

96/W08



Producer Research Support

WA producers urged to gear up for grainfed beef

WA Shorthorn Society



Objectives

1. Run two seminars, using high level speakers within the beef industry, associated mainly with markets in Asia, but in particular Japan; and
2. Also to try and influence cattle producers to target the production of more quality cattle for the longer term lot fed Japanese Ox markets, with high marbling carcasses.

What was done

WA beef producers were urged to gear themselves for expanding grainfed markets at two 1996 seminars conducted with Producer Research Support funding by the WA branch of the Shorthorn Society of Australia.

High profile speakers included Ross Keane of Australia Meat Holdings, Steve Martyn of the former AMLC and Ashley Manners. Mr Manners told the seminars that WA beef producers had survived on producing for the grassfed beef market in the past and, in many instances, producers were still thinking grassfed beef would remain the mainstay of the industry.

But if the beef industry was to survive in WA it had to produce a consistently top quality product that satisfied consumer needs at all times.

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Key points

- Producers who sell their cattle direct would have to demand more feedback.
- Rewards would come from meeting the specifications the industry required.
- Desired carcass specifications of major export processors such as Australia Meat Holdings.

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Producer Research Support

MLA Producer Research Support offers support funding of up to \$15,000 over three years for groups of producers keen to be active in on-farm research and demonstration trials.

These activities include:

- Producer Initiated Research and Development
- More Beef from Pastures demonstration trials
- Prime Time Wean More Lambs demonstration trials
- Sustainable and productive grazing grants.

Contact Gerald Martin
Producer Research Support Coordinator.

Tel 08 8556 2900 or
producersupport@mla.com.au

MLA also recommends

EDGEnetwork

EDGEnetwork offers practical field-based workshops to improve productivity and profitability for the long-term.

Workshops cover breeding, nutrition, grazing management, marketing and selling.

Call MLA on 1800 993 343 or
www.edgenetwork.com.au

Meat & Livestock Australia

Level 1, 165 Walker Street
North Sydney NSW 2060

Tel 02 9463 9333

Fax 02 9463 9393

Free Phone 1800 023 100 (Australia only)
www.mla.com.au

Discussion

"You can't consistently achieve that with the grassfed product," Mr Manners said.

He told producers that if Australia continued to produce large amounts of grassfed beef for the export market it would have to be prepared to compete head on with New Zealand and South America on price.

Australia could not win this confrontation because of high production costs.

While grainfed beef was more expensive his message to producers was that consumers demanded and were prepared to pay for quality. Grain feeding beef was the only way to guarantee a consistent quality product.

Mr Manners, who was brought up in the beef industry and has experienced most aspects of the industry including the management of one of WA's major meat processors, also urged producers to breed for the market that best suited their operation and specialise in it.

"The days of just producing a product and hoping someone will buy it are gone," he said.

According to WA Shorthorn Society promotions officer Tom Hall, Mt Barker, producer reaction to the information indicated a "rude awakening".

He said producers learned the consumer "called the shots". Many producers were already thinking they would have to start producing the product that was required for these markets, as this was where they would make money in the longer term.