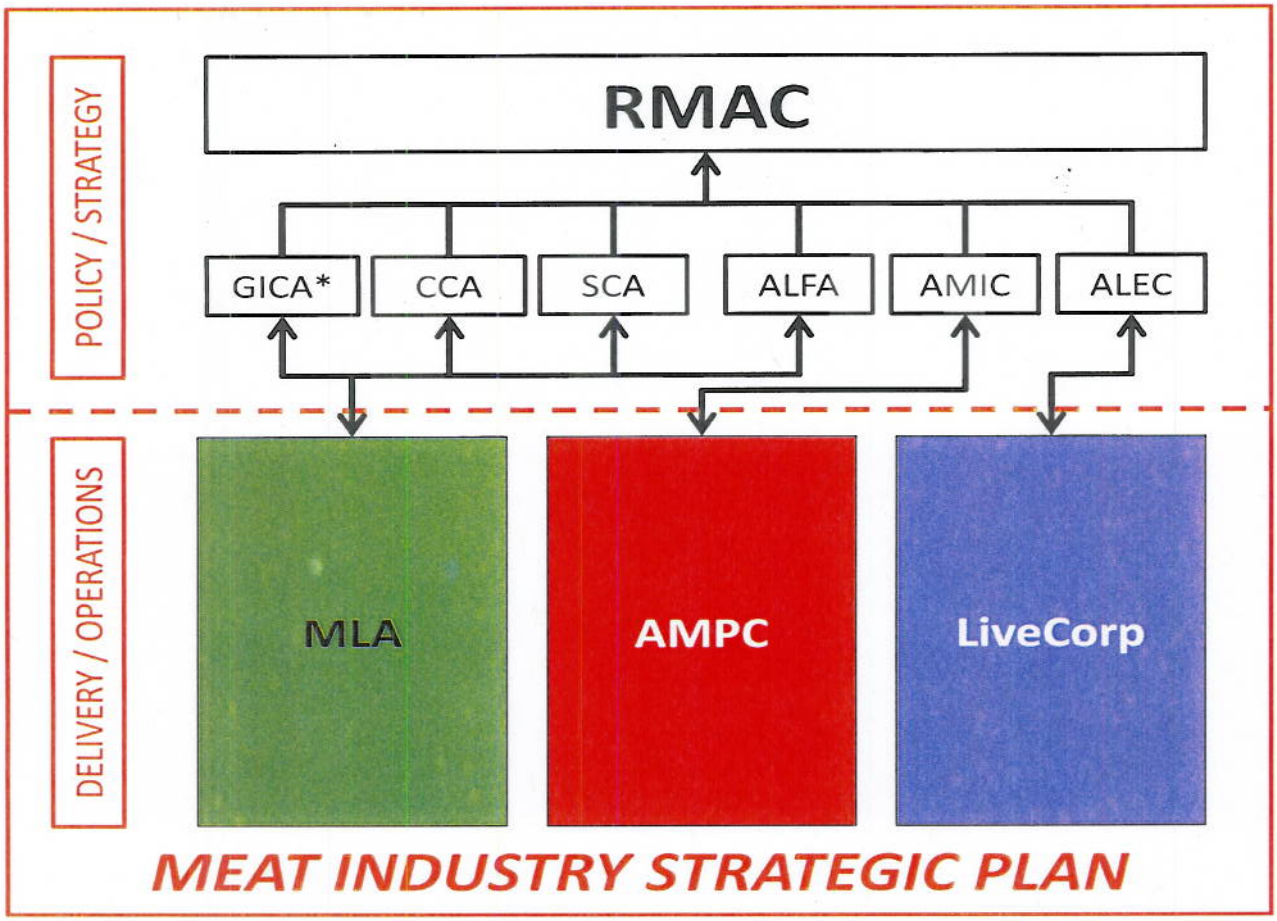
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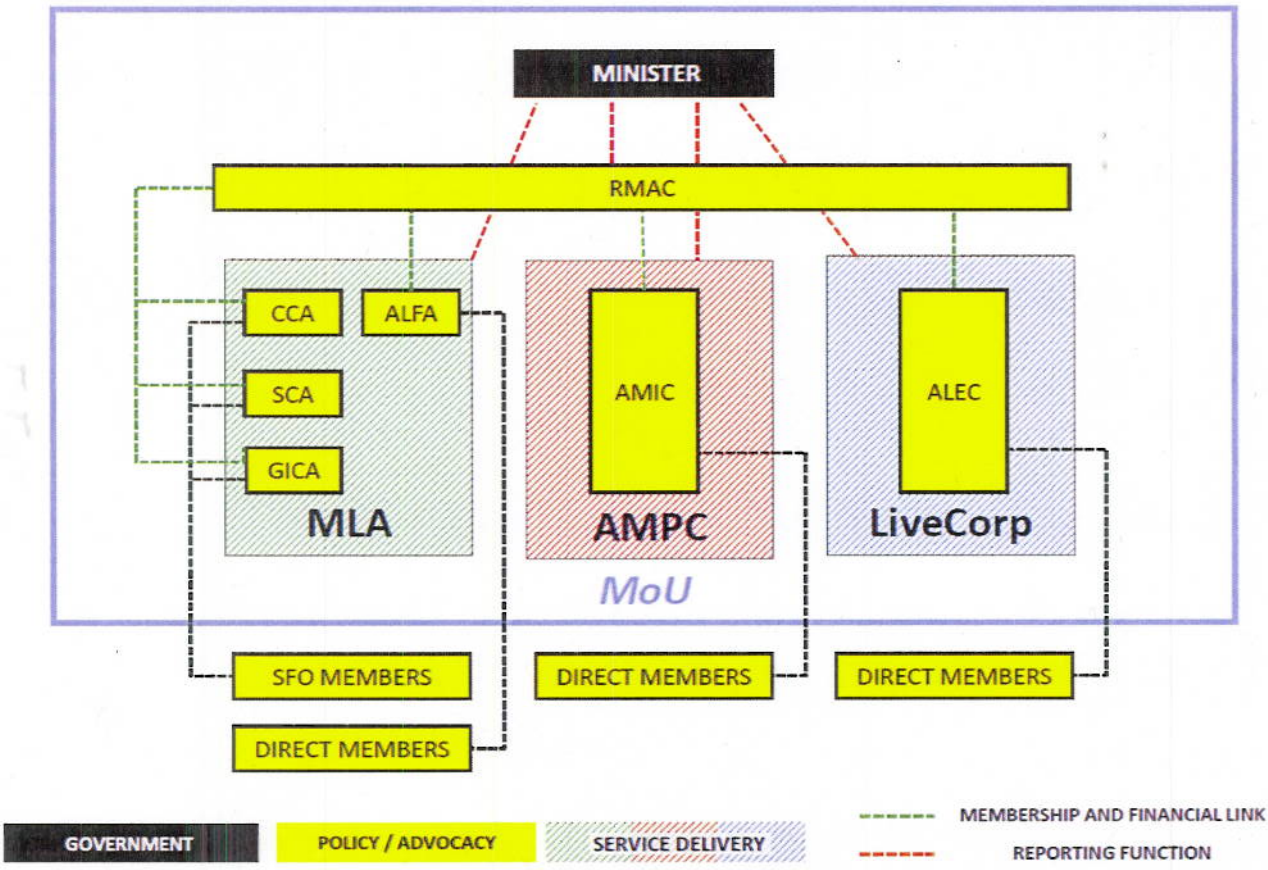
Inquiry into the Industry structures and systems governing levies on grass-fed cattle

Friday, 7 March 2014
Canberra

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* GICA has observer/Associate Membership status of RMAC



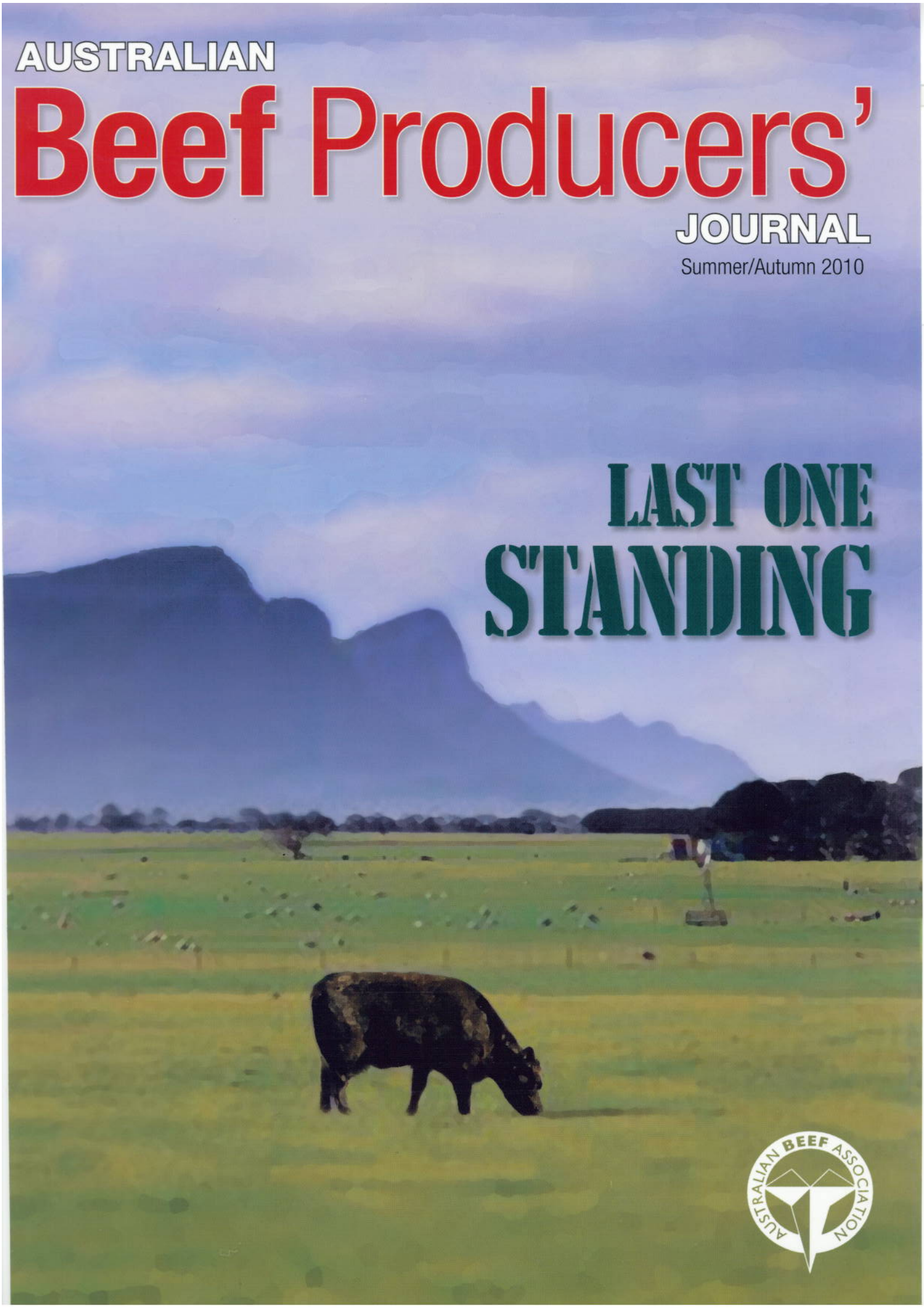
AUSTRALIAN

Beef Producers'

JOURNAL

Summer/Autumn 2010

LAST ONE STANDING



Australian **Beef** Producers' Journal
Summer/Autumn 2010

Australian Beef Producers' Journal

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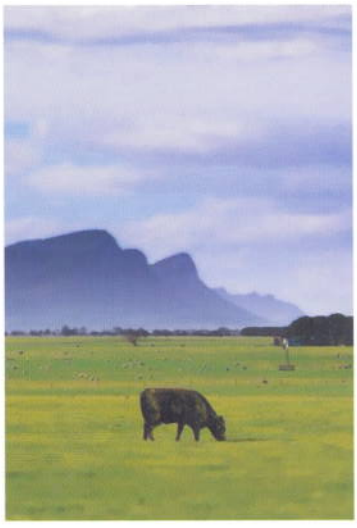
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Cover: LAST ONE STANDING

A cow on the Clarke family's magnificent Devon Park, Dunkeld in Western Victoria with the Grampians behind. With so many major threats to Australia's beef industry listed in this Journal, I thought it appropriate. Also the Angus breed is the flavour of the year with it McDonald's coup.

Ironically, Susie Clarke's Mother had a support role in the film "On the Beach", which depicted the end of the World and was filmed in Victoria in 1956. The World hasn't ended yet – though leaders are still threatening its imminent end through Climate Change – in 1959, it was a to be a Nuclear end. We hope the Australian Beef Industry doesn't follow the Pork Industry toward oblivion despite the suicidal activity of our supposed leaders. •





Palgrove Charolais
page 6

Chairman's Report



By Brad Bellinger – ABA Chairman and Director for Oxley

Cattle Prices

As I write this report, I look out my window upon green paddocks. A relief after the hardest year since I moved here 9 years ago. Many producers throughout Northern and Central NSW and Central and Western Queensland are enjoying a similar vista. As a result yardings in the New Year have dropped dramatically. The dollar as well has moved down slightly. All factors condusive under normal circumstances to a lift in cattle prices. A New Year's phone call from a breeder of quality cattle confirmed the unhealthy state of Australia's cattle industry. A drop of 10 cents on the previous sale and an appalling price of $1.56 for prime yearling off steers. The fact that he topped the sale was of little comfort. This is a price more than 12% below what we were receiving five years ago, one that is for many, perilously close, or below the cost of production.

When seasonal conditions improve, or the dollar drops, the MLA have other excuses for pathetic cattle prices and this time it is the Global Financial Crisis.But can this really explain why we receive only 27% of the consumer dollar when the rest of the worlds cattle producers receive 40%. The USA producers were receiving 43% at the time of writing. Can this really explain why out of ten major beef producing and consuming countries we are ranked 9th lowest in the prices we receive for our cattle?

This edition of the *Beef Producers' Journal* continues to explain the real reasons for our beef cattle slump and how marketing gimmicks such as NLIS and LPA have been an expensive failure.

MLA Levy Vote

I mention this obvious lack of profitability in the cattle industry because this year's MLA AGM; we had the opportunity to vote down the $5 levy. The last time a vote was held unconstitutionally, which was outside the AGM process and without any third party having access to the voting register was held in 2005. Agriculture Minister Peter McGauran decided to lift the levy even though support was only gained by 57% of the grass-fed vote. The Liberals however insisted upon a sunset clause that another vote be conducted on the levy by 2010.

With over $50 million collected in increased levies over that time frame, we have an opportunity to gauge how influential the activities of the MLA are in lifting cattle prices. A detailed review of the levy performance is included in this Journal.

I am sure you know all to well, the problems within the MLA structure that expressed itself on the 2008, vote with an increase in MLA Directors remuneration. Of the 10,200 who voted, if 39 of the top levy payers decided to go with the recommendations of the Peak Councils and many did, then they would have gained the 55% of the vote registered for the support of the motion.

The ABA again engaged the MLA at their AGM in Darwin this year. A small crowd of 110 many of them paid to be there, showed their support for the industry structure. We and a handful of supporters were the loan questioning voice. It was a long day. The final vote for maintainig the levy was 70% in favour and 30% against. Depite the ABA holding a million proxies we gained a lot of individual support but were again beaten by the big end of town.

The Federal Ag Minister Tony Burke has expressed his sensitivy to participation by levy payers in their respective R and D companies. I await his reply from a 2.6% participation rate for levy payers in the 2009 beef ballot in Darwin. Only 5085 voters out of a possible 200 000 even bothered to register to vote. Many hope that by ignoring the MLA that it will just go away.

I have seen a copy of a letter sent to the then Primary Industries Minister, stating that he has resigned from the MLA and should therefore not have to pay the beef levy. The Minister replied that the levy was a 'tax' and therefore had no grounds for non-grata. If a situation existed that the amount of income tax paid resulted in a corresponding amount of votes then a few would run Australia and the rest would be peasants under a feudalistic society. Of course it is pure coincidence that the two largest private cattle producers Don McDonald chaired the Committee that advised for the levy increase and Peter Hughes chaired the Committee that advised it to be maintained. Now of course we have a representative of the worlds largest beef processor JBS has a representative on the MLA Board.

One vote per levy payer is a policy now adopted by the ABA, a model accepted in all the world's modern progressive societies. Is democracy too much to ask for within the red meat industry?

NLIS

In this edition of the *Spring/Summer Beef Producers'* we provide a summary of the NLIS Audit conducted by Agri-business Online. Auditors Paul Evans and Scott Paterson did an extensive analysis of 17 properties NLIS data-base accounts.
We firmly stand behind the Audit and its methodology. The results go far beyond our rather pessimistic views on NLIS, with 34% of cattle losing their whole of life traceability. We prepared bound copies of the Audit Report and sent them to each State Primary Industries Ministers who of course were responsible for legislating NLIS under the advice of the Cattle Council. Their replies were a standard blurb written for them by the MLA.

Read more about the continuing NLIS sham in the Journal, its support by government represents all that is wrong with the current structure and how low farmers' prosperity is on the political radar.

Politics

While on the topic of politics, it is a relief to report on some positive policies emerging from Canberra, in the form of

Brad Bellinger



Chairman, Chairman Director for Oxley

Currently owns and jointly manages Trevanna, Glen Innes NSW, which runs 5000 sheep and 500 head of cattle. Appointed vice-Chairman Nov 2004 and appointed Chairman at Roma AGM 2006.

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Linda Hewitt



Co-Vice Chair ABA, Director for Upper Darling

Appointed Chairwoman of Australian Beef Association November 2004 and Vice Chair Nov 2006. The Hewitt family runs seven properties across Queensland. They operate Fairhaven Droughtmaster Stud, plus run a large commercial herd. Member of the Steering Committee and Seedfunder of ABA.

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Athol Economou



Treasurer, Director for Gippsland

Background in cattle production and meat and cattle industry publishing. Currently publishes *Australian Meat News*, a trade journal that services the meat processing and retail sector and published *Beef Improvement News* for more than a decade. Operates a commercial cattle breeding property in north eastern Victoria.

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Mike Fromm



Director for Capricorn

Owns and manages two properties of 2,200 acres near Chinchilla Qld. Farming mixed crops including wheat, barley, sorghum, oats, cotton and 120 to 150 head of cattle when seasons allow. Has five children with two boys working on the mines as truck drivers. Involved with Commonwealth Property Protection Assocation based in NSW.

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Ernie Camp



Co-Vice Chair ABA, Director for Carpentaria

Appointed joint Vice Chairperson at November 2009 AGM. Owns and manages a family property near Burketown in the Gulf of Carpentaria. Local Shire Councillor.

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Rod Beaton



Director for Henty

Owns and manages crossbred beef operation (Hereford, Angus and Shorthorn) near Henty western Victoria. Son of a soldier settler, he has expanded the original holding. He and his family ran a dairy for 40 years before switching to beef 19 years ago.

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John Hewson

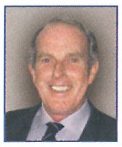


Director for Dampier

Owns, and with family manages cattle property of 11,500 acres at Kojonup, WA. Member of newly formed group to get a better deal for WA producers the Red Meat Action Group.

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Owen Bassingthwaighte



Director for Cunningham

With wife, Paula, and four children, owns and operates a 6000 acre beef breeding and fattening property 50km from Kilcoy, Qld. Has spent working life with cattle in Australia and South America, including ten years with a multinational cattle company. Also owns and operates a dairy farm near Kilcoy.

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Rowell Walton



Director for Barcoo

Trained farming and stock management at Cunderdin Agricultural College in Western Australia. Moved to Queensland to farm in 1983.

With family runs grazing and large scale grain operation in Condamine District. Includes cell grazing property where the majority of cattle run. Mostly backgrounding with breeding depending on circumstances.

Aim – to achieve a market index based on real prices.

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Andrew Rea



Director for Cape York

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John Niven



Director for Kosciusko

John left school in 1963 and went shearing. John then went to Canberra in 1972 and spent approx one year with the Commonwealth Police and then 10 years in the Communications Sections of Foreign Affairs. In 1985, he moved to Bimbi a property of 220 acres, and was a shearer and shearing contractor until 2001. John is a hald owner and sharefarmer/manger of approx 1,600 acres of mixed farming, which runs about 170 cattle, 700 merino sheep and Border Leicester stud of approx 500 head. There is 400 acres of barley when season allows. John is also a Councillor the Weddin Shire.

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Director for Lower Darling

Long time supporter of ABA. Runs Hereford cattle on Ulindah Binnaway, near Coonabarabran NSW. Member of NSW Farmers and former advocate of NFF. Spent many years on various service organisations including Lions and Apex. Supporter of local issues and vigorous campaigner for much, much higher commodity prices.

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John Carter



Appointed Specialist Director

Farmer marketing Chairman Cattlemens' Union, Churchill Fellow in Meat Marketing 1983, Chairman NSW Meat Industry Authority 1984-94, President Australian Intercollegiate Meat Judging Association, commerical beef producer, Chairman Australian Beef Association 1998-2004. Family have bred commercial beef cattle since 1834.

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Nationals Senators, Joyce, Nash, Boswell and Williams.

It is no secret that the ABA has been in conflict with the Nationals over their loyalty in protecting the Anderson Meat Industry Structure. A succession of incompetent Agriculture Ministers, Anderson, Truss, Vaile, and McGauran has seen support for the Coalition dissipate in rural Australia.

The new look Nationals headed by Barnaby Joyce in the Senate, are releasing policies that are indicative of supporting rural Australia. These new policies questioning the Free –Trade mantra, standing against a Carbon Tax and lesser known examples, such as blocking tax breaks for managed investment schemes, have not only set them apart from both Labor and Liberals but are in line with ABA policies. The real test will be as to their commitment to bring reform to the red meat industry structure.

It is now painfully clear that the Rudd Government is not prepared to act. The structure is seen as a perfect vehicle to initiate government policy onto livestock producers. So far, he has given over $30 million, to be managed by MLA to research livestock emissions. It is obviously important that they learn to accurately measure livestock emissions before they tax them.

In our last Journal, we featured the impact that devastating floods had in the Gulf Country of Northern Australia, and no decent rain since. In a marked paradox, we now see six months later the far south of the continent experiencing similar problems, with torrential rain in Southern Western Victoria and Tasmania. After years of below average rainfall drought breaking rains that at first provided welcome relief, haven't stopped. High density stocking rates have turned paddocks into a quagmire and losses particularly in Friesian herds have been substantial.

While Australian Farmers are no strangers to extreme climatic events, because now margins are so tight, governments must act quickly to support producers when they are hit by this extreme climatic conditions.

I have never witnessed Government regulation imposed upon the farming sector with such speed and purpose, as it has over the last ten years. As the ABA continues to fight NLIS, LPA and increases in tax, more imposts appear over the horizon. RMAC's (Red Meat Advisory Council) new 5 year Strategic Plan is targeting environmental and animal welfare issues. While no details have been made public yet, behind closed doors the Government is working through a plan with the Peak Councils and "Industry". With the possibility of an ETS on agriculture and license to farm rumours, I fear the worse. Whatever the outcome, rest assured the ABA will be there to stop further regulation and erosion of our rights placed upon producers.

The next three months provide one of the biggest challenges ever faces by Australian beef producers. The Government with the support of RMAC and the MLA have lifted the ban on the importation of beef from countries that have reported cases of BSE. In the December Senate Enquiry the ABA with vet Dr Robert Steel stood alone against RMAC, Cattle Council, MLA and departmental beauracrats in opposing this madness. The treacherous BSE "Side Letter" attached to the AUS/ USA Free Trade Agreement is coming back to huant us. Thirty submissions to import beef into Australia have already been made to take advantage of our supermarket duopoly driven high retails prices for beef. Refer to our submission in the Journal.

ABA Directors

We also continue to feature profiles of the ABA Directors in this edition of the Journal. John Niven in the South and Ernie and Kylie Camp in the North, give insights into very different operations and how they have made a success of their family businesses. Stories shared about Directors and members' farms and how they arrived at owning their properties, are in inspiration to me and we appreciate those that allow us to put it into print, so it can be read by many more.

Members

I again thank members for their continued support of the ABA. Without your support we would cease to exist. It is the ABA members who are prepared to take action against the structure, not ignoring it and hope it goes away. We realise that profitability in the Beef Industry is a finely balanced scale, with cattle prices on one side and costs on the other; in today's financial climate – it will take very little to tip us over.

I hope you enjoy this edition of the *Beef Producers' Journal* and it increases your knowledge of the Industry. Remember the MLA, a few large processors, the Supermarkets and Peak Councils should not control the Beef Industry. It all starts at the front gate and we the production sector make it all possible; unfortunately this fact is not recognised by those who should know better. •

R-Calf-USA

By John Carter – ABA Director

R-CALF USA are our sister organisation. Like ABA, they are fighting for producers against processors and the "bought" official producer organisations. The US multi national processor's have put $42 million into lobbying in Washington, as they strive to get cattle and beef from the cheapest sources around the world. They are ensuring that the Packers and Stockyards Act is not policed. The USDA has been infiltrated and bought. They are pushing for monopolies in processing – unlike Australia their retailing is in the hands of many supermarkets but, like Australia, their processing is now in the hands of three giant multinationals. Like ABA, they watch the daily worldwide "doings" of JBS Swift and the other multinationals.

This is the wonderful letter from their great CEO, Bill Bullard and his team at R-CALF to the US President and others in power. It illustrates some of what we have in common with our US friends and is very sobering. ***Editor***

A Desperate Call to Action from the U.S. Cattle Industry

Dear President Obama,

While absolutely no one was watching, $6.4 billion has been stolen since Jan. 1, 2007, from the U.S. live cattle industry in the U.S. fed cattle market alone. This conservative estimate is based on U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) data that show the average loss from each of the 49 million head of fed cattle sold by U.S. cattle feeders was over $48 in 2007, over $150 in 2008, and over $65 in 2009.

This money was stolen from what has historically been the single largest segment of American agriculture, the US live cattle industry, that provides the economic cornerstones for most rural communities across America. It was stolen directly from the hands of the nation's 82,170 remaining cattle feeders and transferred into the hands of just a few mega-meatpackers, only four of which control over 85 percent of the fed cattle market in the nation's $50 billion live cattle industry.

This theft occurred in broad daylight. Neither USDA, nor the U.S. Department of Justice, nor Congress, has yet lifted a finger to effectively address the systemic lack of antitrust enforcement within our cattle industry, or to prohibit the rampant, anticompetitive practices pervasive within our U.S. cattle market, or to reverse our cattle industry's horrendous trade deficit.

"Stolen" and "theft" are harsh words, but demonstrably appropriate in this instance, as U.S. beef consumers have watched their retail beef prices race to record highs and then remain at near-record levels throughout the more than two-year assault on independent U.S. cattle farmers and ranchers. And, the mega-meatpackers prospered greatly at the expense of U.S. cattle farmers and ranchers, as well as consumers, with mega-meatpacker Brazilian-based JBS USA earning $51 million in the first quarter of 2009 and $321 million in 2008 before interest, taxes and other expenses, which far exceed its earnings of $53 million in 2006. Tyson, the nation's largest beef packer, reported operating income of $613 million and $331 million in 2007 and 2008, respectively, and claims that its beef and pork segments are what kept Tyson profitable in 2008. And, National Beef Packing Co., the nation's fourth largest beef packer, reported its net profits through the first three quarters of its fiscal year were up 85 percent, with profits during its most recent quarter that ended May 30, 2009, exceeding $46 million.

The losses to U.S. cattle feeders continue and are compounding rapidly. Those remaining in the cattle feeding business are becoming fewer and fewer each day. The combination of cattle feeding losses and the closure of cattle feeding businesses translate into even less competition and even more losses for the independent farmers and ranchers, who are the very heart of the U.S. live cattle industry – the 757,000 remaining beef cattle operations comprised largely of independent cow/calf producers, backgrounders and stockers, who are scattered all across America. Their numbers also are shrinking at an alarming rate, and Rural America is reeling from the consequential, rapid loss of its economic base. We may already have reached the point of no return: the point where it no longer matters if competition is restored because the industry may already lack the critical mass of independent cattle farmers and ranchers necessary to sustain a competitive industry.

Our nation already has accomplished this despicable feat of reaching the point of no return in the dairy and hog industries, wherein the number of farming operations with economically viable herd sizes of over 100 head of animals has shrunk to a paltry 16,000 and 14,150, respectively. This is a most impressive disaster, as it is the direct result of this nation's impervious refusal to take any action, while 80 percent of the dairy operations and 90 percent of the hog operations have exited the industries since 1980. The Government's answer to assist these now nearly fully corporate-controlled livestock industries that have purged hundreds of thousands of independent farmers from their ranks, is to send these corporations taxpayer money in the form of Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) funds, or other emergency assistance. For example, Congress recently earmarked $350 million in emergency assistance for what is left of the U.S. dairy industry, and USDA has reportedly spent $165 million to buy pork from corporate hog packers, presumably to help the almost fully integrated corporate hog industry structure that has literally wiped out 90 percent of our nation's independent hog farmers.

It is doubtful that any substantive portion of this money will ever make it into the hands of the very few independent farmers remaining in either the dairy or hog industries. The lion's share of this money most certainly will flow to the very corporations that, because they have been advantaged by corporate-oriented trade policies and have freely operated with impunity from proper enforcement of antitrust laws and prohibitions against anticompetitive practices, are largely responsible for gutting these industries in the first place.



Judith Mcleary, US Farm and Freedom Alliance, John Carter and R-CALF CEO Bill Bullard – Omaha 2008.

The U.S. cattle industry literally is the last frontier within the U.S. livestock and poultry industries. It is the only remaining major livestock sector that is not already nearly completely vertically integrated by the mega-meatpackers and processors from birth-to-plate, egg-to-plate, or birth-to-milk. But, this distinction cannot last long under the ongoing and unbearable financial losses plaguing its independent participants.

Rural America, as well as the nation's meat safety and meat security, are threatened directly from the inaction of your Administration and Congress regarding the acute crisis facing our nation's cattle farmers and ranchers. Our calls for strict enforcement of antitrust laws have fallen on deaf ears, as the Justice Department has just signaled approval for one of the most compelling, if not the most compelling, meatpacker mergers in history – the merger between the world's largest beef packer (JBS S.A.) and North America's largest poultry processor (Pilgrim's Pride Corporation). Our calls to prohibit anticompetitive practices also have fallen on deaf ears, as the Department of Justice recently allowed the world's largest beef packer (JBS S.A.) to purchase the United States' largest cattle feeding operation (Five Rivers Ranch Cattle Feeding, LLC). Additionally, our calls for trade reform have fallen on deaf ears, as your Administration and Congress have refused to take steps to mitigate, in any way, the $1.6 billion-plus annual economic drain to our live cattle industry, caused by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the host of other poorly negotiated free trade agreements.

Our U.S. cattle markets are broken. Our cattle prices are persistently below the cost of production. Our industry is shrinking, and all the while U.S. consumers are still paying near record prices for beef to the dominant meatpackers and retailers. There is no light shining at the end of this tunnel. Our industry is in an acute crisis, and no action has yet been taken to avert it. All of Rural America, likewise, is suffering from Congress' and your Administration's inaction.

Proposed workshops, studies, and investigations into the despicable practices and policies that have all but completely destroyed our once vibrant U.S. cattle industry, along with the tens of thousands of rural communities it recently supported, are wholly inadequate, as responses to the cataclysmic condition of our industry today.

Immediate, decisive action must now be taken to avoid further destruction to the integrity and structure of our independent producer-based U.S. cattle industry and the rural communities it supports, following the loss of over $6.4 billion in essential revenues.

In February, following four consecutive months of losses to the U.S. cattle industry that exceeded $289 per head, R-CALF USA, on behalf of the U.S. cattle industry, urged the immediate restoration of previously weakened U.S. disease protections, starting with the reversal of USDA's over-30-month rule (OTM Rule) that allows higher-risk, older cattle to be imported into the United States from Canada. These older cattle are adding significantly to price-depressing supplies and aggravating consumer concerns about beef safety. We also urged an immediate end to the anticompetitive, marketing practices of the concentrated meatpackers, particularly their strategic use of price-depressing captive supplies. Neither of these recommendations has been implemented.

In May, R-CALF USA again urged action to restore the integrity of the U.S. cattle industry by restoring the health of our domestic cattle herd and the safety of the beef produced from our cattle and restoring the competitiveness of our industry by enforcing antitrust laws, prohibiting anticompetitive practices and including protections in trade policy that recognize the supply sensitive nature of the U.S. cattle industry. Again, none of these recommendations have been implemented.

Will your Administration and Congress take decisive action to alleviate the deplorable losses accruing to U.S. independent cattle farmers and ranchers by immediately taking the specific actions we have previously requested and reiterate above?

Or, must we now yield to government assistance in the form of TARP funds, or other emergency assistance – as have other U.S. industry segments, including our sister dairy and hog industries – to begin to redress the horrific damage caused by the unbridled excesses of the dominant corporate meatpackers and failed U.S. trade policies? Or, do you have a better, market-oriented solution that would allow us to salvage what is left of our injured U.S. cattle industry?

We, the undersigned representatives of the U.S. cattle industry, including the officers, directors and committee chairs of R-CALF USA and the presidents or chairs of 10 statewide cattle associations, as well as a director from the Intertribal Agriculture Council, look forward to your timely response to this urgent request. •

The Charolais Adaption to Australia

By David and Prue Bondfield of Palgrove Stud, Dalveen, Queensland

Editor's note

A long while ago, the Chief Beef Cattle officer in USDA in Washington said to me "The biggest problem with the beef industry are the breed societies – but don't quote me." I think that 26 years should allow its release.

Over 50 odd years, I have seen show ring and breed fashions change – from dwarfs with legs hidden in straw, to giraffes led by invisible grooms. Over those years there have been a few breeders who bred over a long period for practicality and, as a result, saw their breed widely sought by commercial cattlemen. Captain de Quincey did it with the Hereford, Tom Lasater with the Beefmaster (he declined to be a member of the Beefmaster Society). Here in Australia, few would dispute that David and Prue Bondfield have done it with the Charolais – a breed that an Argentine Hereford cattleman once referred to as "having a Frenchman in a beret sitting on a tractor behind every pregnant cow". I asked them to put together some thoughts on how they have adapted the breed to Australian conditions and where they are aiming in future. I am very grateful that they have given us a very modest insight into a remarkable operation.



Prue and David Bondfield

This year marks 40 years of breeding Charolais cattle for the Bondfield family at Dalveen, in South East Qld and it is an appropriate time to reflect on the family stud business, which in many ways mirrors the journey of the Charolais breed itself since its arrival in Australia in the late 1960's.

Peter Bondfield and his father-in-law saw this imposing breed in the UK on a visit and decided that Australia was in need of the impressive muscle and weight gain of the Charolais to use over British breed females. They saw the potential to produce more heavily muscled crossbred progeny that would really add some value to the beef industry.

The first few years of Charolais in Australia in the early seventies were a journey into the unknown. In a pioneering move, Palgrove bred some of the earliest Charolais cross calves born in Australia, sired by full French Charolais bulls joined to predominantly Brahman, Droughtmaster and Shorthorn females.

Prior to the formation of the Charolais Society, it was left to a group of innovative commercial beef breeders to provide the momentum and funds for the breed to develop.

Although we were very aware of the high birth weights recorded in their native France, where calving was supervised 24 hours a day, the cattle still proved a challenge at calving time, with some very long days and nights spent at the yards. At this point, breeders were forced to make the decision, whether to give up on this new European breed, or persevere and develop a type that could calve and prosper in Australia's more extensive management environment. This was the first of many measured transformations for the Charolais breed in this country.

So began Palgrove's commitment to weighing calves at birth and weaning. Some of the birth weights recorded back then would have frightened an elephant, so over the next few years, we sought to establish a strict culling programme based on birth weight; calving ease and identified an acceptable body shape that produced minimal Dystocia. At the same time, we recognised the need to balance all the growth traits with selection for fertility and natural doing ability. This was done with somewhat rudimentary ratios and comparative data that would later be streamed into the more sophisticated Breedplan.

This concentration on a balance of traits has perhaps become Palgrove's trademark and it has been a philosophy that enabled us to stay focused on developing a consistent type. We were

then able to utilise bloodlines from around the world to produce what is now recognisable as uniquely Australian Charolais.

During the seventies, as both investors and cattlemen saw the value and potential of the breed in southern Australia, Charolais genetics started to flood into the country, mostly via New Zealand, as direct imports from the UK and France during the early 1970's were banned due to presence of Blue Tongue. For Australian breeders, imported sires were often just selected on the basis of a black and white photograph and naturally the resultant progeny, did not always produce positive outcomes.

To add to the challenges, crossbred Charolais progeny in the early years in Australia were often discounted in the saleyards, due to a perception that the heavily muscled beef cuts were not what the 'customer' wanted to buy. Charolais producers were told that the market required large amounts of fat on their steaks! For this reason alone, getting Charolais progeny into markets in southern Australia in particular, proved very challenging and many believed that the "exotics" had no place in traditional commercial breeding programmes.

In many ways, this early prejudice energised us to prove that the Charolais cross carcass was a product that added value to the industry. Along with other breeders around the country, we began to use carcass competitions to showcase the benefits of Charolais genetics. It was a real turning point for us and the breed continues to dominate both hoof and hook classes, constantly confirming its carcass credentials over the last 20 years.

As beef markets changed in the late 1980's, in response to healthy lifestyle changes, processors and butchers changed their specifications and demanded less fat and more yield in the product they sought. This was a time when feedlots expanded in Australia and there was a growing acceptance of crossbreeding, as a more profitable alternative to straightbreeding.

However, perhaps the most significant event giving rise to the spike in demand for Charolais was a major change at the saleyards from sale by description to sale by weight. The Charolais weight gain soon became legendary and contributed to the surge in popularity of the breed in the late eighties and nineties.

Palgrove was always conscious about the maximum amount of muscling that we were prepared to accept in our Charolais. There is no doubt that some of the French bloodlines had some of the most impressive muscling ever seen in beef cattle in Australia, but the downside of extreme, heavily muscled cattle is their inability to lay down fat cover. In addition, the French and UK Charolais breeders who were supplying genetics, were not always as particular about the structural soundness of the cattle they exported to Australia and some undesirable traits soon appeared.

As a result, many seedstock producers sent bulls out into commercial environments where they either perished or produced progeny that could not finish, so failed to meet market specifications.

In the mid 1990's we recognised that if the breed were to continue to offer a real benefit to commercial producers, a balance between muscle and fat had to be achieved. Once again, we elected to adapt the type of cattle we produced by moderating bone and muscle (without compromising weight gain) in order to breed a softer, easier finishing type.

In this quest, we found that the USA and Canada were producing the type of Charolais genetics that would bring back the softness and easy fleshing into our cattle. A bonus for the breed was that there was a growing demand for polled cattle in the USA, so many of the bulls Palgrove brought into Australia were polled. Also, these breeders were increasingly focused on the use of objective data. Our involvement with some excellent seedstock producers in Canada and the USA made it clear to us that genetic improvement in our own cattle could only be achieved by focusing on increasing the collection and evaluation of performance data to guide our selection decisions.

In the last few years, we have concentrated our efforts on breeding all of our heifers to polled bulls, and now have approximately half of our 2500 strong females polled. Once again, we see the need for balance and every two generations or so, we will breed our

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Crossbred Charolais
Shorthorn Bulls 1971

double polled females to a horned bull. Our northern Australian clients in particular, require a little more growth and bone than the USA type Charolais and we are conscious not to lose the highly profitable performance traits of the breed.

As many Australian seedstock producers will know, the rest of the world took some time to catch up to the amount of data produced out of USA, Canada and Australia. It has only been in the last five years that "meaningful" performance figures have been made available to us as importers of genetics from the UK and France. However, we still believe that it is important when selecting sires to look at the data, inspect the bull, his dam, sire and as many progeny as possible. Travelling to other countries also allows us to look for future trends and confirms our view that Australia's cattle producers are some of the most resilient in the world.

Palgrove joined Breedplan right from its inception and would rate its application as one of the most important tools at our disposal, to enable us to select cattle that fit our client's requirements. We were able to build on our own knowledge of the performance and phenotype of an animal, add in the animal's pedigree and sire and dam's history and complete the equation with objective data from Breedplan that, more often than not, confirmed our physical evaluation of an animal's potential, rather than varied it.

With the development of new technologies such as ultrasound scanning, we were able to get 'real information' and identify pedigrees that could deliver on fat and muscle in a balanced package. We are proud to say that Palgrove has more scan and weight records than any Charolais herd in the country and the accuracy of our Breedplan figures are the highest of any breeder. We rely on this information to breed the next generation of cattle in conjunction with kill sheet information feedback from our clients.

We see some challenges for beef cattle production in Australia in the short to medium term, as the seasons continue to change and rainfall becomes less reliable. In response, we are continuing to adapt our Charolais so that they are increasingly efficient performers, able to mature and fatten earlier, building on the breed's identified strength in feed efficiency. We have moderated the frame of our Charolais, so they no longer tower over all other breeds, but are still able to take their place at the head of the 'weight gain' line.


Platinum Windfall





Breeding Charolais began as an experiment for many of the early breeders, including Palgrove, but in the last 40 years the breed has taken its place in the industry as a vital element in the breeding of quality commercial beef animals. It is a breed that has quietly worked away at establishing its commercial credentials over both Bos Indicus and Bos Taurus breeds, from Tasmania to the Territory.

It is our hope that the genetic makeup of herds in Australia will continue to be simply guided by environment, management and markets. This is quite a different notion to what most breed societies would have us believe and unfortunately, the amount of resources wasted protecting breed differences, could be better spent researching breed complementarity. Both the pig and chicken industries have succeeded in this objective and the lamb industry is working hard to do the same.

We this in mind, Palgrove developed its hybrid bull breeding programme for clients, utilising Charolais, Angus, Shorthorn and Brahman in genetic combinations. We believe that this concept will become more common in the future as land and resources become scarcer. Large pastoral companies have taken the hybrid model on board as they too, as with smaller beef producers, need to efficiently breed as many kilograms as possible, off a limited amount of land, for the lowest possible cost. The hybrid bulls allow a rotational breeding programme to be undertaken in one generation with reduced management.

The beef industry has been able to make great leaps forward in recent years with the development of DNA, more accurate Breedplan data, ultrasound scanning, embryo transfer technology and much more. For those of us breeding bulls for the changing environments and markets, the only way to stay ahead of the breeding requirements of our commercial clients, is to keep these technologies at the forefront of our programmes.

Some would have science and computer modelling making all of our breeding decisions in the future, but in keeping with our philosophy of 'balance' in all we do at Palgrove, we believe that there will always be a place for the 'cattleman's eye' in genetic selection.

Australia's cattle producers can be proud of their achievements, and whether the future of our industry relies on corporate or family farm business leaders, there is no doubt that we can't afford to rest on our laurels and every generation of cattle born, must be better and more profitable than the last. Just like the new white French breed that arrived here forty years ago, the beef industry must continue to adapt in order to prosper. •

Global Index

By John Carter – ABA Director

Australian cattlemen are being raped. A continuation of the current price will see the herd continue to contract at an accelerating rate, hence the cover photo. "Last One Standing."

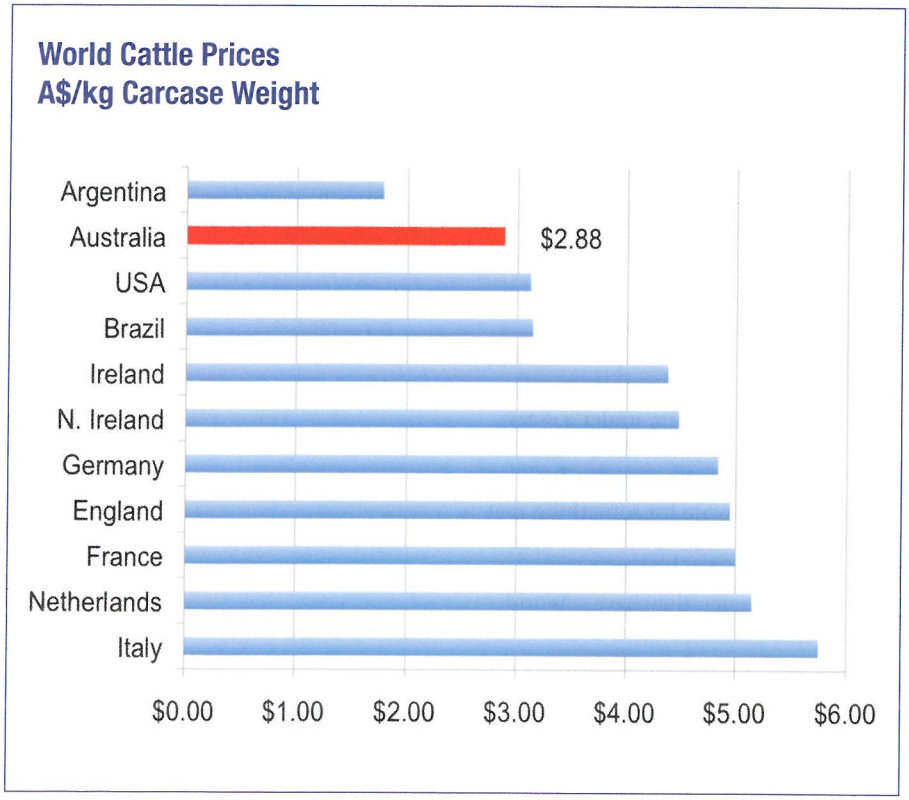
Since my last Journal article, the Eastern Young Cattle Indicator fell from 325 to 278.5 cents. It has recovered to 320 but in real terms is a disaster. The actual saleyard price has fallen almost 30% since 2001. We receive the second lowest prices in the developed world. We are exporting to Brazil!

Over the last 4 years the Australian dollar has swung from a high of 99 cents to a low of 60 cents, with an average of 76 cents. Cattle prices have been consistently falling over this period. The feeble ringing of hands and "We can do nothing" is a disgrace.

Since MLA began in 1998, they have had $1.44 billion at their disposal. They have spent over $0.5 billion on promotion. The World Price graph countries don't have the promotion money that MLA have yet the result lies below:

We have two problems and a third one coming.

1. The first, and by far the biggest, is the supermarket duopoly with their obscene mark up. ABA, alone, fought at the ACCC Grocery Inquiry. We continue to fight on with attacks on the two Ministers involved and work with Senators Joyce and Xenophon. Whilst this duopoly exists, Australian cattlemen will continue to get under 30% of the consumer dollar, whilst cattlemen in other countries get over 40% and up to 50%.
2. The increasing dominance in processing of JBS Swift, as they continue a frightening world wide expansion, with over $US 2 billion in debt and mounting, as the Brazilian Government Bank takes on the debt. Competition has fallen and is falling faster.
3. The threat of importation of high quality, independently graded beef from the US. ABA alone is fighting this in the Senate with Senators Heffernan, Nash and Back. *See separate article.*



1. At the Darwin MLA AGM we asked for the following – A real cattle price based on a year 2000 base published weekly in *Rural Press.*

   I mentioned stock agents referring to record prices at the AGM but I could have included NLRS reporters, staff, rural newspapers. It is time for some reality to be injected into a failing industry.
2. A developed world beef price table published weekly.

   This is done in Euros by *The Irish Farmers Journal* weekly. The publication is regarded by many, as the best farmers' paper in the world.
3. A cattle producer share of the consumer dollar published monthly.

   The USDA does this. The UK does it. Had we had it in Australia we would not have had to endure the dishonesty of the beef section of the *ACCC Grocery Inquiry Report.* USDA site is www.ers.usda.gov/Data/meatpricesspreads/

Domestic Consumption

When MSA was launched, they said that its introduction would see "domestic beef disappearance rise from 38 to 40 kgs by 2000".

Today, when we still have no grading system to the consumer, domestic disappearance has fallen to 31.3 kgs. (MLA figure). The record speaks for itself; MLA has overseen a disaster. We have seen a 24% fall in beef and sheep meat consumption in the 9 years (13kg per head per annum) – from 55 to 42kgs/head. Pig meat and poultry has seen a 28% increase, as they moved from 50 to 64 kgs/per head. Since 2007, the gap has accelerated. The current noises out of Queensland with regard to the Torbay Bill, are the pathetic ravings of puppets of processors who are responsible for this fall in consumption. If you send what is used for manufacturing beef all over the world to be used as table beef in our Southern Capital Cities you will put people off eating beef. The day in 1995 that Queensland cattle Leaders swallowed

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their processor line and Australia dropped the Gold Brand scheme was the day that consumption began to plummet by 23%. A handful of selfish short sighted processors have killed the goose which lays the Golden Egg. They quickly bastardised MSA by removing independent graders and are now slapping it on carcasses that would only go to manufacturing in the rest of the world. Nothing wrong with the manufacturing word but everything wrong with SUBSTITUTION. "Ah, but you don't understand-the beef is aged for 35 days to make it tender". Find me one butcher who will store beef for 35 days. Find me one inspector who checks ageing in shops."

Export

Our largest export market Japan received an increase of $7.4 million promotion money. In 2004 -2005 we exported 418, 939 tonnes to Japan, accounting for 50% if their consumption last year. US is regaining its market share and taking ours.

The US cattleman pays a $1 levy has No NLIS and No LPA and his cattle travel further to consumers.

US producers get 42 to 49% of the US consumer dollar against our 27.29%.

Why, when we are paying the highest levies and using the most expensive QA and Trace-back systems, are we getting the second lowest prices in the developed world?

Is our "Best beef in the World", really the worst in the developed world? Must we face the fact that we produce a third world product? is our supply chain still inefficient? are our negotiators on the EU quota quite hopeless. I can answer that one – Argentina with 28,000 tonnes of Hilton quota earn $US 0.5 billion, the US is increasing their quota to 20,000 tonnes far above Australia's 7,500 tonnes – neither have the NLIS that we gave to the EU so that we could retain access?

Our cattlemen are squeezed out of business by the highest regulatory costs in the World, the toughest retail duopoly in the World, one of the highest interest rates in the World – on top of trying to produce in one of the toughest environments in the World.

Now we have seen Cattle Council and the other Peak Councils on the Red Meat Advisary Council, agree in secret with Simon Crean to allow importation of beef from BSE affected countries! They obviously have no comprehension of what is happening in the Global Beef Market.

The Brazilian Government has created a Developement Bank, which has leant JBS Swift, the processors and producers $ billions to outperform the World. The Argentine is paying very large subsidies to feedlotters. The EU continues to pay large subsidies. China, with a herd of over 100 million subsidises its producers, as does Japan. The US Government subsidises grain prices, which enables the US chain to pay more to the producer than Australia's, yet give the consumer cheaper beef. We will see US Prime and Choice appear in restaurants and on gourmet shelves in supermarkets this year.

Apart from our push for reporting of reality by MLA's NLRS (above):

1. We still continue to be rorted by the Japanese processing companies in Australia and their puppets with Australian names. The huge mark up between Australia and the Japanese consumer must be pared back.
2. We still need the long requested audit of our product and to face up to what we produce – mostly manufacturing beef. Forget about complicated systems like Rightmeat, EQS, MSA. They have taken us nowhere. We are paying millions to consultants who are repeating previous work, which has been of no practical use whatsoever. Cut our costs. We will point all this out to the Arche Consulting Review of MLA.
3. Analyse our processing chain. The absence of any export abattoir west of a line from Adelaide to Townsville, when once there were eight, is a terrible indictment on industry and Ministerial failure in leadership. John Hewson and the WA RMAG group are trying.
4. The role of feedlots needs to be analysed – we can't compete with the USA in bulk quality – and now we have invited them in, under a crazy Free Trade deal under the Disguise of WTO threats. How our feedlot leaders could vote for something that will put them out of business, evades me. The US subsidises grain and, unlike Australia, they have a World respected grading system with independent graders. We will see our restaurants, top hotels and even supermarkets introduce ranges of high quality beef – US Prime and US Choice. Australia will be in the hamburger business – sound, but low priced!!
5. The worldwide financial recession/ depression has seen a huge swing to cheaper eating. McDonalds are a big winner with a 22% increase in beef patty sales. The Australian dollar has moved from buying 104 Japanese yen to 85 Yen. From being worth 98 US cents to 90 US cents – all in a year. Our Foreign debt at $ 726 billion is now the highest per capita debt in the developed world outside Iceland. Our interest rates have remained one of the highest in the World, so that we attract capital to service the debt – mostly bank debt. A fall in our interest rates would see a huge exodus of capital, our dollar fall, increasing our debt and interest to be paid on it. Successive Governments have allowed us to borrow ourselves toward oblivion. We are in a Catch 22 situation.
6. The US, European and Russian herds are falling. Humans are squeezing cattle off the planet. Our herd is shrinking faster. As I write this, 80% of NSW and much of Queensland are still in drought. The floods in the Gulf area saw very big losses – could run to 200,000 and post flood pasture recovery, has been very poor. This follows the earlier de-stocking of much of the NW and Barkly Tablelands in the face of one of their worst droughts on record. Human demand for space and water has us beaten.

So, what of the future?

Sunset Industry as Government, Supermarkets and Nature bleed it?

ABA will continue to say it as it is and fight for change. •

The Role of a Producers Wife in Northern Australia

By Kylie Camp

I asked Kylie Camp to describe the life of a wife of a cattleman in the Gulf of Carpentaria. The Camps live on Floraville Downs, a 206,000 acre station on the Leichhardt River some 40 miles from the Gulf. They experience the challenges of Drought, Flood and Fire on a very big scale. They lost 4,000 cattle in Cyclone Ted in 1976.
Kylie's 2006 Journal description of sharks, crocodiles and snakes swimming around the homestead in the 2006 flood, showed that this area is not for the faint hearted. ***Editor***



Camp family in front of the homestead at Floraville Downs. From L to R Natasha, Kylie, Zara, Ernie, Shannon, Aidan & Lenore

Position description

Must be able to:

- Teach children school for several hours a day, whilst maintaining a happy and stable disposition towards said children
- Cook 3 meals a day, provide smokos and endless cups of tea, to a hungry crowd who will not always show appropriate appreciation of your efforts. Able to whip up a meal at short notice for truck drivers, agents, salespeople and unexpected visitors.
- Maintain station office – pay accounts, issue invoices, wages, BAS and tax preparation, phone banking, NLIS transfers. Answer the telephone – take messages, order goods and maintain a polite attitude towards telemarketers, who will always ring when you are very busy.
- Undertake first aid and in some cases respond quickly and calmly to major injuries and work with Royal Flying Doctor Service to look after the patient.
- Maintain a garden – green grass soothes the soul, when all else around is brown or absent. Hopefully produce some vegetables to supplement the kitchen stores. Be prepared to defend your garden from poddy calves, wallabies and goats, if the gate is left open (which is inevitable).
- Undertake domestic duties quite likely not just in your home but in all station buildings – guest quarters, kitchen, store etc. be able to tidy rooms and prepare beds at short notice for unexpected visitors, broken down tourists, salespeople and cattle buyers.
- May need to be able to help in yards to work, or truck cattle; check and/or fix fences, motors, pumps; drive trucks or machinery
- Keep family and home bathed, clothed and in some semblance of order
- Participate in local/school community events or committees (Optional – though it is a great way to meet and make friends for life that will be a great support network)

Skills required

- **Teaching** – basic literacy and numeracy skills, competency with a computer – kids these days need to be able to present reports in Word, Publisher and Powerpoint, ability to make collages and 3D sculptures out of boxes, glue and an incredible amount of sticky tape, and a lot of patience. Must be able to make up resources and activities to supplement those on offer, especially if you have a struggling learner. Be prepared to stick to your guns, if you believe your child is not getting the best educational outcomes. Enjoy playing with playdough. Maintain a happy attitude when all the requirements for an "on air" lesson that took you ages to assemble or create, are not used and that you need to finish tasks that will never get finished "on air" in your time. Be prepared to accept endless interruptions from phone, toddlers, husband, staff, the odd snake and visitors expected or not. When your children reach high school, it is highly likely they will go to boarding school hundreds of km away. Boarding school, offers so many opportunities that you are unable to offer at home, which is what you want them to experience. But someone else will be their primary care giver for much of their teenage years and each time they come home, they will have changed a little – changes which you did not witness, or have control over. Sadness at this will always be there.

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- **Cooking** – able to make beef interesting and appetising for at least 800 meals a year. Be able to do so when you have no fresh fruit and vegetables, canned supplies are getting low and unexpected visitors call, or turn up earlier than expected. Be able to change a gas bottle; cook cakes etc without power (so no mixmaster etc) or eggs; weevils are a fact of life – get used to them; be able to do all the above, whilst nursing a child or answering a phone.
- **Office** – be competent with computers – much easier to send info to the accountant and pay accounts this way; be able to listen to "on hold" music, while waiting to be put through to government departments, Telstra etc to sort out accounts and queries, be able to pay cheques, whilst nursing a baby or talking on the phone; be prepared that over "the Wet" all accounts will be overdue because you are unable to get mail for several weeks – be prepared that not all businesses will care that you couldn't get mail and so could not pay on time. Expect your computer/internet/phone will not be working when you most need it. Accept that you may have to wait up to 3-4 weeks to have them repaired (last year we were 3 months without Internet).
- **Garden** – don't be disappointed when the poddies eat your hard earned efforts in the vege patch or your favourite plant in the garden. They never seem to like weeds or the plants that grow easily and so require little nurturing from you.
- **Miscellaneous skills** – a good shot, fire fighting skills – wild summer storms mean lightning strikes, basic mechanical skills – the water pump/generator will never break down when the men are home, animal husbandry skills are an advantage (our closest vet is over 330km away). I do have friends who can weld, fence, drive graders/dozers, as well as ride horses/work cattle.

Above all you need a positive attitude and you need to love the wide open spaces and isolation.

Living a long way from anywhere means you need not only to be self sufficient and an expert in "making do" but that you need to be able to cope when things go wrong, kids become ill and services are either not provided, or take a long time to be repaired/replaced.

By the same token your children have lots of space and the freedom and safety to just be kids, you can see/appreciate every day Nature's gifts, breathe fresh air and see the stars at night, drive several hundred kilometres to town in the same time it takes urban dwellers to commute to/from work in the city to home in the suburbs, eat the fish you catch, drink water straight from the creek – no contamination there. •



Bungle in the Jungle

By Brad Bellinger – ABA Chairman and Director of Oxley

There is a consistently underlying thread in the National Livestock Identification Scheme and that is it is not working.

The Agribusiness Online Report (that the ABA funded early in 2009) on the efficiency on NLIS, reveals a startling 34% of cattle that have lost, or never had whole of life traceability (read further summary in Journal).

A survey run by the Kondinin Group has exposed that 30,000 cattle are losing their whole of life traceability every month in NSW alone. The Kondinin Group, a well respected agricultural consultancy group could never be accused of being politically motivated. They wanted the government to fix the problem.

Reading through the responses from the State Primary Industry Ministers after we sent them a bound copy of the Agribusiness Online Report, is testimony to their and their advisors collective incompetence.

Here is a summary of their criticisms and then my reply:

1. *Loss of lifetime traceability status under NLIS does not mean an animal is not traceable.* (This traceability to the last movement could have been achieved with a 14 cent tail tag – instead the Government chose the $3.70 electronic tag).
2. *I am advised that the Audit Report commissioned by your organisation is inaccurate in interpreting that the lack of lifetime traceability status indicated lack of traceability.* (Again the NT Minister Kon Vatskalis concurs with the SA Minister Paul Caica that lifetime traceability is not an issue).
3. *Because of the small sample size, the Report cannot be accepted on being representative as a sample of the NLIS System in Queensland.* (Minister Tim Mulherin then goes on to quote the Cowcatcher 11 exercise conducted in 2007, where 98.7% of 300 cattle were able to be traced back to their property of birth. The Agribusiness Online Audit was conducted on the movements of 56,905 cattle).
4. *A TV commercial focussing on the NLIS produced by McDonalds in Japan is a recent example of the value placed in NLIS by consumers of Australia's beef in North Asia.* (Victorian Agriculture Minister Jo Helper fails to mention that a major restaurant chain in Japan has also said that they viewed NLIS as unimportant. Australia's share of the Japanese market had dropped from 55% in 2004, before NLIS introduction to currently below 50% now. For Minister Helper to endorse a half billion dollar traceback scheme at the cost of the producer to facilitate a grinding beef market in Japan that has dropped the price to Australian processors since the introduction of NLIS beggars belief. The USA with no NLIS, has of course taken much of Australia's share of the import market in Japan).

Given the non-sensible replies by State Agriculture Ministers, the ABA Board decided not to continue with the second part of the Audit, the paper based trail. We had already spent $10,000 of your money on the Audit and any further expenditure we envisaged would not cure the brainwashing that our States Primary Industry Ministers have had by the Cattle Council and others with vested interests.

I would like to thank the Auditors Paul Evans and Scott Paterson for the work they undertook in conducting what is the most comprehensive Audit performed on the efficiency of RFID/NLIS. I also thank those producers who gave the Auditors access to their accounts. With the Qld Government latest fine of $10,000 to a cattleman for breaching NLIS regulations, your identity will always remain confidential.

Misinformation concerning the accuracy and benefits of NLIS is not restricted to Politicians. Last year the ABA caught out MLA CEO David Palmer when addressing a bull sale in Scotland. The press reported on Mr Palmer as saying, "We have 28 million cattle (in Australia) all of them tagged and we can monitor their movements with a team of 15 staff. The cost of this operation he put at some $3 million. He went on to say – "this small Australian team can respond to any query within 30 minutes".

It takes the levies from the sale of 100,000 cattle to pay Mr Palmer's salary. I would suggest it would take someone on less than the minimum wage to lie about NLIS to the International Press.

Slowly the penny seems to be dropping for some politicians. A fervent supporter of NLIS Senator Bill Heffernan, seemed rather bewildered to be told by a government official that beef from BSE affected countries will not require RFID/NLIS at Decembers Senate Inquiry into lifting the BSE ban. To his credit, Senator Heffernan did at least acknowledge that he would have little argument supporting NLIS to the two ABA representatives at the Inquiry. John Carter and I enjoyed a brief moment of vindication.

Unfortunately, if the ABA are unable to block the Governments and RMAC's decision on BSE imports beef producers face the same dilemma that has confronted citrus, vegetable and pig-meat producers. A flood of imported food from subsidised producers without the added high regulatory cost burdens that our own governments place upon us, the primary one for beef producers being NLIS.

During my time in the ABA, I have been approached on occasions by members to take NLIS to court even the high court. I question that the separation of powers is a reality in Australia especially between the Judiciary and Parliament. Statements made by judges issuing fines against producers that have moved cattle without NLIS devices confirm this. It is almost as if they have read from a prepared propaganda sheet given to them by a government official. A statement from one judge, when handing down his sentence to a farmer for breaking the NLIS regulations, pertained to his opinion that the farmer had put at risk Australia's disease free status. With an estimated 24 million untagged wild pigs roaming our

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continent, the average 5th grader would see the irrelevance of an RFID tag in stopping a Foot and Mouth outbreak.

Of course NLIS exemptions exist and so they should in Western Australia for cattle from property of birth to a slaughter house, the same for the Northern Territory for live export cattle. Again it seems our men of the wig and robe, believe that disease recognises State Boarders.

Agribusiness Online Report on the Efficacy of NLIS for its Intended Purpose

Executive Summary

Background

Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) of cattle became compulsory throughout Australia on the 1st July 2005 and was phased in through the mid 2000's. Consequently, the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) was modified to facilitate electronic tracking of each animal. The strategic objectives of NLIS were to:

- Identify individual animals at birth and track their movements until slaughter.
- Leverage Australia's safe food image in global beef market by enhancing its world class Quality Assurance systems with accurate traceability functionality.
- Provide an accurate track and trace system, which would assist in the event of an exotic disease outbreak, and
- Develop a sustainable competitive advantage for Australian beef products, by maintaining and improving access to markets, especially in export arenas.

The Australian Beef Association (ABA) believes that cattle NLIS has lowered the industry's profitability by increasing supply chain management costs and that increased export volumes at higher prices have not eventuated. According to the ABA, "over the last 12 months the Association has received increasing reports concerning the accuracy of producers' NLIS database accounts which, along with higher than expected tag loss rates, are seriously undermining the credibility of the system."

It is against this backdrop that the ABA Board decided to engage consultants experienced in data analysis and strategic marketing (agribusiness) to investigate and report on the accuracy of the NLIS database, in providing lifetime traceability for cattle movements.

Conclusions

Consultants Paul Evans and Scott Paterson, from Agribusiness Online, audited 17 PICs (properties) including a range of small, medium and large properties, over most states of Australia. The audit covered around 57,000 tags, a statistical sample size about 20 times larger than the percentage of the population used for a Morgan Gallop poll. The report documents two different methodologies used by Agribusiness Online to cross check its results and conclusions, which can be summarised as follows:

- 34.5% of the study sample's cattle slaughtered to date did not have lifetime traceability. Orange tags represented 18.4% of these, while white tags comprised the other 16.1%.
- Trend analysis conducted on the loss of traceability resulting from transfers on and off the 17 PICs, suggests that white tags will continue to lose traceability at greater than the historical rate of 16.1% which, in addition to the orange tags still in the system, foreshadows a total lost traceability rate of at least 22.3%, increasing with time.
- That figure does not take into account several substantial intangible losses of traceability that are not being captured by the NLIS database system.
- The economic drivers for the NLIS system are away from, not towards, meticulous NLIS administration practices by cattle producers.
- Since at least 20% of cattle do not have lifetime traceability, it is inaccurate and misleading to promote cattle RFID/NLIS as currently providing whole of life traceability, which it is unlikely to ever achieve, because the economic drivers built into the system are fundamentally negative.
- To rely on NLIS for credible information to effectively manage a highly contagious disease outbreak would be illusory and potentially dangerous for the industry.
- For control of contagious diseases with short incubations periods, it can be logically demonstrated that it would be much cheaper, more accurate and more effective to manage disease outbreaks by using an existing supply chain management program, or converting NLIS to track consignments electronically.
- It appears that the strategic marketing objective of NLIS to create a sustainable competitive advantage in export marketing arenas using RFID technology to promote Australian beef products, has not eventuated. Despite huge investments in the technology and consistent promotion of Australia's beef products, and systems, Australia has not improved its overall market access. Meanwhile, other major beef supplying countries that do not have lifetime traceability, but have experienced exotic disease outbreaks in recent years, are regaining lost market access at Australia's expense. It is therefore very difficult to make a case from this data that RFID/NLIS is delivering, or ever will deliver, a Preferred Supplier status to Australian beef exporters.

Report Authors

Paul Evans established an agribusiness consultancy company in 1978 and has had a 'Paddock to the Plate' experience in supply chain management. He has post-graduate qualification in Strategic Marketing (Agribusiness) and has worked with stakeholders across the whole chain of supply, in Australia's Horticulture and Beef Industries. Paul is one of the pioneers of technology transfer and innovation in Australian fresh food supply chains and his business developed the first value-based marketing systems, for beef and fresh produce, which were sponsored by the lead industry bodies, Horticulture Australia and Meat and Livestock Australia.

Scott Paterson is a qualified Electronics Engineer with experience managing multi-billion dollar projects for the Australian Defence Force. At age 34, he was promoted to the rank of Wing Commander and led a team managing the acquisition of upgraded avionics and weapon systems for the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) F-18 Fleet. Scott was also responsible for the investigation and implementation of a Business Intelligence system approach at the Gold Coast City Council. His knowledge of tools to extract and analyse data, as well as report on performance led to an Information Access and Delivery Project, which delivered valuable new Information Technologies (IT) capabilities to the council. Scott also has post-graduate qualifications in Management Studies and consults to businesses on strategic planning and systemisation. •

John Niven of Hazelwood

John Niven – ABA Director of Kosciusko

John was reluctant to give me his story but I believe strongly that ABA reflects Australia's hugely diversified operators and that John is representative of a large segment. As Director for Kosciusko he has been one of our most active Directors. He has a vision gleaned from a very widely based career. He is a true graduate of the University of Hard Knocks. He is not afraid of offending the establishment and joined ABA because of its refusal to become a sycophantic arm of Government. ***Editor***


Niven Border Leicester ewes

John grew up at Eugowra in Central Western NSW. He was No 4 of a family of seven. His parents had 330 acres on Mandagery creek. He left school in 1963 and did some shearing until Feb 1966 then went full time when his Father died and elder brother took over the farm. He was full time shearing over most of NSW and Longreach area Qld and southern WA until 1971, he married and went to New Zealand in the Spring of 1971.

In February 1972, he made a big change, as he went to Canberra and worked in the Commonwealth Police for a year. He then had 10 years as Duty Officer in Communications section of the Department of Foreign Affairs. In 1979, he formed a small Company with work colleagues and purchased 160 acres North of Forbes. His marriage failed, he lost a house and went back shearing with a contractor from Yass for approx one year. In 1985, he went to Hazelwood 220 acres near Bimbi (Grenfell District) and ran into 22% interest rates and sold the Forbes block. His children, Paul and Leanne, came to him in 1986 and he reared them, while shearing and contracting full time.

Leanne is a Chef but works with David Jones in customer service. Paul is a Vet and also has a Business Degree and works with Consulting Company on efficiency projects.

John purchased 440 acres in partnership 1992 and another 800 acres in 2003. Drought seasons have meant a substantial amount of time on extensive local Stock Routes with up to 200 cattle. He recently sold back to 60 or so. He has 400 merino ewes and 350 stud Border Leicester ewes. He sells upwards of 100 rams per year. Sales ebb and flow. A few years ago, he got up to $800 at auction, 2008 was fairly flat but this year already better, good quality rams available for $300. Selection of rams measured by Stockscan for eye muscle and fat depth. John contested and won a seat on the Weddin Shire in 2004, he was re-elected in 2008. •


John Niven with his Border Leicester rams at the Grenfell Show


Niven cattle in good order

The Sheep CRC $123 million Scandal

By John Niven – ABA Director of Kosciusko

This is a strong article, critical of the academia that is eating up much of our levy funds. When we have highly paid young academics telling lifetime producers, who help fund them how to treat fly strike we have reached La La Land. The cattle CRC also has much to answer for. They continue to initiate work that has long a been completed at Clay Center, USA and European institutions. As with Sheepmeat, individual beef producers show how efficiency can be improved with select crossbreeding. The continued research into pure-breeding is almost a century out of date. ABA welcomes the Minister's order of a Review of MLA by Arche Consulting and will stress this waste of money in our interview. ***Editor***

The claims of benefit to commercial producers by Sheep Cooperative Research Centre are mostly fraudulent. On Thurs 30th April 2009, I attended the sheep Cooperative Research Centre field day at Cowra.

From the opening address by Ian Donges it was obvious the object of the day was an elaborate subterfuge to convince the audience of their stupidity, and the nucleus of the sheep industry was Australian Sheep Breeding Values. It seems ASBV's are the latest fashion. I have searched all the literature for "lambplan" and they seem to have gone the same way as Rural Lands Protection Boards, "on the nose" so change the name. His claim that genetic research was responsible for improved prices certainly set the tone for the day, as that implied inferior genetics were the cause of the price collapse. Supply and demand, overseas markets, value of dollar etc and especially the dominance of Supermarkets caused the collapse of competition and prices

There are 246 Border Leicester studs listed in Flock Book 42 use Lambplan. Approx 20 belong to "Superborders", a MLA Lambplan sponsored group who attach mesmerizing figures to average sheep in an attempt to form a cartel to price gouge commercial breeders. Some other studs "Lambplan" their sheep, simply because of the avalanche of MLA sponsored propaganda that has influenced commercial producers to ask for it.

The first cross Border Leicester, X Merino ewe is the most popular choice of dam for the prime lamb industry. Recently, other breeds including Lambplan free exotics are increasing their share of the industry.

Lambplan affiliated Border Leicester studs are constantly introducing sires from non Lambplan studs. Not only are Lambplan studs lagging behind in genetic improvement but they are adversely affecting the credibility of the Border Leicester breed with outrageous claims of genetic superiority by attaching mesmerizing figures to very average sheep. MLA and its Lambplan subsidiary is a highly sophisticated parasite attached to an industry that has gone from 170 million sheep to 70 million. In fact false claims of profitability to justify the CRC and price gouge the commercial sector of the industry has accelerated the rate of demise.

My Father sold lambs in the early 1960's for six pounds when shearing was eight pounds per hundred. Shearing is now somewhere around $240 per hundred.

Anybody with marketing experience would understand that the claim that genetic variation was responsible for the price collapse and subsequent recovery, is blatantly dishonest and uttered in pursuit of an ulterior agenda. My focus is more on meat than wool. When I saw the CRC XB sheep, I commented they were a disgrace. No meat below the tail, their arses were so low that I had to re-check they weren't emus. ASBV's make no allowance for fundamental structure and a basic sheep function, like walking.

Literature distributed explained that Border Leicesters with the Booroola (twinning) gene were used. I presume to raise the ASBV No. As chance has it, I have some knowlege of this experiment. The Booroola gene was first identified in merino sheep, the initial Border Leicesters were sourced from a dispersal sale near Captains Flat late 1980's and taken to South Australia. I purchased approx 6 of the best, they were Wongajong (John Ford, Goulburn) blood, reasonable frames but little meat on them. A few years ago, a neighbour here at Bimbi, bought Booroola Border Leicester rams from South Australia to specifically breed First X ewes to an order. It will suffice to say the rams were way off type and the lambs were dreadful. The twinning gene was diluted and the exercise put down to experience.

Since it's creation "Lambplan" has been heavily promoted and adopted to varying degrees by stud breeders. Many have their sheep measured simply because clients read the avalanche of propaganda. Studmasters then ignore results for ongoing stud selection. Lambplan as a basis for selection is fundamentally flawed, a number conceals both strong and weak points. I will give an example: A 2002 drop ram, visually the best, had a jaw that was a bit more than acceptably forward. He also scanned the largest area for eye muscle. I was limited by paddocks with available water etc and he was not mated 2004 but used in 2005. Very good progeny but more importantly his daughters have produced exceptionally well and have no sign of poor mouths. This will be followed through as Robert Bakewell worked out 150 years ago records and measurement were vital tools.

Stockscan provides actual measurements easily understood and ram buyers can compare the figures as a guide.

Lambplan has failed. Chris Cummins of Cowra abbatoir, explained in *The Land* since the introduction of Lambplan, lamb quality and eveness has slipped. Concentrated promotion by Meat and Livestock Australia of studs that have embraced Lambplan, which basically multiplies, adds, divides and subtracts until mesmerising figures obtain higher prices and increased sales to inferior sheep.

Highly skilled studmasters such as Graham Gilmore with a passion for the long term success of the industry, not only have to fund their own research but see perhaps hundreds of thousands of



Sale rams on Hazelwood

dollars of their clients levy money used to compete with their enterprise. Clients of my small stud would pay in the vicinity of $10,000 levy money per annum. Studmasters have a vested interest in the success of their clients. A one size fits all ASBV No. formula, designed to encourage ram breeders to regulate sales by forming a cartel to price gouge commercial producers will appeal only to the greedy. Not only is quality compromised but also profitability of the commercial lamb producer. CRC and MLA certainly have a lot to answer for.

I asked "If Lambplan was so successful why were longtime Lambplan studs now introducing rams from non Lambplan studs?" Benign type of answer suggested all genetics should be taken advantage of. I would suggest Lambplan devotees have fallen behind.

Much of the presentation on lamb survival, meat and wool quality and profitability treated the audience as simpletons. The offer of training by an academic for farmers who have survived droughts, economic difficulties and rationalisation, is the pinnacle of ignorance and arrogance.

Strong emphasis was attached to the interests of the meat consumer. That the producer needs the consumer more than consumer needs the producer is furthur demeaning and consistent with the contempt displayed not only by CRC, but also those leaders who have agreed to such nonsense as a ban on mulesing and the ridiculous N.L.I.S.

Measurement is a great tool and education is vital. My son Paul has a Bachelor of Vet Science Degree Syd and Masters Degree from McKinnon project Melb. We simply cannot afford the extravagance of this sheep CRC. In the present economic circumstances and foreseeable future there is no practical application for any of this information, in fact it falls short of the present ability of studmasters to improve our flock. Quite clearly demonstrated by the need of Lambplan studs to source rams from non Lambplan studs.

This sheep CRC is a highly sophisticated parasite, determined to hijack the industry by subtle deceptive claims of intelligence and then sell it back to producers.

MLA bulging with levy funds, simply can't help themselves provide late information. In the Southern Weekly of 24th Aug and delivered with Grenfell Record 26th Aug, is an offer of up to $60,000 financial assistance for Producer Demonstration Site to validate R & D knowledge!

The recent fanfare associated with web site establishment of blowfly information highlights the ignorance, arrogance and irrelevance of the CRC to the industry. Anybody in the industry would have forgotten more about blowflies than this circus would ever know. Blowfly management is a husbandry matter, taught and learned at the farm level. You would hardly give a 5 year old a pushbike and a book on how to learn to ride it. Perhaps a book on how to shear a sheep or lay bricks would be more useful.

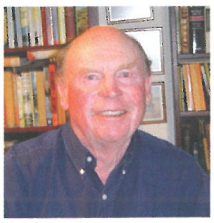
They have developed a machine to test tenderness, why not put it in your mouth and chew it.

We need technology, it is the abuse of such that is the problem.

This CRC wastes $17 million per year playing with 6000 sheep. The Weddin Shire services 4000 people with $5 million.

We are seeing an incredible waste of compulsory levy money. •

Free Trade in Mad Cows: How to kill a beef industry



By John Carter – ABA Director

This was the title of a detailed article by Professors Elizabeth Thurbon, John Mathews and Linda Weiss in our Autumn -Winter Journal of 2007.

Their predictions following the US Free Trade Agreement and its sycophantic "Side Letter" have arrived.

ABA, alone with some wise Senators, is fighting to stop one of the silliest of many silly acts by Canberra's Free Trade ideologues.

I described the first hearing in my Land Newspaper Column.

I have visited Canberra for over 65 years. Its sprawl gets worse each time.

My December 2009 visit was the most critical since our 1974 Wool Rally, which stopped the dropping of the Floor Price. I met Brad Bellinger at the airport and drove to the old Brassey Hotel – there, change was arrested in the 1930's and one can enjoy a "welcome back' note with chocolate by one's bed.

Next day, at 7.40 am, we were in Room 2S3 in Parliament House, ready to present our solitary, detailed submission opposing the introduction of beef from BSE afflicted countries. We were joined by retired Vet and my fellow classmate of long ago, Bob Steel. He questioned the science and stressed the danger of introducing exotic disease.

Like Horatio, Herminius and Lartius on the Tiber Bridge in Macaulay's poem, three of us, were trying to stop an invasion that will destroy the quality end of our beef industry.

We addressed our submission, until the Chair-Senator Fiona Nash, moved to questioning. I was disappointed – but not for long. Nash, Chris Back (WA) and Bill Heffernan had read ours and other material. They began a sustained six hour search for the truth in the style of John Faulkner (the Senate's Quizmaster). We had three more Romans on the bridge.

The nine grey suited representatives of "industry" – the RMAC team, were treated as William Wilberforce would have treated trinket attired African Chiefs, who had sold their tribesmen into slavery. Had there been a referee he would have stopped the fight. The ruthless Chairperson wouldn't allow any question to go unanswered. Finally one admitted to a vow of secrecy – RMAC was not to consult with industry or Opposition before the announcement.

When questioned on why they thought that minimal imports would occur, despite 30 applications, they just looked silly. Senators reminded them of similar statements by Pork Industry "leaders" in the 1990's. Now, over 60% of Australian processed pork is imported. Their time over, they slunk out.

After lunch 13 grey suited senior Bureaucrats took their places in the firing line. The barrage never wavered. Chris Back asked why it was safe to import beef from BSE countries, yet blood from people in England during the BSE outbreak, cannot be used in Australia. Australia's Chief Medical Officer's reply, lacked conviction.

Then came the demolition of the absurd" Beef off the shelves" myth. The reality was dragged out amid departmental buck passing. WTO have no "beef off the shelf" rule, or any power to implement one. There is no "off the shelves" regulation in any Australian State – it would put 300,000 people out of work. The myth rested on a dated, unscientific decision at a quango – Food Safety Australia and New Zealand that they would recommend it. Pathetic.

It was "cover up" for the absurd "Side Letter" to the US Free Trade Agreement signed by Mark Vaile. He had the "honour" to pledge Australia's support, for the BSE afflicted USA, to force its beef into BSE free countries. Crean's Trade Office and RMAC are doffing their caps to the USA.

The Committee will have another hearing in February, as we try to save our beef industry from subsidised imports, at the risk of Australian animal and human health.

ABA submission to Senate RRAT hearing on importation of beef from BSE affected countries 14.12.2009

The 20th October announcement by three Ministers that beef would be imported from BSE affected countries unleashes the most serious threat to Australia's beef industry in our history. ABA vigorously opposes the decision.

We give four reasons:

- Increased risk to Australian human health.
- Increased risk to Australian animal health.
- Devastation of price to Australian producers through importation of cheaper but higher quality table beef that is subsidised through grain susbsidies. Increased unemployment in regional centres, as Australian owned abattoirs close.
- Loss of Australia's unique clean image for its exports as, perception wise, we are demoted to the same ranking as countries with BSE.

There has been considerable deception in this announcement

Politics

"Beef off the Shelves" farce.

Such a move would put 300,000 out of work in a week. Bankruptcies everywhere. No Government in the World did this when BSE broke out within their borders. Who has fabricated this blatant lie? Wasn't any BSE outbreak to be addressed by Australia's unique half billion dollar NLIS scheme? We call for the tabling of the WTO "obligations" paperwork.

US Free Trade Agreement Side Letter of 18/5/2004 signed by the then Minister Vaile, help US gain access to beef markets, post their BSE outbreak. Is this announcement, the delivery of that sycophantic, foolish and quite unnecessary undertaking? The US is already "out muscling" our negotiators on the EU quota, despite their BSE and non traceability status.



Ministers claim that the decision is "Science based" – if so, it is Political science-not medical or economic science.

Increased risk to human health

Acronyms-BSE-Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy: TSE-Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies: CJD-Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease.

Let's look at the medical science:

In 1988, UK's Southwood Committee, made up of prestigious scientists established by Govt. concluded that it is "Most unlikely that BSE will have any implications for human health".

In 1997, the UK Government convened Lord Phillips Inquiry. It stated that up to 136,000 people could lose their lives to vCJD (the human form of BSE). Later, the Blair Government raised this to 250,000.

Scientific certainty on BSE and the various forms of TSE, does not exist. The gestation period for these diseases can run to over 50 years. There is cause of death confusion between BSE/CJD and Alzheimer's disease. Post mortems don't have compulsory reporting in USA for CJD diagnoses. The claimed reduction in BSE cases may well be disguised by flawed reporting of "cause of death".

Reviews of literature are the source of Australia's "scientific "knowledge.

Lisa Waddell is a senior officer in the Department of Population Medicine Ontario Veterinary College, University of Guelph Ontario Canada. She is a policy Advisor to Government.

She states "In 14 reviews, conclusions exceeded evidence presented. The various review authors position on the evidence for the zoonotic public health issues, lacked structured and transparent methodology, preventing the end user from assessing the review's validity"

Australia is putting trade policy above very incomplete and conflicting medical science in this decision.

To illustrate the gap between scientific papers and reality. In the US, there is still no legislation banning the feeding of chicken litter to cattle – see R-CALF

continued on page 20

USA's recent call for the practice to be banned.

Increased risk to animal health

Australia, being an island continent, has succeeded in avoiding most of the serious animal health diseases. Its ban on product from FMD affected countries has been successful in keeping our healthy record. Australia has spent huge sums on eradicating brucellosis and TB in cattle.

North America has had Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) for 30 years in deer. It is spreading fast and there are three recorded cases of its transference to cattle. It is thought by some scientists that CWD may have been derived from Scrapie by wild deer sharing pasture with sheep.

Scrapie has probably existed in North America for a century it was identified in 1947. Control schemes have all failed. It is seen to have almost eternal survival. Apart from a brief episode in 1952, Scrapie has never been diagnosed in Australia or New Zealand. Its introduction would be catastrophic for our failing sheep industry.

"Controlled risk assessment" is a fine academic phrase. We recall the chaos after the importation of some Brazilian beef, after permission from an AQIS, who had never visited the source. We recall the 2005 Senate Inquiry and no apparent disciplinary action taken against AQIS officers concerned. We recall the debacle of the 2007 Equine Influenza outbreak following importation of Japanese horses. We recall the reports of Eastern Creek Quarantine Station hygiene and discipline. AQIS had been warned on the tick carrying capacity risks for the disease, as far back as 2000, by Robert Steel.

We have no confidence in those assigned the task of "Controlled risk assessment:

- Price implications and unemployment.

The USDA website's 18.11.2009 entry, shows that US beef is currently selling to US consumers at around half the price that Australian consumers pay for their beef. US feeder steer producers were getting 32% more than Australian producers.

The US beef chain is much more efficient than Australia's due to:

1. Subsidised grain in their feedlots (their main means of growing out cattle);
2. Cheap imported labour in their abattoirs and
3. A fiercely competitive retail sector with over 60 supermarket chains.

Their table beef is graded by independent Government graders and is identified to the consumer. This gives much greater confidence in product than in Australia, where there is no independent grading. Their per capita consumption is around 17% higher than Australia's.

Beef traders are already doing their sums on importing high quality US beef and those sums are looking good. It will cost around 58 aus. cents/kg to bring beef in (same as the flood of North American pork). T he USDA website gives $aus13.86/kg for Choice grade sirloin at retail. The equivalent (if you can find it) is selling in Australia from $30 to $50 kg at retail. We have seen what the opening of the floodgates did for Australia's pork industry. Should this decision be upheld, we will see the closure of a lot of Australian owned abattoirs, causing major unemployment in regional centres? We have seen our Orange, Tomato and Onion industries destroyed by application of Canberra's Free Trade disease – now, apparently, it is beef's turn.

Question: *What quota and tariff arrangements are envisaged to protect our industry – as every country but Australia and New Zealand do?*

- Loss of Australia's "clean and green" image for world trade.

Australia has made much of its freedom from FMD, BSE, Blue Tongue, Scrapie etc. We have gone further to promote our image with a unique and very costly NLIS system. Despite these factors, our producers are receiving the second lowest prices in the developed world. By allowing in beef from BSE affected countries we are relinquishing this much touted selling advantage. We will be competing with the largest cattle herd in the World – the Indian herd – on price alone.

WE ASK THE COMMITTEE TO ASK THE SENATE TO OVER RULE THIS SUICIDAL DECREE.

The Pork Disaster

Brad Bellinger tabled this very sobering piece at the hearing.

We have been there before first Pork now Beef.

When assessing the impact and consequences of the Government's decision to relax import restrictions on beef, we do have the benefit of hindsight when a similar process was initiated by the government nearly 20 years ago for pork.

Since the quarantine liberalisation in the early 1990's, Australian pig producers have had to compete with imported pig meat. Imported frozen uncooked pig meat from Canada, has been allowed into Australia since 1990, from Denmark since 1997 and from USA in 2004.

The growth of pig meat imports has continued to grow over the years. Between the years 2001 to 2006 the volume of imports increased by 163%, while Australian production declined. Imported pig meat as a proportion of production in Australia increased from 17% in 2001 to 44% in 2006

Pig meat consumption increased by 32% during that period, however this did not stimulate increased Australian production, as imported product supplied the increased demand.

More recent statistics have seen a drop in the gross value of production drop from $944 million 2006-2007 to $880 million in 2007-2008. If current trends continue to this Christmas, then 67% of all processed pork sales in Australia will be from imported pig meat.

Beef comparisons

Similar to pig meat imports beef imports, production will be based on subsidised grain particularly from the USA and Europe. While farmers in Australia receive less for their cattle at farm gate, we are unable to compete with the finished product from the feedlot.

Even when feed grain prices are considered low, transport and geography can dilute the benefits. eg At harvest Victorian feed barley price dropped to $120/tonne, transport to a Toowoomba feedlot is up to $90/tonne.The harvest in Queensland has been a disaster making the cost to the feedlot at $210/tonne.

If the Senate does not overturn the Governments decision to allow imported beef from BSE affected countries, we will see ships loaded with cheap grinding beef sent to the USA and back loaded with graded feedlot beef into Australia.
I have no doubt that consumption will increase however, as with pig meat, it will not be to the benefit of the Australian producer. •

Out West

By John Hewson – ABA Director for Dampier

In WA, Kimberley producers anxiously await the wet season, as bush fires damage and threaten properties in the Broome area, further development of the Ord irrigation area appears imminent after many years of waiting. Hopefully it will not mean more and more sandalwood production under MIS plantations, which have already swallowed up much irrigation land. Unfortunately for Kimberley cattlemen, the best hay producing property north of Hall's Creek, has now been planted to sandalwood, in an MIS scheme. This property has its own irrigation dam. Many producers will now face the added expense of purchasing hay from southern areas. Another problem for Kimberley producers is the steep rise in pastoral lease rent, going up in some cases from $20,000 to $60,000. This rise has been attributed in part to highly inflated prices paid for properties by proponents of MIS, as well as city investors paying prices that do not reflect a realistic return on investment. Hence increasing the property rental valuations; along with a huge increase in wages, fuel ,transport and fencing materials, the rental increases are the last straw. At a recent meeting in Hall's Creek, pastoralists voted unanimously to oppose the rental increase. Good Luck.

Pastoralists have pushed for a feasability study into developing a seasonal abattoir at Broome or Derby, to absorb cattle unsuitable for live export and as another marketing alternative.

Further south, there has been an average to poor season in the Pilbara and Gascoyne areas. While in the northern cattle industry it is interesting to note that pastoralists are supporting a $3.50 levy at MLA AGM down $1.50.

Harvesting is now commencing in the Geraldton area with very good crops. As we move south much of the grain belt is in need of a finishing rain for an average crop. The first GMO trail crops in WA have been harvested, making way for open plantings next year; GMs are still a contentious issue over here. In southern areas, after a very late start to the growiing season we look like experiencing a very short spring season so perhaps not has much grass in our paddocks, as we would have liked.

After many months of waiting the Stocktake Report has been released. There are no new revelations in the Report and information contained in the Report is simply a reflection of issues raised at the Beef Crisis Meeting in Bunbury two years ago. These issues were also identified by the Red Meat Action Group (RMAG) in their submission to the consultants preparing the Report. In an effort to hasten Government and Industry acting to bring competition and efficency into the red meat industry, the RMAG has produced its own plans for a red meat precinct, encompassing everything from sale yards, abattoirs, feed lots and export facilities. We have also identified a suitable site. These plans have been professionally produced. We planned a formal launch of our concept in November, with WA Minister of Agriculture and proactive members of the industry and media present.

Cattle prices are still dreadful in WA, store pastoral cattle at give – away prices and a long wait for bookings at abattoirs.

Editor's note

I have followed the plight of our WA members with interest, as I worked with the WA Meat Authority staff on several projects. I have been appalled at the decline of 8 beef export abattoirs west of a line from Adelaide to Townsville to only one – dysfunctional at that. The meat industry in WA must embrace all parties, who are willing to progress and advance the development of meat processing and competition, if the beef industry is to survive, serviced by reliable abattoir facilities.

MLA board member, Peter Trefort, has done a wonderful job with his Hillside Meats abattoir at Narrogin, exporting the Q Lamb branded lamb cuts into the Middle East. He sends 1,000 lambs every day and is expanding into wealthy Dubai. The beef industry in WA needs a similar inspiration.

I have read the Executive Summary of the assessment of the WA beef industry supply chain – copyright held by MLA and WAMMIA. The report was produced by Warwick Yates & Associates.



Meat retailer will spend $3m to get WA beef

West Australian Fri 23/10

SARAH QUINTON

A local meat retailer will invest $3 million in a metropolitan beef boning room in an attempt to source 100 per cent of his beef from WA producers.

Dave Green owns Australia's biggest retail butcher, Drovers Pastoral Company in Wanneroo, and said he currently sources 60 per cent of his beef from the Eastern States because it is cheaper.

He said the high cost of skilled labour and a lack of competition in the WA beef market had created a price disparity with the Eastern States.

Carcases from the Eastern States were 20 per cent cheaper than WA beef because of the high processing costs in the WA supply chain and a lower level of supply.

"At the moment locally I pay about $8.50/kg for rumps, but I can get it for $7.50/kg delivered from the Eastern States, that's a huge saving for us," he said.

"That's because there are five times the amount of processors over east who can produce processed meat cheaper."

Mr Green said by cutting out the middle man and processing the beef he would need to source up to 300 cattle carcases a week from WA producers, or 15,000 per year.

"This will eventually benefit the farmer because instead of me having to buy my beef from the Eastern States, I'll source it locally," he said.

Newdegate cattle farmer Doug Giles welcomed the plan, saying any new processors for beef in WA could only create more competition.

"I just sent a road train of cattle to the Eastern States for 25¢/kg and still made 60¢ more per kilo than I would have here in WA," he said.

"That's because they have more competition and bigger markets to sell in. The more people that are processing in WA, the better the price for farmers at the farm gate."

A review by the WA Beef Industry Stocktake Committee released last week recommended that a processing precinct would revitalise the future development of meat processing in WA.

The precinct would be funded by the sale of government assets of about $30 million over three years.

Agriculture Minister Terry Redman said the report reinforced the Government's view that a strong and stable export beef processing sector was fundamental to the future of the WA beef industry, but would consider comments by the industry and had asked for responses by November 6 after which he would begin to implement the report.

As one who worked as an administrator of the NSW meat chain for 16 years and was on Australia's Meat Industry Policy group for 4 years, I know what won't work. Any Round Table, Focus Group etc. that selects its members from organisations, is doomed before it starts. If you want action, get the most progressive operator in each segment of the industry, together with an energetic person who will be backed by Government. He/she will listen to the go-ers and go into action. The report highlights that WA needs a change to their pastoral lease system, to something similar to the NT's perpetual lease system. The NT one is underpinned by environmental conditions on the lease. They need an upgrade of port facilities and a well sited abattoir/feed complex.

They are worried about lack of a work force due to the mining demand and high wages. Time to think laterally. The US relies on cheap Mexican labour. Fletchers, Narrikup, a large sheep abattoir in the Great Southern, relies to a great extent on workers from the Philippines and Korea, who are employed under the Visa system and WAMMCO, Katanning, another large sheep abattoir in the Great Southern, relies almost entirely on Malay workers from Christmas Island, there is an obvious solution to solving the work force issue. •

ABA is the Only Producer Body Fighting Suicidal Emissions Trading Scheme

By John Carter – ABA Director

In January 2009, following a Board meeting. ABA released the following press release.

ABA Chairman, Bad Bellinger said today that the ABA Board had met and unanimously opposed any form of Emissions Trading. He said that the Australian Government will be acting like academic fools if it goes down a path of trading something that cannot be accurately measured.

He continued 'Since the 1997 Kyoto Summit we have seen the UN try to run a Clean Development Mechanism with no success. We have seen the European Commission try Carbon Permits. They got their sums wrong and the large power and oil companies made fortunes at Government expense. The people are taxed – as they will be in Australia, if we go down this mad path."

"We have seen the World's bankers make complete fools of themselves and bankrupt millions, as they trade in derivatives which they don't understand. Now, Emissions Trading will be even worse, as people trade an unmeasurable commodity in a gambling casino run by the unknowing. To see it even considered as the recession deepens makes one wonder."

Mr Bellinger said that the members of ABA try to make a living from raising cattle in a harsh environment. They have their feet on the ground. They hold in contempt the academic airheads who are pushing unscientific hot air drivel onto Australians. These people have already demonstrated their impracticality in their utter inability to even sort out our water problems.

He concluded "ABA gives its full support to Barnaby Joyce and anyone else in Parliament who has the courage to point out the bleeding obvious – Emissions Trading is a con act."

From January 2009, up to the publishing of this Journal ABA has carefully studied this issue. It has publicly criticised NFF, MLA and AgForce as they accept millions of dollars in Government handouts in return for supporting the Government policy. They have accepted millions in return for selling out cattle producers for billions. In August, ABA was the only producer organisation represented in the anti-ETS rally outside Parliament House in Canberra. We have been the watchdog.

October – ABA Chairman, Brad Bellinger said that NFF's support for the Labor Government's Emission Trading Scheme in return for a payment of $23 million to MLA, was an act of utter bastardry.

He said that figures being quoted show an annual debit of over $100 per beast, which would put most cattlemen out of business and close a very fragile industry.

We are watching "Get big and get out" on a huge scale. Australia's largest agricultural export industry is in deep trouble. Now the NFF is moving to sink it completely, in return for money to keep NFF solvent and a mouthpiece for the Government."

He continued "ABA applauds the courage of Barnaby Joyce who is voting against the suicidal legislation. He has the intelligence to see through the latest war cry of the mindless mob – "Climate Change". He has read enough history to know that climate has changed since Creation and will continue to the end."

"Money changers" are drooling at having another table to play at. One understands that for tiny Australia's Government to introduce an Emissions Trading Scheme, with so little research on its implications is madness. NFF's support for it is a new low in a long and treasonous history."

In my October 2009 Counterpoint Column in the *Land Newspaper* I wrote.

The Prime Minister's appetite for being filmed with World leaders for Australian TV screens appears to have overcome his judgement. I can't see any logic in the Government's rush to have an Emissions Trading Bill through before Copenhagen. Our 0.035 of the World's population will have a similar impact to that of Namibia or Peru – zero. Commonsense would dictate that we wait and see if anyone is going to do anything. The idea of a double dissolution on the issue after an almost certain stalemate in Copenhagen, makes no sense.

It is even harder to see any logic in the push by the Leader of the Opposition to amend the Government's Bill rather than reject it. Post Copenhagen, the Bill will look silly and the Opposition can crow. Is he planning a parachute from the Liberal Party aeroplane, or are his colleagues of the days when he chaired Goldman Sachs in Australia pressuring him

Matt Tabbai has done an interesting article on the Internet on the Goldman Sachs bank under the title of "The Great Bubble Machine".

Marcus Goldman founded his bank in1869. Tabbai outlines the bank's role in the Great Depression and then the "high tech" bubble with their innovative "laddering" by placing shares with people who were contracted to buy more at higher prices, guaranteeing that the market rose. They did the same with the US housing bubble and the ridiculous oil bubble. Remember when Oil Futures in New York went to $147/ barrel and we were paying $1.35/ litre at our pumps here. Now it is $60/ barrel and we are paying $1.25!! Fishy. Iran's President said at the time that there was no oil shortage. Barrels of oil were being traded up to 27 times. Speculative money in commodities grew from $13 billion to $ 317 billion between 2003 and 2008. The salaries and bonuses at Goldman Sachs became obscene. The great bank "bail out" was engineered by ex Goldman boss, Secretary of Treasury, Hank Paulsen. He has gone but more Goldman Sachs men have taken over in the Obama administration.

Tabbai writes "The new game in town, the next bubble, is in carbon credits – a booming trillion dollar market that barely even exists yet. Goldman Sachs gave the Democratic Party $4,452,585 in the last election. If the plan goes forward, as expected, the rise in prices will be government mandated. Goldman won't even have to rig the game. It will be rigged in advance. The bank owns a 10 percent stake in the Chicago Climate Exchange, where the carbon credits will be traded."



We have the Pacific between us and the US but when I heard that one of Australia's larger banks called on Barnaby Joyce and told him to "back off" in his opposition to the ETS, it was clear who the winners will be. The losers will be the heavily taxed people. Some large oil companies have already made huge money from the infant EU scheme – at the expense of the taxpayer. The major banks see huge money in the new casino and appear to be the "hidden hand" behind Al Gore and our politicians.

"Put your money on self interest-you always know it is trying". They are trying very hard.

My January 2010 column was entitled – Post Copenhagen embarrassment.

Australia's delegation amongst the 40,000 at the Copenhagen talkfest have made fools of themselves – at our expense. Over 100 official Government-persons plus Cattle Council and NFF have gone very quiet. If only their return flights had terminated in Western China. As Hemingway wrote "Let those that want to change the World get to know a small part of it first".

Government perseverence with the ETS bill is political suicide. Their mentality was illustrated by Minister Peter Garrett saying last week that Australia's hot 2009 showed the Planet warming. He hadn't noticed the thirty year record snowfalls and low temperatures across the Northern Hemisphere. He mirrored inane statements by other Parliamentarians noticing the climate changing with more drought and bushfires over the past forty years! Ignorance is not party specific. Professor Simon Ryan of the Catholic University in Brisbane summed it up succinctly in an ABC interview "It appears that the general public have recently discovered that climate is not static – it changes."

We owe a lot to the energy and clarity of thought of Barnaby Joyce, Steven Fielding's unanswered questioning of Penny Wong and the thoughtful Andrew Robb. Australia went too close to a disastrous ETS.

The UN IPCC reports are demonstrably fraudulent. Its Chairman and some of its core 'scientists' at the Hadley Climate Research Centre have been exposed as corrupt. Remember the Y2K bug scam and the recent discovery that the Chief UN Scientist who exaggerated the Swine Flu danger is a large shareholder in the company manufacturing the vaccine. ETS is driven by the New York/London based banks to make a killing at the expense of the taxpayer. Emissions Trading would run into a trillion dollar industry within a few years.

I have just read US Congressman Ron Paul's " End the Fed". His expose of the US bank "bail out" by the friends of the major banks at the Federal Reserve is sickening. The Reserve refuses to divulge how much they gave and a few years ago stopped announcing the amount of money in circulation. These people are just creating credit out of thin air to save their mates. Emissions Trading would give some solid money to their coffers – our money.

The West is ignoring real pollution problems, while conducting a vendetta against an innocent bystander – carbon dioxide. Carbon dioxide, the gas of life, is NOT a pollutant. Annually, 97% of Earth's CO2 is produced by Nature, 3% by humans (including industrial and transport activity). Those estimates are provided by the UN IPCC itself. A mother's breath on her baby's face is now seen as a toxin!.

Meanwhile, South East Asia gasps in a brown cloud of real pollution like the smogs that once smothered London. It isn't caused by carbon dioxide. It comes from dirty combustion – uncontrolled forest and rubbish dump fires and poor people scrounging anything that burns for cooking and heating. The London smog was removed by clean electric heating and lighting from distant steam generators. SE Asia can do the same.

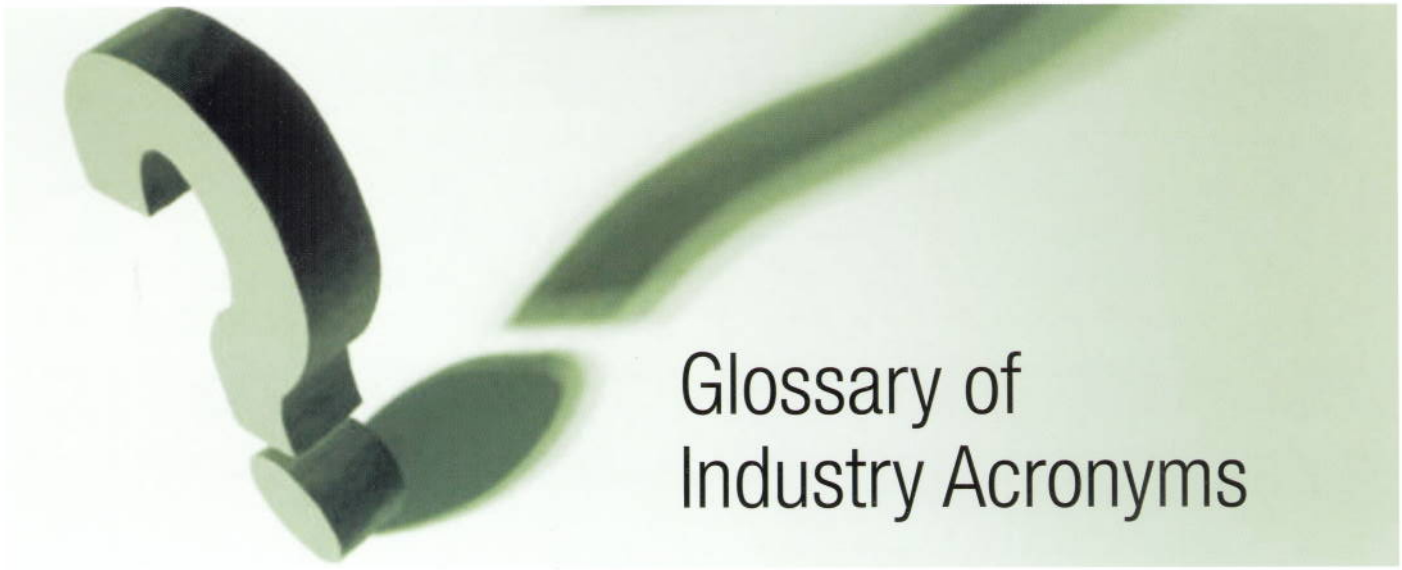
That the UN IPCC and Government want us to believe that a single CO2 molecule produced by humans warms the planet, yet the other 32 produced by Nature doesn't, is just silly. They will need to find a better reason to tax us further.

ABA salutes our tireless member, Viv Forbes and his Carbon Sense Coalition secretary, Malcolm Roberts. We salute Leon Ashby who has also done huge research and publicity. Steve Truman's Agmates has done great work . In the political arena Barnaby Joyce, Steven Fielding and Andrew Robb were courageous men of principle. Andrew is the one bright light for agriculture that has emerged from the NFF ambition pole.

ABA voices its unlimited contempt for all the producer organisations who accepted money to support the Government push for the ETS tax. Never forget that NFF pushed for the GST and was rewarded with a big handout to " train its members". Senator Harridine said at the time that they were the only body in his lifetime to support a Government tax on its members. They haven't changed.

As I finish this article, a drastically amended ETS Bill is moving toward Senate debate. We need to ensure that it is defeated. We know that the Planet is being trashed by humans but an ETS is no way to address the problem. •

Date 2008	Title
19th March 2009	Federal and Queensland Governments Phasing out Australia's Beef Industry, whilst Brazilian and the US Governments Build Theirs
7th April 2009	Crazy Research on Cattle Greenhouse Gas Omissions – Should be Reason to Vote MLA Levy Down
27th April 2009	Victorian Government Subsidisation of e-NLIS Sheep Represents a Stimulus Package for Tagging Companies
28th April 2009	Bush rising against City – Centric Government Persecution
25th May 2009	ABA calls on PM Rudd to replace Minister for Agriculture, Tony Burke
27th May 2009	Bill Bray and MLA Levy Review Committee Lose the Plot
27th May 2009	Cattle Council Thirty Years of Adding Production Costs with Diminishing Cattle Prices is Nothing to Celebrate
2nd June 2006	NFF and Cattle Council Rewarded by Government with Copenhagen Junket
5th June 2009	Australia is ignoring the Northern Flood disaster. Federal Government must Give HOPE to Producers in Declared Areas
19th June 2009	Australia's NVD Leads the Major Beef Export Countries in Animal Health Trace-back but RFID NLIS is an Expensive Failure
9th July 2009	ABARE's "Boom Times for Beef in 2008/2009" Prediction are Based on a Straw Poll and Very Misleading - Time for a Full Beef Industry Audit
18th July 2009	ABA Congratulate AWI on Mulesing Solution
28th July 2009	ABA calls on Premier Rees to Move to Protect the most Productive Agricultural Land in NSW from Mining Degradation and to Divest Minister McDonald of One or Both of his Portfolios
10th August 2009	MLA's recipe for Survival – "Smoke screened Beef" Time for Truth
18th August 2009	MLA Gets Herd Forecasts Consistently Wrong
1st September 2009	RMAC's Strategic Plan Offers Nothing to Producers Who Fund Them
8th September 2009	RMAC's Resistance to Torbay's Truth in Labelling for Beef is Hypocritical
25th September 2009	Decimation of Australian Agriculture
30th September 2009	ABA Labels Opposition to Grading for Consumers, as Ignorant and Hypocritical
13th October 2009	ABA Supports Truth in Beef Labelling Legislation
20th October 2009	Time to look after Domestic Consumers, as Beef Prices in Real Terms Move toward 1970's Cattle Depression Prices
21st October 2009	NFF Proves Once Again that They are Not the Voice of Australian Farmers
21st October 2009	Canberra's Ministerial Trio and Cattle Council's Sell-out of Australia's Beef Industry
26th October 2009	BSE Imports Make NLIS Redundant
26th October 2009	ABA censures MLA's David Thomason for Irresponsible Statements on Beef Grading
27th October 2009	MLA's David Palmer Blows Wrong Notes on NLIS Trumpet/Bagpipes in Scotland
28th October 2009	MLA spent $1.44 billion over 11 years only to see Australians abandon Beef and Sheep Meat Consumption in Favour of Poultry and Pork
12th November 2009	Burke loses to Cattle Council wills, In Mad BSE Decision
16th November 2009	RMAC is an embarrassment – Their Credibility is Gone Completely Minister Burke must Sack his "advisory body", or be seen as a Fool by Association
17th November 2009	ABA concern at Brazilian dominance of MLA
25th November 2009	ABA Pleased to Announce Election of New Co-Vice Chairman
28th November 2009	Apathetic Participation in Levy Vote Should Be of Concern to Federal Agriculture Minister
3rd December 2009	ABA calls on Crombie to Resign or the NFF be Buried Along with the ETS
21st December 2009	ABA congratulates Three Senators and Vows to Fight any Importation of Beef from BSE Afflicted Countries in 2010
7th January 2010	ABA Sets Its First Goal To Achieve a Fairer Price for Our Cattle in 2010
11th January 2010	ABA Releases No 2 Goal in its Endeavour to Achieve a Fairer Price for Australian Cattle in 2010



Glossary of Industry Acronyms

ABA	Australian Beef Association
ABARE	Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics
ACCC	Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
AGM	Annual General Meeting
AFFA	Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Australia
AHA	Animal Health Australia
ALFA	Australian Lot Feeders' Association
ALPAA	Australia Livestock and Property Agents Association
AMI	American Meat Institute
AMIC	Australia Meat Industry Council
AMLC	Australian Meat and Livestock Corporation (replaced by MLA)
AMPC	Australian Meat Processors Corporation
APHIS	Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
AQIS	Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service
ASIC	Australian Securities and Investments Commission
BJD	Bovine Johne's Disease
BIFSC	Beef Industry Funding Steering Committee
BSE	Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy
CAFTA	Central American Free Trade Agreement
CBOT	Chicago Board of Trade
CCA	Cattle Council of Australia
CED	Committee of Economic Development
CoOL	Country of Origin Labelling
CJD	Creutzfeldt - Jakob Disease
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
DAFF	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Forestry
DPI	Department of Primary Industries
e-NLIS	Electronic National Livestock System
ETS	Emissions Trading Scheme
EU	European Union
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
FSANZ	Food Standards Australia New Zealand
FMD	Foot and Mouth Disease
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GMO	Genetically Modified Organism
ICMJ	Intercollegiate Meat Judging
JBS-Friboi	formerly Australian Meat Holdings (AMH) Australia' largest Processor, Feedlotter & Exporter JBS also bought Swift Co in the US
LPA	Livestock Production Assurance
MLA	Meat and Livestock Australia
MISP	Meat Industry Strategic Plan
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NASD	National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (US)
NAIS	National Animal Identification System (American NLIS)
NCBA	National Cattlemens' Beef Association (US)
NFF	National Farmers Federation
NIAA	National Institute Animal Agriculture (US)
NLIS	National Livestock Identification System
NLRS	National Livestock Recording Service
NVD	National Vendor Document
OIE	World Organisation for Animal Health, Organisation Mondiale de la Santé Animale
OJD	Ovine Johne's Disease
Peak Councils	5 organisations; Cattle Council, Sheepmeat Council, Goat Meat Council and the Australian LotFeeders' Association
PIC	Property Identification Code
PwC	Price Waterhouse Coopers (accountants)
QCL	Queensland Country Life – newspaper
R-CALF	American Cattleman's Organisation (similar to ABA and our sister organisation)
RFID	Radio Frequency Identification
RMAC	Red Meat Advisory Council
RMAG	Red Meat Action Group (Western Australia)
SCA	Sheepmeat Council of Australia
SFO	State Farming Organisations such as AgForce, Victorian Farmers' Federation
USA	United States of America
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WHO	World Health Organisation
WTO	World Trade Organisation

MEMBERSHIP FEE SCHEDULE

Up to 100 cattle	$150 plus GST $15	$165
101 to 199	$170 plus GST $17	$187
200 to 299	$190 plus GST $19	$209
300 to 399	$210 plus GST $21	$231
400 to 499	$230 plus GST $23	$253
500 to 599	$250 plus GST $25	$275
600 to 699	$270 plus GST $27	$297
700 to 799	$290 plus GST $29	$319
800 to 899	$310 plus GST $31	$341
900 to 999	$330 plus GST $33	$363
1,000 to 1,099	$350 plus GST $35	$385
1,100 to 1,999	$370 plus GST $37	$407
2,000 to 2,999	$550 plus GST $55	$605
3,000 to 3,999	$750 plus GST $75	$825
4,000 to 4,999	$950 plus GST $95	$1045
5,000 to 6,999	$1150 plus GST $115	$1265
Over 7,000 cattle	$100 for every 5000 head or by arrangement	

Affiliate Membership

$110.00 including GST for people and organisations with no cattle but unable to vote at and ABA AGM.

Please make your cheque payable to: Australian Beef Association Ltd

Australian Beef Association, PO Box 446, Oakey Qld 4401

Phone 07 4691 2618 Fax 07 4691 3814

Email austbeef@ netspace.net.au ABA website www.austbeef.com.au

The Australian Beef Association is a national, representative body, focused on improving profitability for the beef industry by giving control and ownership of industry projects and policy back to the members.

APPLICATION FORM FOR MEMBERSHIP FOR THE YEAR 2010

Membership is for 12 months

Name

Trading as

Property/Residential address

Postcode

Postal address (if different from above)

Phone Fax

Mobile Email

Membership Fees have been changed. Please see fee schedule above

Number of cattle.....

This figure is combined with other members' cattle numbers we have been given, and is only used as a total figure to state approximately the number of cattle ABA represents. Your cattle numbers remain strictly confidential.

All fees are GST inclusive

I have enclosed a cheque for $..... (minimum full $165)

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1992 - $2.00
1993 - $2.15
1994 - $2.90
1995 - $2.20
1996 - $2.08
1997 - $1.85
1998 - $2.10
1999 - $2.20
2000 - $2.35
2001 - $2.90
2002 - $2.70
2003 - $3.05 to $3.40
2004 - $2.80
2005 - $3.10
2006 - $3.20
2007 - $3.00
2008 - $2.90
2009 - $2.80
2010 - $2.90
2011 - $3.30
2012 - $3.15
2013 - $2.80
2014 - $3.45

J. Barnard.
1.50

29 - 30 - 36 ¢.

shrim