

95/Q08



Producer Research Support

Beef producers change farm management techniques to meet consumer needs

Taroom Shire Beef Marketing Group



The project

Beef producers in the Taroom Shire in Queensland have improved their management skills and altered their aspirations following the completion of a Producer Research Support project.

The beef marketing project was aimed at helping producers manipulate their own property management and marketing practices to match consumer demands within their physical and financial constraints.

The result should be more profitable enterprises and customer satisfaction, said group spokesperson Kay Taylor.

The project involved developing relationships for communication and feedback along the marketing chain.

"One of the real strengths (of the project) is the producer driven focus and mechanisms for feedback which keep the project on track," Ms Taylor said.

Objectives

1. Enhance profitability of the beef industry by increasing the efficiency of the marketing of beef cattle and their end products;
2. Assess live animals accurately to consistently meet consumer requirements;
3. Increase producer understanding of market specifications;
4. Assist producers to develop and adjust as required, the necessary breeding, feeding and management systems on property, to help them consistently meet market requirements and where possible achieve premium prices; and
5. Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of two-way communications along all stages of the marketing chain.

What was done

The Taroom Shire Beef Marketing Group (TSBMG) was formed in 1993 as the result of strong interest from producers within the shire to improve the marketing of their cattle.

As well as the interest being expressed by many individual producers, this was also supported by the Taroom Shire Landcare Producer Needs Analysis in 1995, which identified marketing as being within the top four issues.

Ms Taylor said that on a broader Queensland perspective, the QDPI Beef Genetic Improvement Project surveys of beef producers and beef associated organisations and groups throughout Queensland in 1995, identified meeting market requirements was one of two main issues for beef producers. This was further supported by the North Australia Beef Producer Survey in 1990, where 84% of producers identified marketing as a major issue.

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Key points

- More profitable enterprises and customer satisfaction resulted from changes to farm management, in particular improved skill in live assessment and marketing practice.
- Feedback and communication keeps attitude, skill, aspiration and practice change going.

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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.

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During the life of TSBMG, marketing, and related issues such as breeding and nutrition, had remained the number one areas for which industry was demanding information and skills.

Ms Taylor said the first 12 months had been "action packed" with activities including:

- two Beef Markets and Marketing workshops;
- a grant winning marketing day;
- a Buying Better Bulls workshop;
- two quality assurance awareness workshops;
- a Working in Groups (WIGs) workshop;
- five veterinary chemical accreditation workshops;
- an agricultural chemical accreditation workshop; and
- a 'Meating the Challenge' seminar.

What happened?

Ms Taylor said feedback from project activities had continued in a positive vein. There had been continued high attendances at activities and there is a growing financial membership of about 90.

A major advantage to the group with this project is the strong linkages it has with the Western Downs Beef Improvement Association, relevant QDPI projects and personnel, Taroom Shire Landcare, the Storelink project, and other producer marketing groups.

Activities are regularly jointly organised by TSBMG and Western Downs BIA to maximise the efficiency of resource use.

Multiples of similar events are conducted in a range of areas to service both groups.

She said that in addition to the ongoing positive feedback from producers involved with project activities there was a better awareness and understanding of:

- general marketing issues;
- quality assurance issues;
- video image analysis;
- value based marketing;
- electronic identification;
- live cattle assessment;
- influence/manipulation of major players on the beef industry;
- the need to "take control of our own industry";
- the operation and needs of lotfeeders and the retail end of the production line;
- market needs; and
- the type of bulls that need to be bred (by bull breeders) and purchased (by commercial breeders) to help meet market requirements.

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MLA also recommends

BeefPlan

BeefPlan is a non-traditional approach to learning. Groups of like-minded beef producers, work together as a management team to focus on property management. Importantly the learning agenda is set and controlled by the group.

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July 2006 / PIRD OUTCOMES

Discussion

Attitude changes included:

- being prepared to trade all cattle on the property as it was now cheaper to buy cattle than to breed them;
- striving to improve all of the time; and
- aiming to produce and market cattle to achieve the top price by meeting market specifications, not just filling transports with inferior cattle.

Skill changes included:

- improved live animal assessment skills;
- ability to describe cattle more accurately to meatworks and feedlots; and
- ability to breed and select bulls that better meet market requirements.

Aspirational changes were:

- seeing the need to keep the learning process going;
- a more realistic expectation for the beef industry; and
- realising that survival depends on a low cost operation.

Practice changes were:

- putting live animal assessment skills to more use;
- weighing and assessing cattle before sale direct to meatworks;
- weighing cattle at regular intervals to monitor average daily weight gains;
- weighing all cattle before they are drafted for market;
- growing fodder crops (when the season permits) to finish cattle faster, better and
- younger;
- doing own marketing;
- selling direct to the meatworks to get all of the feedback and relate back to blood lines; and
- following up feedback on progeny by bulls sold to commercial breeders.

Ms Taylor said individual participants and those with whom they interact had benefited from the personal development and Working In Groups issues.

"This strengthens the effectiveness and empowerment of the group as well as the individuals."

Another key outcome that has resulted from TSBMG activities was the formation of a steering committee which was investigating the development of a group marketing venture for the Shire.