



Cattle specification information sheet

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This document is aimed to inform all stakeholders in the supply chain, particularly producers, regarding the evolving cattle specifications. The introduction of Meat Standards Australia (MSA) has led to an increased focus on cuts specific eating quality moving away from one channel having to utilise the entire carcasses.

Feedback across the supply chain between stakeholders is essential to ensure alignment with consumer demands and the end product delivered. Improvements in genetics and productivity have allowed producers to increase weight gain and yield. Australian beef is being increasingly exported, leading to the requirements of exporters being preferred over domestic market requirements. This report looks at three main groups of stakeholders: butchers, food service and retailers

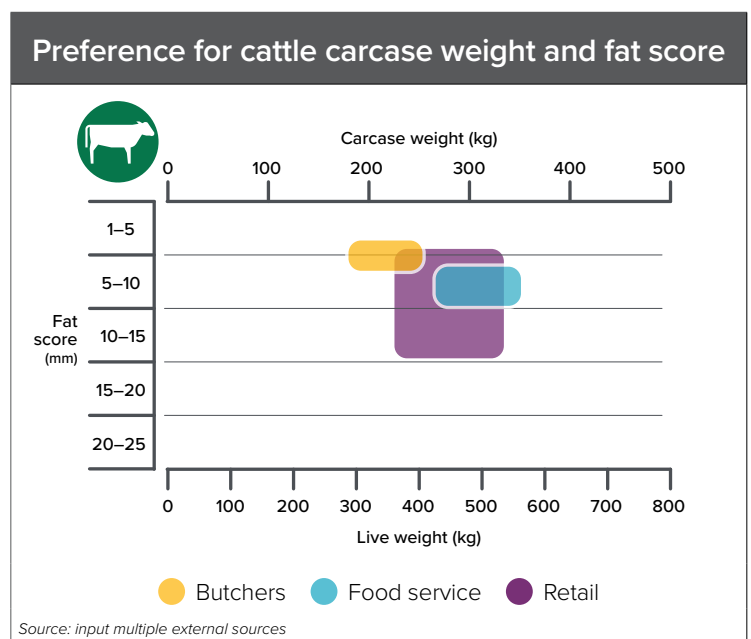
Butchers

Butchers ideally prefer grassfed heifers at 180–250kg cwt, with fewer butchers equipped to handle whole carcasses, a shift toward carton meat has increased. This transition is largely driven by staffing shortages in butchers and limited space to accommodate the process.

Food service

Food service is evolving with changes in population demographics over the last 30 years. Now, the centre of plate is less focused on one big protein or cut – with a wider range of cuisines and cuts available. Carcass weights for food service range from 260–280kg cwt ideally with an upper limit of 350kg cwt.

Importantly, restaurants want consistent product to ensure the centre of plate conforms to consumer expectations.



Retailers

Retailer specifications are becoming more stringent and are constrained by changing consumer preferences and packaging requirements. These packaging requirements require smaller carcasses to ensure the ‘ideal’ steak will fit into the plastic trays without compromising steak thickness. If steaks are too thin consumers will be hesitant to buy them or cook them. Major retailers now are more likely to purchase cattle and place cattle into a feedlot to ensure an adequate finish and improve eating quality.

Producers can solely focus on reaching weight, but this is only one factor regarding suitability for retailers. Other factors include, MSA score, Dentition (0–2 teeth), Ossification 100–190 (lower the score the better), breed and pH levels.

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