

99/V10



Producer Research Support

Finetuning Beef Production

Team TeMania



The project

Team TeMania was formed to create a closer link between the TeMania stud and its commercial beef breeder clients. They set out to work together to refine the genetics essential for the commercial producer, backgrounder-lotfeeder, processor, wholesaler-retailer and consumer.

Objectives

1. Establish systems for making better use of feedback received from feedlot and processor end-users on cattle produced;
2. Record and analyse more production data from members to establish preferred pathways to meet market specifications;
3. Educate and inform members of the results of the studies above and other current industry research, such as that from the Beef CRC;
4. 50% of the steers that are submitted into Certified Australian Angus Beef (CAAB) off grass to achieve the required grade; and
5. 90% of the steers that are submitted into CAAB off grain to achieve the required grade.

What was done

"Since the start of the program we have set out to educate team members about how to breed and produce a better product," Team TeMania spokesperson Hamish McFarlane said. "In doing so, we have broadened members' knowledge of the effect their management decisions have on their livestock and other sectors further along the beef chain."

One way in which the alliance set about achieving this was through a talk by Bruce Knee of the Victorian Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Hamilton, on factors that result in dark cutting beef.

"His speech highlighted factors that can raise stress levels in cattle, such as transport, abattoir lairage, washing and fasting."

Mr McFarlane said that throughout the project they had sought to provide a team environment to counter what they and many others regard as the major problems in the beef industry that result in an unreliable final product – beef.

"A consumer cannot be guaranteed of buying a consistent and desirable product each time they buy beef," said Mr McFarlane. "The beef industry lacks uniformity and direction due to the many and varied management practices and competitive nature of the industry."

"Many of the breeders, processors and lotfeeders find themselves competing against one another and not willingly supplying appropriate feedback and information that will benefit the beef industry as a whole."

Members of the Team TeMania Angus seedstock/commercial producer alliance are working toward the supply of a more consistent product by accessing feedback and refining their breeding programs.

With Producer Research Support funding, the alliance has made rapid progress, helping streamline the essential data collection.

Key points

- Shortcomings in carcase data collection systems beyond the farm gate prompted a switch to live animal scanning to fill information gaps.
- Team TeMania members made management changes, including calving time, to better match feed availability and quality with livestock needs.
- The team approach created an environment that encouraged team members to excel.
- A shift in approach from a commodity supply situation to a 'food business' approach.
- Heightened interest in how an animal works and the need to provide management conditions, which optimise genetic capability.

Contact details

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What happened?

He said that steers that achieve the best results must be followed back through the information chain so the same genetics and conditions that produced them can be replicated and improved to ensure ongoing consumer demand.

Since the start of the project their emphasis has moved away from the collection of carcass data towards the collection of scan data. The reasons behind this were:

1. Unreliability in the collection of carcass data and traceback to producer identification;
2. Inconsistent collection of carcass data;
3. More assured animal data identification through on-farm scanning;
4. Scanning can be carried out on larger performance groups;
5. All animals in a group must be scanned on the same day for true comparisons; and
6. More rapidly identify higher performing progeny.

The information collected through scanning is fed directly into BREEDPLAN for analysis. The results are made available to Team TeMania members and the wider industry.

Discussion

"Seedstock producers must breed animals that consistently produce offspring like peas in a pod" stated Mr McFarlane. "It is unrealistic to expect others in the beef supply chain to reward commercial producers for steers that are inconsistent in size, weight, marbling, fat cover, yield and tenderness.

"We have focused on the role genetics plays in overcoming this problem, and the importance of progeny testing of sires so that the best possible genetics can be chosen for individual production-management systems.

Hamish said there were many examples from the project of sire EBV comparisons listing a before and after scenario. "This highlights the benefits of having a structured progeny test so that reliable data can be collected. The alternative would be to wait for reliable carcass data to become available, which in most instances is difficult to obtain and has often been compromised and unacceptable for BREEDPLAN analysis."

Mr McFarlane said the continued push by team members to supply steers to the premium B3 market to Japan has seen few steers submitted to the Angus breed's CAAB brand off grass. This coincided with the change in the license of the CAAB contract from Prom Meats to Cargill. Despite this, CAAB Supply Coordinator Colin Boord commented on one consignment, stating "Team Te Mania bred steers achieved the best results through the CAAB program I have ever seen off grass".

From 508 steers submitted to CAAB off grain in 1999/2000, Team TeMania steers achieved almost 95% compliance.

Marbling scores have been increasing. In 1999, the team put 612 head through different processors, with 80% achieving marble scores above three. In 2000, from 1067 head processed, 86% gained marble scores of three and above, while in 2001, from 1664 head 92–100% achieved the same levels.

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 Stephen Feighan - MLA Project Manager, Producer Delivery and Adoption.

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MLA also recommends

EDGEnetwork

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Table 1 shows carcass data on a consignment of 54 head put through CAAB after 164 days on feed, against a CAAB average of 188 days on feed.

Table 1. Carcass Data on Consignment put through CAAB

Marble Score	CAAB Avge	Team Data
0	2.63%	0
1	31.12%	27.58%
2	59.84%	58.62%
3	6.30%	13.79%
4	0.11%	0

Wayne Upton from the Animal Genetics and Breeding Unit at the University of New England, Armidale, NSW, who has directed the Team Te Mania Progeny Test, spoke at the group's most recent Team meeting in January 2002.

Mr Upton spoke about striking a balance between genetics and management. The focus of his presentation was on marbling and, drawing on research carried out within the CRC herd, he said the message was clear - to ensure the ability of steers to marble to their genetic potential, producer management and animal nutrition play equally important roles for animals to realise their full genetic potential. This meant constant weight gain and no checks in growth.

"Throughout the development of the team program we have been conscious of being able to improve the understanding by the members of the issues that are relevant to the membership by drawing upon industry leaders and specialists," said Mr McFarlane.

He said Producer Research Support funding helped build the size of the group's membership, which in turn enabled them to attract a higher calibre of speaker. It also allowed them to access people like Wayne Upton.

"Wayne's technical knowledge and experience from trials such as the CRC, has enabled him to set a sophisticated progeny test, with link sires between herds. In addition to his academic input, he has been available to meet with commercial producers and explain the importance and relevance of progeny testing."

Mr McFarlane said when the project started they had expected the technology linking the producer and the processor would not have been far off.

"We are still not yet there and, to a certain extent, limited technology has made it difficult to obtain some basic production data from members who are not subscribers to BREEDPLAN. Nevertheless, we are working with various parties to remedy this and feel reasonably confident that inroads have been made in recent times that will make this possible in the not too distant future.

"As a commercially focused group, we are committed to our R&D and to improve the level of education and standards."

"Team Te Mania has made significant inroads towards our defined target of bringing producers to work together to produce a consistently tender and tasty beef product."