

Feedback

A photograph of a chef in a white shirt and a dark striped apron, focused on cooking. A large, intense flame is rising from a pan on the stove in front of him. The background shows a professional kitchen environment with various equipment.

All fired up

32// **Creating lamb masterpieces**

08// **Support role**

Working with export partners to improve welfare

10// **Disease control**

The R&D investment in Johne's disease management

16// **Productive performer**

The benefits of grazing barley in Victoria's Mallee

20// **Out of the BIN**

Brahman genetic knowledge grows

A note from the MD...



As 2013 draws to a close, we look back on a year of prolonged drought, which has driven livestock sales up, prices down, and exports to new record levels. MLA remains focused on making the right investments to create the biggest opportunities for our levy payers - balancing the need to respond to the challenges facing industry in the short term, while evaluating the longer term trends impacting the industry.

Australia is not a low cost producer post farm gate. We cannot compete head to head with competitors such as the US and Brazil which have cost structures up to three times lower than ours. To compete on the global market we need to differentiate ourselves from lower cost producers, with a consistently high quality product.

In early October I attended the biggest annual food, beverage and meat trade show in the world - Anuga, where MLA co-invested with Australian exporters to bring together the Australian red meat precinct. The broader 'clean and green' Australia message underpinned the promotional activities of all the individual exporter companies. After talking with countless customers, it is clear that there is overwhelming interest in beef and lamb globally - particularly from China, the Middle East and Russia. There is enormous and growing demand from these nations as their standard of living rises. This highlighted the importance of industry investing in marketing to assist Australia capture this growing global demand, and in market access activities to help ensure

our competitiveness, for example the Free Trade Agreements with Korea and Japan.

MLA is a relatively minor contributor to industry outcomes compared to the macro issues of seasons, government policy and the A\$. However we will continue to work to create opportunities for producers - by investing in marketing activities as referred to above, and R&D to try to help mitigate costs - such as effective feedbase management and genetics which you can read about in this edition.

The MLA Board, with new Chair Dr Michele Allan, will oversee these levy investments with renewed focus and vigour around ensuring they are strategically invested into effective programs and activities that add value.

Scott Hansen
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Summer beef campaign

Fire up the barbie

Comedian, radio presenter and known beef-lover Merrick Watts is again this summer rallying supporters on his mission to let the world know that Australians barbecue beef.

"In Australia, shrimps are short people, and we don't throw our short mates on the barbecue - we invite them around for a steak," MLA Group Marketing Manager Andrew Cox said of MLA's summer beef marketing campaign theme, being used for the second successive year.

"This myth has cast a cloud over Australian culture for 30 years, and it will take some time to correct.

"The barbecue has always been an intrinsic part of family life in Australia, and after last year's great response we knew we needed to keep the emphasis on the fact that we Aussies barbecue beef steaks, not shrimps".

Andrew said it was important to build on the strong foundation laid by last year's campaign to put beef back in the spotlight as the number one meat barbecued in summer.

"Our 'Throw Another Steak on the Barbie' campaign is about defending beef's position as king of the grill," Andrew said.

The ad launched on Sunday 10 November and is supported by digital media activities, including a major targeted Facebook consumer campaign, outdoor materials including bus shelter posters (right), scooters carrying billboards, a helicopter banner (in Canberra only), point-of-sale and interactive recipe-dispensing sites in major retailer shopping centres.



Andrew Cox, MLA

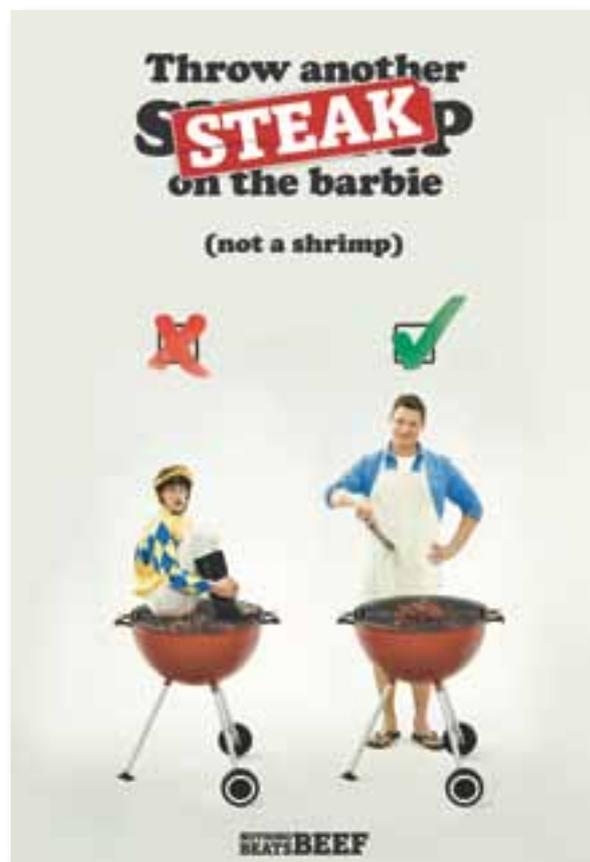
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and www.facebook.com/nothingbeatsbeef



500,000

new barbecues are sold in Australia annually



App queues up 'appy steaks

To support the campaign, a new mobile app (for Apple and Android) has also been developed to help Australians cook the perfect steak. 'SteakMate' allows users to enter details about their favourite beef steak, choose its thickness and cooking method and the preferred degree of doneness. The app gives cooking, turning and resting instructions, and also has a queuing functionality allowing users to add as many people to the queue for those cooking for bigger groups. The app can provide individual instructions for each steak's cooking specifications and cooking time, even with 10 different steak cuts on the grill, everyone's happy. SteakMate also gives a full list of all beef steaks recommended for cooking and information about each of them.

WA Meat Profit Day

'Meating' Expectations And Thriving

Thursday 3 April 2014

Irwin Recreation Centre,
1 Ridley St, Port Denison WA



Network with fellow producers and learn about the range of activities your levies are funding to improve productivity, increase demand and position red meat ahead of its competitors in domestic and international markets.

If you are attending the WA Meat Profit Day, make the most of it and come to the Beyond the gate tour

A red meat supply chain tour for MLA members

Geraldton, WA - Wednesday 2 April 2014

Take part in an exclusive beef and lamb MasterClass, get a behind the scenes look at foodservice operations and meat retailers, and dine at one of the town's best restaurants.

Bookings and for more information: **1800 675 717 (option 4) or visit**

WA Meat Profit Day: www.mla.com.au/MPD-WA // Beyond the gate: www.mla.com.au/BTG-Geraldton

AGM focuses on challenges and opportunities

Northern cattle producer George Scott was newly elected to the MLA Board, while Michele Allan and Lucinda Corrigan were re-elected for another term when members attended MLA's annual general meeting in Wodonga, Victoria, in mid-November.

In her first chair's address Michele Allan used the AGM to outline the volatile conditions facing the industry.

"The unpredictability of the current trading environment makes planning a difficult process for any enterprise operating in this industry," she said.

"In planning for how we invest levy funds, we also face a balancing act - responding to constant change in the short term, while reviewing the longer term trends impacting on the industry."

MLA Managing Director Scott Hansen acknowledged the diversity of the livestock industry and outlined MLA's activities in working with industry to create opportunities in his address.

"All sectors of industry need to keep the long term in mind, and work together to respond to the demands and challenges they face in the global marketplace," he said.

"Australia is not a low cost producer. To compete in the global market we need to differentiate ourselves from lower cost producers with a consistently high quality product."



Newly elected Board member, George Scott



To view webcasts from the producer forum and AGM visit www.mla.com.au/agm

Looking to the future



David Jenkin
Chairman
Hamilton Meat Profit Day



Ten years ago David Jenkin was at the helm of the first Hamilton Meat Profit Day (MPD) Committee, and a decade on he's back in the chair. The principal of Banemore Herefords spoke to *Feedback* about why the 2014 Hamilton MPD's theme is close to his heart.

Why the MPD theme of '2025: Ready or not?'

We're committed to supporting the future farming generation. It's no good having all these wonderful technological advances and market opportunities if there's no informed, younger generation eager to take them on.

Why is it important that producers look to the future?

The family farm is a huge part of Australian agriculture, but we tend not to do succession planning well.

In the 10 years since our last Meat Profit Day we've seen the Hamilton region involved in several cutting-edge research projects and it's important to instil this same sense of enthusiasm and excitement in the next generation of our local farmers.

What are some of the topics for discussion at the MPD?

The major topics for the day will include markets, technology and genetics, and how we can maximise productivity in these areas for future generations. Succession planning will be a big topic, with specialist speakers including NSW-ACT Rural Industries Research & Development Corporation Rural Woman of the Year Isobel

What:

Meat Profit Day

Where:

Hamilton Showground

When:

Wednesday, 19 February 2014

Theme:

'2025: Ready or Not?'

Knight from proAGtive, and Tony Gurry, from CoggerGurry Advisors in Hamilton.

Dr Rob Banks from Animal Genetics and Breeding Unit will be discussing the importance of on-farm genetics, while MLA's Chief Economist Tim McRae will be sharing the latest industry projections.

Other topics will include lamb production systems and foreign ownership, which is a hot issue in this area, and we will also hear from several producers about the on-farm changes they have implemented.

What do you think some of the issues will be for livestock producers in 2025?

'Who is running the farm?', genomics and maximising pasture productivity.



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Tasmanian Challengers leading the field



MLA Challenge leader board

1. John and Annie Ramsay
2. Lachlan and Anna Hughes
3. Marcus and Shannon Sounness
4. Andrew and Megan Miller
5. Matthew and Angela Pearce
6. Bill and Georgia Wilson

The MLA Challenge quarter one results are in and Bothwell, Tasmania, sheep producers John and Annie Ramsay are on top with their effective management decisions, good use of resources and earnest communication.

The MLA Challenge is a year-long competition between six Australian cattle and sheep producers judged on how effectively they manage their businesses to improve productivity and profitability, with a focus on reproductive efficiency and feedbase management.

Forward-thinking decisions and effective use of tools by the Ramsays impressed judges.

John said he was surprised by the result as he often questioned his decision making process.

"We have put a lot of time and research into using the MLA tools, particularly the feed demand calculator, and they have been beneficial to our business," he said.

A target for the Ramsays was improving lamb survival which they achieved through increases in ewe condition, mob size and better management of feed.

"By changing from Merinos to composites we have been able to achieve our ewe condition target of three for singles and 3.2 for twins," John said.

"And by increasing our stocking rate from 3DSE/ha/100mm of rain to 4DSE/ha/100mm of rain has led to maximised production of 24DSE/ha better utilising the feed resources and cutting down on fodder making expense."

MLA General Manager Livestock Production Innovation Peter Vaughan said that the Challengers had progressed well in meeting their first quarter goals and were taking a more strategic and targeted approach in management.

"Even with dry seasonal conditions, which saw food-on-offer decline for the northern beef Challengers, they both have still been able to reach many of their production targets," Peter said.

"The Hughes have managed this particularly well, increasing the condition score from 2.5-3 to 3-4 in 75% of their cows, with the remaining 25% being segregated and fed a supplement.

"The Millers became drought declared and had to change to a more complex management process to reach their targets."

Peter said for Amelup sheep producers Marcus and Shannon Sounness, an excellent season followed by a storm event saw average results amongst the maiden ewes, with a low lambing percentage of 76%, but they are hoping for a better percentage next season after meeting their ewe condition score target this quarter.

Southern beef producers Matthew and Angela Pearce, and Bill and Georgia Wilson had a more favourable season which saw them comfortably meet production targets of 90% calving rates and earlier turn-off at higher weights, respectively.

"The Challengers can now look forward to the next quarter when previous decisions and benefits will flow forward and take them closer to increasing their targets," Peter said.

The MLA Challenge is supported by Woolworths, Westpac, QantasLink and Fairfax Agricultural Media.



For updates, videos and background information on each participant, visit www.mla.com.au/challenge

What the judges said...

"There is a really competitive energy among Challengers and this is great. All of the Challengers have made positive changes by embracing the advice and resources made available through the Challenge and as a judge it was rewarding to see how close they all were when you put their achievements on paper." *Susan Bower, head of Westpac Agribusiness*

"I am really impressed with how active all the Challengers have been in looking at what opportunities there are for improvement and getting stuck into it with the support of their mentors and the resources on offer to give them the confidence to make, in some cases quite substantial, business changes." *Dr Jane Weatherley, MLA R&D Communications and Extension Manager*

Correction

In the Challenger profile of Matthew Pearce on page 39 of the October edition of *Feedback* it was incorrectly stated that his enterprise has 500 Merino ewes (and 300 breeder cattle). His enterprise actually has 300 breeder cattle and no sheep.

Livestock exports

Finding common ground

Sharing a cup of tea, getting to know key players personally and demonstrating the benefits of change are among the simplest and most effective strategies to improve animal welfare standards in countries that import Australian livestock.

MLA's Livestock Export Program Manager, Peter Dundon, lived and worked in the Middle East for seven years, providing training and technical support to feedlots and processing facilities.

He said improvements in animal handling practices were often the direct result of trust.

"You build relationships largely through meeting with people and listening to their needs and concerns - often it involves drinking lots of tea!" Peter said.

"Once you have trust, you can look for common ground."

In Muslim countries, much of the 'common ground' is the animal welfare principles at the core of 'halal' slaughter practices.

The term 'halal' means lawful, and for meat to be lawful under Islamic law it must have come from an animal that had its throat cut while still alive and facing Mecca. It also has to be ritually sacrificed by a Muslim and registered Halal slaughterman, who recited a prayer dedicating the slaughter to Allah. The animal must also be killed in a way that is 'least painful' and 'most merciful'.

"Muslim religious obligations of kindness to animals knit very well with the Australian community's animal welfare expectations," Peter said.

Local team leads the way

Dr John Ackerman, MLA's Regional Manager in Indonesia, echoed Peter's sentiments, adding that local staff were also integral.

"We have an excellent team of Indonesian professionals who make it easier to ensure we're working within the culture, the religion and the regulatory framework," John said.

"Our goal is always to work in partnership with the Indonesian government, industry and local authorities for the benefit of both countries."

An example of this cooperation is the practice of stunning, which is supported by both the Indonesian government and MUI (Majelis Ulama Indonesia - Indonesia's Muslim clerical body), the peak council overseeing Islamic bodies in Indonesia.

Prior to the launch of Australia's Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS) in 2011, only about

four abattoirs in Indonesia employed stunning as a regular practice; now it's 80.

The significant uptake has been driven by MLA working alongside local authorities to overcome misconceptions about the practice.

"It hasn't necessarily involved an Australian telling processors or religious authorities about stunning," John said.

"Rather, we work alongside local bodies and provide the relevant technical information to them, which they then pass on."

John said staff spent a significant amount of time ensuring industry understood that MLA was not responsible for 'policing' ESCAS.

"We are not the ESCAS regulator; we are there to help the Indonesian industry and government when required," he said.

"Misconceptions surrounding our role affect how well we can work and provide advice. They need to know we are there to help, not to act as a supervisor or regulator."

Show and tell

Peter and John agreed that demonstrating the benefits of practices such as stunning and low-stress stock handling, rather than just talking about them, is crucial to achieving change.

"Through demonstrations and training we can show that low-stress stock-handling practices make the importer's life easier - it's good for staff health and safety, and it's good for the animal," Peter said.

Both MLA managers have seen the positive flow-on effects this training is having in Australian livestock export markets - and not just for Australian stock.

"Abattoirs are finding the practices we demonstrate lead to better economics, better products and better health and safety for workers," Peter said.

"Those practices will spread through the industry to other abattoirs, regardless of whether they're processing Australian animals."

Fast facts

The value of live Australian cattle, sheep and goat exports in 2012-13 was

\$800 million

13,000 people

mainly in regional and rural Australia are employed in the live export industry.



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In profile

Brian Scott // *ESCAS technical support and training adviser*

Since 2011 Brian Scott (pictured above) has been part of MLA's team in Indonesia, working alongside his Indonesian counterparts to build capacity in the local meat and livestock industries and assist compliance with the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS).

Previously he was General Manager of Barrington's Security, managing 400 employees from ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds. He has also been a butcher and pursued tertiary qualifications in business management and operations. Brian was raised on a cattle property at Coonamble, NSW.

What does your role entail? Developing and implementing risk mitigation programs, providing supply chain assessments and technical support,

training in animal welfare and traceability, capacity and compliance building.

Describe a typical work day: I meet with importers, exporters, government representatives and supply chain managers to discuss areas that need to be improved or reviewed. Facility visits to abattoirs occur at night between 9pm and 3am, as they process at night and the meat is taken directly to the market and consumed that day.

What do you enjoy most about the job? Working with Indonesians and achieving positive outcomes for the industry. It also allows me to capitalise on my business and management skills in an industry I grew up in.

What is the biggest challenge? Ensuring an adequate level of understanding of all processes, and working in a different

ethnic and religious environment. I draw on my own experience and education to adopt an understanding approach to problem solving, and I ensure the program is delivered in a consultative way.

What has been the response to your work? Exporters and importers have supported the risk assessment process. The risk assessment tools and internal monitoring programs have been widely adopted by industry, mitigating risk and resulting in improved control throughout all supply chains. The ESCAS within Indonesia has been further strengthened by the strategies and commitment from the supply chains.



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Working together on

The welfare of Australian livestock in overseas' markets continues to be an industry focus and MLA remains committed to developing innovative programs to help importers and exporters comply with regulations related to the treatment of sheep, cattle and goats.

Since the introduction of the Australian Government's Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS) in 2011, MLA has delivered in-market training and technical support to thousands of livestock industry participants around the world.

MLA's primary task is to assist supply chains to meet and comply with ESCAS regulations, helping to ensure continued export market access and sustainability of an industry worth \$1.8 billion to the Australian economy.

While the system has been implemented in Australia's livestock export markets, an innovative approach has been needed to manage its take up, according to MLA's Livestock Export Program Manager, Peter Dundon.

"One challenge is that exporters are now fully responsible for the animals' welfare to the point of slaughter," Peter said.

Funding on-the-ground expertise

The Industry Collaborate Welfare Program (ICWP) is proving a win-win for Australian exporter Emanuel Exports, its supply chain partner in Kuwait and MLA.

Under the ICWP, MLA funds up to 50% of the agreed costs of an Australian exporter employing an animal welfare officer to work in a supply chain. MLA's contribution is capped at \$150,000 per exporter and \$75,000 per region.

According to MLA Middle East/North Africa Livestock Services Manager, David Beatty, the program is providing value for money.

"Emanuel Exports has employed veterinarian Col Scrivener, who is living in Kuwait and working in the importer's feedlot," David said.

"It's a win for everyone. The importer is getting great value out of the agreement because of Col's veterinary skills and the help he can give them in the feedlot, Emanuel has more confidence that ESCAS requirements are being met, and MLA now has a direct conduit to the importer to better deliver support programs.

"Not only can Col deliver programs regarding Standard Operating Procedures training, technical advice and risk assessments, but he's also providing the opportunity to collaborate on animal welfare research."

2,924
people trained

in low-stress stock handling and processing techniques by MLA in the Asia Pacific region in 2012-13

\$1.8
billion

Contribution to the Australian economy from the livestock export industry

13
exporters

received Industry Collaborative Welfare Program funding in 2012-13 and 2013-14



"This is difficult to guarantee if you're sitting in an office in Australia, so exporters have responded by putting their own supply chain managers and animal welfare officers into the market.

"It has been a very successful practice and MLA has helped facilitate it through our Industry Collaborative Welfare Program (ICWP) with livestock exporters."

The ICWP is just one of a number of MLA programs developed to assist with ESCAS compliance. The programs are managed by the Livestock Export Program and jointly funded by MLA and LiveCorp.

Here we take a look at two current programs.

New training programs

Standardised training programs have been developed for the handling of cattle, sheep and goats in order to align training across the Livestock Export Program and support exporters and importers to conduct their own animal welfare training.

MLA Livestock Export Research and Development Manager, Sharon Dundon, said the training materials were based on the ESCAS animal welfare checklist and included modules on port, transport, feedlot, lairage, slaughter with stunning, slaughter without stunning and animal handling.

"The project developed Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), instructional DVDs and training support materials. The SOPs and DVDs to date have been produced in English, Arabic and Bahasa," Sharon said.

"These standardised training programs have been piloted in Indonesia for cattle and in the Middle East for sheep.

"The feedback from these sessions has allowed the refinement of the training programs, which will be rolled out further in late 2013 and early 2014."

A \$165,000 funding announcement by the Federal Government in July has further boosted the project, allowing for the instructional DVDs and SOPs to be translated into Turkish, Malay, Russian, Farsi, Chinese and Vietnamese.

Photo: MLA staff demonstrate sheep handling methods as part of a standardised training program being piloted in the Middle East.



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



Animal health

Tackling Johne's disease

MLA is investing in research projects to help sheep and cattle producers manage Johne's disease risk and better control infections, and perhaps even eliminate the disease over time.

In addition to a 10-year study monitoring the effectiveness of an ovine Johne's disease (OJD) vaccine, other projects are investigating environmental factors influencing the disease and its cost to sheepmeat processors.

The main one is a \$6.4 million project led by Professor Richard Whittington from the University of Sydney, which seeks a basic understanding of how the Johne's disease bacterium behaves, how it interacts with the host animal and what science can take advantage of in those interactions to develop better testing methods and vaccines.

"This project has both a short- to medium-term focus and long-term goals," Richard said.

"In the short term, we aim to develop tools for immediate application (see story on page 12), such as new diagnostic tests and novel predictive tests that can be used to select resistant and susceptible livestock, and tools to improve the safety aspects of the current vaccine.

"Other findings will have a long-term focus, such as developing more economical vaccine efficacy testing methods.

"There are literally dozens of potential new vaccine candidates, but it currently costs more than \$500,000 to conduct even a modest vaccine trial on one of them.

"We're working on an indirect measure of vaccine protection which could replace the current method of observing large groups of sheep and cattle for three to five years or longer," he said.

"The knowledge we gain may then be used in our own trials and by other research partners in progress towards new vaccines."

The five-year project is being jointly funded by the MLA Donor Company and the peak sheepmeat, wool and cattle industry bodies, and is due to conclude in December 2015.

It aims to:

- provide **new diagnostic tools** to enable producers to determine more accurately whether their herds/flocks are infected or not, and which animals in particular are exposed and infected, and to predict which animals are at high risk of contaminating the environment
- develop **new genetic approaches** to predict which herds/flocks are resistant, which particular animals are resistant, and which infected animals will get sick, contaminate the environment or recover
- conduct research towards a **safer, more effective vaccine** for sheep and cattle
- maintain and **develop capacity in livestock health** for the benefit of producers by training four post-doctoral fellows and postgraduate students

New genetic approaches

Dr Evan Sargeant convenes the Johne's Disease Research Advisory Group, which meets twice a year to review research progress and advise on future projects.

He says preliminary results from the University of Sydney's work on the susceptibility of different sheep breeds to Johne's disease are particularly interesting.



Late 19th Century:
Johne's disease first recognised and documented in cattle in Europe



1920s/30s:
Johne's disease first detected in Australian cattle



1980:
Johne's disease first detected in Australian sheep in NSW Central Tablelands



1990s:
Ovine Johne's disease (OJD) recognised as a national problem



1998:
Six-year National OJD Control and Evaluation Program (NOJDP) implemented



1999:
Bovine Johne's disease (BJD) zoning introduced



1999:
Development of media for culture of sheep strain



2001:
Gudair vaccine introduced for sheep on permit



Far left: Merino, Poll Dorset and Border Leicester sheep held as part of the Johne's disease breed susceptibility trial at the University of Sydney farm at Camden.

Left: Field assistant Nobel Toribio sampling a sheep at the University's quarantine site.

"Earlier research revealed that not all animals become infected, even when there is heavy exposure. Some animals appear to be resistant, some limit the infection and some completely recover," Evan said.

"It suggested there may be genetic differences we can exploit to breed more resistant animals.

"The university's recent breed susceptibility trial studied Border Leicester, Poll Dorset, White Suffolk-Merino cross and Merino sheep.

"The preliminary results indicate differences in the rate of development and the proportions of animals that develop the disease between the breeds, while also showing individual variation within breeds.

"Identifying the underlying causes of these differences will provide clues for improving vaccines and selection processes."

The procedures used in this research were approved by the University of Sydney's Animal Ethics Committee.

A safer and more effective vaccine

MLA's Animal Health and Biosecurity Project Manager, Johann Schröder, said an important part of the project was responding to producer concerns about the safety of the Gudair vaccine.

"Gudair is effective in controlling clinical disease losses but there have been terrible cases of accidental self-injection by operators, with surgery required to remove the injected material," Johann said.

"Part of the University of Sydney's project is seeking a vaccine that is as effective as Gudair, but without the occupational health and safety hazards."

What is ovine Johne's disease (OJD)?

- OJD is a fatal, wasting disease in sheep.
- OJD causes the lining of the bowel to thicken and reduces food absorption.
- The average time from onset of clinical signs to death is from six weeks to three months.
- Most sheep do not show signs of OJD for a long time, from months to years, after becoming infected.
- Most infected sheep spread the disease in manure prior to and while showing symptoms.
- An OJD vaccine has been commercially available for more than 10 years and has been shown to reduce the number of infected sheep in a flock, reduce the number of bacteria excreted in their manure and to slow the onset of disease in those animals which become infected.

What is bovine Johne's disease (BJD)?

- BJD is a fatal, wasting disease in cattle caused by the cattle strain of the same bacterium that causes OJD.
- Cattle acquire infection at an early age through eating contaminated pasture or drinking contaminated milk or water.
- BJD is more often seen in dairy herds than beef herds in Australia.
- The effect of BJD on beef production is difficult to measure because of its slow onset, but producers can suffer significant losses.
- A BJD vaccine is currently undergoing an approval process. The vaccine is available in the southern states on permit for the purposes of field evaluations.



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www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/programs/johnes-disease/national-johnes-disease-control-program-njdc

www.mla.com.au/johnesdisease



2003:
National Approach to BJD in Australia endorsed by industry and government

2004:
Two-year National Approach to the Management of OJD in Australia implemented

2005:
MLA-funded research finds average annual economic loss due to OJD infection on farms is \$768/DSE or \$65.92/ha (not including losses due to trade restrictions)

2007:
Five-year OJD Management Plan implemented

July 2012:
Revised National BJD Strategic Plan launched

November 2012:
BJD bison strain detected on a stud cattle property near Rockhampton

2012-13:
Cattle vaccine undergoing approval process - vaccine available in Victoria on permit

July 2013:
Revised five-year National OJD Management Plan launched



Research jumps hurdle

Producers can be confident that laboratories diagnosing Johne's disease cases are using a 'gold standard' testing method, following work funded by the MLA Donor Company and peak sheep and cattle industry bodies.

Professor Richard Whittington said the research team had to overcome a major hurdle in the \$6.4 million Johne's disease research project, which began in 2011.

"For the past 20-plus years, animal health diagnostic laboratories have relied on a culture medium that was only made by one company, and which contained a radioactive component," Richard said.

"Last year, the company announced it would cease making the medium.

"We were faced with a huge risk that we would not have the technology to underpin the very important research going on nationally or the routine diagnostic work in places where Johne's disease is well established.

Photo: Project leader Richard Whittington examining bacterial cultures in the PC2 microbiology lab, University of Sydney, Camden.

"It was crucial to find a replacement because this is the single most important test for Johne's disease – the gold standard."

Richard's team 'demystified' the ingredients in the company's culture medium, and developed an alternative that is safer – as it's not radioactive – much cheaper and in some ways easier to use.

They are now providing the medium to laboratories around Australia and have made the recipe freely available to international laboratories. The protocols will be part of the newly revised Australian and New Zealand Standard Diagnostic Test Protocol for Johne's Disease, for use in the National Johne's Disease Program in all livestock species.

A benefit of the new medium is that it does not need to be examined weekly, as required by the previous test; lab staff can 'set and forget' it for 12 weeks.

"This creates a big saving in terms of labour," Richard said.

"A disadvantage is that it's a manual test – at the end of the 12 weeks it requires a fairly thorough examination.

"As part of our MLA-funded research, we're looking at high-throughput methods for checking this media after the 'set and forget' phase to make it more user friendly, and even more acceptable to other labs."



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Research at work

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

<p>In this issue</p>	<p>18// Doing better business Underpinned by More Beef from Pastures, a new business training program for cattle producers is underway in WA</p>	<p>20// Brahman Beef Information Nucleus Read how research is lifting the rate of genetic improvement in Brahmans</p>	<p>25// The right plant... EverGraze research highlights tall fescue as a candidate to fill the summer/autumn feed gap</p>	<p>26// Residue monitoring Learn how measuring the impact of animal health treatments ensures high meat standards</p>
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Pasture management in the Pilbara

Grazing land management (GLM) has been identified as an effective way to improve the economic and environmental sustainability of northern cattle enterprises. Now, producers in Western Australia's Pilbara region will have access to a training program to help them implement GLM principles.

Climate variability, erosion, patch grazing and feral animals have been identified as the most significant constraints to the sustainability of Pilbara pastoral enterprises.

A 2011 report on the research, development and extension requirements of the Pilbara and Kimberley cattle industries was compiled by MLA and the Department of

Agriculture and Food Western Australia (DAFWA).

One of the authors, Rebecca Dray of DAFWA at Karratha, said the research for the report clearly identified that effective GLM underpinned cattle production in the Pilbara.

"The initial study showed there was a need for continuing extension of GLM principles to ensure managers can access

information relevant to local conditions, and can therefore make informed management decisions," she said.

"One of the greatest challenges is to match the available feed with herd numbers in a variable climate.

"Improving land condition improves the bottom line. Having land in good condition gets you more kilograms of production per hectare." →

50 million ha
in the Pilbara

33%
of the Pilbara is pastoral leases

200-350 mm
average annual rainfall

Grazing management

→

A GLM pilot program was run in the Pilbara in November 2012, when DAFWA brought pastoralists together to establish how GLM packages from other areas could be adapted for the Pilbara. GLM workshops have been successfully run in the Kimberly since 2009. The resulting program, which will be delivered as a three-day workshop, will be rolled out in early 2014.

"Most pastoralists understand GLM principles intrinsically, but new insights are gained through the workshop and discussions," Rebecca said.

"The planning day gives managers the opportunity to develop projects they can do on their own properties to address individual issues and improve overall grazing land management. A follow-up workshop will be held towards the end of 2014 to see how GLM has been implemented on the participating properties."



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Principles of GLM in the Pilbara

- Spell paddocks where and when appropriate - especially when it is wet and the grass is growing.
- Move cattle around using mosaic burning (using fire to create a mosaic pattern across a paddock so pasture is in a range of growth stages) and turning waters on and off. These techniques regulate the availability of pasture and water.
- Burn spinifex country after the first summer storms - spinifex burns when the ground is still wet.

The learning process



Benchmarking has shown a northern cattle producer family that every 1% increase in calves \$100,000 to their bottom line.

The Mills family are using every tool on offer to drive that 1% and, after helping shape the Grazing Land Management (GLM) pilot program for the Pilbara, see GLM as offering the next profit driver.

"We have to constantly look at how things are progressing and changing to stay viable," Geoff Mills said.

"You can't just carry on the way you always have - you have to be prepared to keep learning and be open to new ideas.

"It's about accepting new technology such as telemetry and monitoring, and it's also about the care and welfare of our animals in regards to supplements, medications and testing.

"We were plodding along with about 60% calving then, through some testing we did, we discovered we had vibriosis (a venereal disease transmitted

by mating infected bulls to susceptible cows) in our young heifers. We put a vaccination program in place to deal with it and are now getting up to 80% calving (the average calving rate in northern Australia is around 70%).

"We are in a benchmarking group and every 1% increase in calving makes \$100,000 difference to our bottom line. Injections and drenching aren't cheap, but they make a big difference," Geoff said.

Geoff believes that when the land is in better condition, the cows are in better condition, resulting in more calves on the ground - also in better condition.

Learning from others

Geoff's daughter, Jacinta (pictured), had wondered whether they'd get value from participating in the development of the GLM workshop program as the original information was based on production in the Kimberley.

"At the start, I was unsure about whether the GLM workshop in Karratha was going to be appropriate for us," Jacinta said.

"Most of the speakers were from other areas and I wasn't sure if it would be applicable to the Pilbara."

However, once she discovered the course developers wanted to hear her experiences, rather than the other way round she was won over.

"I really appreciate the fact that these workshops are held - not only are they an opportunity to educate ourselves and each other, but it's also a social opportunity for us. Sometimes we don't see other people much for six months of the year."

Jacinta is one of the youngest of three generations that live and work on Warrawagine Station. Her father, grandfather, uncle and cousins also work in the family beef business.

She said the biggest thing she learnt from the GLM workshop

Snapshot

Geoff and Jacinta Mills, 300km east of Port Hedland, WA



Property:
400,000ha

Enterprise:
Beef, predominantly for live export

Livestock:
21,000 Droughtmaster cattle

Pasture:
Buffel grass and spinifex

Rainfall:
300mm

weaned adds

was the importance of what is happening on the ground surface.

"It's not just a matter of seeing that the cattle are fat and there is grass around - there's more to it than that," she said.

"I can walk out into a paddock that once I thought had no feed left, that it had been overgrazed, and now I can see that there is potential to bring that paddock back, through better management."

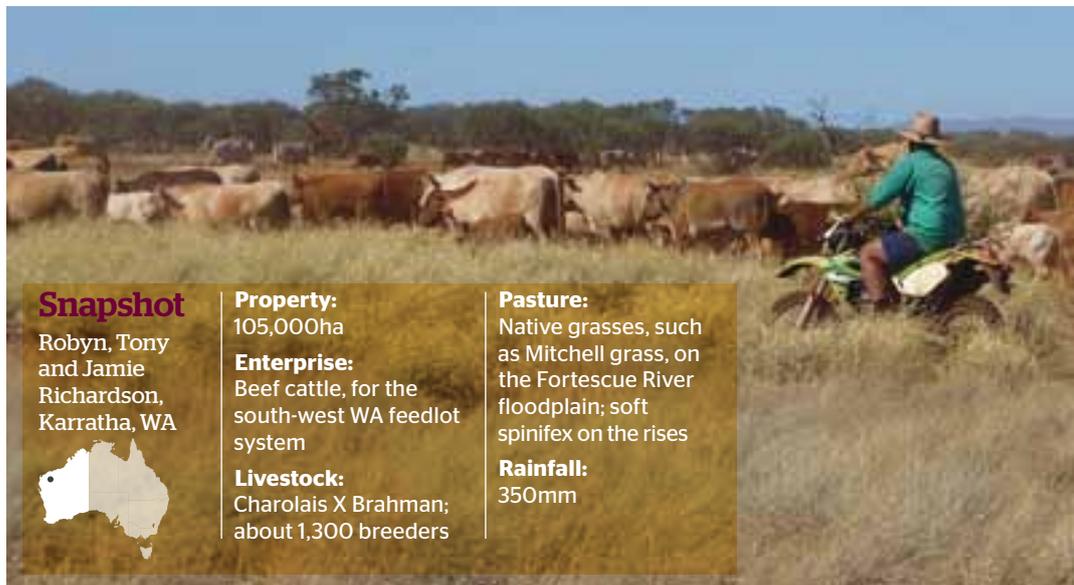


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Order the booklet *Grazing Land Management: Sustainable and productive natural resource management* at www.mla.com.au/GLMmanual

Download the pasture-monitoring Stocktake+ app at www.stocktakeplus.com.au



Snapshot

Robyn, Tony and Jamie Richardson, Karratha, WA



Property:
105,000ha

Enterprise:
Beef cattle, for the south-west WA feedlot system

Livestock:
Charolais X Brahman; about 1,300 breeders

Pasture:
Native grasses, such as Mitchell grass, on the Fortescue River floodplain; soft spinifex on the rises

Rainfall:
350mm

Jamie Richardson moving cattle at Mt Florance Station.

Of droughts and flooding rains...

Fewer animals may well hold the key to long-term sustainability for this northern cattle enterprise, but Robyn Richardson doesn't rely on a business plan based just on numbers.

Robyn said, "It's also about overall profitability and sustainability - you need to achieve those key indicators."

"Cattle are the means by which we get an income off the land but if we don't look after the country - we don't get the income. Higher productivity from fewer animals is our ultimate goal."

Robyn, who runs Mt Florance with her husband Tony and son Jamie, was a member of the steering committee that helped develop the pilot Pilbara GLM program.

"Overall, management in the Pilbara is not a lot different from elsewhere in northern Australia, but we needed to use specific examples that relate to the Pilbara - descriptions of the landscape in this region and forage produced specific to the land systems," she said.

"I think there's value in anything that gives people information to sustainably manage their operations."

The Richardsons made a decision 20 years ago to focus

on alleviating the constant impact of dry seasons and improve the Mitchell grass pastures, which had been severely affected by cattle in parts. This started with more water points and improved fencing.

A good flood

Mt Florance is a long thin property that follows the ephemeral Fortescue River. A large portion of the station is on a floodplain.

"The river runs through the centre of the property, and most years we get a 'local run'. A full run from right up the top of the catchment happens maybe about one in every five to seven years.

"There's Mitchell grass on the floodplain and the cattle flog it if we let them - we need to be careful how we manage it. It's the first thing to come up after rain and we need to allow it to go to seed before being grazed.

"If it wasn't for our fencing, the cattle would hang around on the country they like. We move the cattle off the floodplain and on to the spinifex to spell the native grasses," Robyn said.

"It's not just the wet seasons that need management.

"The dry seasons are always a problem," she said. "Now, if we get a dry summer, we take calves off the cows and truck the cattle south but keep the breeders."

In 1998, the Richardsons decided to move out of sheep to focus on one sustainable enterprise.

"The country is pretty healthy now and it'll get better," Robyn said.

Lessons learned

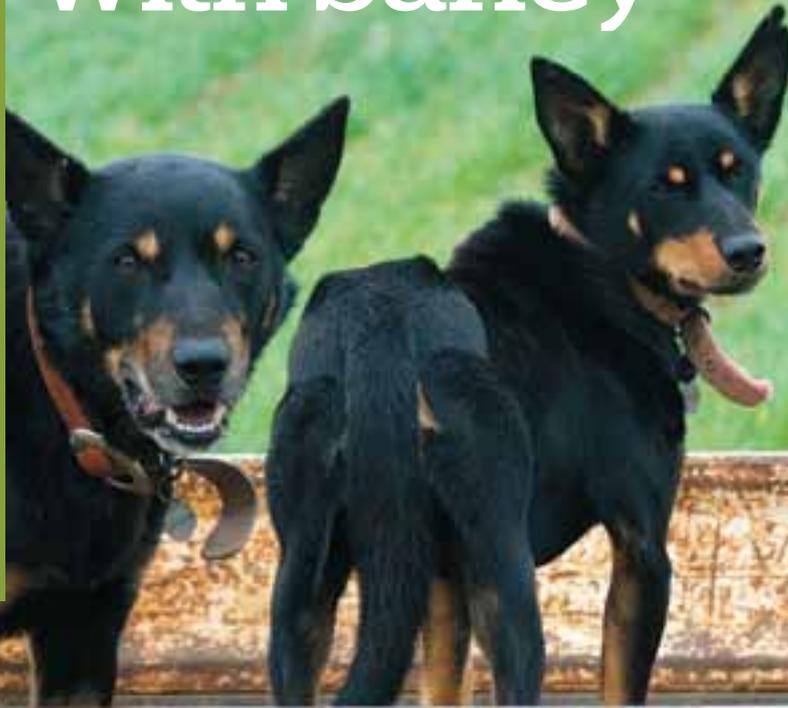
- GLM involves working with the sustainability and carrying capacity of the country in different seasons.
- Fencing around different land condition classifications is a useful tool to manage over-grazing.



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SnapshotDarren Barker,
Nullawil, Vic.**Property:**
2,000ha**Enterprise:**
Broadacre
cropping cereals,
field peas and
canola**Livestock:**
1,200 Merino ewes
joined to Poll
Dorsets**Pasture:**
Using Moby barley
as a grazing crop
for sheep**Soil:**
Sandy red loam**Rainfall:**
300mm

Raising the bar with barley



Two MLA-funded Producer Demonstration Sites (PDS), run with the Nullawil Best Wool Best Lamb (BWBL) group in Victoria's Mallee, are having an impact on what was once a cropping-dominated area.

The first PDS developed recommendations on crop grazing, feed budgets and paddock sizes to help producers increase their income from sheep.

Final research, through a second PDS, on suitable crops to fill the feed gap between grazing cereals in winter and early spring and stubbles will conclude this year.

Before Victorian producer and Nullawil BWBL member Darren Barker (pictured with dogs Johnny and Charlie) introduced Moby barley to his cropping program, his sheep enterprise was limited to buying store lambs to finish on stubbles.

He has grown Moby barley for the past three years to help fill the winter and spring feed gap before stubbles became available for grazing.

Darren initially trialed 40ha of the grazing crop, expanding it to 200ha this winter.

"We've found Moby barley gives phenomenal feed growth, provided it rains, and it has allowed us to run a lot more sheep, including breeding ewes, which we couldn't do before," Darren said.

Today, he runs a breeding flock of 1,200 Merino ewes joined to Poll Dorset rams for an April

lambling, providing a reliable income from wool and prime lambs each season. He then buys-in up to 1,500 store lambs, depending on the season and price opportunities.

PDS manager Garry Armstrong, Department of Environment and Primary Industries at Echuca in Victoria, said the PDS demonstrated that sheep were great for cash flow and a good risk management tool for grain producers.

In 2010, a Moby barley grazing crop in the trial returned a gross income of \$1,767/ha when continually grazed by ewes and lambs, compared to a crop of Hindmarsh barley, which recorded a gross income of \$671/ha when grazed once.

Garry said the practical on-farm work undertaken by the Nullawil group had shown it was

possible to use grazing crops to generate a sustainable sheep income from a small part of a cropping property. The introduction of grazing crops also gives producers the ability to finish lambs with more consistency in meeting market specifications.

He said research indicated a purpose-grown grazing crop was best in their region, as there was only a small window of about eight weeks to graze cereal crops before grain yields were adversely affected.

Income streams

Darren was originally keen to try grazing crops to spread risk, especially when farming with marginal rainfall.

This year he sowed Moby barley in late April, at a cost of \$20/ha for seed with 40kg monoammonium phosphate (MAP) fertiliser/ha.



The ewes lambed in April in a confinement area, where they were supplementary-fed due to the dry autumn.

When it didn't rain until late May, Darren said the resulting crop wasn't ready for grazing until July but it carried the sucker lambs right through to sale in September.

Darren used a simple three-strand electric fence system to rotationally graze the Moby barley in paddocks sized 12-22ha.

Stocking rates and grazing pressure varied depending on the season, he said, although they usually ran up to 300 ewes and lambs in the larger-sized paddocks, moving the stock every few days as required.

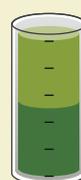
He said they aimed to finish their home-bred lambs on the Moby barley as suckers for the supermarket trade at 20-22kg carcase weight.

Lessons learned

- Plan grazing to minimise compaction, which helps the no-till system. Moving to no-till farming and well managed grazing rotations five years ago dramatically decreased our workload, while allowing us to run more sheep.
- Introduce new crops gradually. We started with just 40ha of grazing crops until we became more confident.
- Get as much advice as you can, especially about what crops suit your local environment.

Project dashboard: PDS one and two - grazing cereal crops in a Mallee Farming System

Financial contributions to the project:
\$74,600



MLA levies:
50%

Government:
50%

Length of project:
3 years

Completed:
2 years,
10 months



The project is part of MLA's objective to:

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



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

Read more about the PDS findings in earlier stories in the June and September 2012 issues of *Feedback* at www.mla.com.au/feedback



To watch a video featuring Darren Barker and Garry Armstrong talking about crop grazing and the PDS go to: www.mla.com.au/NullawilPDS

Building capability

Number crunching

Establish accurate figures for the kilograms of beef produced per hectare and the cost of production. That's the first step to determine farm performance and provide a platform to improve efficiency and profitability, according to Allison Watson, Coordinator of Western Australia's My-Beef-My-Business program.

Allison said cattle producers could now analyse their businesses through the program, which identifies business strengths and weaknesses and shows where improvements can be made.

My-Beef-My-Business is based on the first module of MLA's More Beef from Pastures program and has been run by the Department of Agriculture and Food WA (DAFWA) for two years, with support from the WA Beef Council.

"The Beef Council identified industry benchmarking as a means to build resilience and help beef producers better understand their profit drivers," Allison said.

"We begin the program by collecting data - the producer sends their financial data directly to business analysis company Red Sky Agricultural and departmental staff help collect the on-farm or production data.

"The producers receive a confidential report that shows how they are performing on various parameters, and against benchmarks for the average and top 25% of producers in the analysis."

Regional workshops are held for participants to learn about industry trends and what drives profit in top performing businesses. Participants can network with fellow producers and talk to farm advisers and consultants.

"Once these areas (for action) have been identified, participants are encouraged to plan how the changes can be implemented on-farm in a practical way," Allison said.

The My-Beef-My-Business program costs \$440 (including GST) per business.



Kojonup cattle producers Jim and Pam McGregor work through their business report with Department of Agriculture and Food Beef Project Manager Sue-Ellen Shaw.

Heading in the right direction

To improve the 'business' of your cattle enterprise More Beef from Pastures recommends these steps.

1. Assess your current position.
2. Establish business goals and objectives.
3. Evaluate and choose the best options for improvement.
4. Document the plan.
5. Implement, monitor and review.

Tips for analysing your business

A performance analysis evaluates the business and how it is performing against similar enterprises, and helps identify areas for improvement.

The analysis should include both physical and financial aspects of the business. Ideally, data should be collected over at least three years to identify trends and account for abnormal items that may obscure true performance, such as drought.

For a full analysis, the information should include:

- physical farm characteristics, such as soil and pasture type, carrying capacity, arable land area etc
- a farm livestock inventory and trading accounts, including beef production
- labour use, supplementary feeding inventory and fertiliser inputs
- financial data from annual accounts, a profit and loss statement and statement of annual cash flow
- a balance sheet, including all assets and liabilities, depreciation schedules and capital expenditure



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MLA's More Beef from Pastures program is available online:
www.mla.com.au/morebeeffrompastures

MLA's Cost of Production calculators for cattle and lambs is available at www.mla.com.au/toolbox

The MLA challenge
www.mla.com.au/challenge

Fiscal responsibility

Tim Prosser admits that when he registered to be part of the My-Beef-My-Business program last year, his main motivation was what was happening over the fence.

"My neighbour participated in My-Beef-My-Business the first year it was run and, really, I wanted to see how we were doing relative to him," Tim said.

The report that came back showed that Tim (pictured) and his father, Les, who run the family's Scott River beef business, were generally doing well.

"We thought we were doing okay, but it was good to know for sure that we weren't at the bottom of the list," Tim said.

"Our stocking rates were right up where they should have been and we weren't spending money where we shouldn't. We weren't paying to grow the cattle."

One thing Tim found interesting was that his neighbour was spending more on fertiliser, but wasn't necessarily more profitable.

"By putting less fertiliser on the paddocks, we are producing less beef per hectare, but our costs were also lower, so the profit margin is comparable," he said.

"It's not a simple case of the more you spend, the greater the profit - there's a broad range of possibilities and it's a balancing act to work out just where to pitch it.

"I'm pretty happy with where we are sitting - with the balance between what we are spending and what we are making. It was interesting to see where the money was going."

Tim plans to participate in the program again this year.

"I'd like to look at another year's data to make sure our good result wasn't just a one-off. Last year, we had good prices and good seasons, so it will be interesting to see how it works in a different year. I don't think the difference will be huge, but we'll see," he said.

The biggest lesson for him from the program was the importance of making the most of everything you spend.

"Every dollar has to be spent to make money, not to keep up with the neighbour," Tim said, even if he is keeping a close and competitive eye on what's going on over the other side of the fence.

Lessons learned

- You can't improve profitability unless you know where your money is going.
- Find the balance between expenditure and income that works for your own risk profile.



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Snapshot

Tim and Les Prosser, Scott River, WA.



Property:
810ha (half pasture, half uncleared bushland)

Enterprise:
Prime beef

Livestock:
400 breeders, Angus X Dairy Shorthorn; Angus and Charolais bulls

Pasture:
Half perennial ryegrass and kikuyu, balance annual clovers and rye

Rainfall:
1,000mm

Genetics

Brahmans embrace genomics

With the accuracy of existing estimated breeding values (EBVs) lifted by 20%, new EBVs being tested and confidence in the way sires are ranked, the Brahman is poised to enter the genomic age.



Fast facts

- The Brahman Beef Information Nucleus project involves 2,000 animals and an investment of almost \$3 million over seven years.
- 73 Brahman sires will be evaluated.
- A 20% improvement in the accuracy of Brahman-sire EBVs has already been achieved.
- The project shows EBVs are an effective tool for ranking sires.

Australian Brahman Breeders Association (ABBA) General Manager John Croaker has great hopes for the seven-year \$3 million Brahman Beef Information Nucleus (BIN) project.

"I think the real value of this project is that it's such a strong head-to-head comparison of a cross-section of the current Brahman breed, raised in large contemporary groups, with measurements across the whole spectrum of traits," he said.

"This is far more valuable than a measure of any one trait in isolation.

"It's far more valuable to the data analysis, and will be of real benefit to the breed as we move into the genomics era."

The Brahman BIN, funded by the MLA Donor Company and (ABBA), is the largest progeny-test program undertaken for the breed. It is being run in Queensland under commercial conditions with herds at Banana Station, near Rockhampton, and Baranga Grazing at Bauhinia Downs. It aims to improve the accuracy of existing EBVs and collect valuable data on hard-to-measure traits, such as eating quality and female reproduction.

Tropical Beef Technology Services Technical Officer Paul Williams presented initial findings at a BIN update field day for producers at Banana Station earlier this year.

He said the accuracy of EBVs for the 26 participating sires evaluated to date had already improved 20%.

"Work so far has also validated the usefulness of EBVs," he said.

"The accuracy of Brahman-sire EBVs had been quite modest - about 60% - but, even after the 20% improvement, there has been little change in ranking of the sires.

"The results show that when comparing the EBVs of the bottom five and top five sires for weight and carcass traits, there was very little change (after the addition of their BIN progeny records). EBVs are working and doing their job of comparing sires well."

Collecting new data

Technical Adviser from the University of New England's Animal Genetics and Breeding Unit, David Johnston, said the program had already collected valuable data on contemporary sires as well as verifying and improving information on older sires, some of which are linked to the Beef CRC data.

He said the next phase would track female reproduction performance and collect steer abattoir carcass data.

David said that by collecting more data on age of puberty and lactation anoestrus the breed's existing Days to Calving EBV (which estimates the interval from when a bull is

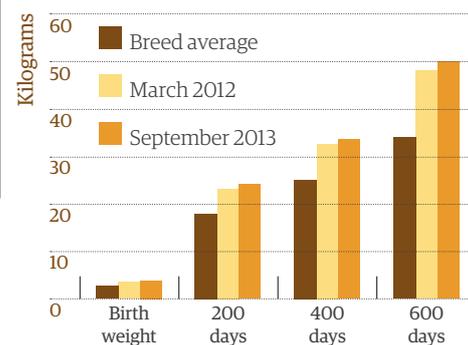
introduced to a calf being born) would be improved. The long term benefits from improving this knowledge flow to commercial producers, who can then select more productive genetics which allow cows to produce more calves in their lifetime.

"As we overlay this new information, it will remain to be seen whether that EBV remains the same or will need to be expressed differently," he said.

"We'll also be able to capture other maternal traits such as milk production through recording weaning weights."

The first steers, being grown out for the grass-fed Japan ox market, will be ready to slaughter by April and will have been measured for growth rates (200, 400 and 600 days), flight times, fat, marbling, eye muscle area and shear force (tenderness). They will also be MSA-graded and be assigned a score under the new MSA Index.

Figure 1 Change in growth Estimated Breeding Values average for all sires



Source: Tropical Beef Technology Services



Speakers at this year's BIN field day were host Mark Wilson, ABBA President Andrew Olive, Paul Williams of Tropical Beef Technology Services, David Johnston of Armidale's Animal Genetics and Breeding Unit, ABBA General Manager John Croaker and field day Chairman and MLA Director Geoff Maynard. Photo courtesy of Queensland Country Life.



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Go to www.brahman.com.au

Read about the MSA index at
www.mla.com.au/MSAindex

Serving up better Brahman



Mark Wilson (far right), Banana Station, Queensland with (L-R) sire supplier Tony Fenech, FBC stud, Wowan and his parents Libbie and Richard Wilson, Rosslyn Bay.

Mark and Belinda Wilson are commercial cattle producers and participants in the Brahman progeny test program. They hope new carcass data will improve the breed's profile.

Mark and Belinda aren't looking for miracles from the Brahman sire progeny test program but they are hoping for more accurate carcass data to improve the breed's reputation with eating quality.

"Carcass and eating traits in Brahmans have improved markedly, and this project will hopefully confirm what we've always known - that *Bos indicus* cattle can deliver a high-quality eating experience," Mark said.

The Wilsons are fifth-generation cattle producers and the family has owned Banana Station, south-west of Rockhampton, for more than 50 years.

Originally Hereford breeders, the family introduced Brahman genetics to their herd about 40 years ago to improve its survivability, heat tolerance and parasite resistance and to produce an animal better suited to the sub-tropical environment.

"Since then we've used European, British and African breeds; we believe the ideal animal for us has a minimum 50% Brahman content with a mix of British and Euro - Brahman for survival/adaptation traits, British for carcass traits and Euro for growth," Mark said.

"Our steers are aimed at the Japan ox market and are usually turned off between two-and-a-half and three-and-a-half years old at 300kg

Snapshot

Mark and Belinda Wilson,
Banana, Qld.



Property:
62,000ha plus
12,000ha leased

Enterprise:
Beef production -
Brahman and
Brahman cross

Livestock:
22,000 head

Pasture:
Native forest
grasses with stylos
to improved buffel,
panic and Rhodes
with legumes;
3,000ha of
leucaena

Soil:
Heavy cracking
black scrub soils
to light forest
country

Rainfall:
600mm

plus dress weight, although it varies depending on seasonal and market conditions."

The Wilsons are well positioned to learn from the Brahman progeny test program, with the station running a 'co-operator herd' of females producing offspring that are both physically measured and DNA-tested to collect information, particularly on hard-to-measure carcass and female reproduction traits.

"We've been doing artificial insemination here for 25 years, so it's been relatively easy for us to support the program," Mark said.

"We've aimed to artificially inseminate (AI) up to 800 high *Bos indicus* content maiden heifers for the program each year for the three matings required.

"We're now well on our way to discovering more meaningful, accurate information about the breed's young sires, but it will be some years before the results can be applied in the paddock."



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Building capability

Thriving on the EDGE

More than 300 northern cattle producers have benefitted from BusinessEDGE training in the past two years.

Developed by MLA specifically for northern cattle enterprises, the workshop helps producers determine whether or not their enterprise is economically sustainable in the long term and if all their needs and aspirations can be funded by the business.

It equips participants with the skills to keep accurate records and build a financially resilient business by reducing business risk, making better business decisions and growing wealth.

The workshop helps take the emotion out of capital expenditure projects so that assets increase in value over time and cash flows improve.

Livestock are not forgotten, and participants learn how to determine if their herd is performing as it should and what to do about it if it is not.

The workshop also covers planning for succession and retirement.

MLA's Research Extension Manager - Beef, Liz Allen said improving performance was particularly important given declining terms of trade and tough seasonal conditions affecting many enterprises.

"Producers who want to set out on the right business path could really benefit from attending a BusinessEDGE workshop," Liz said.

Course dates are:

Mount Isa, Qld
3-4 March 2014

Charters Towers, Qld
6-7 March 2014



Enquiries: events@mla.com.au



www.mla.com.au/edge
www.mla.com.au/events

Learn more about the BusinessEDGE program's capital investment module in MLA's *friday feedback* feature at:
www.mla.com.au/capitalinvestment

Fast facts

41,000ha

Median property size of 2012-13 BusinessEDGE participants.

4,000 head

Median herd size of 2012-13 participants.

8.9 out of 10

Average satisfaction score from all 2012-13 participants.

70%

Participants who said after the workshop they planned to grow their business gradually; 13% said they would grow rapidly and 15% said they would maintain the current level of activity.



Snapshot

Brett and Fiona Murray,
Balfes Creek, Qld.



Property:
3,000ha

Enterprise:
Bullock production

Livestock:
650-700 head
Brahman cross

Pasture:
Mostly native
grasses with buffel
grass

Soil:
Black soil with
areas of sandy clay

Rainfall:
650mm

A BusinessEDGE workshop equipped North Queensland producers Fiona and Brett Murray with the skills to navigate their way through the dissolution of a family partnership.

With the business split now behind them, the value of the lessons learned in the BusinessEDGE workshop is still being appreciated and is now helping the Murrays look ahead.

Splitting up the business, which ran on two properties (one at Balfes Creek, west of Charters Towers, and one further west), was challenging and involved considerable work on the financial details required by the banks.

"Because of the size of the property, Brett and I couldn't actually take on a huge debt, so we had to try and work it out so the banks would be happy," Fiona said.

"I utilised some of the things that I learnt (through BusinessEDGE) to do our budgets, the cash flows and that side of things.

"The BusinessEDGE course helped give me the confidence to be able to say to the banks, 'hang on, look at these numbers'."

Fiona and Brett are now concentrating on running Oaklands Station, a 3,000ha enterprise running 650-700 head of Brahman cross cattle, producing bullocks that are sold through Townsville processors.

In good times and in bad

Fiona said the workshop had helped them position their business for the tougher years.

"It also makes you prioritise and really consider whether you need to spend money and if it is going to save money or make us money," she said.

"An example of that for us was cattle lick. We send samples of our grass to a nutritionist and they write up a recipe for us to make our own lick so that our cattle are getting exactly what they need. Not only is it better for our stock, but it has actually turned out to be a couple of hundred dollars a tonne cheaper than buying lick off the shelf.

"We were already doing that before the workshop, but it does show that we are spending our money in the right places."

The workshop also focused on labour costs and the Murrays began to examine their labour efficiency. The resulting investment - a new set of cattle yards - has enabled Brett and Fiona to put the whole herd through by themselves.

Lessons learned

- Concentrate on your animals because, at the end of the day, they are what make you money.
- Our business is not something that we can view as a short-term option. It's a bit like putting money on the share market - you have to look at it over the longer term.
- It's important to analyse whether you need to spend money and if it is going to save money or make you money.



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Pastures

Revealing the secrets of soil



Cultivars Woogenellup (bottom line of the three microwards) and Seaton Park (top row of the three microwards) being tested for survival, root disease and productivity at a field site without waterlogging where previous pasture had been sprayed out with herbicide (far LHS two microwards), cultivated but unfumigated (two central microwards) or both cultivated and fumigated (two RHS microwards).

MLA is investing in one of the largest studies into soil-borne root diseases - a costly problem potentially affecting the 22 million hectares of sub-clover pastures in southern Australia.

The project's lead researcher Martin Barbetti and postdoctoral scientist Ming Pei You, both from the University of Western Australia, have spent the first year of the five-year project identifying seed treatments, spray options and other techniques to control root disease. These will be tested in field trials to identify practical management techniques.

"Unfortunately for southern livestock producers, the autumn-winter feed gap coincides with the main time when soil-borne pathogens attack and cause most root damage," Martin said.

"This creates a feed shortage at a critical time, constraining livestock production and profitability."

While producers are aware of pasture decline (marked by dwindling legume component and weed emergence), they often don't realise that one of the causes is soil-borne root diseases.

These pathogens can inflict losses of 50% or more through:

- pre-emergence damping off (rotting) - seeds die underground and fail to emerge
- post-emergence damping off - surviving seedlings succumb to root disease and often die, further reducing production capacity
- the legume content of severely affected pastures failing to regenerate over time
- lost nitrogen fixation on sick legumes, along with inability of diseased roots to utilise fertilisers

Current control options, such as renovating soils and planting resistant cultivars, are expensive and often ineffective as a clover cultivar may be resistant to one pathogen, but succumb to another.

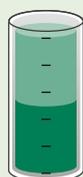
"MLA recognised that producers need practical tools for short-term as well as long-term solutions, so we will investigate the efficiency of options such as manipulating grazing, cultivation and chemicals to prevent and manage soil-borne root diseases," Ming Pei said.

The research team has also isolated one of the four main pathogens, *Aphanomyces trifolii*, in culture - only the second time this has happened in the world.

The South Australian Research and Development Institute has been sub-contracted to develop the first DNA assay for this pathogen, enabling the first commercial soil test to assess the presence and prevalence of the full range of soil-borne pathogens in pastures.

Project dashboard: Soil-borne root diseases

Financial contributions to the project:
\$1,280,772



MLA levies: **50%**

Government: **50%**

Length of project:
5 years



The project is part of MLA's objective to:

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



Martin Barbetti

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A feed gap filler

Summer-active tall fescue could provide an economic solution for producers looking for a sustainable pasture to fill the late summer/autumn feed gap.



Average production during May:

Tall fescue:

38kg/ha/day

Perennial ryegrass:

20kg/ha/day

Coping with the wet and the dry... tall fescue

A PhD project at the EverGraze Hamilton Proof Site found summer-active tall fescue achieved up to twice the production rates of late season flowering perennial ryegrass in challenging months, such as May.

Researcher Maggie Raeside, of the Department of Environment and Primary Industries Victoria, investigated best practice establishment and management strategies for summer active tall fescue, which has the potential to improve land use and reduce supplementary feed costs for producers in Victoria's south-west.

Maggie said this high-quality pasture, which is particularly suited to heavy, waterlogged soils, was capable of responding quickly to summer rainfall and providing out-of-season green feed. However, its uptake has been hampered by its slow establishment and its vigorous spring growth, which makes quality difficult to maintain.

The grass was sown on the valley floors in the Hamilton EverGraze Proof Site's pasture systems experiment.

Maggie found summer-active tall fescue's biggest strength was autumn production, with May growth rates during the four years of the experiment averaging 38kg/ha/day and up to 60kg/ha/day.

This compares to the late-season flowering perennial ryegrass, which grew 20kg/ha/day on average, and up to 30kg/ha/day in the same period.

The total annual production of tall fescue during the experiment was on average 12t/ha, which was similar to the perennial ryegrass at 11t/ha.

"It proved an excellent option for filling the summer/autumn feed gap as it doesn't become dormant during this period and increases feed availability at a time when other perennials are slow to get moving," Maggie said.

She also said the pasture's persistence was good, as long as it was supported by good grazing and soil management practices, with the variety lasting for more than seven years in heavy, low-lying soils.

"We found the best quality and palatability was achieved by grazing it at the three-leaf

Snapshot

EverGraze
Hamilton Proof
Site, Hamilton, Vic.



Pasture:
Perennial ryegrass,
lucerne, tall fescue,
chicory, kikuyu, tall
wheat grass hedges

Soil:
Derived from
basalt and
consists of sandy
clay loam topsoil
15-20cm deep
overlying clay
sub-soils.

Rainfall:
683mm

Need help with your pastures?

Try these MLA tools.

- Rainfall to pasture growth outlook tool
www.mla.com.au/pasturegrowthoutlook
- Feed budget and rotation planner
www.mla.com.au/feedbudgetplanner
- Evergraze pasture improvement calculator
www.mla.com.au/pastureimprovementcalculator
- Tips & Tools: Grazing management for mixed perennial-based pastures
www.mla.com.au/perennialbasedpastures
- More Beef from Pastures pasture utilisation module
www.mla.com.au/mbfp/pasture-utilisation

stage during autumn and winter and set stocking or grazing at the two-leaf stage in spring," she said.

"Long-term set stocking, however, causes poor persistence and weed invasion, especially during winter."



Maggie Raeside

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www.evergraze.com.au

The feed demand calculator is available at www.mla.com.au/feeddemand

Residues

Research into residues

The continued development of veterinary treatments that improve animal health and welfare is critical to the Australian sheep and cattle industry.

Veterinary products destined for use in the supply chain must comply with legal requirements and consumer expectations that products are free from unacceptable residues. A breach in Australia's chemical residue monitoring programs could

Finding the remedy for Theileria

Research has revealed a treatment used overseas for cattle suffering *theileriosis* can leave residue post-application for 147 days or longer - a critical piece of information for producers when forward planning the slaughter of those animals.

The drug, buparvaquone (BPQ), is considered the best current treatment option available and can be used by veterinarians in Australia with a Consent to Import Permit from the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA). Currently there is no application with the APVMA for registration of BPQ, a prerequisite for its commercial release.

Funding from MLA, in collaboration with the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and Queensland Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation, saw BPQ tested for treating the disease in cattle and to measure the tissue residue depletion.

The tests showed the tissue samples for fat and muscle were below the limit of detection (0.005mg/kg) at 119 days post-treatment. Conversely, test samples of

kidney and liver tissue showed unacceptable levels of BPQ at 147 days. The injection sites on the animals' necks also had unacceptable levels of BPQ at 147 days.

Theileriosis, a disease known to have been present in Australia for about a century, has only been commonly seen in cattle since 2006.

A 2011 survey, conducted by the NSW DPI, found 227 NSW properties had reported cases of *theileriosis*. NSW DPI Cattle Health Coordinator Dr Graham Bailey said the incidence of bovine anaemia caused by *Theileria orientalis* has increased since the survey, and it has been identified in other states.

According to Graham, producers on affected farms indicated the annual cost could be more than \$10/head for veterinary costs, loss of productivity and cattle deaths.

MLA's Project Manager for Animal Health and Biosecurity Dr Johann Schröder said producers and veterinarians should be aware that BPQ may have a quantifiable residue at the injection site, as might happen with other drugs on the market, even if the withholding period is observed.

What is *Theileria orientalis*?

Mainly found on Australia's east coast, *Theileria orientalis* is a blood parasite in cattle. The parasite can cause *theileriosis*, which can result in anaemia, jaundice, abortion and mortality in cattle.

The parasite is transmitted by ticks (although not the cattle tick), but other means of transmission may also occur. The transmitting tick remains on the host animal for up to seven days and the cattle will not show signs of sickness until the tick has dropped off. Cattle are particularly at risk when they are moved from inland properties to the coast. Alternatively, coastal cattle can bring the parasite with them when they're transported inland. Good quarantine procedures and treatment for ticks may reduce the possibility of spread.

There are other species of *Theileria*, not yet found in Australia, which cause serious diseases such as east coast fever and tropical *theileriosis*.

Project dashboard: Residues assessment from *Theileria* treatment

Financial contributions to the project:

\$244,840



MLA levies: **50%**

Government: **50%**

Length of project:

1 year 7 months
Completed



The project is part of MLA's objective to:

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



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www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/404679/Bovine-anaemia-caused-by-Theileria-orientalis-group-Primefact-1110.pdf

potentially lock Australian products out of markets. It could also take years to rebuild customer trust and Australia's reputation in export markets.

Registered products with the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) stipulate a withholding

period (WHP) and export slaughter interval (ESI) on the product label. The WHP is the minimum period between the last application of a pesticide or veterinary medicine and the use of the animal or crop for human consumption. The ESI is the time from the last administration or feeding

of a chemical product and the slaughter of the livestock for export.

MLA has recently funded R&D focused on collecting residue and withholding period data associated with two veterinary products which are not currently registered with the APVMA.

Residue-free relief for sheep

A veterinary drug used for managing pain and controlling inflammation in cats, dogs, cattle, pigs and horses has been found to work successfully in sheep and could be available to producers as soon as 2015.

Troy Laboratories Senior Analytical Chemist Fiona Cotter managed MLA-funded research that confirmed that Meloxicam can be used to manage pain and inflammation during surgical husbandry procedures in sheep.

The drug was administered to sheep by the buccal method (placing it in the sheep's mouth between the teeth and inner cheek lining) and worked within eight minutes of administration.

The research showed that Meloxicam administered at the maximum proposed dose of 1mg/kg bodyweight had no detectable residues in any tissue from (and inclusive of) day 10.

Troy Laboratories is conducting tests and compiling data to submit to the APVMA to have a WHP registered in Australia for the product's use in sheep. If successful, Meloxicam will be the first non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug available in the Australian market with an on-label WHP.

MLA's Sustainability R&D Manager Dr Jim Rothwell, said Meloxicam given without the need for injections, was a novel product for best practice in animal welfare standards.

"Equally as important as the management of pain relief and inflammation is the testing and research being undertaken to have a prescribed on-label WHP. This is critical in



Administering Meloxicam via the Buccal Method.

satisfying the requirements in the processing sector," he said.

"Overall, the research into Meloxicam use in sheep was important in improving animal welfare standards while complying with chemical residue legislations of importing countries - as well as meeting international customers' expectations concerning food safety and animal husbandry."



Dr Jim Rothwell, MLA
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www.troylab.com.au

Learn what you can do to ensure good animal welfare at www.animalwelfarestandards.net.au

Download the new Sheepmeat Council and MLA publication *A producer's guide to sheep husbandry practices* at www.mla.com.au/sheephusbandryguide

Enrich's Eureka moment

The Future Farm Industries CRC Enrich project, part funded by MLA, has won the 2013 Australian Museum *Caring for our Country Landcare Eureka Prize for Sustainable Agriculture* for its work in developing livestock production systems based on drought tolerant native perennial shrubs.

The team discovered that grazing native shrubs could improve profitability by up to 24% in low-to-medium rainfall areas, as well as decrease greenhouse gas emissions and erosion.

"This team has produced a practical recipe for helping to proof farms against climate change," the Director of the Australian Museum, Frank Howarth said.

"From mixed native plantings in the Riverina to old man saltbush and mallee in arid Western Australia, it is already helping farmers increase the health of their livestock while also improving the condition of their land."

The Enrich project is a collaboration between the CSIRO's Dr Dean Revell, the University of Western Australia's Associate

Professor Phil Vercoe, the South Australian Research and Development Institute's Dr Jason Emms, and land managers. Its ideas for sustainable grazing systems are already being adopted at multiple sites across four states.

The Australian Museum Eureka Prizes reward excellence in the fields of research and innovation, leadership and commercialisation, science journalism and communication, and school science.

Watch a short video made by Dean about the team's work at: www.youtube.com and search for '2013 Enrich project team winner'.



www.australianmuseum.net.au/eureka

www.futurefarmonline.com.au

Working on international relations

Production efficiency, market access, sustainability, animal welfare and cost of production: these issues know no borders, affecting producers right across the globe. Collaborating with other countries on research about these issues was a focus at both the annual Five Nations Beef Alliance and Tri-Lamb conferences, hosted in Australia during September by peak industry bodies, Cattle Council of Australia and Sheepmeat Council of Australia.



The Five Nations Beef Alliance (FNBA) meets annually and is attended by delegates from Cattle Council of Australia, Canadian Cattlemen's Association, Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Ganaderas of Mexico, Beef + Lamb New Zealand and the National Cattlemen's Beef Association of the United States of America. Twelve 'Young Rancher' delegates also participated this year.

"Market access is integral to Australian cattle producers, with two-thirds of Aussie beef being exported. Working with other exporters to encourage global trade reform and reduce the number of barriers restricting trade flow is an important aspect

of the Five Nations Beef Alliance," said Cattle Council president Andrew Ogilvie.

The Tri-Lamb Group is made up of representatives from the (US) National Lamb Feeders Association, American Sheep Industry Association, American Lamb Board, Beef + Lamb New Zealand and the Sheepmeat Council of Australia.

Tri-Lamb meets annually to discuss what sheepmeat producers from the three countries can each do to gain increased sales in the large, but relatively untapped, US market. The US is Australia's largest lamb export market (in terms of volume and value), with shipments in 2012 reaching around 37,000 tonnes swt, valued at nearly A\$300 million.

"On average, each American consumes one pound of lamb a year, with many having never tried it at all - presenting significant potential to increase consumption and boost the value of our exports," said Sheepmeat Council of Australia president Ian McColl.

Both conferences were preceded by tours of properties, feedlots, research centres and processing plants, with the FNBA touring Queensland and Tri-Lamb, NSW.



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Championing Australian agriculture

What do you do when your animals get sick? What happens if you run out of petrol when rounding up the mob – do you chase them on foot? How long have you been a producer?

Two Young Farming Champions, MLA-sponsored **Jasmine Nixon** and NFF-sponsored **Kylie Schuller**, came up with the answers when they spoke to around 100 seven-year-old students at Manly West Public School in September.

Many of the students were eager to share their experiences with the animals and farm visits and were fascinated by all the products from cattle.

When the Champions asked why it was good to eat meat, the general response from the pupils was that “eating meat was good as the cows were in the sunshine and sunshine is good for you”.

Kylie enlightened them about all the other reasons for eating meat and all agreed “meat helped to make you strong”.

This year’s Champions will interact with more than 40 schools across Queensland, NSW and the ACT in Art4Agriculture’s Archibull Prize program. The program combines art with education

about agriculture and environmental awareness by providing a blank, life-sized fibreglass cow for students to use as an artwork or the subject of an artwork. It focuses on the theme: “What does it take to sustainably feed and clothe your community for a day?” The Young Farming champions also speak to students about sustainable farming practices and encourage them to support Australian producers.

Jasmine (see profile below) is joined by other MLA-sponsored champions Hannah Barber, Naomi Hobson and Danille Fox (see profile below) to help communicate the essential role Australia’s producers play in producing its food.

The 2013 Young Farming Champions project is sponsored by MLA’s Target 100 program.



www.art4agriculture.com.au



Jasmine Nixon, 24, Crookwell, NSW

Jasmine Nixon is one of the sixth generation of her farming family and grew up on a cattle property on NSW’s Southern Tablelands. She has immersed herself in the cattle industry, completing a livestock science degree at the University of New England in Armidale and chairing the Angus Youth National Management Committee. She has also worked in an abattoir, shown cattle in the snow in Minnesota, US, and was the 2012 *The Land* Sydney Royal Miss Showgirl. Her participation in the Intercollegiate Meat Judging Competition led to her current job working on a new supply chain project in the Teys

Australia livestock department, based at Wagga Wagga, NSW.

Jasmine said the Young Farming Champions program sounded like an exciting opportunity to engage with the younger generation. She wants to bridge the rural-urban divide by getting young people to think about where their food comes from, and promoting agriculture as a viable career option.



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Twitter: @JasmineJNixon

Danille Fox, 19, St George, Queensland

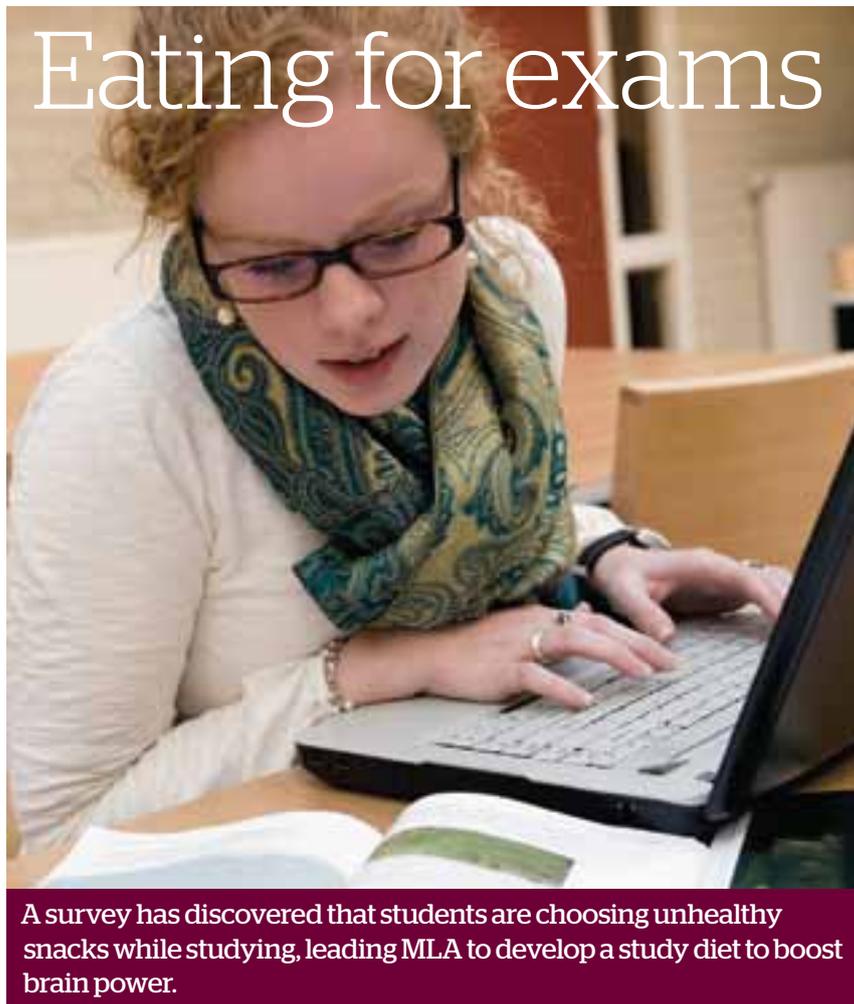
Danille grew up on her family’s cattle property near St George in south-western Queensland. She is studying a Bachelor of Veterinary Science at the University of Queensland, after deciding to combine an interest in Australian agriculture with her love of animals. Danille is looking for opportunities to expand her knowledge and skills in agriculture. She was awarded the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) Horizon Scholarship and gained experience at the Katherine Research Station and Darwin’s Berrimah Veterinary Laboratory. Danille said work experience enabled her to develop

valuable networks, and she hopes to return to north Queensland after university as a rural vet specialising in cattle.

She said the Young Farming Champions program was an opportunity to share her passion and promote the sustainable farming message to a wider audience, particularly school-age children. She believes building relationships with consumers will ensure the stability of Australia’s agricultural industries.



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A survey has discovered that students are choosing unhealthy snacks while studying, leading MLA to develop a study diet to boost brain power.

The survey, commissioned by MLA, revealed the average student snacks up to three times on a typical study day - favouring treats like chips, lollies or chocolate.

Almost three quarters (73%) of those surveyed said they snacked more when studying, with as many as 30% thinking about food or snacking most or all of the time during a study session.

As a result, accredited practicing dietitian Geraldine Georgeou, together with MLA, developed specially formulated study diets for boys and girls.

"Poor food choices aren't providing the brain fuel teens need, so study time is wasted scouring the pantry shelves and raiding the fridge in the constant search for more," Geraldine said.

"The Study Diet provides healthy meals and snack ideas packed with nutrient-rich foods that are recommended in the Dietary Guidelines. Choosing these

foods such as beef and lamb three to four times a week keeps teens' iron and zinc levels in check and keeps them feeling fuller for longer, focused and full of energy so they can study efficiently and perform well at exam time.

"Survey results revealed only one in 10 students were snacking on nutrient-rich protein foods such as beef or lamb leftovers. Red meat is especially important at this time as low iron can contribute to tiredness and fatigue which may make it difficult to study effectively."

With detailed food choices for breakfast, lunch, dinner and numerous healthy snacking options, the Study Diet shows how eating right can be the first step to aid in study success.



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Figure 1 Extract of the 'study diet' for girls

Breakfast	2 slices wholegrain bread + 2 tsp margarine + 2 slices (40g) reduced fat cheese + tomato
Morning tea	1 wholegrain fruit muffin 30g mixed nuts (no added salt)
Lunch	Smoked salmon salad (50g smoked salmon + ¼ avocado + 60g ricotta + lettuce) 1 cup low fat milk + 1 tbsp Milo
Afternoon tea	3 wholegrain crackers + 1 tsp margarine + 1 tsp vegemite 1 piece of fruit
Dinner	Beef Stir-fry (see recipe opposite)
Supper	200g low fat yoghurt 1 cup berries

Figure 2 Extract of the 'study diet' for boys

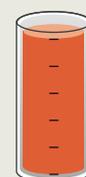
Breakfast	2 slices wholegrain bread + ¼ avocado + 2 slices (40g) reduced fat cheese + tomato
Morning tea	Smoothie (1 cup low fat milk + 200g low fat yoghurt + 1 banana + 1 tsp honey)
Lunch	Leftover bolognaise toasty (Spaghetti Bolognaise + leftovers + 1 slice (20g) reduced fat cheese + tomato + 2 tsp margarine + 2 slices wholegrain bread)
Afternoon tea	1 slice fruit toast + 1 tsp reduced fat cream cheese
Dinner	Lamb Mini Roast with smashed pumpkin*
Supper	1 packet air-popped popcorn 1 cup fruit salad

*For recipes of these meals, more tips, advice and even more 'study-friendly' recipe ideas and a complete study diet meal plan for both boys and girls, visit www.beefandlamb.com.au/studydiet.

Other recipes include herb crusted lamb cutlets with red cabbage, healthy Spaghetti Bolognaise and beef casserole with pearl barley.

Project dashboard: Eating for exams marketing campaign

Financial contributions to the project:
\$30,000 (Marketing)



MLA levies: 100%

Length of project:
3 months
Completed October 2013

The project is part of MLA's objective to:

Enhance the nutritional reputation of beef and lamb.

Recipe

Beef rump steaks

with crunchy greens and brown rice

A protein-rich meal like beef rump steaks and crunchy greens is packed full of nutrients for studying teens who need their brain power during exam time.

Serves: 4

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 25 minutes

Ingredients

4 x 200g beef rump steaks, fat trimmed and lightly oiled
1 cup brown rice
300g sugar snap peas, trimmed
300g snow peas, trimmed
2cm piece ginger, finely grated
1 tbsp soy sauce, salt reduced
2 tsp toasted sesame seeds
½ tsp sesame oil

Tips

- If you prefer, try substituting the brown rice with your favourite grain, such as couscous, basmati rice or barley to serve with instead.
- Mix and match your favourite choice of vegetables according to seasonality and availability.

Method

1. Cook the brown rice in a saucepan of boiling water for 25 minutes or until rice is cooked.
2. Heat a lightly greased char grill pan or barbecue to high. Cook the rump for two and a half minutes each side, or until cooked to your liking. Rest meat by covering loosely with foil for five minutes before serving.
3. Meanwhile, cook the sugar snaps and snow peas in a saucepan of boiling water for two and a half minutes or until cooked but still crunchy. Drain and place in a bowl with ginger, soy sauce, sesame seeds and oil. Toss to combine.
4. To serve, divide the vegetables and rice among four plates and top with the beef rump steaks.



Lamb Masterpieces

Remastering the leg of lamb



Volume II of the *Lamb Masterpieces* magazine series explores how the seemingly ubiquitous lamb leg or shank can be elevated to new heights.

Now in its second series, MLA's *Lamb Masterpieces* program highlights the creative potential of lesser known cuts of lamb and how they can maximise a restaurant's bottom line.

The magazine targets chefs, wholesalers and foodservice, and is designed to ignite inspiration by moving away from premium lamb cuts like cutlets and backstraps, to experiment with lesser-known ones like the neck, shoulder and ribs.

Brad Leahy // Head Chef and General Manager, Bluewater Grill, Perth



Running a restaurant and function centre set on Heathcote Reserve on the outskirts of Perth, Brad Leahy enjoys offering a seasonal menu that celebrates lamb's versatility.

Brad, a long time user of the lamb leg, was keen to be part of the Masterpieces series to share his knowledge of using non-loin cuts to create dishes reflecting his ethos of simplicity and sustainability while using more of the lamb carcass.

The Bluewater Grill uses about 50kg of lamb each week, predominantly legs, boneless shoulder, shanks and lamb racks. The restaurant produces about 1,200-1,400 meals a week, of which about 50 are a-la-carte lamb meals.

Brad's featured recipe in the latest Masterpieces edition - roast lamb leg with potato and parsnip gratin and heirloom carrots (below) - refreshes the

traditional lamb roast. Other current Lamb Masterpieces-inspired menu items are a braised and rolled shoulder cooked in tomato and served with chickpeas and roast cutlets.

What trends have you noticed over the years with lamb? Chefs want to know more about the origin and breed of the lamb. The Masterpieces series shows me different ways of presenting dishes to a restaurant standard and it gets people thinking about new ways to create ideas. What you can do with non-loin cuts varies so much, and from a dollar point-of-view, as chefs we can't always use primal cuts. If non-loin cuts are flavoured, presented and cooked the right way, they are just as popular.

What's your favourite non-loin lamb cut? The lamb neck is my favourite. I love the moisture and texture of the meat and the way it breaks down; it has good fat content and flavour and can be cooked so many ways - boned out, filled and rolled, wrapped or braised and slow roasted.

Why is it important to use non-loin lamb cuts? So the whole animal is used and nothing is wasted. We decided to investigate using non-loin cuts on our menu, mainly for the price point advantage over primal cuts.

How valuable has the Lamb Masterpieces series been? It gets chefs thinking about different ways of approaching lamb, and the more it's out there and the more information provided to butchers and chefs, then those who are creative are going to come up with clever ways to cook and present non-loin lamb cuts.



Roast Lamb Leg, with Potato and Parsnip Gratin and Heirloom Carrots

Serves
6

INGREDIENTS
1 Sifted leg of lamb, Chung Chai garlic and herb olive oil salt and pepper
1kg heirloom carrots
— for potato and left whole olive oil
30g finely sliced
50g butter
2 x 2 cup stock

POTATO AND PARSNIP GRATIN
500g Flour flour potatoes, peeled and sliced on a mandoline 1cm thick
150g parmesan, grated
200g Parsnips, cleaned, grated
30g unsalted butter, melted
150-200ml cream
sea salt
white pepper, freshly ground

HERB CRUMBLE TOPPING
400g dry old ciabatta bread, crust removed
1 large quantity chives
2 large parsnips, chopped

METHOD

LAMB

- Trim the excess grease and fat and cut into 160g-180g portions that can be rolled up. Roll into leg shapes and truss.
- Marinate roasts in garlic, herb and olive oil for at least 3 hours.
- When ready to cook, remove roasts from marinade, season and then gently seal in a pan until coloured all over. Once sealed, place in a hot oven and roast for a further 2-30 minutes (for medium rare) or until done to your liking.
- Remove from roasting pan, transfer to a roasting tray and leave to rest for 10 minutes.
- Make a jus with the roasting pan juices.
- Peel carrots and fry off in butter for 5 minutes. Add half the stock and simmer for 15 minutes. Add remaining stock and simmer for a further 15 minutes, or until tender.
- Blitz with stick blender and season to taste.

HERB CRUMBLE TOPPING FOR GRATIN

- Place the bread in a food processor until it forms a coarse crumb.
- Add rosemary and parsnip and process for 30 seconds. Set to one side.
- Cut the gratin with a ring cutter, place on a baking tray then sprinkle the crumble mix over the top. Gently heat under a grill for 6-8 minutes.

RECIPE BY

Brad Leahy
Bluewater
Grill
WA

TO SERVE

Swirl some carrot purée on the plate and place sliced lamb on top. Place a portion of whole heirloom carrots on the side along with a parsnip gratin. Add some steamed broccoli dressed in olive oil and carefully pour lamb jus around plate.

PARSNIP AND POTATO GRATIN
1. Take a small baking dish, copper pan or ceramic casserole, just large enough to contain the sliced potatoes.
2. Brush the dish with melted butter.
3. Layer the sliced potatoes, slightly overlapping, in a circular motion.
4. After 2 layers, sprinkle parsnips and potatoes evenly then season with sea salt and pepper.
5. Continue with the layers of parsnip and potatoes until it reaches just below the top of the dish.
6. Season the potatoes once finished layering, add a good drizzle of melted butter and pour over the cream.
7. The cream should just cover the potatoes.
8. Add a touch more pepper.
9. Bake at 140°C for about 1 hour.
10. Set aside.

HERB CRUMBLE TOPPING FOR GRATIN
1. Place the bread in a food processor until it forms a coarse crumb.
2. Add rosemary and parsnip and process for 30 seconds. Set to one side.
3. Cut the gratin with a ring cutter, place on a baking tray then sprinkle the crumble mix over the top. Gently heat under a grill for 6-8 minutes.



Read Brad's Masterpieces recipe at www.raremedium.com.au/foodservice-resources



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After profiling rump, belly, forequarter and mince in Volume I, the second series showcases the leg (featuring a complete breakdown of the leg), knuckle and hind shank with butcher information on different non-loin cuts of lamb, menu ideas and recipes contributed by chefs.

MLA National Marketing Manager Foodservice, Claire Tindale-Penning, said non-loin lamb cuts offered options that tasted delicious, while maximising value.

"The lamb leg is often seen as the less fashionable cousin, but really it is as versatile as any other cut if you know what to do with it.

"We know lamb is Australia's favourite meat, so it makes sense to have it on a menu all year round.

"The lamb shank often gets pigeonholed as a winter cut, but it can easily be shredded, peeled, wrapped in filo or stuffed into a steamed

bone - and it instantly becomes hand held party food that transcends seasons."

Claire says there is genuine interest from chefs to look at alternative cuts.

"They are really stepping up to show their creativity. These lamb cuts allow them to show off their culinary skills and keep their menus dynamic to entice diners with innovative and incredible tasting dishes," she said.



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For more information about the *Lamb Masterpieces Volume II* and the recipe notes visit www.raremedium.com.au/foodservice-resources

Justin Miles // Executive Chef and co-owner, Windy Point Restaurant and Café, Adelaide



Justin Miles oversees the restaurant, cafe and function centre situated 15 minutes south of Adelaide, with sweeping views of the city and Adelaide Hills.

Justin is constantly looking for new ways to complement his restaurant's stunning view with exemplary food that celebrates local, organic, and above all, flavoursome ingredients. He said the inspiration behind his menu is derived from a contemporary Australian style of food, with European and Middle Eastern influences.

The current lamb menu creations include Savannah lamb shoulder (sourced from the Clare Valley) with smoked paprika polenta and pickled cucumber; and a lamb shank with freekeh, labneh and almonds.

The restaurant produces about 900 meals a week, of which 40-50 portions are lamb-focused, mainly featuring cuts like lamb breast, shank, shoulder and rump.

Justin's featured recipe in the latest *Lamb Masterpieces Volume II* - braised lamb shank on pea mint mash with smoky leeks (below left) - reworks the classic lamb shank into a modern dish. You can see the recipe on the Rare Medium website.

Why is it important to use non-loin lamb cuts?

Price is a big factor, but also because non-loin cuts tend to be more flavour driven, not to mention it shows off the skill of the kitchen producing the meals.

What are your customers looking for? Many of our customers are often contemporary diners wanting a special occasion dining experience. In their meal, they are looking for contemporary food with some twists, and a mix of formal and casual ambience.

How popular are lesser non-loin cuts of meat for recipe development? We tend to steer clear of loin cuts and mostly utilise non-loin cuts like the lamb breast, shank, lamb shoulder and rump. When I'm sourcing lamb from a wholesaler, what I'm really looking for is the flavour profile. This is very important, along with price, provenance, breeding skills and farming ethics.

What trends have you noticed over the years with lamb? The price has increased sharply on loin cuts but non-loin cuts have remained reasonably stable. As well, there's more focus on farming practices and therefore the quality has improved.

What's your favourite non-loin lamb cut? The lamb neck or breast, definitely.



RECIPE BY

Justin Miles
Windy Point
Restaurant
& Café
SA

SA

RECIPES BY

Around the globe



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

1 HONG KONG
Beef and lamb in fine form

Australian beef and lamb was on display to more than 16,000 people who visited Asia Pacific's leading fine dining and bar exhibition, Restaurant and Bar Hong Kong, in September. MLA partnered with local importers and an Australian exporter for the event and also sponsored the Disciples Escoffier Young Talent Contest, which attracted an audience of 180. The contest brought together eight aspiring chefs from the Asia Pacific region who went head-to-head in cooking Australian beef rump (see picture bottom left). High-ranking chefs also showcased Australian beef and lamb's versatility in western and Chinese styles during a demonstration to more than 500 people.

Australian beef and lamb exposed to more than **16,000** people at an exhibition in Hong Kong



2 UNITED STATES
Star performers

Highlighting the versatility of Australian beef and lamb for different market segments, MLA partnered with importers at concurrent events in the north east of the US in September. More than 35 business leads were generated for grassfed Australian beef and lamb at the Natural Products Expo in Baltimore, while in New York City high quality Australian Wagyu, beef and lamb were featured prominently at the starchefs.com International Chefs' Congress. The Congress was attended by more than 1,500 foodservice professionals and consumers. Starchefs.com is a leading American magazine for culinary insiders.

1,500 foodservice professionals and consumers attend the starchefs.com International Chefs' Congress

3 UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
Butchers get a grilling

Tarek Ibrahim, MLA's Corporate Executive Chef in the Middle East/North Africa, ran a meat training course in Dubai for 56 butchers from a retailer in the United Arab Emirates. The butchers learned about grilling and roasting cooking methods, customer service, vacuum packing, and wet and dry ageing of cuts. They worked with lamb leg and square cut shoulder and beef rump and oyster blade.

4 AUSTRALIA
Red Meat Hub a hit

MLA and *Rare Medium* (MLA's magazine for the foodservice industry) sponsored the 'Red Meat Hub' at the Sydney Fine



Food Show in September. Four self-nominated NSW-based wholesalers made up the 'Hub', presenting education sessions, product sampling and more than 50 cooking demonstrations in four days to boost interest and awareness of beef, lamb and goatmeat. Wholesalers used MLA's Industry Collaborative Agreement program to co-fund their presence at the show. The trade show attracted 20,328 foodservice representatives and wholesalers. The latest *Lamb Masterpieces Volume II* magazine was also launched at the event.

5 JAPAN

A decade of displays



The Aussie Beef and Lamb Display Contest in Japan celebrated its 10th anniversary this year. The contest has grown rapidly, with more than 2,500 retail outlets nationwide now participating. Meat section managers from supermarkets compete for the best displayed Aussie beef and lamb cabinet by decorating it with the latest Aussie Beef point-of-sale (POS) materials including posters, stickers, and placemats. This year's POS tools promoted Australian beef and lamb's clean, green image and safety and nutrition attributes. Meat section managers also used cross-merchandising with other products including beef sauces and wine to create innovative displays and further boost Aussie beef and lamb sales for a three month period.

6 RUSSIA

Russian taste for beef

To drive growth of beef in the Russian foodservice industry, MLA exhibited at World Food Moscow - a major Russian trade event, which featured 1,634 exhibitors and attracted importers, foodservice and retail

distributors, as well as restaurants and retail chains. The three-day trade show in September attracted more than 26,500 visitors from 87 countries. A major lead was generated with a new Russian steak house chain, which now plans to use Australian beef. High-end steakhouses have become a target for Australian high quality chilled beef with 50 venues in Moscow currently serving Australian product.

50

high-end Moscow steakhouses currently serve Australian beef

7 SWEDEN

Grainfed beef on the menu

Around 300 retail and food service guests enjoyed Australian grainfed beef at a Sweden-based distributor's 30-year anniversary dinner in August. Chuck eye roll was the feature dish and was prepared by one of Sweden's leading chefs. MLA collaborated with a Monaco-based importer and an Australian exporter to make the event possible.

8 KOREA

Bloggers spread the message



In conjunction with MLA and the most popular *shabu shabu* franchise in Korea (*shabu shabu* is a Japanese dish featuring thinly sliced beef boiled in water), 20 'Shabu-lovers' participated in a pre-summer cooking class. They acted as brand ambassadors, using their own blog sites to promote Australian beef as a natural ingredient used by the *shabu shabu* franchise. In another class, 20 consumers participated in a cooking class with an influential culinary power blogger who then shared the class experience and recipes with her 9,200 blog subscribers, highlighting the *Hoju Chungjung Woo* (clean and safe Australian beef) brand.

On the ground

North America



David Pietsch
MLA Regional Manager -
North America
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There's a children's song that has the line, "Mary had a little lamb, the doctor was surprised!"

Getting US consumers to 'have a little lamb' is often a challenge, but when they try it they too are 'surprised' at the mild and juicy flavour, and the health benefits.

While sheepmeat exports to the Middle East and China have risen dramatically, North America remains the highest value export market for Australia.

With 315 million Americans, the opportunity for growth is great. A recent MLA-commissioned global consumer research survey of US consumers found 29% of those surveyed thought that lamb was becoming more popular, ranking higher than any other protein in this regard.

One of MLA's roles in North America is to continue to explore ways to create greater awareness of Australian lamb by making it relevant, on trend, and even sexy.

This winter holiday season (bookended by Thanksgiving and New Year) MLA is coordinating the "Winter Wonderlamb" promotion in the New York City area. It will feature popular chefs and restaurants offering Australian lamb, in-store promotions and retail cooking demonstrations. As with all campaigns, social media will be leveraged to create greater buzz and awareness.

MLA partners year round with importers on targeted advertising and in-store promotions. Providing matching funds for these activities dollar-for-dollar with importers through the Industry Collaborative Agreements (ICA) program ensures full buy-in from both parties, and that promotional activities are commercially relevant to drive longer-term demand and sales for Australian lamb.

Sales of Australian lamb in North America arising from ICA's increased by 13% last year, a solid return on the producer levy investment as well as that of the importer. In two specific cases, already large customers have increased sales by 34% and 31% respectively during the year.

With these partnerships and innovative campaign activities US consumers can continue to be 'surprised' and the US can maintain its status as a high-value market for Australian lamb into the future.

Market observations

Supply highs matched by exports

High processing volumes have been a common theme for cattle and sheep in what has been a dry year, particularly in western Queensland and, for the first six months, southern NSW and Victoria. Encouragingly, exports have continued to keep pace, despite a high and, at times, volatile A\$.

Ben Thomas
MLA's Beef
Market Analyst



August 2013 marked the point when indicative eastern states cattle slaughter began tracking above year ago levels, which was sustained by the persistent drought conditions in northern Australia and exacerbated by significant herd rebuilding in 2010-12.

While there were good rain events in the southern states through June and July, processing numbers remained high due to the number of cattle already booked to processors and highlighting the extent of the northern situation.

Like cattle, sheep processing tracked significantly higher year-on-year for more than 12 months. Lamb processing during August finally declined to match year-ago levels.

While cattle, sheep and lamb slaughter rates were high, export volumes moved

equally fast, with numerous records broken - with most centred on China.

The competition for beef, in particular, was encouraging, with developing markets outbidding traditional markets for product that was once assumed to be a given for a certain market. For example, larger volumes of brisket were demanded by China, as opposed to traditional buyer Japan, and the price of lean manufacturing beef reached record levels.

Underpinned by the high processing volume and strong demand, beef exports for 2013 are on track to reach one million tonnes swt for the first time in any calendar year. Similarly, lamb exports are likely to hit almost 200,000 tonnes swt, while mutton volumes should reach 130,000 tonnes swt, significantly higher than the volumes shipped in 2012.



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Global economic outlook

Changing global dynamics

Global economic growth has been driven in recent years by emerging economies, such as China, India, Indonesia, Russia and Brazil. However, the economic growth of these countries has been slowing, though still remaining positive.

The growth in emerging markets has had a positive impact on Australia's beef and lamb exports - particularly to China and the Middle East in 2013 (see figures 1 and 2).

Growth of emerging markets is expected to continue slowing from the break-neck pace seen in the past two decades (see figure 3). Risks to emerging markets could develop, while on the other hand, growth in developed countries, particularly the United States, is expected to improve.

Emerging markets - potential challenges

This year saw a significant milestone for the global economy, with emerging markets accounting for more than half of world GDP (when adjusted for purchasing power) - see figure 4. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), in 1990 it was less than a third (of a far smaller total).

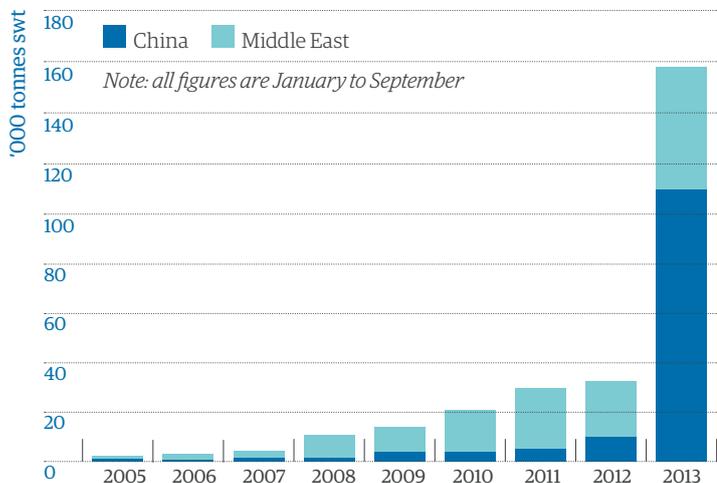
China was forecast to grow at 8% in 2013 and 8.2% in 2014 (IMF), well below the 14.2% reached in 2007 and the 10% in 2010, only two years after the GFC. India, an emerging global beef supplier, looks to be stalling relative to recent years, with growth forecast for 5.6% in 2013. In 2008, the Indian Government claimed growth of 8-9% was India's new cruising speed.

It appears that China's exceptional economic growth will begin to slow. Brazil and Indonesia have also seen a slowdown in the past 12 months, as both a raft of internal inefficiencies and a failure to enact reforms in the good times has created a hand brake on growth.

Adding to the pressure on these emerging markets is the potential impact of a strengthening US economy and the tapering of Federal Reserve stimulus funds, known as quantitative easing. The Federal Reserve has been pumping money into the US economy in an attempt to increase liquidity, stimulate the economy, guard against deflation and lower long term interest rates. At the beginning of October, the Federal Reserve was pumping US\$85 billion each month into the economy through bond purchases, weakening the US\$ and driving money into emerging markets in search of higher yields.

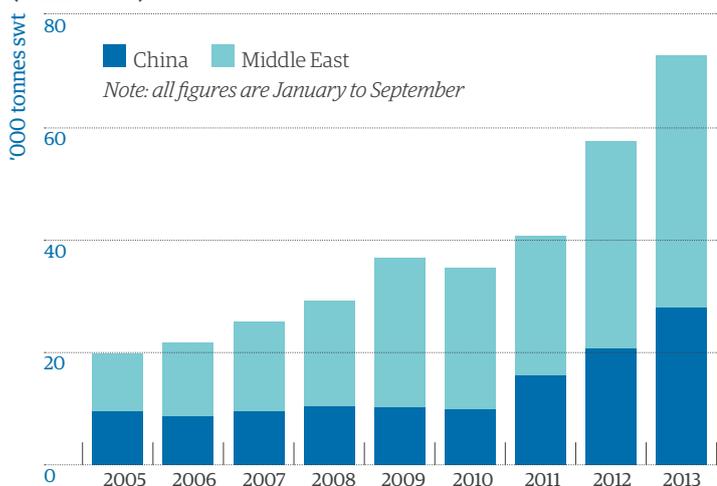
This has the effect of both depreciating the local currency in an emerging economy (as money flows out) and reducing investment, and was a major contributing factor in the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997. Most Asian countries affected by the crisis are in better shape than in 1997, although a tightening in US monetary policy will likely lead to some capital outflow. Countries that could be vulnerable include Brazil, India, Turkey, Mexico, Indonesia and South Africa.

Figure 1 Australian beef exports to China and the Middle East (tonnes swt)



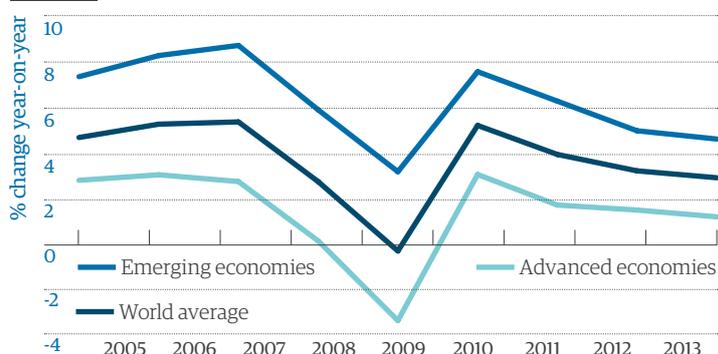
Source: Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Figure 2 Australian lamb exports to China and the Middle East (tonnes swt)



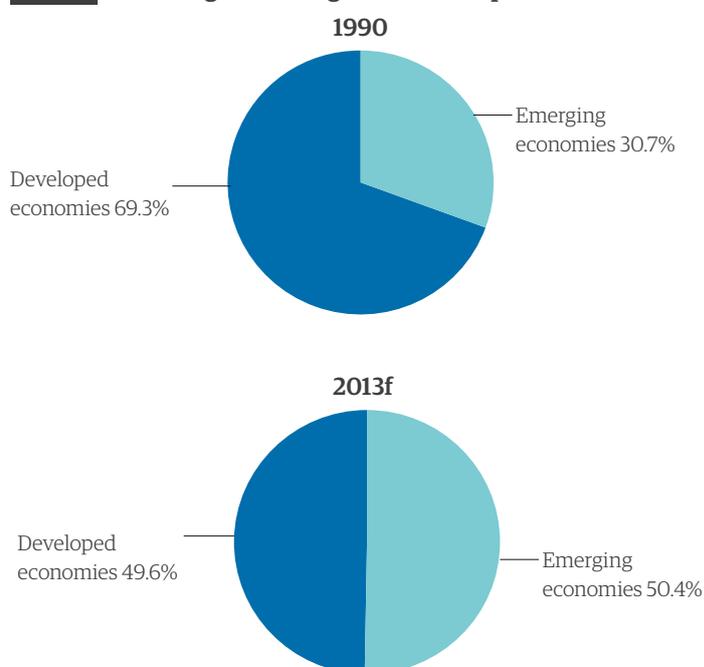
Source: Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Figure 3 World economic growth rates (% change year-on-year)



Source: International Monetary Fund

Figure 4 Percentage share of global GDP output



Source: International Monetary Fund

f = forecast

This is likely to have two impacts on Australian red meat exports. In markets for Australian red meat, a depreciation of the local currency and weakening economic growth could both decrease demand and make it more expensive to import Australian red meat. In Indonesia, for example, the rupiah is close to its lowest level against the US dollar in four years.

In countries which are large suppliers of red meat to global markets, their weaker exchange rates will increase the competitiveness of their exports. The Indian rupee depreciated by more than 13% from May to August on speculation that the Federal Reserve would begin to taper its quantitative easing, while the Brazilian real has depreciated significantly since May.

It is important to take into consideration the effect any tapering would have on the Australian dollar, as this has also weakened since May. However, perceived as a safer currency than many of its emerging market counterparts, a slowdown in Federal Reserve stimulus is likely to have less of an impact on the Australian dollar.

Recovery of developed markets

Economic growth in developed countries showed an improvement in 2013. Activity is expanding at improved rates in Japan, the US and the United Kingdom and, after six consecutive quarters of recession, the Euro Zone saw positive growth in the second quarter of 2013.

The upswing in momentum in these developed economies is welcome news, however, substantial risks remain and a sustainable recovery is not yet a sure thing. Japan, the US and the United Kingdom are important markets for Australian red meat, and an improvement in their economic outlook should benefit demand.

However, it will be important to watch the impact a resurgent developed world has on emerging market economies. Particularly, the impact any tapering in US Federal Reserve stimulus has on capital flight and exchange rate depreciation in these emerging markets.





Enjoying a tour of the Arndell Park McDonald's were MLA's Megan Davies, brothers Angus and Lachlan Chadwick, Coonamble; restaurant owner Trish Russo; Ella Shannon of Macquarie Funds Group and Rabobank representatives Sarah Sivyver and Lloyd Setter.

Sydney// Macca's tour

Twenty-three producers and agribusiness professionals gained an insight into the McDonald's beef supply chain when they toured the Blacktown manufacturing plants, which supply 226 of McDonald's 900 national restaurants with their beef patties. The MLA-supported McDonald's tour, held in September, highlighted the fast food giant's beef supply chain systems and sustainability efforts, and provided transparency of McDonald's processing systems. Participants saw each step, from grinding to packaging and transporting of patties. At the end of the tour attendees tasted the final product - burgers at the nearby Arndell Park McDonald's. Producers said the experience opened their eyes to a complex, rigorous and efficient supply chain that supplies vast quantities of beef product every day.

More information: Megan Davies, MLA // T: 02 9463 9383
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Adelaide River and Mataranka // BeefUp forums

The two BeefUp forums, attended by 70 producers, in August delivered clear and practical information and tools that producers could take home and put into practice on-farm immediately. Discussions focused on the key profit drivers of cattle businesses and sustainability practices that can make a significant difference to an enterprise's bottom line. The Northern Territory Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries' (NTDPIF) Robyn Cowley gave a presentation on the newly released publication: *Guidelines for the development of extensive cattle stations in northern Australia: insights from the Pigeon Hole Project*. One producer said: "Good forum - highly recommended. A good variety of applicable topics and speakers. All very knowledgeable and answered questions with ease."

More information: E: events@mla.com.au
www.mla.com.au/beefup

www.mla.com.au/extensivecattleguidelines

Read a feature on the guidelines on pages 22-24 of the October edition of *Feedback*



NTDPIF's Dionne Walsh leads a discussion on working out the value of grass to a producer's business.

Upcoming events



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

Hamilton Meat Profit Day

An event to equip Victorian cattle and sheep producers with the tools they need to run productive, profitable and sustainable businesses to 2025 and beyond.

When and where:

19 February 2014, Hamilton Vic

Bookings and for more information:

www.mla.com.au/HamiltonMPD

WA Meat Profit Day

Network with fellow producers and learn about the range of activities your levies are funding to improve productivity, increase demand and position red meat ahead of its competitors in domestic and international markets.

When and where:

3 April 2014, Port Denison WA

Bookings and for more information:

www.mla.com.au/MPD-WA

LambEx Adelaide

A compelling two-day conference for lamb and sheep producers, featuring outstanding speakers, an extensive trade exhibition, entertainment and an opportunity to communicate with all sectors of the lamb value chain.

When and where:

9-11 July 2014, Adelaide SA

Bookings and for more information:

www.mla.com.au/LambEx2014

MEET THE CHALLENGERS...

From one end of the country to the other, six diverse livestock enterprises are putting their businesses through the year-long MLA Challenge. Here, we introduce two of the participants.

To learn more about the Challengers go to www.mla.com.au/challenge

'Banchory Grazing' quick facts



Dulacca, Clermont and Capella Qld

Property size:
21,588ha

Herd / flock size:
7,000 head

Breeds:
Angus cross

Average annual rainfall:
620mm

Soil type:
Clay to light ridge

Pasture type:
Native and improved pastures

MLA Challenge participant:

Lachlan Hughes



Anna, William and Lachlan Hughes.

Lachlan Hughes is a fifth-generation cattle producer who manages two of his family's four properties.

The Hughes family run a 7,000-head herd of Angus-cross cattle over four properties – two in central Queensland and two in the western Darling Downs region, which are managed by Lachlan and his wife, Anna.

For the MLA Challenge, Lachlan will be focusing his attention on benchmarking one of the properties, Banchory Grazing, while looking for programs to improve performance.

What prompted you to nominate for the MLA Challenge?

It offers a great experience for my family as we move towards becoming a more sustainable rural enterprise. One of my biggest concerns is that the business may not be performing to its full potential. The Challenge will be an excellent opportunity to identify any areas for improvement.

What do you hope to achieve in the year? I'm looking forward to working with an industry mentor. I am also keen to meet the other Challengers and see what new tools or techniques are out there that will assist with the daily decision making within our business.

'Riverglen' quick facts



Edi, Vic

Property size:
185ha

Herd / flock size:
250 breeders

Breeds:
Angus/Charolais and Speckle Park

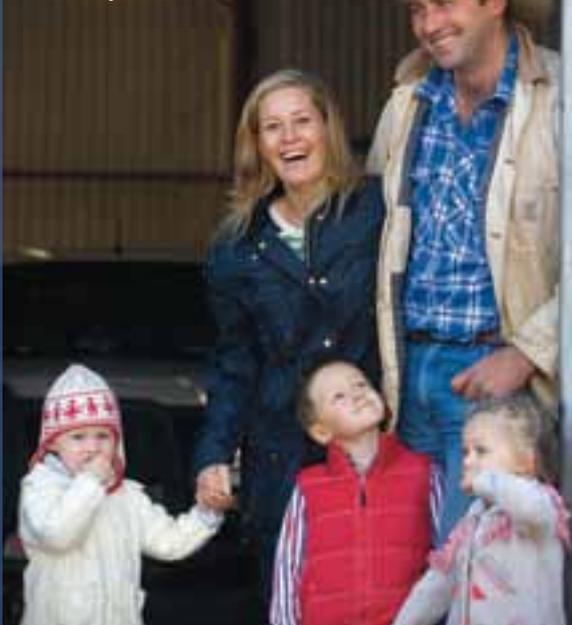
Average annual rainfall:
1,150mm

Soil type:
Sandy loam

Pasture type:
Annual and short rotation rye grasses, sub, shaftal and white clovers, lucerne and phalaris

MLA Challenge participant:

Bill and Georgia Wilson



Georgia and Bill Wilson with children McKenzie, Lloyd and Evie.

While they might run one of the smallest enterprises in the Challenge, Bill and Georgia Wilson have much in common with their fellow Challengers.

Bill and Georgia have farmed in the King Valley, north-east Victoria, for the past three years. Previously, they leased land to build their herd numbers while operating an agricultural contracting business. Like the other Challengers, Bill and Georgia are focused on increasing productivity.

At present, they have 250 breeders on their 185ha property, and aim to turn off store and feeder cattle, and to finish some grassfed slaughter cattle as they improve their pastures.

What prompted you to nominate for the MLA Challenge?

It seemed a good way to build our business skills and increase productivity by using the tools available through MLA. We hope we can look at our business more objectively and make sound decisions that make good practical sense, and remove some of the emotion that can come into play at times. We also hope to encourage other producers to do the same with their own businesses, as we know there are others in a similar situation as us.

What do you hope to achieve in the year? We hope it will help us achieve our business goal of increasing efficiency and expanding our scale of production. We are particularly looking forward to having an industry mentor. Having someone available to listen to our concerns and provide advice will be invaluable.

Save the date

Wednesday 19 February 2014

Hamilton Meat Profit Day

**2025: ready
or not?**

**Hamilton Showgrounds,
Horner Street,
Hamilton Victoria**



The Hamilton Meat Profit Day will have an extensive program of local and national speakers, demonstrations and displays covering topics to equip Victorian cattle and sheep producers with the tools they need to run productive, profitable and sustainable businesses to 2025 and beyond.