# RED MEAT UPDATES

## TASMANIA

**12 JUNE 2014 | LAUNCESTON**

Delivered in partnership by

MACQUARIE FRANKLIN
Consultants for business, agriculture and environment

mla
MEAT & LIVESTOCK AUSTRALIA

## Red Meat Updates is proudly presented to you by

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## With special thanks to the Red Meat Updates Working Group

Basil Doonan, Chair (Macquarie Franklin)

Mel Rae, Event Coordinator (Macquarie Franklin)

Leanne Sherriff (Macquarie Franklin)

Sharon McGovern (MLA)

Georgie Bond (Eastfield)

Rob Tole (Greenvale Pastoral)

Frank Archer (Landfall)

John and Iain Bruce (Western Plains)

David Squibb (PGG Wrightson Seeds)

Rowan Smith (TIA)

James Tyson (TIA & Sheep Connect)

Peter Ball (TIA)

Bruce Jackson (DPIPWE)

John Talbot (TQM)

## And a huge thank you to the event sponsors

# PROGRAM

Thursday 12 June 2014 | The Tramsheds, Launceston
8.30am Registration desk opens, tea and coffee available
9.30am Proceedings commence

| SESSION 1 |
|---|
| **Welcome**<br>The Hon Jeremy Rockliff MP, Minister for Primary Industries & Water |
| **Keynote address: Tasmania's red meat markets: past, present and future**<br>Tim McRae, MLA |
| **Tasmanian red meat industry strategy update**<br>Brett Hall, TGFA |
| **Virtual farm tour of Benham**<br>Rob O'Connor, Benham |

**Morning tea**

| SESSION 2: CONCURRENT SESSIONS | |
|---|---|
| **SHEEP UPDATES** | **BEEF UPDATES** |
| **The MLA Challenge: what impact has it had on Ramsay Agriculture?**<br>John Ramsay, Ramsay Agriculture, Bothwell | **Our beef production story**<br>Mark Pearce, Beef Producer, NSW |
| **Lean meat yields & eating quality project update**<br>Janelle Hocking Edwards, SARDI | **Beef cattle health update – the latest findings**<br>Bruce Jackson, DPIPWE |
| **Tips to improve on-farm biosecurity**<br>Jess Coad, Livestock Biosecurity Network | **Southern beef situation analysis – what differentiates profitable producers?**<br>Tim McRae, MLA |
| **Branding a way forward**<br>Kerry Melrose, Melrose Meats, QLD | **Our succession planning story**<br>Mark Pearce, Beef Producer, NSW |

**Lunch**

| |
|---|
| **Interactive beef value chain presentation**<br>Doug Piper & Murray Patrick, MLA |

| SESSION 3: CONCURRENT SESSIONS | |
|---|---|
| **IRRIGATED PASTURE UPDATES** | **DRY LAND PASTURE UPDATES** |
| **What can red meat producers learn from dairy farmers?**<br>Basil Doonan, Macquarie Franklin | **Tour of Tasmania's pasture trial sites – matching pasture variety with landscape and climate constraints**<br>Rowan Smith, TIA |
| **Opportunities for grass seed crops in new irrigation areas**<br>Tony Butler, TIA | **Future pasture technologies**<br>Linda Hygate, MLA |
| **Endophyte technology – the balance between pasture persistence and animal performance**<br>David Squibb, PGG Wrighton Seeds | **Wildlife browsing: effectiveness & economics of management options**<br>Jonathan Knox, DPIPWE |
| **Using precision ag technology for managing water and nutrient inputs in pasture-based systems**<br>James Hills, TIA | **Live-weight, legumes, facts and fixation**<br>Peter Ball, TIA |

**4.15pm** Networking drinks

# WELCOME

**The Hon Jeremy Rockliff MP, Minister for Primary Industries & Water**

Jeremy is a north-west Tasmanian who grew up on the family farm at Sassafras. After matriculating in 1987 Jeremy then went to work on a cattle and sheep property near Hagley.

Following a two-year period at Lincoln University in New Zealand, Jeremy received a Diploma in Farm Management and returned to Tasmania to manage his family's property at Sassafras, which specialises in mixed cropping and prime lamb production.

Apart from his passion for farming and rural life, Jeremy has a strong empathy with public and community services and has worked with a number of organisations including Lifeline NW, Natural Resource Management and Landcare Groups, Youth and Family Focus, the TFGA and MST Workplace Solutions, as well as holding many other positions.

Jeremy has a close association with the Latrobe Football Club of which he was President from 2006-2009. In 2006 Jeremy was awarded Life Membership of Lifeline North West.

Jeremy campaigned successfully in July 2002 to become an MP for Braddon in the House of Assembly and held the portfolios of Shadow Minister for Primary Industries, Water and Environment and Shadow Minister for the Arts.

In December 2006, Jeremy held the portfolio responsibilities of Economic Development, Resources, Sport, and Recreation and Community Development and between August 2008 and March 2010 was Shadow Minister for Tourism, Infrastructure, Resources and Racing. Jeremy held the position of Deputy Leader of the Opposition from March 2006. Jeremy is currently the Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Primary Industries and Water and Minister for Racing.

Since becoming a Member for the House of Assembly, Jeremy has been instrumental in helping set up the Tasmanian Devil Research Trust Appeal, progressing the rights of asbestos victims, championing the need for water development and greater quarantine barrier controls, fighting for stronger food labelling laws and effectively representing many people across the Braddon electorate.

Jeremy is known for his strong representation of the North West and West Coast and believes that given the fact that much of the wealth for Tasmania is created by the diverse industry base of the North West and West Coast then in turn the region deserves nothing less than its fair share of government support and services.

Jeremy is married to Sandra they have three beautiful young daughters Ruby, Lucy and Holly.

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## Welcome to Red Meat Updates

The importance of the red meat industries to Tasmania is undeniable. Beef and sheep meat contribute almost half a billion dollars to the State annually, and beef sales remain Tasmania's single largest food export earner.

The Liberal Government has a commitment to grow the value of the agricultural sector in Tasmania tenfold to $10 billion per year by 2050, backed by our long term Agrivision 2050 Plan. I am confident the red meat industry will feature strongly in this growth.

Tasmania produces some of the best red meat in the world, and the industry has great potential. We must all work together to ensure the industry has the information and support needed.

That's what the Red Meat Updates is all about. An initiative driven by industry and developed in collaboration with producers, processors, researchers and agricultural consultants, it will showcase the latest research and development, and the many innovative practices being developed by the red meat industries.

It is an excellent example of the collaborative work necessary to secure a successful future for Tasmania's iconic red meat industries.

# KEYNOTE ADDRESS

## Tasmania's red meat markets – past, present and future

**Tim McRae, Chief Economist, MLA**

Tim McRae is the Chief Economist and Manager for Market Information and Analysis for Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA). Working closely with industry and producers, he is responsible for MLA's efforts to monitor, analyse and forecast developments in livestock, co-product and meat markets in Australia and around the world.

Tim is also the manager of MLA's National Livestock Reporting Service, which is responsible for the reporting of over 60 saleyards each week right across Australia. The author of MLA's bi-annual Beef and Cattle Industry Projections, he also oversees the release of MLA's Lamb and Sheep Industry Projections, along with several other publications.

Tim has a bachelor's degree in Agricultural Economics and a Masters of Rural Management from the University of Sydney.

**Abstract:**

Growing overseas demand for red meat and robust global prices should point to an improvement in conditions for Australian livestock producers into the medium term, provided supplies remain steady and seasonal conditions are favourable. For Tasmanian producers, the mix of markets, products, consumer focus and logistics will be crucial to capitalising on the anticipated demand.

The 2014 demand outlook for Australian beef appears positive, primarily due to the combination of a lower A$, recovering global economic conditions and the sustained purchasing of export markets. Australian beef and veal exports to Japan for 2014 are forecast to decrease 7%, to 270,000 tonnes swt. The combination of strong competition from the US, a recovering, yet fragile economy, an unfavourable exchange rate, anticipated tight supply from Australia and strong demand from other markets is expected to continue adding downward pressure on Australia's largest export beef market.

With the Australian flock expected to feel the impact of the record lamb slaughter and surge in sheep slaughter in 2013, the overall supply of lamb is expected to tighten into the second half of 2014 and through 2015.

So, while the supply prospects for Australian lamb over the medium-term will depend, in part, on seasonal conditions throughout 2014, the demand for lamb in overseas markets looks very clear. With decreased supplies out of NZ and expanding demand from major markets, Australian lamb and mutton will be in strong demand. The combination of China, the Middle East and the US will continue to take the majority of Australian shipments throughout 2014.

# Tasmanian red meat industry strategic plan

**Brett Hall, Livestock Producer and TFGA Meat Council Vice Chairman and Board Director**

Brett is a red meat producer from Oatlands and is a Director of the TFGA Board. He served a 3 year term as chairman of the TFGA Meat Council and currently holds the position of vice chairman. He is a member of the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA) extensive agriculture centre advisory group, the Cattle Council of Australia research and development taskforce and is a Trustee of the Tasmanian Beef Industry Trust. He was recently awarded a Tasmanian government scholarship for agricultural innovation as part of the MBA program at UTAS.

**Abstract:**

A TFGA initiated industry 'think tank' has recently developed an integrated vision for the entire red meat industry in Tasmania.

VISION: Establish Tasmania as a reliable and sustainable supplier of the best quality red meat in the world.

The development of this strategy has been unique because of the representation and co-operation from all the Tasmanian red meat industry sectors. The blue print developed will act as a framework for discussion and consultation with the wider community and stakeholders. The industry is committed to utilising the feedback received to further enhance the content of the plan before the final document is released.

The strategy identified three main themes with the greatest potential to sustainably increase the profitability of all the stakeholders:

- Secure a reliable and sustainable production base;
- Improve market access, by delivering produce of the highest quality;
- Increase information and communication activity and resources.

The draft strategy is a holistic single 'blueprint'. It has taken a scenario based approach around building innovative and profitable value and supply chains through mutual trust and co-operation between all sectors of the Tasmanian red meat industry.

For more information about the strategy:

Tasmanian Farmers & Graziers Association
TFGA House, Cnr Cimitiere & Charles Streets
PO Box 193, Launceston TAS 7250
Phone: (03) 6332 1800 or 1800 154 111 (within Tasmania)
Email: reception@tfga.com.au

# Virtual farm tour of Benham

**Rob O'Connor,**
**Benham Tasmania, Avoca**

Rob and Hanna O'Connor own and operate the business "Benham Tasmania" at Avoca in the midlands of Tasmania.

The property "Benham" has come from a long history of producing superfine wool to what now is a diverse farming business, with an enterprise mix of sheep for wool and prime lamb production, beef, cropping and forestry. The property is also diverse in land types and climate with average rainfall ranging from 500mm at one end of the property to 900mm at the other end. Enterprises on the property are matched to land capability and seasonal climate variables.

In recent years the business has expanded its irrigation area, which is designed to complement both the livestock and cropping programs.

The virtual farm tour has been filmed over a year in the life of the business. It looks at the key management and business aspects of pasture and livestock production on the property.


# SHEEP UPDATES

## Chairs:

**Leanne Sherriff, Making More from Sheep State Coordinator, Macquarie Franklin**

Leanne is a senior consultant with Macquarie Franklin. She has worked in many aspects of natural resource management and agricultural extension for the past 13 years. Leanne has technical expertise in a wide range of NRM fields, including biodiversity, weed management, fire management, climate change, water quality, salinity and sustainable soil management. Combined with a strong understanding of agricultural production systems, Leanne's unique range of skills is in demand by a broad range of clients who want scientifically sound and practical advice to achieve sustainable outcomes.

Leanne's skill set has recently expanded to incorporate sheep production, with Leanne involved in a number of red meat industry projects including state coordinator for Making More from Sheep, coordinator for three Tasmanian lean meat yield and eating quality lamb trials (funded by MLA), part of MLA's Farm300 National Coordinator team, and delivery of Lifetime Ewe Management for RIST. Leanne also has extensive experience in group facilitation and development and delivery of extension and training packages, including producer surveys and interviews, running farmer discussion groups and major event coordination.

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**James Tyson, Sheep Connect State Coordinator, TIA**

After eight years working with Australia's leading agribusiness banks – Rabobank Australia and National Australia Bank – James now manages the Sheep Connect Tasmania extension program; creating sustainability through improved productivity and profitability.

James comes from a prime lamb and cropping property at Sassafras and has a Bachelor of Agricultural Science from the University of Tasmania. More recently, he completed a Master of Business Administration (MBA) at Curtin Graduate School of Business in Perth, Western Australia.

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# The MLA Challenge: What impact has it had on Ramsay Agriculture?

**John Ramsay, Ramsay Agriculture, Bothwell**

John Ramsay is a Tasmanian sheep and poppy farmer, who has been involved in the MLA challenge over the past 12 months. John and his wife Annie run Ramsay Agriculture which comprises 3 properties totalling 3500 ha over 3 locations in Tassie. They employ 8 FTE's and run 3,000 merino ewes and 9,500 composite ewes, finishing between 6,000 – 10,000 lambs per annum on predominantly irrigated ryegrass. They crop 250ha of irrigated poppies.

John grew up on his family farm 'Ratho' and jackarooed in southern QLD and Riverina NSW. John went to study at Orange Agriculture College, focusing mainly on merino sheep and management. When John returned home the family purchased 'Ratho' (previously leased) and started an irrigation development program. 'Ratho' has been transformed from a merino property to a predominantly irrigated farm growing poppies and composite ewes.

**Abstract:**

John and Annie Ramsay embarked on the MLA challenge 12 months ago. MLA provided resources and a mentor. Through the course of the year Ramsay Agriculture has made some major changes. Out with the merino's and in with composite ewes. Lambs sales have increased. Decisions are made with a lot more rigour. There has been more monitoring, which then leads to more questions. Growth rates of lambs, genetics to use, lambs survival, scanning percent condition score.

There also has been a focus on business management: asset management, staff management, key advisor management, service provider management and labour efficiency.

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Find out more about John's and Annie's experiences. A range of quarterly articles and videos can be accessed online: www.mla.com.au/livestock-production/MLA-challenge

# Lamb lean meat yield and eating quality

**Janelle Hocking Edwards, SARDI**

Janelle has an undergraduate degree and PhD at University of Adelaide, which was followed by Postdoctoral Fellowship at Massey University and AgResearch New Zealand.

Janelle was appointed at the University of Western Australia to develop a national Wool Biology course which is conducted at four Australian Universities. Whilst at The University of Western Australia, Janelle was involved in numerous areas of sheep research through her own projects investigating wool follicle development in lamb foetuses and those of her Honours, Masters and PhD students.

Since 2000, Janelle has been employed by South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI) as a meat and animal welfare scientist and works part time at Struan Research Centre in the South East of SA, conducting industry relevant, sheep focussed research.

In addition she co-manages a 1100ha commercial farming business (wool & prime lamb) and cares for two teenage children.

**Abstract:**

The Proof of Concept – Lean Meat Yield (LMY) and Eating Quality (EQ) Producer Demonstration Sites (PDS) were established to determine the value of new research breeding values for LMY and EQ traits along the lamb supply chain.

Results from Tasmanian PDS's that evaluated lambs using terminal rams with extreme genetics for LMY, SF5 (tenderness) and intramuscular fat (IMF) will be presented and the value of these new traits to the Tasmanian lamb supply chain will be discussed.

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Further information about results from the Tasmanian Producer Demonstration Sites can be accessed online.
www.macquariefranklin.com.au/resources.html

# Branding a way forward

**Kerry Melrose, Melrose Meats**

Kerry started work in the family business Melrose Meats, with his father and uncle in December 1968, straight after finishing high school. Kerry started as an offal clerk and quickly progressed to a junior livestock buyer under guidance from his uncle, Steff Melrose.

By the late 70's Kerry took over control of all live stock purchasing.

During the early 80's Melrose Meats grew to be one of the Australia's largest service works processors of stock, throughout New South Wales and Queensland processing 400 cattle and 10,000 lambs per week to supply their Queensland Wholesale requirements and new export markets.

In the 90's Kerry moved into retail with his sons and ran various retail outlets. It wasn't until 2006 the opportunity to start sourcing quality lambs for Tasmania arose while running the lamb procurement business for Marcelford Wholesale Meats. By 2010 the Melrose family took up the opportunity to embrace Tasmanian lamb by taking this product in a new direction, by concentrating on only independent quality retailers and the upmarket food service sector.

**Abstract:**

With the inception of the MSA system, the face of domestic meat marketing in Australia has changed. It now has reached a level that has opened endless opportunities for the quality conscious purveyors of red meat, be they retailers or restaurants alike. For many years now, progressive retailers have been using the MSA logo as a brand, however now with a broader acceptance of the MSA system at a retail level, the emphasis has changed to promoting the product brand itself. While still using the MSA system as their purchasing guide, branding now creates this point of difference and a sustainable advantage.

## Notes

# Tips to improve on-farm biosecurity – secure your farm, secure your future

**Dr Jess Coad, Livestock Biosecurity Network**

Jess is the Tasmanian coordinator of the Livestock Biosecurity Network. She works with producers, industry stakeholders and peak-industry bodies to identify and address emerging and on-going health, welfare and biosecurity issues within the sheep and cattle industries.

Jess has nine years' experience working in agricultural research, development and extension in Tasmania, and recently completed a Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD).

She has a background in dairy, beef and prime lamb operations in Tasmania.

**Abstract:**

Jess will offer some tips on improving pest and disease control through adoption of good biosecurity practices – both on- and off-farm. Anyone who enters a farm or handles livestock carries some responsibility.

Most on-farm biosecurity practices are free or very cheap to implement, but they have ongoing payoff and returns. Biosecurity is about good management and good farming practices. It's about protecting your assets and livelihood.

Jess will touch on how common sheep pests and diseases are spread (e.g. lice, footrot and OJD), and suggest simple biosecurity practices you can implement to:

- decrease the risk of them entering, emerging and spreading throughout your property, and
- control and eradicate, where possible, those already present.

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# BEEF UPDATES

**Chair: Frank Archer, Landfall Angus**

Frank Archer is a co-principal of Landfall Angus, a family owned and operated business currently run by the fourth and fifth generation of the Archer family. Located in the Tamar Valley in northern Tasmania, an Angus Seedstock herd and composite ewe flock are run over 4000 hectares of grazing country.

After studying farm management and working in New Zealand, Frank returned to Tasmania to work in the family business in 2006. The key focuses of the operation are to operate a sustainably profitable business and to ensure a smooth transition of the management and ownership of the business from one generation to the next.

In addition the Archer Family market their branded meat products through Landfall Farm Fresh, their own retail store, in Launceston. Landfall Farm Fresh focuses on retaining control of the products supply chain, ensuring consumers are guaranteed product integrity.

## Notes

# Our beef production & succession planning stories

**Mark Pearce**

I live in the Yaven Creek area, near Adelong and Batlow (120km east of Wagga Wagga, NSW), with my wife Clare and our two children, Ted (6) and Lucy (7.5). I completed a Bachelor of Applied Science (Agriculture) from CSU Wagga, then went on to work as an agronomist in Northern NSW for several years. After finishing this, I travelled overseas for 6 months before returning home in mid 2000. Initially, I came home as a farm hand, but as time went on my parents handed over financial and farm management in 2003. However, they still play a large role in the day to day running of the farm. My father is 74 and still works with me most days. I am interested in interpreting current research so I can incorporate it into our farm production system.

**Our beef production story abstract:**

We run a spring calving, self replacing beef herd, producing feeder steers for the EU market.

To put things into perspective, I am the third generation to come back to the family business. My siblings showed little interest in coming home to help run the family farming enterprise, so I arrived home in 2000 after a stint in sales agronomy.

Any younger farmer coming home to the family farm has to learn to deal with many issues, and it may be hard to fathom why any young person would want to come back to the farm, often leaving behind a well paid satisfying job. This can be a very difficult decision to make, but one that I made 14 years ago, and I haven't looked back.

I've had to deal with drought, succession planning hurdles and the sometimes arduous task of working with the older generation, who, as we know, can become very set in their ways! Many would think all your worst nightmares had just become reality, however, this period of my life has been a very rewarding one, albeit challenging. Numerous mistakes have been made over the years, but generally the changes I've implemented have increased production and have made the farm a lot more profitable and easier to work on.

**Our succession planning story abstract:**

We all know that succession planning should be dealt with by every family business, and farming is no exception. Luckily for our family, my parents had the foresight to initiate succession planning well before I came home to work on the family farm. This presentation discusses the personal challenges faced by our family in relation to succession, and the positive effects produced for the family business as a whole. The need for families to remain cohesive, but independent of each other, can be more of a challenge than that of increasing the productivity of a farm.

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# Beef cattle health update – the latest findings

**Bruce Jackson, DPIPWE**

Bruce Jackson is a veterinarian currently employed as Manager, Animal Services within Biosecurity Tasmania Division, DPIPWE. Bruce graduated as a Bachelor of Veterinary Science with Honours from Sydney University in 1975 and gained entry to the Australian College of Veterinary Surgeons Epidemiology Chapter by examination in 1989. Bruce grew up on a sheep and cattle property near Walcha in the Northern Tablelands of NSW, and after graduation worked at Coffs Harbour, Warren (NSW), Oatlands (Tas), and Zimbabwe as a clinical veterinarian mainly with cattle, sheep and other production animals before returning to a Veterinary Officer position with DPIPWE in 1986. Bruce has been involved with many programs such as Emergency Animal Disease preparedness, introduction of the NLIS for cattle in Tasmania, residues work including the ban on the use of HGPs in cattle in Tasmania, an abattoir survey to prove that the Tasmanian beef herd was free of Enzootic Bovine Leucosis (EBL) and has been involved with programs aimed at reducing the impact of Bovine Johne's Disease (BJD) on cattle producers.

**Abstract:**

Laboratory submissions to Mt Pleasant Animal Health Laboratory were analysed for the period Feb 2013 to Feb 2014. Some of the most common conditions were limited to the dairy industry but some were of interest to the beef industry:

1. BJD – not many cases but serious effect on individuals who want to trade store and breeding stock. Use of the Beef Only declaration on the Cattle Health Statement for all store and breeding cattle transactions would help to slow leakage from dairy to beef industry.
2. Pestivirus; losses mainly due to lowered calving rates, neonatal losses and 'poor doers' Persistently Infected (PI) calves – usually a trickle but significant number of large outbreaks (e.g. 10/90 PIs). Profiling should be worthwhile to determine whether to vaccinate or not.
3. Brown Stomach Worm: beware egg counts can be 30-70 epg in cattle dying of Type 2 Ostertagiasis! Essential that producers have pepsinogen levels assessed (blood sample required). A recent case indicates that Macrocyclic lactone (ML) resistance may be emerging.
4. Micronutrients: Copper, cobalt (B12) and selenium supplementation can be expensive and response to supplementation not always consistent.
5. Phosphorus; deficiency is much more common than diagnostic rates indicate – plasma must be separated ASAP from blood samples!!
6. Campylobacter ("Vibrio"): cases diagnosed on KI, E Coast, and possibly FI. Culling empty cows and vaccinating can eradicate the disease from the herd.

# Southern beef situation analysis - what differentiates profitable producers

**Tim McRae, MLA**

Tim McRae is the Chief Economist and Manager for Market Information and Analysis for Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA). Working closely with industry and producers, he is responsible for MLA's efforts to monitor, analyse and forecast developments in livestock, co-product and meat markets in Australia and around the world.

Tim is also the manager of MLA's National Livestock Reporting Service, which is responsible for the reporting of over 60 saleyards each week right across Australia. The author of MLA's bi-annual Beef and Cattle Industry Projections, he also oversees the release of MLA's Lamb and Sheep Industry Projections, along with several other publications.

Tim has a bachelor's degree in Agricultural Economics and a Masters of Rural Management from the University of Sydney.

**Abstract:**

The key differences between the most profitable producers and the others were identified in order to demonstrate the opportunity for improvement in profitability. The analysis was on data drawn predominantly from the Holmes Sackett benchmarking database over a 15-year period. The geographic area from which data has been collected includes southern Queensland, the New England, Tablelands, Slopes , Wheat Sheep and pastoral zone of NSW, Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia

The major findings include:

- Profits of beef enterprises in the last year are high in relative terms and second only to 2002 levels.
- When compared to alternative enterprise choices over the long term, average beef profits per hectare exceeded wool but lagged dual-purpose, prime lamb and cropping enterprises.
- Over the last 15 years the average maximum profit per hectare of beef enterprises was lower than alternative enterprises. This is part of the reason for the lower relative performance when compared with alternative enterprises over the long term.
- Between-year variability in profit has been lower for beef enterprises than for all other livestock enterprises.
- Exceptional sheep meat and wool prices over the last few years have led to far higher sheep profits relative to beef profits. Crop profits have the greatest between-year variability and the greatest losses during drought.
- The most efficient and profitable beef producers have a combination of higher productivity and a lower cost of production. They do not have the individual highest productivity or price.
- There is a trend for increasing cost of production in beef enterprises but, at the same time, production per DSE and per hectare has also increased. A production increase has been necessary to offset the increasing rate of growth in both enterprise and overhead expenses.

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# Interactive beef value chain presentation: Adding value across the beef supply chain

**Doug Piper, MLA**
**Butcher- Sydney, Australia**

Butcher Doug Piper has over three decades in the meat industry. After leaving school at the age of 15 and moving to Sydney, Doug as done everything meat, from owning and managing retail butcher shops, overseeing meat departments for retail chains and working behind the scenes in wholesale and processing to strategizing business development.

Piper first joined Meat & Livestock Australia in 2007, where he has held red meat butchery master classes and networked with retail butchers throughout Australia, raising retail standards while working broadly across foodservice with exec chefs cultivating relationships and encouraging "nose to tail" usage of beef, lamb and goat on Australian menus today.

Piper has also travelled throughout the US, China and Europe promoting Australian beef, lamb and goat to chefs, retailers, foodservice chains and international hotel groups where he demonstrates a whole beef and lamb carcase breakdown, preparing innovative cuts utilising the whole carcass.

Back in Australia he also shares his meat knowledge at various industry trade events promoting non loin cuts proving that there is more to meat than just the premium cuts. Piper also facilitates Meat & Livestock Australia`s red meat retail value adding program that inspires retailers to produce a huge variety of beef and lamb meal options for their customers.

**Murray Patrick, MSA**

Murray Patrick is Southern Operations Manager for Meat Standards Australia (MSA). He's been with MSA for 15 years, commencing as a grader. In his current role, Murray ensures the integrity of MSA is maintained and looks for opportunities to grow the adoption of MSA beef and sheepmeat. Prior to MSA, Murray managed his family's mixed farming enterprise in northern Victoria.

# IRRIGATED PASTURE UPDATES

**Chair: Scott Leighton, Roberts Ltd**

Scott has been with Roberts for three years and in the role of state agronomy manager for the last 12 months. Scott has a 30 year history of involvement with the agricultural industry in Tasmania and has had various roles, including fresh market vegetable production for local markets through to managing mixed farming operations in the north of the state, and running his own agricultural contracting business for almost 20 years before joining Roberts.

Scott's passion is irrigated and dryland cropping and pasture production.

# What can red meat producers learn from dairy farmers?

**Basil Doonan, Macquarie Franklin**

Basil has 20 years of experience in farm business management, training and consultancy. He has worked extensively in Australia and overseas in grazing industries, particularly the dairy and beef sectors, primarily in the development and delivery of farmer training and follow-up consulting. He has consulted to many farm business owners and managers and has developed business strategies that have ensured the success of these individual businesses.

**Abstract:**

- Dairy farmers generally have more debt, more expensive resources and higher product prices; a kilogram of milksolids is more valuable than a kilogram of beef or lamb. As a result they must achieve higher levels of productivity to achieve a return to capital and management.
- Dairy farmers are exposed to greater variability in product prices on a year to year basis, generally have higher levels of inputs than red meat producers and as a result, there is greater volatility in the input price to product price ratio. Dairy farmers must have farming systems that can respond to volatility.
- With good management and excellent farming practices (and less expensive land resources) the best red meat producers can achieve similar returns to dairy producers.
- The evolution of a farming system should be a function of logical business decision making since the majority of farmers will list profit as a key motivator. Many farm business managers adopt an oversimplified approach to this, farming the way they want to farm, chasing silver bullets or blindly following the benchmarking results of the best farmers. This is totally misleading and often results in the evolution of farming systems that are inappropriate for the manager's resource base.
- For the large majority of farm businesses, profitability is driven to the greatest extent by the successful implementation and management of the basics and then incorporating new or emerging technologies at the margins. The environment that farms operate in is dynamic which means that any decision needs to take into account how it will interact with the entire system.
- Farm managers have been shown to consistently and repeatedly get this process wrong, particularly in times of higher prices when they tend to farm how they would like rather than how they should. This leaves these businesses particularly exposed when prices fall, there are seasonal challenges, or costs rise sharply. The primary focus on systems selection should be to marry it with the farm businesses' resource base in order to optimise profit. Farming lifestyle can only be sustainably maintained after profit is achieved.
- Adopting a whole of business or "systems" approach to the decision making process is one way of achieving consistently high profitability as the farming system evolves. Even the simplest decisions are set in a complex and leaky environment and can have significant impacts at the business level.

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# Opportunities for grass seed crops in new irrigation areas

**Tony Butler, TIA**

Having recently started at TIA, Tony is involved within the Herbage Development Program (HDP), where he is working closely with the Tasmanian pasture seed industry in a development and extension role. Projects range from assisting to identifying industry growth restrictions, generating education material, industry promotion and organising an upcoming national scale conference.

Tony has been involved with the Tasmanian agricultural industry for over four years having moved across the ditch from NZ. There, he was involved with postgraduate research focused on irrigation management with pasture based systems within Canterbury. Prior to working with the HDP, previous experiences include working in the agricultural sector in the UK as well as the private agricultural research industry within Tasmania.

**Abstract:**

Pasture seed production within Tasmania has the potential to be a significant player on the global market with the likes of Denmark; Oregon, USA, and New Zealand. This potential has been enhanced by the recent investment in irrigation schemes throughout the state. This investment as well as the 95% reliability of supply has opened the doors for producers within these irrigation districts to intensive, higher return crops which were previously infrequent or unobtainable.

Pasture seed crops can offer a sustainable and ecologically friendly crop that can fit well within the complex and challenging soils found within the Midlands and elsewhere in the state. In addition, the crop can offer flexibility within the cropping and grazing rotation, alternative uses of the crop as well as use of the crop post-harvest. In addition, recent advancements in crop management have resulted in substantial yield increases. When combined, pasture seed production and spin off uses has the potential to offer sound economic returns.

This presentation will cover the above issues as well as an overview of significant players within the global industry. Also, there will be some initial results from an industry survey as well as an announcement on details for an upcoming industry conference later this year.

Any enquires about the Herbage Development Program and its work can be contacted at TIA.HDP@utas.edu.au

# Ryegrass endophyte technology – the balance between pasture persistence and animal performance

**David Squibb, PGG Wrighton Seeds**

David Squibb is the Sales and Production Agronomist for Tasmania, for PGG Wrightson Seeds, providing advice/extension activities within the state. David has been with PGG Wrightson Seeds for 9 years, based fulltime in the state, after working for a leading Tasmanian rural supplier for 10 years previous to this.

David is a born and bred Tasmanian, involved with many agricultural industry groups in Tasmania, and is passionate about increasing productivity in the pastoral grazing sectors. David has worked closely with Dairy Feedbase and Nutrition Discussion Groups, several Beef Discussion Groups and also various prime lamb producers, attending regular meetings and field walks. David is available for farm visits at any time, by arrangement, to discuss pasture and forage options with producers.

**Abstract:**

Over recent years, plant breeders have developed ryegrass plants that increase dry matter production, feed quality and persistence. But how do we get the balance right to achieve the goals we are setting?

Endophytes are naturally occurring fungi that live within the ryegrass plant, being provided with a place to live, feed and reproduce. In return, the endophyte helps protect the ryegrass plant from predators, both above ground and some below the ground. The endophyte releases toxins that may cause issues such as ryegrass staggers and heat stress, and can have a detrimental effect on animal performance but may assist with persistency.

Plant breeders have been able to source naturally occurring endophytes from around the world that exhibit different combinations of toxin release and some that have none at all.

This presentation will outline some of these interactions, the effect that they have on animal performance and also pasture persistency, and discuss ways to manage these to get the best results for you as a producer.

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# Using precision ag technology for managing water and nutrient inputs in pasture-based systems

**James Hills, TIA**

James Hills completed a Rural Science Degree followed by a PhD on the feeding behaviour of ruminants at the University of New England, Armidale, in the late 1990's. Following this, James worked in the horticultural industry in Tasmania on various research and development projects and during that time he also developed and managed a successful seed potato business. James joined the Dairy Centre at the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture in 2012 as the research and development team leader. James currently leads a number of projects assessing precision agriculture technologies and their relevance to pasture-based dairy systems.

**Abstract:**

Water requirements of pastures differ depending on the prevailing species sown, the climatic conditions and soil type. Achieving the efficient use of water and optimum pasture growth involves matching the pasture water demand with supply. It is imperative that the root zone of the soil is at an adequate plant available water level because too little or too much water has a negative effect on production. Practical considerations of efficient irrigation include correct start-up time at the beginning of the season and accurate subsequent scheduling to ensure that adequate plant available water can be maintained.

Precision Ag technology can improve uniformity of supply within sites to prevent over and under watering as a result of variability in topography and soil types. The use of tools such as moisture monitors at various depths can assist with understanding the movements of water through the soil profile and alert the farmer to periods of over or under-watering. Other technology, such as thermal sensors can allow the pasture to provide feedback on moisture stress and could assist with developing appropriate variable rate maps for VRI's.

Accurate irrigation procedures are also important for controlling responses to nutrients. In particular, too much water can lead to nutrients being leached beyond the root zone, which is a major farm cost and potentially leads to offsite environmental concerns.

Technology is rapidly becoming available to enable placement of nitrogen and other nutrients exactly where they are required which reduces overall fertiliser usage, whilst still delivering the same or better production. An example of technology that is currently being assessed in dairy pastures is the Smart N technology using Weedseeker® sensors that detect and avoid applications of nitrogen to urine patches. Results from recent trials indicate nitrogen inputs can be reduced between 25 and 40% without affecting pasture growth.

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# DRYLAND PASTURE UPDATES

**Chair: Brian Field, TIA**

Brian Field is the Leader of the Extensive Agriculture Centre of TIA, a role he has undertaken since 2011. Brian grew up in Northern Tasmania on the family farm, and when he finished school worked in many diverse farming businesses across the north. He returned to study in the early 1990's obtaining a Bachelor of Applied Science Degree in 1994. Brian commenced his professional career in DPIPWE in 1994, where he worked across a range of RD&E areas including extending pasture research results, assisting with pastures and grains RD&E, and conducting a range of canola activities from field trials, discussion groups and managing summer breeding nurseries for the National Brassica Improvement Program. Following the introduction of the GMO moratorium in the early 2000's, Brian was required to undertake a regulatory monitoring program of the old GMO crop sites in Tasmania. Concurrently, he played a lead role in developing expansion of canola production in Tasmania targeting GMO free markets in Japan.

In late 2009 Brian accepted a secondment to TIA as an opportunity to focus on delivering RD&E to Tasmanian producers, and was appointed Centre Leader in 2011. A major component of Brian's activities currently involve developing and supporting staff to provide RD&E relevant to Tasmania's beef, sheep and grain industries.

## Notes

# Tour of Tasmania's pasture trial sites - matching pasture variety with landscape and climate constraints

**Rowan Smith, TIA**

Rowan is a Junior Research Fellow with the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA). He grew up in North-east Tasmania on a small beef property at Lilydale and attended Scottsdale High School where he developed a passion for agriculture. Rowan completed a Bachelor of Agriculture Science at the University of Tasmania in 2004 and has been with TIA in various roles for the majority of the time since.

He has recently became the leader of the Extensive Agriculture Centre's flagship Herbage Development Program (HDP) following in the large footsteps of Eric Hall and Bob Reid. Rowan's recent activities have been in pasture research, which included his PhD studies which focussed on the impacts of wildlife on pastures in Tasmania.

Rowan is also interested in International Agricultural Research and currently coordinates an ACIAR project focussing on developing productive and profitable smallholder beef enterprises in Central Vietnam.

**Abstract:**

The Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture's (TIA) Herbage Development Program (HDP) has been breeding new pasture cultivars, running species/cultivar evaluation and demonstration sites across Tasmania since the early 1990's. The overall objective of the program has been to identify, evaluate and develop a range of new perennial grass, annual and perennial legume, and browse plant species across a range of climatic and management conditions. This has been in response to the need for better adapted and more persistent species/cultivars for the low to medium (<700mm) rainfall regions of Tasmania.

The program has been a long term investment of the Tasmanian Government and the University of Tasmania for over two decades. The evaluation and demonstration sites have also been supported with funds provided by the Australian Government through initiatives such as Landcare, 'Caring for Our Country', National Heritage Trust, NRM Groups and Farmer Producer Groups. These funds have provided support to establish and monitor the sites for 3-5 years and the HDP program has continued to monitor (some for more than 10 years) to get a thorough representation on the persistence of these species.

This presentation covers some of the key findings at each demonstration site, highlighting the species that have been persistent, productive and the reasons why.

Rowan is presenting on behalf of a number of people who have made enormous contributions to the program over many years including Bob Reid, Eric Hall, Andrea Hurst and Gary Martin. It is thanks to them that the program has been such a success. We thank the ongoing support of the Tasmanian Government and current funding bodies including NRM North and Tamar NRM, producer groups and landowners.

More information on the TIA Herbage Development Program can be provided by contacting TIA.HDP@utas.edu.au or by checking out the TIA website www.tiar.tas.edu.au

# Future pasture technologies

**Linda Hygate, MLA**

Linda Hygate is the Project Manager for southern pastures research and development with Meat and Livestock Australia. After 17 years living and working in Victoria in a number of roles, in agricultural research, development and consultancy, Linda moved to Queensland and is based in MLA's Brisbane office. Linda holds a Bachelor of Agricultural Science and a Masters degree in Environmental Policy.

**Abstract:**

The opportunities under development for livestock producers to enhance their pasture management will be discussed. MLA is currently investing around $20m in pasture research and development for southern Australia. These projects and the opportunities they offer will be discussed.

## Notes

# Wildlife browsing: effectiveness and economics of management options

**Jonathan Knox, DPIPWE**

Jonathan is a Project Officer with the Browsing Animal Management Program (BAMP) at DPIPWE, a role he has had for the last three years. Jonathan has worked with DPIPWE for 27 years on a range of agricultural management related programs; mostly pasture management. This has included some research, but mostly a focus on extension. Jonathan's early career experience involved working on farms in Tasmania, around Australia and overseas. His qualifications include an Associate Diploma in Farm Management and Graduate Diploma in Agricultural Management and Extension. He currently lives at Evandale with his family on a small farm.

**Abstract:**

BAMP's aim is to promote integrated strategies to reduce the impacts of wildlife on agricultural and pastoral production. Information and advice from BAMP is based on outcomes from the Alternatives to 1080 program. Project Officers help landowners in planning and we also help to facilitate the exchange of information within the industry. BAMP operates within the Game Management Unit of the DPIPWE.

Offering a cost benefit analysis for comparison of different options for controlling losses to wallabies and possums is difficult and often entirely immaterial. The critical question is: Which option, or combination of options, can be made to succeed in a particular circumstance?

Knowing the extent of losses to a business from wallabies and possums is extremely important to implementing a successful control program as it allows a level of investment to properly relate to the risks and the benefit of success. On most occasions a realistic assessment of the losses to wallabies and possums completely dwarfs the cost of controls. Many farmers do not fully understand the true extent of their losses which can exceed $100,000 per year for substantial farms that have good habitat for wallabies.

On the other hand, a botched control program is likely to have a very low level of benefit, and the cost may be so great that it is a risk to a business or the people within that business. That is particularly true where the people and finances of a business are already under strain from losses and stresses related to wallabies and possums.

As examples, a wallaby fence will cost $10,000 to $13,000 per kilometre but a single hole every 400 metres will make that fence nearly worthless. Conversely, a kilometre of successful fence will reclaim land worth between $40,000 and $100,000 per km of fence within the first hundred metres of the bush edge. A shooting program involves OH&S and liability risks along with cost of out of hours, high quality labour, whether it is the landowners, or contracted, but if the population is not reduced to very low level by highly efficient shooting, the benefits to productivity will be low, as the remaining population will eat more and breed faster. 1080 needs good planning and preparation and the cost can be substantial. 1080 does fail at times. 1080 has social and market risks. As continuous poisoning is not allowed, infill from surrounding areas is likely.

To be useful, consideration of effectiveness and economics of wallaby and possum control options needs to include a very careful analysis of risks of failure. Industry wide initiatives to increase productivity through reducing losses to wallabies and possums should identify and focus on reducing those risks.

For further information:

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www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au/wildlife-management/management-widlife-browsing-grazing-losses/browsing-animal-management-program

# Future pasture technologies

**Peter Ball, TIA**

Peter is an Industry Development and Extension Leader in the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture's Extensive Agriculture Centre. Peter studied Agricultural Science at the University of Tasmania and whilst working in DPIPWE and TIA has been learning about Tasmanian pastures across 20 years of pasture and grazing related research, development and extension. Highlights have included working in MLA's Sustainable Grazing Systems, Prograze and More Beef from Pastures programs, along with research in quantifying and maintaining desirable species composition.

**Abstract:**

Some observations are that there is untapped potential in even the best pastures, that most pastures never get anywhere near that potential, and that there often far more grazing than grazing management.

The learning continues, as it should.

The value of legumes to Australian agriculture is not news. However this value and importance seems often overlooked in many Tasmanian pastures. Is this complacency or do we believe legume no longer has a role in our modern pastures? Trial work at Winnaleah has illustrated the magnitude of response that can be achieved by supplementing an every-day ryegrass pasture with nitrogen. In response to 270 kg of nitrogen applied per ha per year, a 73% increase in beef live-weight production was measured.

At Ringarooma a producer demonstration site has sought to illustrate the value that legume composition can bring. Over two years beef live-weight gain was used to measure the potential for animals to harvest energy from grass only and from legume and grass pastures.

Up to 40% legume was achieved in the best legume pasture resulting in a 38% increase in potential live-weight production above grass- only pasture. On average over the two years, pastures including sown legume yielded a 22% increase in live-weight production potential, without the cost of nitrogen.

This value is realised through improved feed quality, nitrogen fixed and total dry matter grown and distributed across the growing season. It perhaps makes us think that clover is not a weed, that it is not just cream in a good year, but a requirement in any year and that with management and more persistent and better adapted legumes there could and should be more of it. How much do you have?

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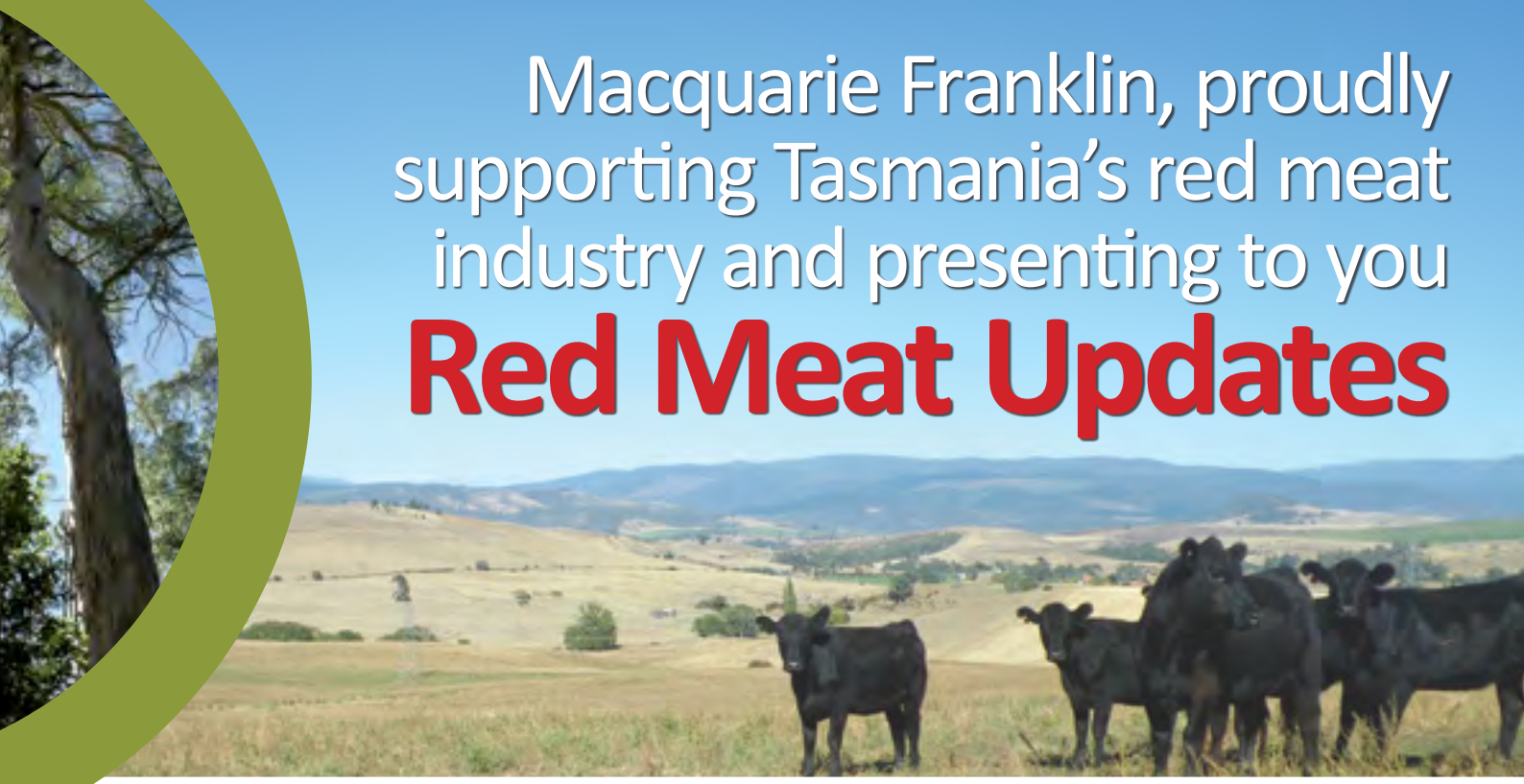
Access the range of free online tools at **mla.com.au/tools** today to help bolster the productivity of your pastures. Try the online calculator that predicts the maximum stocking rate or one which determines the pattern of feed supply and demand over 12 months, as well as other handy applications that will help your property prosper. It's all there for you at: **mla.com.au/tools.**

**DO SOMETHING. TRY SOMETHING.**
**HELP YOUR PROPERTY PROSPER.**



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# Red Meat Updates




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