27kg green DM/ha/day).

Therefore, available pasture is declining at the rate of 8kg DM/ha/day.

How long will the paddock last (300kg DM/ha divided by 8kg green DM/ha/day)? About 38 days

When calculating short term (1-5 days) feed budgets, except in spring, pasture growth may be ignored.

* Use MMFS Tool 8.2: www.makingmorefromsheep.com.au/turn-pasture-into-product/tool_8.2.htm

** Intake estimate from the table in MMFS Tool 8.2 (pasture digestibility 70%)



Download MLA's stocking rate calculator to easily make these calculations online www.mla.com.au/tools www.makingmorefromsheep.com.au

Bred well fed well

Discover how to use superior sheep genetics and achieve improved reproductive performance from better feed management at a free one-day workshop.

Bred well fed well workshops are supported by MLA, AWI and the Sheep CRC as a part of a national program to increase sheep industry productivity.

Bred well fed well delivers practical training on how to:
→ use ASBVs to improve enterprise profitability

→ develop a breeding objective for your sheep enterprise

→ better manage ewe nutrition for reproductive performance and flock profitability

→ improve skills in developing simple energy budgets for the ewe flock

Practical sessions include condition scoring, feed budgeting, ram rankings and ram selection. Follow-up courses will also be offered for those wishing to further develop skills in breeding and nutritional management.



Find workshop dates at www.sheepcrc.com.au www.mla.com.au/events



In profile

Brendon Watts // Doncaster butcher and founding member of the Red Meat Networking Club

Victorian butcher Brendon Watts has always been one for seizing opportunities. He was one of the first retailers to join the MLA Red Meat Networking Club (RMNC) when it launched a decade ago. Since then, Brendon has taken advantage of the resources RMNC provides to butchers to help them develop best retail practices, promote red meat innovation, boost profits and build demand for red meat. Brendon began butchering at the age of 15 in 1969. He bought his first butcher shop at 25 but didn't realise how much he would need to change business practices over the years to stay in the market. This year, as the RMNC club celebrates its 10th anniversary with more than 1,600 members, he discusses the impact it has had on his business, Brendon's Quality Meats in Doncaster.

What challenges did butchers face when RMNC began?
"The club came along at a time of massive change. To compete with supermarkets and takeaways, butchers had to develop and maintain a point of difference. Butcher shops have transformed from unappealing, static places to high-end, chic stores. RMNC gives us the knowledge to better understand and enhance our businesses through tapping into MLA programs, workshops, staff training, networking, advertising and study tours—it keeps us thinking outside the square."

What are the advantages of networking?
"Until recently most butchers didn't network outside their own shops. During my first Queensland RMNC tour, 30 of us were introduced to some very smart operators. I was impressed by the style of butchering and

stores we saw. As a united front, we now share our experiences and progress, and help one another out. I call it creative friendship. Last month I had a butcher from Wollongong come in to use my shop to make his sausages. I didn't know him, but he's an RMNC member. I met him at the airport and helped him—that's how it works."
What have all these changes meant for your business?
"Gaining new insights with the help of RMNC, we have become independent and branded by modernising our store. We keep up with lifestyle changes and occurring meat trends. We've accommodated the dynamics of our area to turn a very good store to a very elite, cosmopolitan, competitive store. It's important to understand what's going on in the world—such as time-poor

professionals needing meals they can pre-purchase, freeze, take out after five and cook. More than 50% of our products are now value added for our customers' convenience. We prepare lots of ready-to-cook meat like seasoned, rolled lamb, curries, stir fry mixes and pan or oven prepared meat. We cater directly for our customers, giving them exactly what they want. All this has come from ideas I would never have thought of had I not joined RMNC."

Find out about RMNC at www.acutabov.net.au/rmnc
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Insight

Top priority: MLA outlines its focus for 2012-13

MLA has put its marketing and R&D programs under the microscope to focus on delivering additional value to beef, sheep and goat producers in 2012-13.

In consultation with the peak industry councils, MLA has identified four areas of 'back to basics' investment designed to build demand and productivity for industry.

MLA Managing Director, Scott Hansen, said that while all the company's programs add value to industry, focusing on the four priority areas should deliver the best long-term return on producer levies.

"Our focus in the year ahead is squarely on building demand and productivity for Australia's beef, sheep and goat producers by providing targeted marketing and R&D services that benefit the supply chain," Scott said.

"Getting industry feedback on our programs is also critical, as is keeping our eye on changes in market developments."

Maintaining and improving market access
MLA's market access program provides research services and market intelligence to support peak industry councils and government negotiations, with the aim of maintaining and improving market access for Australian red meat.

MLA's food safety program also invests in research consistent with the company's objectives to increase market access and competitive advantage as well as lift demand. For example, MLA is conducting research and seminars to help industry prepare for and minimise the impact of changes to US import requirements that will introduce routine sampling for six additional non-O157 *E. coli* strains in imported ground beef.

In Australia's live export markets, the onus is on commercial supply chains to meet the stipulations of the government's new regulatory framework. However, Scott said MLA would continue to work under the peak industry councils' direction to assist

industry in providing technical support for exporters and importers in that process.

Growing demand

MLA will continue to channel investment dollars into programs that grow demand for red meat in Australia and internationally. The MSA program continues to grow, with estimates of over 1.6 million cattle and 2 million lambs to be graded this financial year. This critical mass has enabled MLA to embark on a new MSA consumer education program and renew its focus on supporting commercial brand owners who use MSA. It will also invest in science and consumer sensory work to further refine the MSA model, focusing on long distance transport effects to explore further supply opportunities for producers.

In global markets, MLA and industry representatives will gather at the 2012 marketing taskforce meetings in March to assess the relative investment in established markets, such as Japan and the US, versus growth markets, such as Russia and the Middle East.

Increasing productivity

Helping the Industry increase productivity remains one of MLA's core aims. In southern Australia, the feedbase investment plan will deliver several projects, including research to develop new cultivars for southern production zones and work with the pasture seed supply chain to provide credible information for producers through the Pasture Variety Trial Network initiative.

In northern Australia, the productivity of the breeder herd is arguably the most significant area of focus for productivity gains. Results from MLA's Cash Cow project will be finalised in 2012-13, mapping reproductive performance with a view to determining



key factors affecting the northern herd. MLA's research will deliver producer tools on best practice management to optimise productivity, including heifer and weaner management manuals.

MLA will also work to improve awareness and expand the offering of market information services in 2012, continuing to deliver market intelligence to aid producers in their on-farm decisions.

Supporting industry integrity and sustainability

MLA commissions a range of R&D projects to improve practices and inform industry, community and government debate in areas such as the environment, animal welfare, food safety and nutrition.

Work on web-based information sites and education applications such as www.mla.com.au/virtualfarm and www.primezone.edu.au provides information to schools. MLA also works to proactively equip producers and industry representative bodies with the information and skills to become industry advocates online.

"Roy Morgan research shows that producers are highly trusted by over 80% of consumers, making them best placed to dispel any misinformation about the industry in the marketplace," Scott said.

"The industry has an opportunity to better leverage this goodwill."

MLA will help producers directly engage with the urban community through its Target 100 campaign and The real conversation workshops, giving them avenues and skills for using social media to share their story and promote the industry.

Defining roles

MLA will continue to articulate its role in the industry as an R&D and marketing service delivery company, clearly delineating this from the policy and representation roles of the peak industry councils and regulatory role of government.

"It's a challenging work program for the year ahead but one that I believe will deliver value to red meat producers. I welcome feedback from MLA members on MLA's priority areas for 2012-13," Scott said.

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Sign up for weekly updates on MLA news, market information and events at www.mla.com.au/fridayfeedback

Sheep industry projections



In demand

Strong prices for sheep and lambs at all levels of the supply chain in recent years have provided the financial lure for the lamb producing sector to continue its expansion.

Following consecutive good seasons in the eastern states and drought breaking rain in Western Australia, the national sheep flock took its first steps towards rejuvenation in 2011, increasing to 74.3 million head.

Comparatively favourable returns from sheep production have been accentuated by a recovery in wool prices from 2010. These factors are anticipated to remain favourable moving into 2012, reinforcing the industry's financial viability.

Other markets fuel demand
Australia remains one of the largest global players in the trade of lamb, mutton and wool, even as the national flock has declined from over 170 million head in the 1980s to a low of 70 million in 2010 (Figure 1). International flocks have been in decline, with New Zealand in particular following a remarkably similar trend to Australia.

The increase in returns to Australian lamb producers has been driven largely by the greater interest in lamb in developing markets, which has meant exports now generate a much higher proportion of income than in the past.

In 1995, approximately 15% of lamb production was exported, mainly to the US. In 2011, 48.5% of production was exported, with the Middle East the largest market, followed by the US and a quickly growing Greater China. The increase in the proportion of production exported has occurred in conjunction with a substantial increase in overall lamb production (Figure 2), making the export effect even greater.

It is expected that in the near future these growing markets, especially the Middle East and Greater China, will continue their upward trajectory given their

rapidly growing populations and expanding middle classes.

The main factor limiting the potential for Australia's sheep producers to continue to benefit from these markets is the ability to supply enough to meet demand—which has been difficult in recent years with the decline in available lambs.

The live export sector of the industry reached historic lows in terms of numbers shipped in 2011 but is projected to stabilise in 2012. More ewes and wethers will become available to the trade, particularly later in the year.

Flock rebuild supported by solid prices
Fortunately for the industry, conditions remain conducive to an ongoing flock rebuild. Prices for lambs and sheep reached record highs in 2011 and while 2012 is unlikely to match last year's levels, they should remain above historical rates (Figure 1).

Producer surveys carried out by MLA and AWI indicate a strong intention by producers across the country to increase or maintain their ewe flocks and increasingly wether flocks too. With an historically high proportion of the national flock currently made up of ewes, these intentions are expected to be fulfilled in step with further growth in lamb slaughter and production.

Managing for productivity makes the most of opportunities
With the focus on rebuilding flocks through either retaining older ewes or by mating a greater proportion of younger ewes including ewe lambs, producers are encouraged to think about managing the ewe flocks to gain the optimum productivity. Programs such as Lifetime Ewe Management and Making More From Sheep clearly focus on activities such as condition scoring, pregnancy

Figure 1 Australian sheep flock and lamb price

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

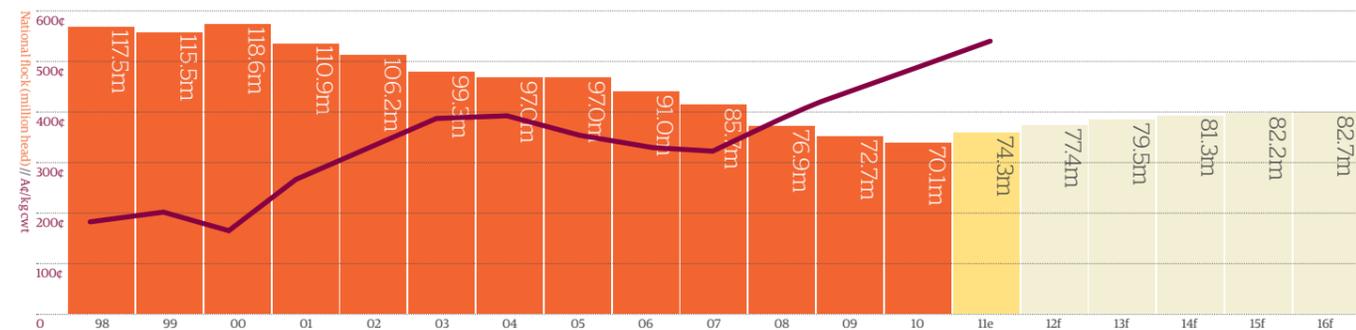
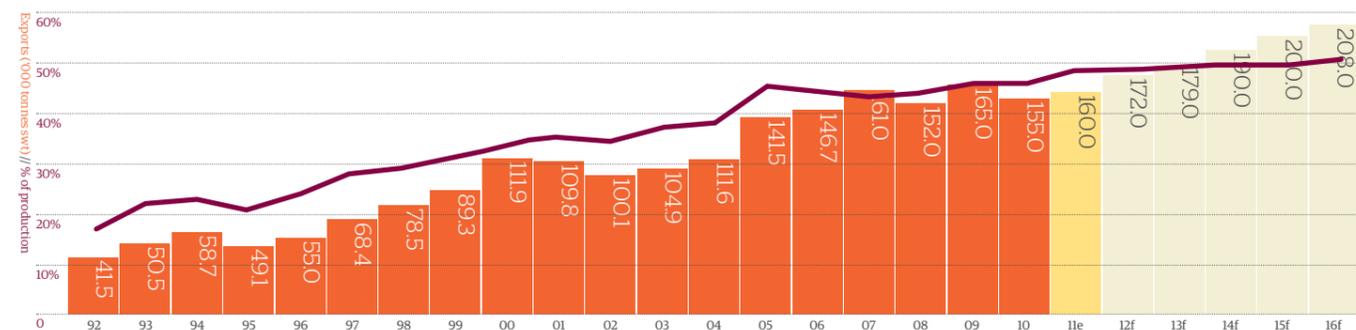


Figure 2 Australian lamb exports

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



High feed availability in 2012 means producers need to calculate the cost of production of each kg of carcase weight and weigh up the opportunity to go to heavier weights versus shifts in stocking rates and lambing rates.

scanning and feed budgeting to ensure that ewes are given the best opportunity to ensure high marking rates and early growth rates of the progeny. Given the importance of every live lamb, producers should review other practices such as selection of rams for lambing ease and appropriate birth weights, preparation of lambing paddocks including shelter and worm management.

The survey also highlights the need to have a clear view of what markets and market specifications are being targeted in the lamb production system. Targeting market specifications starts with selection of the right rams. Increasingly the traits that will have a big influence on the profitability of lamb production are those traits that you can't see such as number of lambs weaned, maternal weaning weight (milk), worm resistance and carcase characteristics such

as fat and muscle. Importantly these components apply to all rams selections including Merino, maternal and terminal sires. Finally, high feed availability in 2012 means producers need to calculate the cost of production of each kg of carcase weight and weigh up the opportunity to go to heavier weights versus shifts in stocking rates and lambing rates. Profit margins in lamb will depend on how well you manage carcase weight versus the number of lambs per ha.

48.5%
of lamb production
exported in 2011

74.3m
head in the
national flock

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Right: Peter McGilchrist is working with beef processors in each state to identify opportunities for segregating MSA cuts into premium quality lines to extract greater market value.



Star quality

Research is determining potential to further identify, segregate, and market significantly more Meat Standards Australia (MSA) four- and five-star premium beef cuts.

National research aims to identify additional opportunities for red meat processors to optimise harvesting superior and good everyday 'cut x cook' MSA graded products.

The volume of carcasses graded through MSA has grown an average 20% for the last four years. However, the bulk of MSA beef continues to be sold under a single 'MSA graded' claim, with minimal further segregation of the different levels of eating quality. This is because most processors use a boning group threshold to classify carcasses more simply as either 'in' or 'out'.

Research conducted by MLA Postdoctoral Fellow, Dr Peter McGilchrist, has found that some processing consignments of cattle can contain up to 40-60% MSA four- and five-star cuts.

According to Peter, a significant proportion of carcasses are not segregated and therefore not sold at their full market value. He said this is because some processors have difficulty analysing the volume of

carcasses that meet different quality levels, identifying price thresholds and demand, as well as sorting carcasses and sourcing consistent supply of cattle.

There are a handful of company brands that already use the MSA three-, four- and five-star eating quality levels to establish a point of difference in the market place and maximise returns for the higher eating quality product. These premiums are reflected in price incentives for producers to supply MSA eligible cattle that meet the brand specifications.

"At one processor we found that 89.5% of cube rolls graded over a nine-month period were MSA four-star, but sold as three-star because the lowest 10.5% don't make the four-star grade," Peter said.

He is commencing work with beef processors in each state to identify opportunities for segregating MSA cuts into premium quality lines to extract greater market value.

In the long term, Peter hopes the research will lead to more

accurate price incentives in the processor grids for producers.

"We need to demonstrate to processors how they can reap higher values from carcass segregation and then hopefully will see benefits flowing back to producers who comply with MSA standards," he said.

"Evidence collected by MLA shows that consumers are willing to pay up to double the price for MSA five-star beef compared to MSA three-star beef."



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For more information on how to produce MSA quality beef visit www.mla.com.au/msa

Taking MSA to the masses

New television and print advertisements introducing the refreshed MSA logo commenced in mid-February as part of the MSA consumer education campaign that was launched in late 2011.

The campaign introduces the MSA logo to consumers as an identifier of quality—educating them about MSA, what the logo means and how it helps them take the guesswork out of buying beef.

Feedback from retailers indicates consumer recognition of the consistent quality of MSA graded product is growing but increasing awareness of what the MSA logo means will require more time.

This will be helped by the national presence the logo is achieving at the point-of-sale, along with brochures, marketing materials and the education campaign.

LOOK OUT FOR...
The MSA refresh and what it means for you in the next episode of *feedbackTV*, out with the May issue of *Feedback*.



Brand power

Investing in developing and marketing branded product builds customer awareness and supply chain loyalty for Australian beef and lamb.

55
Australian companies used the ICA program to help promote beef brands on the world stage last year



A big entrance is not just something the fashion industry thrives on; it also has a role to play in the red meat market. But creating a big entrance to inspire consumers and build sales is not easy, as Atron Enterprises Managing Director, David Larkin, knows after developing a stable of branded beef products for both the export and domestic markets.

David said the support of industry funding programs such as MLA's industry collaborative agreements (ICAs) was vital given the significant work and expense involved in developing brands to take the product to potential customers.

"Without industry funding support programs such as ICAs, the level of investment required from brand concept stage to processing 150 head a week would be out of reach of most companies," David said.

"In round figures you're talking up to \$400,000 to do all the preparatory work so you can hit the ground running with a new brand."

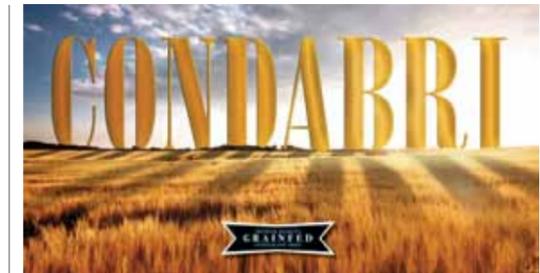
David believes Australian beef sales have to become more brand driven to remain competitive, making the ICA program an important marketing strategy and investment. He said there was genuine value for Australian cattle producers in the success of brands because they lifted meat from a commodity status into a different price bracket and created customer loyalty that helped protect sales from everyday market fluctuations such as currency rates.

"The days of living in a commodity world are drawing to a close, as the cost of our livestock and production will eventually make us uncompetitive against the cheaper meat that can be produced in other countries that have lower costs or are heavily subsidised," David said.

"The way forward is to add value. For that you need to be marketing and selling products. That is where branding and having a story to tell to consumers becomes so important."

Did you know...

MLA's industry collaborative agreement (ICA) program partners industry with processors and exporters who have developed branded beef and lamb products, giving them funding support for marketing and promotion to increase sales both internationally and on the domestic market.



Atron Enterprises spent more than two years developing its latest brand which launched last year—an MSA licensed premium grainfined product called "Condabri".

The brand is based on Wagyu and British breed cattle grainfined for 70-120 days. The product has two tiers: Condabri Gold for carcasses over 300kg cwt and Condabri Black for lighter animals.

"With the assistance of the ICA, we were able to launch Condabri into the marketplace with all the bells and whistles needed to make a new product work, such as brochures, website support and exposure to potential customers," David said.

The brand was marketed into Asia throughout most of 2011 and is showing significant potential, with volumes growing from 20-30 carcasses a month to more than 200 per month.

"We're selling branded beef in a supermarket in Asia that is more expensive than US beef but it sells because of the marketing support and value that is connected to the product."

The domestic market has responded strongly to Condabri with plans to roll-out the product to a wider audience by selling it in independent supermarket chains and butcher shops.



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To find out more visit www.mla.com.au/ica

ICA funding is on a dollar-for-dollar basis and companies must meet strict guidelines before an ICA plan is approved.



Cash Cow targets reproduction efficiency

When it comes to reproductive efficiency in beef cattle, the most commonly stated goal is for a female to calve and rear a calf every 12 months.

Although that goal is difficult to achieve in many parts of northern Australia due to the nutritional quality of pastures and variation in seasons, it begs the question “what are realistic targets for optimal reproductive performance in northern herds?”

Data from the MLA-funded Northern Australian Beef Fertility Project (Cash Cow) has demonstrated a substantial variation in reproductive performance in herds throughout Queensland, Northern Territory and the Kimberley.

Professor Mike McGowan, project leader from The University of Queensland’s School of Veterinary Science, said data was collected from two reproductive cycles during the project’s study of 60,000 cows from 78 commercial properties. It will be used to identify realistic benchmarks for major reproductive traits such as annual pregnancy rates based on the value achieved by the upper 25% of mobs in the study. Preliminary benchmarks based on the reproductive performance of herds in the 2009-10 breeding season were presented at the Northern Beef Research Update conference held in Darwin last year (Figure 1).

Find out the latest at Beef Australia 2012

Data from Cash Cow is now being analysed to identify the major factors contributing to the substantial variation in northern reproductive performance. Mike will discuss these factors at MLA’s FutureBeef seminar at Beef Australia 2012.

“Producers can then use current best practice management strategies and technologies to address the factors that contribute most to reproductive outcomes in their enterprises,” Mike said.

He said that if the Cash Cow analysis demonstrates that there is significant unexplained variation in reproductive performance then this will determine the need for future research into factors influencing reproductive performance.

Figure 1 Annual pregnancy rates in Cash Cow herds across northern Australia (2009-10 season)

Class	Mating system	Number of mobs	Median ¹ (%)	Typical range ² (%)
Maiden heifers	Continuous	9	63.3	48-82
	Control	45	81.0	71-86
	Overall	54	80.2	63-86
First lactation Females	Continuous	8	44.5	37-63
	Control	37	77.0	62-85
	Overall	45	75.0	55-84
Cows	Continuous	16	64.0	57-70
	Control	49	81.0	64-89
	Overall	65	75.0	62-88

Note: The annual pregnancy rate of maiden heifers has not been corrected for the selection of maiden heifers exposed to bulls.

Figure 2 Losses between confirmed pregnancy and weaning in Cash Cow herds (2009-10 season)

Class	Mating system	Number of mobs	Median ¹ (%)	Typical range ² (%)
Maiden heifers	Continuous	9	17.0	15-26
	Control	28	9.0	4-14
	Overall	37	10.0	1-16
Cows	Continuous	15	14.0	7-22
	Control	44	6.5	4-11
	Overall	59	7.0	4-13

Note: These losses are under-estimates as they do not include cow mortalities

1. The median is where half of all values are above and below it.
2. Typical range represents values between the 25th percentile and 75th percentile.

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Cash Cow highlights a large variation in northern breeding performance. Half the maiden heifer mobs monitored in 2009-10 had losses from pregnancy diagnosis to weaning greater than

10%

Access the latest R&D at Beef Australia 2012

MLA’s free FutureBeef seminar covers:

- the latest data from the \$2 million Cash Cow project
- MSA’s move into the retail sector
- MLA’s global marketing activities

When:
9 May, 1.30pm-5.30pm

Where:
Bos Taurus Room, James Lawrence Pavilion, Rockhampton Showground

To register:
Rockhampton Venues and Events
T: 07 4927 4111

Online registration is available at www.beefaustralia.com.au

On-farm

Research at work // Find the latest information and resources for making a difference in the paddock every month in this section of *Feedback*.

In this issue

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Tropical perennial grasses boost cattle numbers and improve soil condition

Wean more lambs

Researcher Nick Linden investigates whether time of shearing impacts lamb birth weights

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Stocking rate—less is more when it comes to long term returns

Gone troppo

Tropical perennial grasses have allowed the Bowman family to boost cattle numbers and improve soil condition on their northern New South Wales property. →

Tropical perennial grasses

Snapshot

The Bowman family, Barraba, NSW



Property:
2,700ha

Enterprise:
Beef cattle—spring calving enterprise and opportunistic trade cattle

Soil:
Basalt clay

Rainfall:
700-750mm



Tom and Emily Bowman started investing in tropical perennial grasses four years ago after seeing the positive impacts of the pastures on other local properties.

"After conventional cropping during the 1980s, our production system is now focused on cattle production. Before the tropical perennial grasses, we relied on a combination of lucerne, native pastures and winter grazing oats," Tom said.

While lucerne provides some green feed during summer, groundcover is an issue, with patches of bare soil leading to significant compaction between plants and resulting in soil erosion from summer storms. Tom said they introduced the tropical grasses with the main aim of improving groundcover and reducing this erosion.

"We direct drilled 40ha of undulating hill country down to a locally-recommended mix of premier digit grass, Katambora Rhodes grass, Bambatsi panic and Gatton panic during early November 2007," he said.

"Following this, we had a couple of heavy summer storms providing about 50-75mm of rainfall each. I thought the seed would be washed away, but two months later it was all up and we had weaners grazing the new pasture by the second week of February.

"Our 600 weaners continued to graze the paddock from March through to April, which was a real bonus for us as autumn is a feed gap."

Getting established

Since that first paddock, the Bowmans have continued to establish more country to tropical perennial grasses each year.

Tom said the key to success was to make sure paddocks are weed-free before starting.

"We establish our tropical perennials onto paddocks that have had at least two years of grazing oats and we control weeds throughout the crop and fallow periods," he said.

"We aim for a plant density of about 10 plants per square metre. Post establishment, we continue to invest in the pasture base through soil fertility to support maximum growth."

Tom soil tests each paddock and applies nitrogen and trace elements as needed. He said the cost of soil testing to determine appropriate fertiliser rates is nothing compared with the cost of fertiliser—testing allows him to supply only what is needed.

The growth potential is spectacular, both with and without the summer rainfall,

Above: Tom and his father Roger have divided paddocks into 10-15ha blocks for effective grazing management.

Right: Tom and Emily Bowman, with their children Oliver, Sybella and Alessa on their farm at Barraba.

20 t/ha
of dry matter produced in a growing season

30 kg DM/ha
produced by premier digit grass for each millimetre of water used

100 kg DM/ha
additional forage in the growing season for every kg/ha of nitrogen applied

and the challenge is to ensure there are enough mouths to keep the pasture under control.

Grazing management

To this end, effective grazing management requires small paddocks and high stocking rates to maintain the tropical grasses at the leafy growth stage during periods of peak growth.

"We have divided paddocks into blocks of 10-15ha using single wire electric fencing, with watering points supplied to each paddock," Tom said. "It's a significant investment in water and wire, but we achieve longer and better grazing than we did under lucerne and the results are worth the investment."

During the warmer months (November-February), when the tropical perennial grasses are actively growing, the Bowmans stock at a density of about 250 steers to 10ha, moving stock every

three to five days. To achieve sufficient stocking densities during this period of rapid pasture growth, they bought in trade steers during spring and fattened them over summer.

"The key is to know the appropriate length of time the pasture will need to recover before the next grazing—this varies according to temperature and soil moisture," Tom said.

"We generally move stock when there is 1200-1500kg DM/ha left in the paddock and ideally place them into each new paddock before stem elongation commences."

He said it could be difficult to keep the grasses at the leafy growth stage as large stock numbers and strict rotational grazing were required.

However by maximising the energy and protein of the pasture through fertiliser and careful grazing management, they have been able to achieve growth rates of about 1.5kg/hd/day.

"We had a mob of steers that increased from an average weight of 400kg to 480kg after 50 days grazing perennial tropical grasses."

According to Tom, the grasses also helped fill the autumn feed gap for weaners. He said native pastures only provided low-quality fodder during autumn, which was unsuitable for weaners.

"With well-planned grazing, the tropical grasses provide suitable feed right through late summer-autumn until oats are available for winter fodder," he said.

"Up until now, we've only had enough tropical grass pasture for trade stock and weaners. As we establish more we will put more cows and first calvers in these paddocks."



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The science behind the story

Interest in tropical perennial grasses in northern NSW has grown during the past 10 years. Inverell district agronomist, Bob McGufficke, discusses production benefits and considerations.

Estimates from commercial seed sales suggest that more than 250,000ha of tropical perennial grasses has been sown in the past three years. This has greatly improved the pasture feedbase in the area, providing increased options for producers during the warmer months.

Tropical perennial grasses are drought tolerant and can produce up to 20t/ha of dry matter (DM) in a growing season (120kg DM/ha per day). They also have a role in providing persistent perennial species in the landscape and year-round high levels of groundcover if well managed.

Water use efficiencies are high compared with native perennial grasses. In trials in the Tamworth region, premier digit grass produced almost 30kg DM/ha for each millimetre of water used.

As indicated by Tom Bowman, adequate soil nutrition is essential for these grasses to achieve optimum growth and quality for animal production. Given adequate moisture, tropical perennial grasses respond to increased nitrogen and, as a rule of thumb, can produce an additional 100kg DM/ha in the growing season for every kg/ha of nitrogen applied.

Due to their rapid growth, one of the biggest challenges is to maintain high feed quality. This can be achieved through good plant nutrition and appropriate grazing management strategies. Plant nutrition can be improved with fertiliser to raise soil phosphorus, sulphur and nitrogen to a productive level for tropical perennial grasses, and replace these nutrients (particularly nitrogen) when required.

Well-managed legumes can also supply much of the nitrogen required by these grasses. With adequate soil moisture and fertility and warm summer conditions, tropical perennial grasses grow rapidly. They require regular grazing at high stocking densities to maintain the high quality, leafy pastures required for maximum livestock production.

EverGraze is a research and delivery partnership between Future Farm Industries CRC, MLA and AWI. This case study was first published in FFI CRC's Future Farm, Issue 8 August 2011 and is reprinted with permission.



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Something to think about

Now is a good time to start planning ahead if you're considering sowing tropical perennial grasses to take advantage of their high summer growth potential. Factor in issues such as sowing time, competition and varying management requirements that may arise when sowing mixtures of different species.

Successfully integrating these pastures into your grazing system requires careful planning. Up to two years 'lead time' is necessary to control summer-growing annual grasses. With some thought and planning this 'lead time' can be incorporated into a cropping or grazing program, reducing the time that a paddock is out of production.



To learn more visit www.futurefarmonline.com.au/research/future-livestock-production/tropical-grasses.htm

Wean more lambs

Does shearing clip birth weights?



“Shearing ewes in mid-pregnancy might provide a tool for producers to increase lamb birth weights.”

Victorian Department of Primary Industries Research Scientist, Nick Linden, discusses whether the timing of shearing has an effect on lamb birth weights, thereby influencing survival rates.

Observation of ewes lambing at the Chiltern EverGraze site in Victoria prompted an investigation into the effect of time of shearing on lamb birth weights.

The site was established to investigate the use of rotational grazing and strategic fertiliser applications to improve the productivity of native pastures within a lamb production enterprise. However, recent data also provided some clues as to how time of shearing might affect lamb birth weights.

Weighty trend for mid-pregnancy shearing

All ewes at the site are CentrePlus Merinos, joined to White Suffolks. A new line of ewes was purchased in September 2010 (now four and five years old) to complement the existing six-year-old ewes and all ewes were joined as a single group in the first week of February 2011, for July lambing. All three age groups were equally distributed across the various pasture treatments.

New ewes were shorn in mid-August 2010 just prior to delivery and joining, and existing ewes were shorn late April 2011, in mid-pregnancy (approximately 80 days from start of joining).

After lambing, researchers observed a trend whereby the older ewes, shorn in mid-pregnancy, had heavier lamb birth weights. This was apparent for singles and twins, ram and ewe lambs (Table 1).

The researchers expected the older six-year-old ewes to have heavier lambs than the four- and five-year-old ewes. Previous research shows that, when adjusted for all other effects (eg birth type and genetics), the difference in birth weights between four- and six-year-old ewes should be around 0.15kg or 0.17kg.

At the Chiltern EverGraze site, the difference in lamb birth weights between the younger (four- and five-year-old) and older (six-year-old) ewes exceeded these figures. This indicates other influences, such as differences in management during pregnancy.



Table 1 Birth weights of single and twin lambs from four-, five- and six-year-old ewes at the Chiltern EverGraze site, 2011

Age of ewe	4 years	5 years	6 years
Female (s)	5.2 (12)	5.0 (4)	5.8 (17)
Male (s)	4.9 (13)	5.3 (2)	6.1 (13)
Female (t)	3.5 (40)	4.3 (22)	4.9 (38)
Male (t)	4.0 (30)	4.5 (16)	5.1 (28)

s = single, t = twin and (n) = the number of lambs in each category

Analysing possible causes

Figures 1 and 2 (on the next page) illustrate that all three age classes followed similar pathways of weight and fat deposition (ie when one group gained or lost weight or fat, so did the others). If one group had been losing weight and condition during pregnancy, researchers would have expected it to produce lighter lambs. But all three age classes followed the same profiles, which removes one possible cause of variation in lamb birth weights.

The older ewes were significantly lighter and leaner than the younger ewes, from joining through to lambing. Yet experience shows that lighter and lower condition score ewes tend to have lambs with lighter birth weights. This indicates that the heavier lamb birth weights from the

“The difference in lamb birth weights between the younger and older ewes exceeded the expected figures.”

→ older ewes were not due to body weight or condition; that an additional factor contributed to higher lamb birth weights.

All ewes were joined to the same team of rams, at the same time and subjected to the same routine animal health treatments, so the researchers thought that the time of shearing might be in influencing factor.

Figure 1 Liveweight profiles for four-, five- and six-year-old ewes from the Chiltern EverGraze site, 2010-11

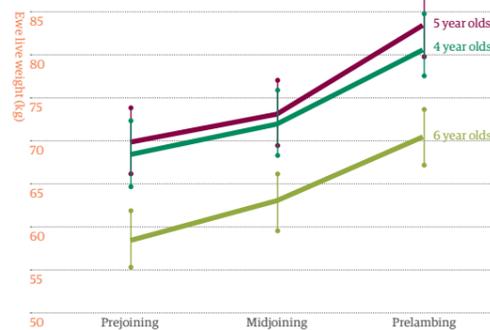
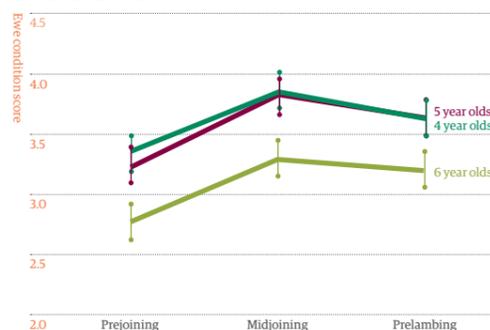


Figure 2 Condition score profiles for four-, five- and six-year-old ewes from the Chiltern EverGraze site



Research supports the trend

New Zealand research has shown that shearing ewes mid-pregnancy will increase birth weights of single- and twin-born lambs and also increase the survival of those lambs when run in a commercial environment.

That shearing in mid-pregnancy can lift lamb birth weights explains a large portion of the increases in lamb survival. Lambs that are lighter at birth have a higher surface area to weight ratio than larger lambs, making them more susceptible to cooling and exposure. Lambs from ewes shorn in mid-pregnancy may also handle colder weather better by maintaining a more stable core temperature. There is some evidence that these lambs have larger reserves of brown fat (a key energy source for newly born lambs).

Shearing ewes in mid-pregnancy might provide a tool for producers to manipulate lamb birth weights. This could be most useful in situations where lambs are likely to be born below their optimal birth weight (eg multiple-born lambs). It is unlikely to significantly influence the survival rates of single-born lambs that generally have heavier birth weights. For shearing in mid-pregnancy to be a viable tool, ewes need to be able to respond to the stimulus of shearing (ie adequate maternal reserves or nutrition).

Researchers at the Chiltern EverGraze site cannot definitely state that time of shearing was the sole factor contributing to the heavier birth weights from the older ewes, as too many variables exist in the management of the new line of younger ewes prior to their arrival at the site. But the supporting data combined with their experience certainly indicates that shearing ewes in mid-pregnancy can contribute to heavier lamb birth weights.

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EverGraze facts and figures

MLA's investment in EverGraze through the Future Farm Industries CRC has developed farming systems for high rainfall zones that can significantly increase profits of southern livestock producers while addressing regional natural resource issues, such as soil and water management.

13,500+
people have participated in EverGraze activities

3,100
producers have made changes to pastures and livestock through EverGraze

180,000
ha of pasture is managed differently as a result of EverGraze practice change—reported benefits include improved pasture persistence and growth; increased carrying capacity; improved weaning percentages; increased wool and meat production

Targets for the next phase of EverGraze include:

2,400
producers in southern Australia's high rainfall zone consciously integrating one or more practices developed and/or promoted by EverGraze into their whole of farm management

300+
livestock industry advisors capable to deliver farming system decision making processes and understanding interactions and impact of elements within the farming system

Wean more lambs

Lost cause: diagnosing lamb losses to improve survival strategies

Understanding the reasons for losses at lambing and developing management strategies to prevent and minimise future losses are key to Making More From Sheep's *Wean more lambs* module.

The first step to address lamb losses is to accurately diagnose why each lamb died.

Peter Holst from NSW Department of Primary Industries has created a booklet that provides a useful procedure to determine cause of death. It presents a logical sequence of actions enabling you to identify key clues that lead to a specific diagnosis: has the lamb been cleaned, has it breathed, walked, been fed, suffered a cranial haemorrhage or had a defective liver. →



Autopsy procedures can help to determine the real cause of lamb losses and provide critical information to develop effective management strategies to minimise future losses.

→

Has the lamb walked?

Examining the membranes that cover the lambs' hooves is a simple assessment. If the membranes are broken and worn, it is likely that the lamb walked and was not stillborn. Intact membranes are indicative that the lamb never walked and was either stillborn or died during the birthing process or shortly after birth.

Has the lamb breathed?

Drop a sample of lung tissue into a bucket of water; if it floats, the lamb breathed, and if it sinks, the lamb didn't breathe. Lung tissue that indicates that the lamb did not breathe suggests that the lamb either died during the birthing process or was dead in utero. A further examination for cranial haemorrhage would support either the first or second option.

Are primary or secondary factors involved?

Further assessments can help determine if exposure played either a primary or secondary role in lamb losses.

Where exposure is a cause of death, remedies such as the role of grass hedgerows for shelter (as tested at the Hamilton EverGraze site) may provide a cost-effective solution. Interestingly, the Hamilton research found that providing shelter reduced lamb losses from both primary exposure and starvation/mismothering (lambs suffering from exposure are more likely to succumb to mismothering due to their reduced vigour).

Quite often, the solutions to reduce lamb losses exist but there needs to be an accurate assessment of why the losses are occurring to implement the correct preventative strategies (see Table 1 for other causes and management strategies).

When thorough autopsy procedures are followed, the majority (more than 80%) of lamb deaths are often attributed to the starvation, mismothering and exposure categories or dystocia. In contrast to industry perceptions, while predation on lambs is common, it is not often diagnosed as the primary cause of death. Predation normally occurs on lambs that are already affected by other factors.

Fast fact

The Holst procedure is used at all Sheep CRC Information Nucleus Flock sites to identify the cause of lamb deaths. The flock is used to identify valuable traits that are viable for indirect selection of lambs. In future, genetic selection or genomic tools may be available to address specific death categories through genetic improvement.

Lamb survival rate targets

Lambing management needs to aim for lamb survival better than:

90%

Merino and crossbred ewes, single bearing

80%

crossbred ewes, twin bearing

70%

Merino ewes, twin bearing

As ewe condition score at lambing increases, so does lamb survival—especially in twin bearing ewes. In the period from three days after birth to before weaning, aim to keep lamb losses at less than 3%.



Table 1 Causes and evidence of lamb losses and some effective strategies

Cause	Evidence	Strategies to address cause
Dystocia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Oedema around head and neck of lamb → Possible cranial and central nervous system (CNS) spinal chord haemorrhage → Petechiation on lungs or heart (small red dark spots caused by bleeding, possibly due to lack of oxygen) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Lambs damaged during the birthing process can subsequently have low vigour, do not feed and die within two days of birth → Pregnancy scan to manage single-bearing ewes separately from twin-bearers → Maintain ewes to achieve condition score 3 at lambing → Source rams with breeding values for lambing ease and low birth weight
Mismothering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Lamb has walked and breathed → No cranial or CNS haemorrhage → No milk in gut → Lamb may or may not have been cleaned by ewe → Fat has been mobilised from the lamb's heart and kidneys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Ensure ewes are condition score 3 at lambing and have adequate, high quality feed on offer (1,200kg DM/ha for singles and 1,800kg DM/ha for twinners) → Ensure lambing environment is free from disturbances, with smaller paddock and mob sizes → Ensure paddocks are sheltered, particularly for multiple-bearers → Maximum recommended mob sizes are 100-250 for twin-bearing mature ewes and 400-500 for singles
Mismothering combined with secondary exposure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → No milk in gut → Yellowing and oedema on knee joints → Fat has been mobilised from the lamb's heart and kidneys → No cranial or CNS haemorrhage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → As per above, ensure ewes are condition score 3 at lambing and have adequate, high quality feed on offer → If these lambs have low birth weights, manage ewes to achieve optimum condition during subsequent pregnancies to help increase birth weights → Shearing ewes mid-pregnancy may increase birth weights
Primary exposure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Lamb has fed and walked → Yellowing and oedema on knee joints → No cranial or CNS haemorrhage → Fat has been mobilised from the lamb's heart and kidneys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Provide wind-reducing shelter using trees, shrubs and hedgerows to reduce chill index and subsequent deaths from exposure → Shelter may encourage ewes to stay with newborn lambs for longer → Shelter should be close to high quality feed
Dead in utero	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Lamb did not breathe → No head or neck oedema or no cranial or CNS damage → Lamb has not walked → May be signs of in utero decomposition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Test for animal health risks such as campylobacter—vaccinate accordingly
Primary predation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Lamb is normal except for signs of fatal injury from predator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Implement predator control prior to lambing → Programs in conjunction with neighbours are more effective
Secondary predation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Lambs are diagnosed with symptoms of another death category, but also shows signs of predation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Consider the primary causes first

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Grazing land management

Less is more

using moderate stocking rates to maximise returns

In an erratic climate with highly variable rainfall, stocking rate is the most important management factor that affects pasture condition, animal production and business profits.

Results from the Wambiana grazing trial indicate that moderate stocking would outperform heavy stocking for an average north Queensland property of 20,000ha by more than \$1 million in income over 13 years.

The trial based on the Lyons family's Charters Towers property, 'Wambiana', from 1998 to 2011 disproves that heavy stocking rates are needed to maximise returns in northern Australia.

Investigating different grazing strategies

Run by the Queensland Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI) and co-funded by MLA, the trial investigated the effects of five grazing strategies across widely variable rainfall years on beef cattle production, economic performance and pasture condition.

Heavy stocking at 0.25AE/ha (where 1AE represents a 450kg steer) was the least profitable grazing strategy, degrading pastures to 'C' land condition and lowering both liveweight gains and carcass values. After 14 years, accumulated gross margin was lowest under heavy stocking (Figure 1) and drought feeding was also required in dry years.

The most profitable strategy was moderate stocking at the long-term carrying capacity of 0.125AE/ha. It achieved the highest individual liveweight gain of 116kg/year (averaged over 13 years) and higher carcass values.

Recommending an optimal strategy

Project leader and DEEDI principal scientist, Dr Peter O'Reagain, said the optimal grazing strategy for northern beef producers was flexible stocking around long-term carrying capacity, with stocking rates adjusted proactively according to available pasture.

Peter said appropriate stocking rates could be calculated using a forage budgeting program, such as Stocktake.

"This should avoid overgrazing in dry years, but allow managers to take advantage of good rainfall years," he said.

DEEDI's John Bushell said increasing stock numbers in good years could boost profits and would not adversely affect pasture condition, provided that

numbers were expanded cautiously and did not exceed carrying capacity limits.

He said it was critical that producers cut numbers rapidly when conditions deteriorated, to avoid economic loss and long-term pasture degradation.

"The Wambiana trial clearly showed that high pasture utilisation levels going into a drought adversely affected pasture condition and productivity for up to eight years after," John said.

Estimating long-term carrying capacity

Peter recommended that producers attend a Grazing Land Management course to determine the long-term carrying capacity of each paddock on their property. This could then be used as a guide for setting upper limits to stock numbers. He said this stocking rate limit should not be exceeded, irrespective of how good seasons were.

"For example, in some strategies in the Wambiana trial, stocking rates are temporarily adjusted upwards to take advantage of better seasons but even in the best years never exceed an upper limit of about 50% above the long-term carrying capacity," Peter said.

Moderate stocking would outperform heavy stocking for an average north Queensland property of 20,000ha by more than \$1 million in income over 13 years.

"Incorporating some form of wet season spelling is also critical to maintain and improve pasture condition, and buffer the effect of rainfall variability on feed availability."

Peter said the duration and number of spells a paddock needed depended on its condition; the poorer the condition, the more frequent and longer the wet season spells.

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Download // *The Wambiana grazing trial: Key learnings for sustainable and profitable management in a variable environment* at www.mla.com.au/wambiana

0:25 AE/ha
the least profitable grazing strategy

0:125 AE/ha
the most profitable grazing strategy

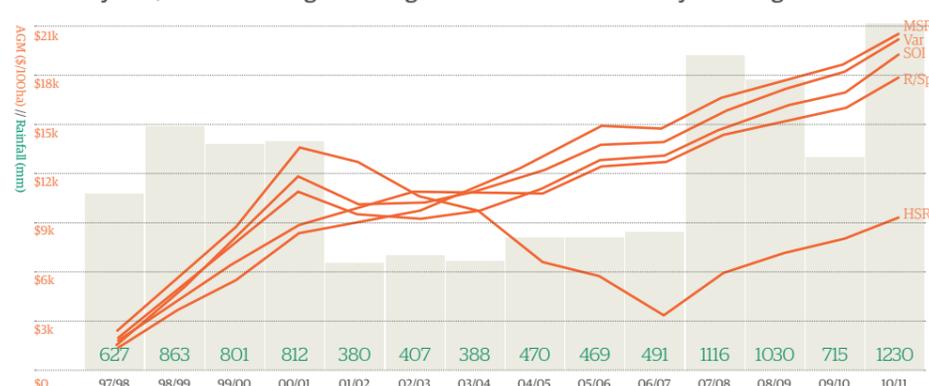


What's next for Wambiana?

Researchers aim to use the next phase of the Wambiana trial to refine the grazing management strategies to maximise sustainability and profitability. This will be achieved by adapting some of the tested strategies to incorporate the lessons learned during the past 13 years.

DEEDI will continue to collaborate with other agencies, such as CSIRO, to investigate the effects of grazing strategies on faunal biodiversity, greenhouse gas emissions and soil carbon sequestration.

Figure 1 Accumulated gross margin for grazing strategies at the Wambiana trial. After 14 years, accumulated gross margin was lowest under heavy stocking.



Note: Accumulated gross margin for five grazing strategies at the Wambiana grazing trial from 1997-98 to 2010-11. Interest on livestock capital at 7.5% and price differential based on condition score. (Var=variable stocking, R/Spell=Rotational wet season spelling, SOI=southern oscillation index-variable, HSR=heavy stocking rate, MSR=moderate stocking rate).

Fast facts

Outcomes from the Wambiana grazing trial showed:

- Heavy stocking was the least profitable strategy and degraded pastures to 'C' land condition.
- Moderate stocking generated far more profit, maintained pasture in B+ land condition and reduced runoff.
- Variable stocking was as profitable as moderate stocking but income was far more variable and land condition was poorer.
- Wet season spelling with moderate stocking maintained pastures in B+ land condition and was almost as profitable as moderate stocking.

Grazing land management

Groundwork

Managing stocking rates in a variable climate

Snapshot

David and Genevieve Counsell, Dunblane, Barcaldine, QLD.



Property:
10,000ha

Enterprise:
Beef cattle agistment and Merino sheep

Livestock:
500 agisted cattle;
10,000 sheep

Pasture:
Mitchell grass open downs

Soil:
Self-mulching grey cracking clay

Rainfall:
492mm (average);
450mm (median)

Aligning stocking rates with the long-term carrying capacity of individual paddocks is paying dividends for central west Queensland graziers, David and Genevieve Counsell.

Main: David Counsell at home on his Barcaldine property.

1: David and Genevieve Counsell, with their children Monty, Fenella and Lily, are advocates of moderate stocking for long-term sustainability.

2: Mitchell grasslands showing improvements in 3P grass pasture species under a moderate stocking rate policy on the Counsell's Queensland property.

The Counsells run 10,000 Merino sheep and opportunistically agist about 500 cattle each year on 10,000ha of Mitchell grasslands near Barcaldine.

"We are largely set stockers and our core enterprise is a self-replacing Merino wool flock," David said. "But we agist cattle to take advantage of big seasons."

Calculating long-term carrying capacity

The Counsells work within an environment of extreme rainfall variability, where management skills are challenged by massive falls in some years and less than 350mm received in 30% of years.

Like many pastoralists in the region, they risk loss of perennial grass species, increasing erosion and declining pasture productivity. To deal with this, the family calculated the true long-term carrying capacity of each paddock, and they aim to match this with planned per-paddock stocking rates during the dry season.

The Counsells used the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI) Stocktake program to establish each paddock's long-term carrying capacity. Adjustments were made for land condition, kangaroos, tree encroachment and distance from water for each paddock, based on stocktake guidelines.

David said the long-term plan was to set stock at 85-95% of this long-term carrying capacity (ie 8-10ha/AE).

Maintaining accurate paddock records

David monitors actual paddock carrying capacity performance against expected performance using monthly stocking rate information, feed budgets and monthly photographs at designated sites.

They set targets of desired residual dry matter for the following February, and per-paddock stocking rates are planned in April-May at the end of the growing season.

Year-round, David records the pasture production (in kg DM/ha) for each paddock to ensure projections of long-term carrying capacity are accurate and to detect any changes over time.

Implementing improvements

To further lift per-paddock productivity, David said that water points were being relocated to central parts of paddocks to minimise stock walking distances and implement wet season spelling of pastures.

He uses wet season spelling to rejuvenate paddocks showing signs of degradation and to encourage greater density of major 3P grasses. "During the year, we identify paddocks that are not performing to expectations, or where the groundcover index has dropped, and give them a spell in the wet season," he said.

"They remain ungrazed for a range of time, from as little as six weeks up to eight months. As a minimum, we aim for six weeks, which is long enough for the 3P grasses to flower and set seed."



Monitoring the changes

As a result of their business management and monitoring systems, the Counsells are seeing more groundcover on many paddocks, a big increase in areas of perennial grasses and significant encroachment of buffel grass. David said unfortunately in some small areas, there had been an increase in tree establishment in some traditional grassland areas.

"It is a fine balance between optimising profits and managing risk. For us, moderate and targeted per-paddock stocking rates are the way to achieve that."

In big wet seasons, the family agists cattle to better utilise the abundant pastures.

"It has been too expensive to buy-in more sheep, and cattle agistment is easy to manage and provides a reliable cashflow," he said. "Current stocking rates are about 6.2ha/AE (about 130% of long-term carrying capacity) on the back of a run of good seasons."

"Because of our records, we are more confident about the numbers of animals we can run in each paddock," David said. "We could probably run a lot more animals, but when it does not rain, this approach falls apart. It is a fine balance between optimising profits and managing risk. For us, moderate and targeted per-paddock stocking rates are the way to achieve that."

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Download // *The Wambiana grazing trial: Key learnings for sustainable and profitable management in a variable environment* at www.mla.com.au/wambiana

Forage options

Piling on the pounds with leucaena



Snapshot

John and Sue Moffatt, Orana Downs, Bringalilly, Qld.



Property: 1,330ha

Enterprise: Grain and beef

Livestock: 150 breeders and progeny; 200 grower steers

Pasture: Improved and native pastures; leucaena

Soil: Dark brown clay to loam

Rainfall: 650mm

A decision to plant leucaena four years ago has given southern Queensland beef producers John and Sue Moffatt a reliable source of quality summer forage.

1 AE/ha
average stocking rate for leucaena during the growing season

0.8 kg/day
average daily weight gain of steers on leucaena at Millmerran

The Moffatts run a 1,330ha mixed farming operation "Orana Downs", in the Bringalilly region outside Millmerran.

They crop 445ha and use the remainder for grazing, including 200ha of improved pastures.

Orana Downs runs 150 breeders. John and Sue aim to grow out their steers on leucaena to 500kg for the local feed-on market and sell cull heifers as yearlings at 360-400kg lwt.

Selecting a suitable site

The Moffatts have planted 100ha of leucaena on previously cropped land, including 80ha of Tarramba and Cunningham cultivars and 20ha of Wondergraze, at a cost of \$125/ha. Most has been planted on 8m row spacings in hilly Brigalow country.

"We did our first planting in January 2008, and then another in early March 2009," John said. "We selected a site that was 1,300 feet (400m) above sea level so that we could avoid the worst of the frosts. Most of it has gone through three winters now and it hasn't lost its leaf, so we're very happy as far as its avoidance of severe frosts is concerned."

Reaping the benefits

John said the leucaena planting provided guaranteed, high quality feed source from October through to early April.

"The biggest benefit of the established leucaena has been that it has given us a sustained feed source as opposed to growing forage sorghum in summer, which is never guaranteed," he said. "We have found we now have feed earlier in spring than we used to."

For the past five years, the Moffatts have hosted an MLA-funded Producer Demonstration Site (PDS) on their property to determine whether leucaena is a suitable pasture option in southern Queensland.



John said work undertaken as part of the PDS showed that over the 2010-11 growing season (November to June) steers on leucaena achieved an average live weight gain of 0.8kg/day, with some drafts gaining 1.3kg/day.

Managing the challenges

However, according to John, managing leucaena also came with some significant challenges, including weed control between rows; establishing grass pastures between rows; and monitoring any spread of leucaena plants outside the planted area.

"You need to keep the space between the rows free of weeds after planting until the plants reach 1m in height, so they aren't competing for moisture and nutrients," John said.

"As ours was old cultivation country, that proved very difficult and we had to cultivate between the rows to cut the weeds down. It's also important that you graze the leucaena before it sets pods to prevent its spread into neighbouring paddocks."

i | John and Sue Moffatt // T: 07 4695 7161
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Location location

5 things to consider

Agricultural consultant George Lambert discusses leucaena site selection:

1. Carefully consider frost risk, rainfall, soil type and drainage when selecting a suitable site for leucaena. As a guide, leucaena performs well in areas where grain and forage crops perform well.

2. PDS research indicates that leucaena will tolerate temperatures down to -4°C before losing leaves. Lower temperatures kills leucaena back to ground level, making plants come back slowly from the crown rather than from along above ground stems.

3. Test selected sites for nutrients and plant available water holding capacity. Generally, alkaline clay and clay loam soils around 1m deep will hold enough water as long as there are no restrictions (eg salinity).

4. Soil phosphorus is particularly important. As a rule of thumb, apply phosphorus fertiliser with the seed at planting.

5. In dryland conditions, PDSs have shown the best results in leucaena with rows 5-7m apart, using inter-row companion grasses such as buffel, Rhodes, bambatsi and purple pigeon grass. Good grass cover is essential for soil protection and supporting high stocking rates.

Leucaena thrives on southern hospitality

Leucaena plantings are spreading across southern Queensland as more producers recognise the deep-rooted perennial legume's value in southern pasture systems.

Leucaena is a permanent pasture traditionally grown in central Queensland on deep, fertile soils with annual average rainfall of 600-800mm. However, using existing varieties, the spread of leucaena has successfully extended to suitable locations throughout southern Queensland.

Leucaena, grass pastures and forage crops
Toowoomba-based agricultural consultant George Lambert runs several MLA Producer Demonstration Sites (PDS) to investigate the suitability of leucaena in southern Queensland. On suitable landscapes, mixed leucaena and grass pastures are proving very competitive as an alternative to forage sorghum for many southern beef producers.

"Last season at Millmerran, steers on leucaena gained an average of 0.8kg/day for 200 days, while steers on forage sorghum are expected to gain at 0.5 to 0.7kg per day for only half that period at similar grazing rates," George said. "The big bonus is that an 18-year-old, very productive leucaena pasture exists in the Chinchilla district," he said.

Leucaena also complements the use of oats in winter. "Because winter rainfall has been unreliable recently, some producers are using oats as a support crop to leucaena to finish off animals that had not made market weights".

Managing for weight gains

Once established, leucaena is often grazed in southern Queensland from November until the end of May. During that period, the grazing rate averages 1AE/ha.

"That rate is very much dependent on the soil quality, temperature and rainfall conditions," George said.

"Last summer, conditions were excellent at our Millmerran PDS site and the grazing rate was over 2AE/ha for 200 days."

He said PDS grazing trials indicated that producers could expect weight gains of up to 1.3kg/hd/day. "However, long term average weight gains using a range of steers are more like 0.8kg/hd/day."

Tim Emery is a Beef Extension Officer with the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI) based in Roma. He said

a growing number of producers were considering planting leucaena across the western Downs.

"I've heard of more success stories than failures but producers need to carefully consider their site selection before they plant," he said. "Talking to others who have already planted leucaena in this region would be a must. I would recommend producers get in touch with the Leucaena Network to do that."

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E: george.lambert8@bigpond.com
Contact // The Leucaena Network at admin@leucaena.net or www.leucaena.net
g | Order // *Leucaena: a guide to establishment and management* from www.mla.com.au/leucaena

How to

As it seams

Most cooks will admit it. From home kitchens to top restaurants—the more you know about an ingredient, the more confident and likely you are to use it.

In the case of red meat, MLA works with chefs in a variety of ways to build their knowledge and enthusiasm for including beef, lamb and goat on their menus. Trade publications such as *Chef's Special* and programs including Masterpieces™ and MLA's state based chefs clubs deliver information on cuts and whole-carcass use into restaurants around the country.

MLA Marketing Manager—Foodservice, Claire Tindale, said providing foodservice with these resources has become more important as the emphasis on the butchery component of a chefs training at Tafe has declined over time.

"We see an opportunity to assist chefs build their knowledge and skills around red meat so they are more comfortable and more inspired to use it on their menus" Claire said.

"It's important for chefs to know where cuts come from on a carcass, so they understand the muscle use and structure and therefore how they should cook a particular cut to get the best out of it."

Claire said this matching "cut to cook method" which comes from the science of MSA, is a means of identifying specific muscle characteristics and selecting the most appropriate cooking methods to achieve the best eating experience.

"The rump is made up of multiple muscles and they all cook and eat differently. This is why we encourage chefs and butchers to break down the rump into its individual muscles and then cook it appropriately to get the best results," she said. MLA regularly includes a masterclass feature in *Chef's Special* magazine demonstrating the butchery of a cut, cooking methods and menu ideas to more than 7,000 Australian foodservice establishments that receive the magazine every quarter.

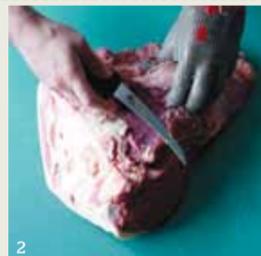
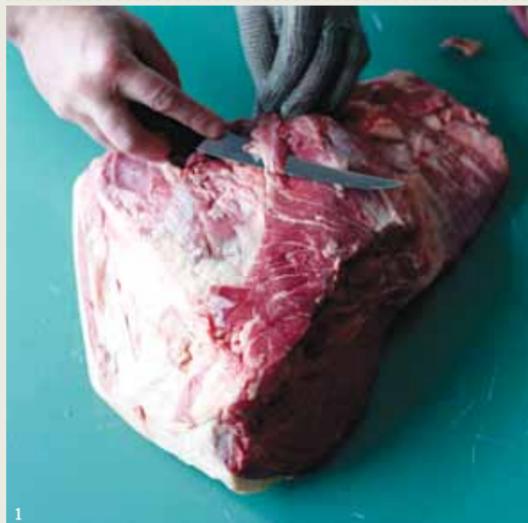
The following masterclass can turn a whole rump into a variety of cuts...

- **Rump cap:** great as grilling steak or coal fired roasting piece
- **Eye side:** the perfect mignon
- **Centre cut:** a prime roast
- **Tri tip:** dice cut for gourmet skewers
- **Rump pillow:** course mince for a signature burger.

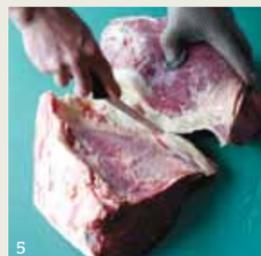
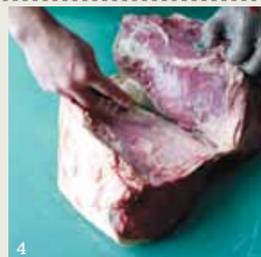
How to subprimal a rump...



Turn a whole rump into a variety of different cuts by following this master class and recipe.



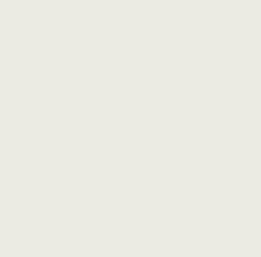
1-2 // Clearly identify the undercut muscle laying on top the underside of the rump. Locate the seam—gently pulling the meat and follow all the way through to remove the muscle. This can be used for trim or in a braise, pies or curry dishes.



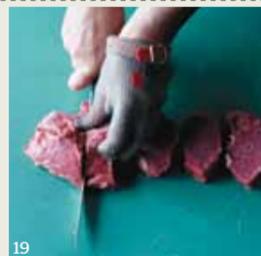
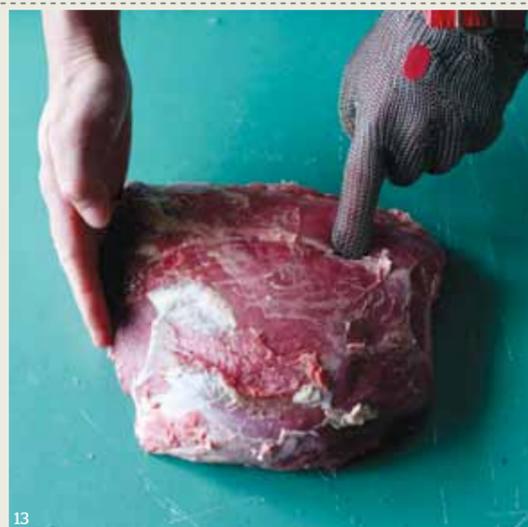
3-5 // To separate the rump cap, known as the Picanha in Brazil, keep the rump fat side sitting at the bottom of the rump, underneath the centre cut and eye of rump. Gently pull back on the centre muscles and use the weight of the meat to follow the seam all the way through, gently pulling as your knife cuts through the seam.



11-12 // When slicing steaks from your rump cap make sure you're cutting against the grain. That is from the tip of the triangle down. Trim off any excess fat.



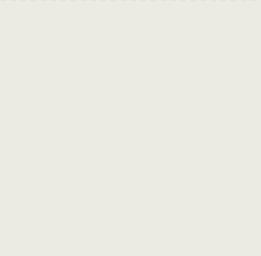
18-19 // There you have an eye of rump.



11-12 // When slicing steaks from your rump cap make sure you're cutting against the grain. That is from the tip of the triangle down. Trim off any excess fat.



20



21

6-10 // Slice off the section of the cap that is all fat. Remove the silver trim from underneath and any other excess fat. By holding the knife at a slight angle upwards, you are less likely to pierce any meat while removing trim. Follow the line of the meat to remove the excess top fat.

11-12 // When slicing steaks from your rump cap make sure you're cutting against the grain. That is from the tip of the triangle down. Trim off any excess fat.



20-21 // Remove the sinew from the centre cut and trim off excess fat. A perfect cut for Schnitzel and Scaloppini.

Recipe

Picanha with relish

Australian rump with Brazilian flavour

The rump cap is a cut of beef famous for its tenderness and flavour. In Brazil, this cut is idolised and called the Picanha. Try this recipe if you're looking for an innovative new dish for lunch or lighter meals.

Ingredients

1kg rump cap roast (for heavier rump cap, speak to your butcher)
5-6 cloves garlic or 3-4 tablespoons of prepared crushed garlic
1/2-2/3 cups of coarse salt
1/4 cup of olive oil

Relish

Tomatoes, seeds removed
White onions
Green capsicum
3 cloves garlic
1/4 cup olive oil
3/4 cup red wine vinegar
Cold water
Salt, pepper to taste

Method

1. Trim excess fat from the meat. Mix salt and garlic together to make a paste, rub all over the meat. Add a little olive oil if the paste won't stick. Marinate the cap for several hours, turning it over once an hour or so. Liquid should come out of the meat.
2. Scrape most of the mixture off the roast, especially the large chunks of salt. Rub the meat with a little olive oil and a little more garlic.
3. Grill over very high heat. Turn once and cook to rare. Take off heat and rest before carving.
4. Carve 5mm pieces against the grain. Serve with baked potatoes and relish.

To make the relish

1. Dice tomatoes, green capsicum, and onion into cubes. Mix equal measures of the three. Add 1/4 of a cup of red wine vinegar and stir.
2. Add 1/4 of a cup of cold water and olive oil, all to taste. Add some salt and cracked black pepper to taste. Let marinate in the refrigerator for at least 1 hour.
3. Serve sliced picanha over baked potatoes with relish drizzled over the top.



School campaign turns leftovers into lunches

School is in around the country and MLA is helping busy parents solve the dilemma of what to give kids for lunch that's nutritious, tasty and easy to make.

The back-to-school campaign features posters and brochures highlighting red meat's nutritional benefits and showing parents

how to turn red meat dinners into healthy lunches. During the campaign MLA ran television commercials and red meat cooking segments on Channel 9 breakfast television.

Over 680,000 recipe booklets on turning dinners into lunches were also inserted into magazines such as *The Australian Women's Weekly*, *Woman's Day* and *Take 5*.

680,000

recipe booklets on turning beef and lamb dinners into lunches have been inserted into magazines such as *The Australian Women's Weekly* and *Woman's Day*



Nutrition bites

National dietary guidelines recommend lean red meat

New draft national dietary guidelines released in December continue to recommend lean red meat as a nutritious food and part of a healthy diet.

In a move welcomed by the National Farmers' Federation, the draft guidelines revised by the National Health and Medical Research Centre (NHMRC) do not refer to the environmental sustainability of individual foods. Previous documents describing dietary modelling underpinning the dietary guidelines, released in 2010, considered the perceived environmental impact of red meat.

As a result of consultation with the agricultural industry, including MLA, the NHMRC acknowledges that the evidence on the environmental sustainability of food is complex. The NHMRC also acknowledges that expert advice and consideration of the Australia context of food production is required in considering the environmental impact of food choices. It will be working with other Commonwealth

Government agencies to provide guidance on environmental sustainability.

A maximum of 455g per week of lean meat (including pork) is recommended, due to evidence linking red meat with colorectal cancer. This amount is consistent with an intake of red meat three to four times a week (with serve sizes of 100-150g).

MLA Marketing Manager Nutrition, Veronique Droulez, said it was important for the red meat industry to make sure the guidelines accurately represent the evidence supporting the role of red meat in the Australian diet, as they influence consumption habits.

"Through its nutrition portfolio, MLA will be working on a submission in response to the draft dietary guidelines to determine whether red meat has been appropriately represented," she added.

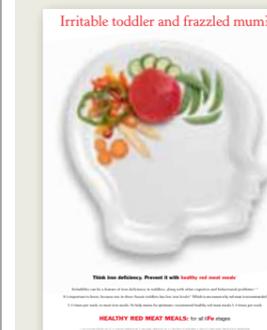


Ads promote red meat at any age

A new MLA nutrition campaign aimed at healthcare professionals focuses on healthy red meat meals to prevent iron deficiency at each life stage, from babies to the elderly.

The campaign launched in October featuring advertisements in key healthcare magazines such as *Australian Doctor*, *Medical Observer* and *Primary Care Nurse*, to remind doctors and practice nurses that patients can benefit from eating red meat three to four times a week to prevent iron deficiency.

The advertisements were supported by a range of MLA resources, including the 'How to make every bite count' booklet which shows mums how to introduce red meat to their babies and toddlers. More than 150,000 copies of the brochure have been distributed since it was launched in 2010.



Find out more about MLA's nutrition campaigns

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Art 4 Agriculture

A herd of fibreglass cows is altering students' thinking about red meat production...



Caroline Chisholm College students created a 'Moo-biks Cube' which won the 2011 Archibull Prize.

Transformed into inspiring artworks for the Archibull Prize, a surreal herd of fibreglass cows is part of a mind-bending, construct-challenging competition designed to make city students in New South Wales aware that there is more to agriculture than mud and manure.

Art 4 Agriculture's National Program Director, Lynne Strong, is passionate about the program and its success in connecting agriculture with the mainstream population.

In 2011, MLA and other Research and Development Corporations supported Art 4 Agriculture's Archibull Prize. The 10-week program was taken up by almost 30 schools around Sydney and run in conjunction with agriculture and food and fibre technology subjects.

Each school was allocated a fibreglass cow to be used as an artwork to address the theme

'What does it take to feed and clothe Sydney sustainably for a day?' Students created a DVD and PowerPoint presentation on their work and developed a weekly blog on their creative journey.

"It's really a call to arms—challenging students to inspire their peers to think about how to be a sustainable Australia and a sustainable planet."

Each school was also allocated a commodity-specific Young Farming Champion to support the students.

Agricultural consultant and beef producer Alison McIntosh, of Crookwell, NSW, provided inspiration to the year 9-11 girls at Caroline Chisholm College near Penrith.

A Royal Agricultural Society of NSW Councillor and 2011 NAB Agribusiness Cattle Council Rising Champion, Alison specialises in data technology and works on the family farm.

"For a lot of the girls, their only experience of agriculture was the school farm," she said.

"I wanted to relate to the girls on a very personal level, to show them there are many diverse career opportunities in agriculture and they don't all involve getting dirty."

Alison spoke about her work and showed the students a YouTube video of her life on the farm.

The college's Agricultural Course Co-ordinator, Shelley Baldwin, said the Archibull Prize opened up the students' minds to what they can do.

"It shows them there's a whole bunch of opportunities. They can work in economics, marketing, research or environmental management as well as more traditional roles," she said.

The school won the 2011 Archibull Prize with their 'Moo-biks Cube', an interactive artwork which allows the viewer to flip the cubes to reveal the different sides of agriculture.

"It's aimed at being a conversation stimulator that encourages people to see the full range of economic and social impacts agriculture has on society," Shelley said.

The fibreglass herd will be on display at the Woolworths head office in Sydney as well as at the Sydney Royal Easter Show.

Expressions of interest are now open to local government councils around Australia who would like to feature this program.



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In the zone

The Australian education system has never been so tapped into primary industries thanks to a new one-stop web portal, Primezone.

The website gives teachers and other community members, fast, easy access to more than 1000 quality, approved information resources. According to Primary Industries Education Foundation Executive Manager, Ben Stockwin, the portal's great strength is the huge breadth of information available in one place.

"Primezone has extensive links with other websites such as MLA, Landcare, Australian Council for Educational Leaders and all the resources are linked to the Australian curriculum," Ben said.

"We're aiming to provide a high value, good industry message couched in educational terms on a site with educational credibility."

Phase two of the project, funded and supported by MLA, will see an additional 550 resources added and a more sophisticated search engine uploaded ready for 2012 school year. The foundation will also investigate how best to promote the website and its tools, including MLA's virtual farm.



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Support continues for supply chain assurance systems in Indonesia

Under the direction of the Cattle Council of Australia, MLA has been working in-market in Indonesia over the past eight months to assist exporters and importers to meet the requirements of the government's new regulatory framework—Export Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS). Cattle Council of Australia President Andrew Ogilvie provides an update.

CCA President Andrew Ogilvie



Work to assist exporters and importers to meet the requirements of the government's new ESCAS framework has enabled industry to resume its cattle exports through an approved and independently audited system that meets international animal welfare standards, and maintain this vital market for Australian producers.

Despite industry's activities in establishing these new supply chains and animal welfare assurance, in December Indonesian authorities announced the first quarter permit allocation (12 January-12 March) for live cattle would be 60,000 head. In 2011 the first quarter permit allocation was 100,000 head with 88,000 head delivered against this allocation, so this represents a considerable decrease in volume.

In parallel with this reduction, there have been significant changes to the permitting process, creating additional challenges for the Indonesian market.

There is ongoing concern within the industry on the significantly reduced permit allocation for 2012 and the new permitting process. The MLA Jakarta office is in regular contact with both the Embassy and the importers to discuss these issues.

To ensure industry continues to deliver increased improvements in line with regulatory requirements and social

expectations, Cattle Council is encouraging ongoing commitment to the following areas:

Increasing the number of cattle stunned in Indonesia

There have always been impediments to the uptake of stunning in Indonesia, however we are now seeing promising adoption rates. Cattle Council is strongly advocating for increased pre-slaughter stunning and approximately 65% of Australian cattle are now being stunned prior to slaughter in Indonesia.

Providing advice and technical support to help implement the ESCAS process

Industry is supporting the adoption of ESCAS through the development and extension of Standard Operating Procedures that align with the international animal health organisation (OIE) animal welfare requirements. Industry is developing training and support materials to assist in the ongoing improvements in animal welfare through increased staff capabilities.

The new regulatory framework will be rolled out across all live export markets in 2012 and Cattle Council of Australia will provide ongoing direction to industry to ensure ongoing access to these vital markets for Australian producers.

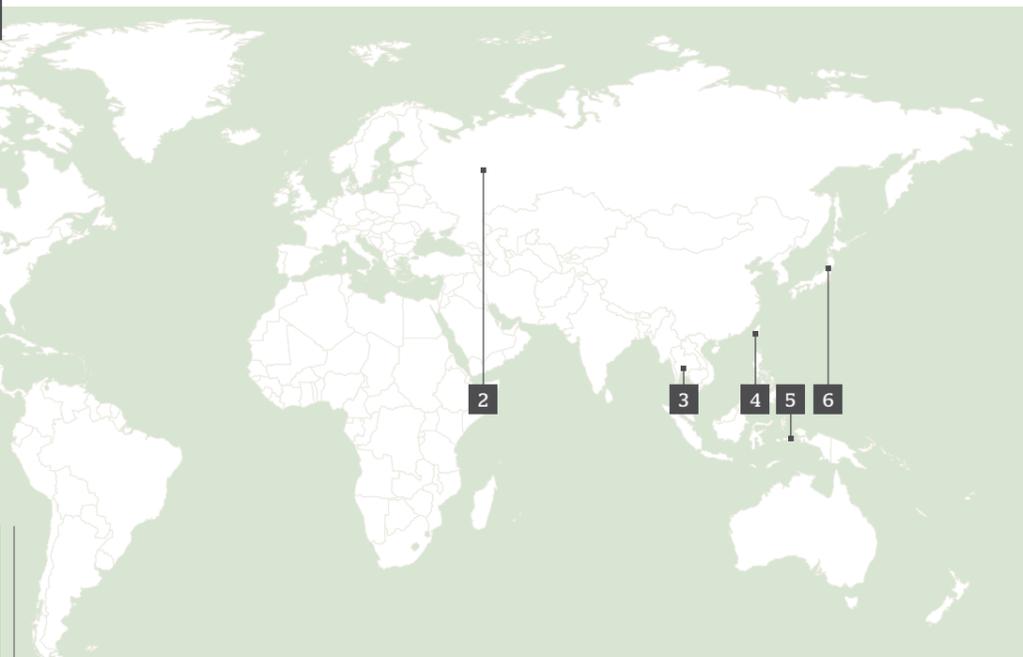
65%

of Australian cattle are now being stunned prior to slaughter



Cattle Council of Australia
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www.cattlecouncil.com.au

Around the globe



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

1 US

Australian lamb's casual appeal

MLA sponsored and exhibited at the Culinary Institute of America (CIA) World of Flavors event at Greystone College in California. The exhibit provided samples of casual-dining lamb dishes to 700 chefs, foodservice managers and trade media.

MLA enlisted the talents of expat chef Craig Hopson of legendary New York restaurant Le Cirque to develop and cook the lamb dishes showcased at the event.

The International Corporate Chefs Association (ICCA) networking event in Napa also gave MLA the opportunity to discuss Australian red meat with ICCA members from the top 200 multi-unit foodservice operations in the United States.

2 RUSSIA

A-OK promo gives St Petersburg a taste for beef

Russian retail chain "OK" ran an Australian beef promotion supported by MLA during December—the best month for

retail in terms of sales—featuring tastings and workshops in different outlets across St Petersburg. The initiative aimed to increase sales by promoting and generating interest in the attributes of Australian beef to customers.

3 SOUTH-EAST ASIA

The Perfect Cut

MLA was the main partner to the Asian Food Channel's (AFC) The Perfect Cut culinary roadshows featuring Australian celebrity chef Adrian Richardson.

The roadshows were held in Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong and The Philippines.

Adrian showcased Australian beef and lamb by educating attendees on different cuts of meat and handling and demonstrating how to cook the perfect steak.

AFC also hosted a demonstration to the general public and private dinners with Adrian preparing menus using Australian beef and lamb.

The roadshows were well received, reaching over 800 people across the four countries.

800

people across four countries attended the roadshows showcasing Australian beef and lamb

300

students participated in the Australian red meat training seminars



Chef Adrian Richardson

4 TAIWAN

Young chefs in training for culinary challenge

Taiwan hosts its first Young Chef Pencil Box Challenge this month. Potential entrants are already preparing for the big event by gaining a better understanding of Australian red meat through a series of training seminars in northern, central, and southern Taiwan. About 300 students from 29 universities and colleges participated in seminars, where they were introduced to the Australian red meat industry—its farming and grading systems, red meat nutrition and food safety—MLA, and the history behind the Young Chef Pencil Box Challenge. The training also covered red meat cutting and cooking demonstrations, and an appreciation and tasting session.

5 INDONESIA

Learning about Australian beef in Jakarta



MLA is advocating the importance of Australian beef in a healthy, balanced and nutritious diet in a school program delivered to students, parents and teachers at elementary schools throughout Jakarta. About 1,176 students and parents have participated in the program, which includes a nutrition workshop, cooking demonstrations using Australian beef, a cooking competition and a number of brochures and recipe books for students, parents and teachers.

1,176

students and parents participated in the Australian beef school program in Jakarta

Meanwhile, retailers across Jakarta are jazzing up their display cabinets with a new Australian beef logo, point-of-sale and merchandising materials highlighting that Australian red meat is a quality, healthy, tender and halal product. Showcase sites are being rolled out in three hyper-marts and one supermarket in Jakarta to demonstrate to other retailers the sales benefits of correct merchandising, handling and presentation of beef. Consumers experiencing the newly revamped chilled displays will soon be able to obtain beef recipe books and brochures on nutrition, halal certification and food safety.

6 JAPAN

Iron Beauty winter campaign heats up demand

The 'Iron Beauty' program continued to promote the importance of iron-rich beef in a healthy diet with MLA's consumer winter campaign, "Feel great with iron in Aussie Beef—say goodbye to poor blood circulation".

The campaign targets the awareness of widespread iron deficiency across Japan's female population and the related health risks but lack of knowledge among consumers that beef is a good source of iron. Part of the campaign featured a competition for 200 invitations to Aussie Beef Female Seminars in February, where influential dietician Yumi Date discussed the nutrition benefits of Aussie Beef.

Market observations

Value in every market

The volume of Australia's beef and lamb exports increased 2.8% and 2.9% respectively in 2011 but the value of these shipments makes even more interesting reading.

Tim McRae
MLA Economist



Australian beef and veal exports for 2011 were valued at A\$4.7 billion Free On Board (FOB)—a 7% increase on the previous year. Lamb exports exceeded A\$1 billion for the first time on record, totalling A\$1.1 billion FOB and up 12% on the previous year.

Increased volumes shipped contributed to increased export returns for beef and lamb but rising global prices for protein products delivered the main impetus.

Continuing to demonstrate the diversification of Australia's beef export markets in 2011, the traditionally dominant Japan and the US markets only contributed 51% of total beef and veal exports earnings in 2011 (at A\$2.4 billion FOB). This is the lowest combined total to the two markets since 1999.

This was offset by increased exports to almost every other market—led by Korea—with total export returns for other markets jumping 22% year-on-year (or A\$411 million) to fall just shy of A\$2.3 billion FOB. Export returns from markets other than Japan and the US

have increased 168% since 2000 (or A\$1.44 billion FOB).

Other markets to register growth in value for 2011 included:

- Taiwan, up 37% to A\$196 million
- Middle East, up 31% to A\$167 million
- China and Hong Kong, up 35% to A\$131 million
- EU, up 29% to A\$129 million

There were slight declines to Russia (down 5% to A\$234 million) and Indonesia (down 5% to A\$171 million) in 2011 but total values remained well above historical levels.

The US remained the most valuable market for Australian lamb exports during 2011—growing 19% year-on-year (despite shipments lifting just 1%) to \$350 million FOB or 32% of the total for the year. Values to the Middle East were steady on 2010, finishing at \$216 million FOB, compared with a 5% decline in volumes shipped.

Lamb exports to Greater China were \$117 million FOB, with the 24% year-on-year increase in receipts outpacing the 15% rise in volumes. The value of Australian lamb exports to the EU reached \$108 million FOB, also up 24% year-on-year.

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On the ground

Middle East/North Africa

Lachlan Bowtell
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Middle East/North Africa
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The MENA region is at times a tinderbox of political activity and social revolution. However, the commercial ramifications of these activities can be seen as a great opportunity for Australian exporters.

Market signals in the MENA region point to further growth. While countries such as Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Iraq, Iran, Bahrain, Yemen and Syria currently experience significant social unrest and reform, as they rebuild their economies and political structure they are looking to Australia to assist them in their quest for food security and consistent supply. The high A\$ has impacted on volumes to the region—with significantly cheaper product being available from local and overseas suppliers—but the thirst for clean, safe, delicious halal red meat products is being quenched by Australian exporters.

MLA's strategy is to raise the awareness of Australian red meat's attributes as a clean, safe, delicious halal product through various activities across the year. For example, in 2011, we held 15 workshops with retailers and foodservice operators across the region to provide a hands-on forum and training session that introduced or reacquainted end users with Australian beef and lamb. Discussing the unique attributes of Australian product, versus our competitors, gained a tremendous amount of buy-in from these groups, with 86% of attendees moving either some or all of their purchases to Australian meat or increasing their current volumes. MLA also initiated an in-store product sampling program in supermarkets across the UAE in 2011, resulting in over 320 hours of activity across various outlets in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. In 2012, this will evolve into an ongoing series of events as retailers realise the benefits of "getting the product into the consumer's mouth" at point-of-sale and not promoting just on price.

Market insight



MENA's melting pot brews opportunity

An intriguing mix of the ancient and traditional to the sophisticated and ultra-modern, the Middle East provides at least one common phenomenon to travellers and business people alike—versatility.

From the Egyptian pyramids dating back to 3,200BC and Jordan's Petra—a city carved out of stone to world class scuba diving in the Red Sea and the origins of agriculture and irrigation in Mesopotamia or modern Iraq, the region presents a kaleidoscope of unique sights and history.

Rising from this ancient foundation has been a burgeoning modernisation and sophistication borne of the region's rich fossil fuel reserves, particularly since the late 1960s.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations of Bahrain, The UAE, Oman, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar controls 40% of global oil and 23% of the world's natural gas reserves. Financial security and affluence is evident—Abu Dhabi's sovereign wealth fund ranks as number one in the world at \$US627 billion; Saudi's fund is number two at \$US472.5 billion; and the 'Burj Al Arab' in Dubai is consistently voted the world's most luxurious hotel.

The traditional and ultramodern now coexist across much of the region and with that comes demand for the full gamut of Australian red meat products.

Australian beef's slice of the market

Australian beef exports to the Middle East and North Africa continue to climb and diversify—calendar year 2011 was up 31% on 2010, equating to an extra 8,185 tonnes across 24 countries in the region.

The UAE, Jordan and Saudi Arabia lead the charge and while there remains a strong manufacturing cut base, it is the diversification of cuts and the increasing demand for higher end quality that is enabling Australian exporters to differentiate on unique attributes, and importantly avoid

being priced out of the market on commodity types due to a volatile exchange rate.

Grainfed product reached 3,776 tonnes in 2011, a 98% increase on 2009. High end food service demand in the key markets of Jordan, the UAE and Lebanon has helped drive this volume. In February, representatives from the Australian Lot Feeders Association (ALFA) visited key food service and retail outlets in the region to get a first-hand view of the further potential for Australian grainfed beef.

What does this mean for Australian exports?

MLA covers 44 countries in the MENA region, with a population of around 1.1 billion—65% of which is estimated to be under the age of 30. This relatively youthful demographic could impact future dynamics in many ways, including solid demand for manufacturing beef for use in increasing hamburger outlets in countries such as Saudi Arabia, and segmenting promotional work to target this influential group.

Combine this with constant food security concerns, diminished competition from pork due to religious beliefs, and the importance of Australia's long term partnership to provide healthy clean, safe and delicious halal-guaranteed product becomes clear.

Strong demand creates strong competition

Although Brazil's beef volume into the region has fallen 28% from 2010 to 2011, it remains a gigantic 327,000 tonnes—generally competing strongly on price—compared to Australia's 2011 calendar year beef volume of 31,310 tonnes. While an increasing Brazilian Real has assisted Australia's price competitiveness, competing on quality is what Australia does best. In terms of lower-quality product, Indian 'beef' (mainly buffalo) increased to 338,000 tonnes in 2010 (latest calendar year figures available). Sheepmeat from countries such as China, Sudan, Somali and Kenya are all present in the market at varying price points. New Zealand beef competes for retail shelf space with Australia, and while the UK remains the key market for NZ lamb, its sheepmeat volume is around 29,000 tonnes compared to Australia's 81,280 tonnes (38,151 tonnes being lamb).

In one sense competition accentuates the quality, food safety and reliability of Australian product offers in a region with an inherent versatility that helps to spread risk and provide an outlet for an ever increasing range of Australian red meat products.

The great lamb kofta cook-off



Helping boost volumes of sheepmeat in the region are key religious events such as the month-long Ramadan, which provide a platform for consumer promotion at a time when the product is front of mind. Another vehicle used by MLA to drive sheepmeat

consumption and loyalty to Australian product is the 'Live the Good Life' barbeque. Held as close as possible to Australia Day, 2012 will be the third year that the colloquially known 'kofta cook-off' has been held. Plans are to increase last year's volume of 500 kilograms of lamb to 750kg.



1.1 billion population across the Middle East/North Africa region

830 metres high the world's tallest structure, Burj Khalifa in Dubai

40 °C+ soaring summer temperatures are followed by winter snows in Lebanon, Turkey, and Iran

\$758-\$85,800 variation in per capita income from Afghanistan to Qatar

Relatively speaking: the size of Australia =
4 Saudi Arabia's
25 Omans
433 Kuwaits
672 Qatars
10,526 Bahraims

Black gold by the barrel

10.7 million barrels/day makes Saudi Arabia the world's largest producer of oil

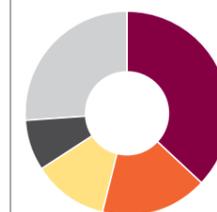
4.2 million barrels/day brings Iran in at number four

2.9 million barrels/day keeps the UAE at number eight

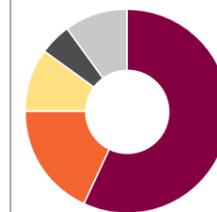
On the plate

Australian product is used in hamburger outlets, diced for wet dishes, and features in traditional kofta meals right through to dishes in high-end restaurants showcasing more specialised loin cuts.

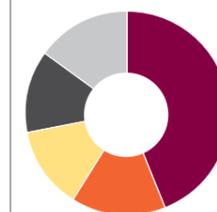
In the container



Beef:
37% manufacturing
17% topside/inside
12% carcass
8% thickflank/knuckle
26% other



Mutton:
57% carcass
18% leg
10% manufacturing
5% shoulder
10% other



Lamb:
44% carcass
15% forequarter
13% shoulder
13% leg
15% other



Sam Kekovich CD launch party at Breezes

Lambassador Sam Kekovich hosted an Australia Day dinner at Breezes restaurant on Crown with television and sporting celebs to celebrate the launch of the Chop song from his Barbie Girl CD. The event was organised by MLA to celebrate and promote lamb on Australia Day. Sam also gave his Australia Day speech where he said it would be "un-Australian" not to eat lamb on our national day.

Sam celebrates lamb on Australia Day with (L-R) Tottie Goldsmith, Alan Fletcher, Ally Fowler, Alyce Platt, Vicki Paulin.



Charters Towers producers attended MLA's social media workshop.

Meet Mr Patriotic himself Sam Kekovich!

Butcher's competed in MLA's national competition to see which Red Meat Networking Club (RMNC) retail outlet was the most creative and innovative with a new lamb product. They competed for trophies for the most impressive Australia Day theme in-store, and best new value-added lamb product in the cabinet (themed around Australia Day).



Lambassador, Sam Kekovich presented the trophy to Rode Road Meats butcher Brad Cammack for the best Australia Day retail store themed display.

Social media workshops

MLA held three social media workshops for red meat producers in late 2011. The pilot workshops were held in Charters Towers, QLD, Katherine, NT, and Katanning, WA and were designed to show producers how to use social media to communicate with the urban community and promote the red meat industry online. The pilots were used to develop the workshop format and materials for a national rollout in 2012.

7th National Native Grasslands Conference

MLA sponsored the conference on managing native grasslands for soil and animal health in Holbrook NSW, last November. Ninety people attended the event which focused on animal behaviour and management. Presentations were followed by field tours on properties near Holbrook, one of which focused on increasing biodiversity and land regeneration.

The conference also included workshops on pasture, cropping and livestock.



Field tour on property near Holbrook.

Faculty of Veterinary Science Postgraduate Conference

Veterinary Science postgraduate students attended the MLA sponsored Postgraduate Research Conference in Sydney last November where students had the opportunity to share their research findings and experiences and reach scientific solutions to issues facing animal/veterinary science stakeholders.



Agronomist, Angus Lego, MBFP Producer Advocate, Tom Amey and Trevor Rose, Beef Livestock Officer, NSW Department of Primary Industries, Casino.

More Beef from Pastures (MBFP) Cattle Nutrition–Pasture quality and utilisation demonstration

Producers gathered on Tom Amey's Dyraba property at Casino to discover the difference in pasture production and quality that can be realised under different management regimes on the mid north coast. The aim of the trial site is to lift production and profitability by 50%.

Upcoming events

BeefUp forums

Discover how to make more money from your beef production enterprise at MLA's BeefUp forums.

When and where:
22 May, Texas Qld

Bookings: 1800 675 717

BusinessEDGE

Learn financial and business management training at this two day workshop for northern beef producers.

When and where:
20-21 March, Gympie Qld
18-19 April, Clermont Qld

Bookings: 0488 599 033
businessedge@
jkconnections.com.au
www.mla.com.au/
EDGENetwork

Beyond the gate: The red meat supply chain tour for MLA members

Follow your products through the supply chain to consumers' plates –meeting with processors, wholesalers, butchers and executive chefs.

When and where:
20 March, Sydney

Bookings: 02 9463 9257
astreet@mla.com.au

Understanding your farm finances

Improve knowledge of farm finances and begin the process of monitoring and evaluating farm financial performance.

When and where:
29 March, Bordertown SA
2 April, Clare SA
4 April, Maitland SA
17 April, Murray Bridge SA

Bookings: 08 8842 1103
www.ruraldirections.com

WAFarmers Centenary Conference

Take part in discussions and presentations about the future of agriculture in Western Australia with excellent social and networking opportunities.

When and where:
21-22 March, Perth WA

Bookings:
www.wafarmers.org.au

28th NTCA AGM and Northern Beef forum

Discuss industry issues including animal welfare, livestock export, production, industry representation, producer levies, the rural/urban divide and land use.

When and where:
30 March, Darwin NT

Bookings:
www.ntca.org.au

PestSmart roadshows

Learn about best practice pest management incorporating currently used techniques and the latest innovations.

When and where:
14 March, Charleville Qld
16 March, Toowoomba Qld
20 March, Armidale NSW

Bookings: www.feral.org.au/pestsmart/roadshow/

Sheep health and management workshop

Matching feed supply with requirements of ewes and weaners to optimise productivity and profitability. Presented by Hamish Dickson from Productive Nutrition Pty Ltd.

When and where:
19 March, Monarto SA
Bookings: 08 8842 3192



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

THE BAYER AND BIONICHE INTERNATIONAL BEEF CATTLE GENETICS CONFERENCE

6-7 MAY 2012

ROCKHAMPTON

Register online for this conference at www.beefaustralia.com.au



Bayer



CONFERENCE PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

Internationally Recognised Speakers

Outline of International Market Opportunities for Beef

Release of Major Research Results from the Beef CRC

Case Studies of how Genomics can add Value throughout the Beef Supply Chain

