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Melbrig feedlot proves point

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Brahman breeders with a point to prove that the breed can grade MSA have had their faith rewarded by the diligent and expert care of the Hutchinson family’s custom-feeding operation at Mundubbera, Queensland.

In December, eight Brahman cattle producers including Eloise Brahman Stud, Boogal Cattle Co, Hazelton Brahman, GE McCamley, D&C & RE Comiskey, Rockley Pastoral Co, S G & K A Wallace and Fenech Brahman placed 94 cattle in the care of Melbrig Feedlot for this month’s Beef 2012 exposition in Rockhampton.

Manager Brad Hutchinson said the cattle performed extremely well over the 101 days on feed.

He said the average start weight was 386 kilograms with an average finish weight of 544kg. The daily gain (full weight in and out) was 1.50kg per day with a feed conversion of 6.1 on a dry matter basis.

The cattle were loaded out from Melbrig Feedlot on March 26 and transported to Teys Australia abattoir at Biloela where they were processed and graded to MSA standards.

Australian Brahman Breeders Association general manager John Croaker said the vendors of the Brahman cattle were extremely happy that all 94 Brahman cattle graded to MSA standard.

All but two head graded in boning group 11 or better with 36 cattle grading in boning group 8 or better.

Mr Hutchinson said he was excited about the 94 Brahman cattle all grading to MSA standard ensuring the steaks will display the highest eating quality at the Ascot Stone Grill Restaurant during the Beef 2012 exposition.

Melbrig Feedlot is owned by Bruce and Viv Hutchinson. The feedlot is operated as a family partnership with their two sons Brad and Stewart and their wives Kellie and Bronse and trades as Hutchinson Grazing.

Melbrig Feedlot Brahman MSA Grading Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boning Group</th>
<th>Number of Carcasses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>34</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The steaks will display the highest eating quality at the Ascot Stone Grill Restaurant during Beef 2012.
for MSA Brahman

The Melbrig Feedlot is at Mundubbera about 400 kilometres north west of Brisbane. The Burnett River flows through the Mundubbera region, which is highly regarded as an excellent cattle-grazing area but is also recognised as the Citrus Capital of Queensland, being home to the ‘Big Mandarin’.

Melbrig Feedlot was established in 2005 and is built on part of a 1025-hectare holding owned by the Hutchinson family. The feedlot is operated and run on a daily basis with the assistance of one fulltime employee.

The feedlot has a licensed capacity of 3,000 standard cattle units turning off up to 6000 cattle annually which are destined for domestic and export markets.

The Melbrig Feedlot has full accreditations for NFAS with licences for the EU and HQEU markets as well as MSA certification.

The feedlot is equipped with a Cambooya Roller Mill, which has capacity to produce up to 15 tonnes of grain per hour.

The commodity area has a grain storage capacity of about 700 tonnes.

All the grain used at the feedlot is procured from outside suppliers while the hay is grown on the property. It has a 1500-tonne silage storage capacity and procures various feedlot supplements from Riverina Stock Feeds.

Dr Rob Lawrence of Integrated Animal Protein from Toowoomba provides valuable input to the business concerning cattle nutrition.

The feedlot derives its water supply from a bore and dam system which has a capacity of 70 megalitres.

The feedlot has adopted high standards of environmental management with the effluent being used to spray pastures on the property and the cattle waste used as fertilizer on farm irrigation areas with any excess being sold to farmer.

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- adjustable roll scrapers
- right and left-hand models

Benmic Industries
— the milling professionals.

LEFT: Melbrig feedlot manager Brad Hutchinson said the Brahman cattle performed extremely well over the 101 days on feed.
RIGHT: The feedlot was established in 2005 and is built on part of a 1025ha holding owned by the Hutchinson family.
The cornerstone of profitable beef production is cattle that produce a high-yielding, high-value and high-quality carcase at the lowest possible cost, says Australian Brahman Breeders Association general manager John Croaker.

The cattle need to be able to not only survive, but also thrive across a range of conditions and environments, having the adaptability to perform on grass, forage crops and in the feedlot, no matter what the season, he says.

Mr Croaker (pictured) also said studies by leading Australian research bodies keep confirming that Brahmans are performing second-to-none in fulfilling all the key economic requirements for profitable beef production.

Mr Croaker cited the example of a recent Beef CRC Genetic Technologies trial of eight breeds, which found that Brahmans were the most efficient beef producers, having the lowest net feed intake (NFI).

The CRC’s net feed intake test measured the amount of feed consumed by an animal compared to what is expected for an animal of that age and weight.

The trial tested 469 progeny of Brahman cows, bred to Brahman, Charolais, Limousin, Hereford, Santa Gertrudis, Belmont Red, Shorthorn and Angus bulls.

These cattle were born at either Brigalow Research Station or Duckponds Research Station in Central Queensland and raised together at Duckponds before entering the Beef CRC’s Tullimba Research Feedlot, near Armidale, NSW, for an average of 59 days on feed. The trial showed that the most efficient breed was the straight Brahman, with a NFI of -0.61 kilograms per day, meaning that they ate 0.61 kilograms per day less than the amount expected for their weight and weight gain. This compared with the poorest performers, the Angus-sired cattle, which had a NFI of +0.30 kilograms per day.

CRC for Beef Genetic Technologies CEO Heather Burrow said the research inferred that animals with a low NFI would perform better than their higher NFI counterparts, whether in a feedlot, on pasture, in dry seasonal conditions or on abundant feed. As feed efficiency is one of the most economically important production traits, having a herd of low NFI cattle could allow higher stocking rates or longer grazing times for each paddock, a significant factor in regions with high land costs.

Dr Burrow said the NFI information would be particularly useful to stud breeders and lot feeders.

“Lot feeders could use the NFI results as a drafting tool and pay a premium for cattle that they knew would perform in the feedlot,” she says.

While renowned for their performance on pasture across Northern Australia, purebred Brahmans are fast establishing themselves as standout performers in feedlots.

Central Queensland Brahman breeders Peter and Ann Kirk and family, along with other producers, have been successful feeding Brahman cattle in the feedlot. The feedlot has a strong supply chain alliance with one of the major supermarkets and purchases flat-back cattle for the domestic trade with an intake live weight of between 300 and 400 kilograms. For the export market, they purchase Santa Gertrudis crossbred and Brahman crossbred cattle with an intake live weight of between 420 and 480 kilograms.

Apart from feeding their own cattle, the Hutchinson family are highly respected for custom-feeding cattle for outside vendors. Mr Hutchinson feels the Melbrig Feedlot has been a success story due to their openness and integrity when dealing with suppliers, buyers and vendors of custom-fed cattle. In addition to this the efficiency of the operation along with their attention to detail in feeding rations and animal health has provided a high level of customer satisfaction.
THE Australian Brahman Breeders Association has joined forces with Beef Australia 2012 and the Ascot Stonegrill Restaurant to showcase the tenderness and quality of Brahman beef.

Eight Brahman cattle producers have custom fed 94 Brahman steers at the Melbrig Feedlot, Mundubbera, for 101 days specifically for the Ascot Stonegrill Restaurant.

The cattle were processed at Teys Australia meatworks in Biloela, with all of the 90 Brahman cattle grading to MSA standard to provide consumers with the finest meat quality traits.

Ascot Stonegrill Restaurant has been a feature at the last two Beef Australia events and returns to the Beef Australia Exposition 2012 in partnership with ABBA, one of the country’s leading beef breed societies.

ABBA general manager John Croaker says he’s thrilled about the initiative as it will demonstrate the “extraordinary quality, taste and tenderness” of properly prepared and cooked Brahman beef to customers at Beef 2012.

As well as being MSA approved, the Brahman beef will be halal certified. The Ascot Stone Grill will serve fillet, striploin and rump with the cube roll for steak burgers. As well as serving more than 1000 steaks a day, oxtail stew, steak and kidney, and blade steak casserole will also feature on the mouth-watering menu.

The initiative comes as the preparation and cooking of beef to best practice gains traction as being critical to customer satisfaction and the reputation of the Australian grain and grass-fed beef industry’s product.

While each link of the beef supply chain strives for continual improvement and best practice, the final process of cooking beef to its optimal standard can be the difference between success and failure, sometimes undermining the hours of work and investment that precedes the meal preparation.

Despite the beef industry’s pursuit of excellence, consumers still remark that they find inconsistent quality beef at retail and food service outlets in Australia.

MLA has recognised the issue and has employed professional chefs like David Carew to lift awareness of cooking traits and methods to Australian industry and consumers.

Out of a total promotional expenditure of $196 million last financial year, at least $5 million was allocated to this important area of cooking beef to its optimal standard.

David Carew says the exercise is nothing new. He wrote the ‘How to cook a perfect steak’ notebook while doing promotional work for MLA at Royal Easter in Sydney nearly 20 years ago.

Howard Verwey, owner of Stonegrill International Pty Ltd, who introduced the stonegrill dining concept into Australia in 1985, says he can’t wait for consumers to taste the results of the Brahman beef.

The stonegrill cooking method is now

MLA’s own “master chef” David Carew will attend Beef Australia 2012, to demonstrate seam cutting of beef secondary cuts.

Mr Carew will discuss technical innovations that MLA has designed to assist the value proposition. Mr Carew will also showcase SmartShape ideas and introduce menu designs with MSA ‘cut to cook’ principles, which aim for better utilisation of carcases.

Mr Carew will demonstrate to Beef 2012 visitors three components to add value to the
used in more than 150 restaurants in Australia and is now marketed worldwide under the Stonegrill brand in more than 60 countries worldwide.

Mr Verwey says stone grilling of meat on rocks can be traced back to the ancient Egyptians and Vikings.

The volcanic rock used to make the stone grill is mined in South Australia and manufactured in Melbourne.

Mr Verwey says the stone grill business just keeps growing and has captured the interest of diners and restaurateurs. It’s now used in restaurants, cafes, international hotels, clubs and resorts with outstanding success.

Mr Verwey says stonegrill dining is recognised as being one of the healthiest methods of cooking red meat.

Will Cordwell, owner of Ascot restaurant, says he’s been serving the best quality steak he can procure for his stone rock grill for the past 15 years and will never consider another model.

He says the customer’s meal remains hot and enjoyable, as the natural volcanic stone retains a prime cooking temperature for 30 minutes.

“This allows diners to eat at leisure, with every bite as hot and delicious as the first,” he said.

Beef Australia 2012 chief executive officer Roger Desailly says the exposition has a focus on the sector of the beef industry that cooks and presents beef to food service and customers.

He says that as well as Ascot Stonegrill Restaurant initiative, the PFD Food Services Awards of Excellence will be presented, recognising the outstanding work of local chefs and restaurants in preparing outstanding beef meals.

Mr Desailly says Coles Supermarket is a new sponsor of Beef Australia 2012.

“Coles Supermarkets is once again intrinsically in tune with the mood of consumers and the need to fill the knowledge gap on cooking red meat at home in all age demographics,” Mr Desailly said.

“The cooking demonstrations will have something for the home chefs, busy mums; school aged children and hungry teenagers, barbecue loving dads and all in between”.

Beef 2012 will also feature past Master Chef contestants demonstrating ways to prepare beef dishes.
BeefEx stars in tough times

The grain-fed beef industry’s BeefEx event returns to its stamping grounds at the Royal Pines Resort on Queensland’s Gold Coast, from October 9-11.

While tough trading conditions continue to prevail, ALFA’s events committee chair Gina Lincoln, is determined to create a program that will compel strong attendance.

“When times are tough at the feedlot, it’s more important than ever to get away, spend time with others in the industry and take a moment to learn, enjoy the networking and entertainment that BeefEx offers,” Gina said.

“Our aim is to design a program that is the right combination of quality information and outstanding entertainment.

“We have a track record of doing that and the bar is even higher this year.”

Significant registration discounts will be available to ALFA members attending the event.

For information on registration, sponsorship, exhibition opportunities and programming, contact event managers Esther Price Promotions on esther@estherprice.com.au

Brahmans with the lot

Petann Pastoral Co, Weir Park, Gogango, Qld, lot feed 2000-3000 head a year at Waterfall Feedlot near Goomeri, in Southern Queensland. Typical weight gains for the Kirks’ Brahman are 2.5-2.7kg per day for steers and 2.3kg per day for heifers, over 100 days on grain.

“We feed cattle that we buy in and we breed and nothing is doing better than the Brahman,” said the Kirk’s lot-feeding manager Kevin Geddes. “Where a Euro-cross might be gaining 2.2 to 2.6kg a day, it’s eating 16 kilograms, compared to the Brahman that’s eating 13 kilograms. The feed conversion is great and that means more profit.

“We’re averaging 335 to 345kg dressed at two years of age.

“Most are milk or two tooths, generally with 13 to 15 mm of fat at the P8 site. From mob to mob they’re never less than five cents off the top of the grid.”

Craig Forest, manager of Saxby Feedlot at Kilkivan, also in Southern Queensland, can also attest to the performance of Brahman on grain.

He said Brahman adapted well to the feedlot, had the lowest maintenance requirements of any breed, required less medical attention, and were efficient feed converters, meaning they were cheaper to feed.

Other feedlots have also reported significantly reduced sickbay costs – averaging about $20 per head less than other breeds, which is a significant factor when feedlot margins are tight.

“We need to push the issue of cost of gain rather than daily weight gain. You can get great weight gain, but it’s the cost of gain that makes the profit and in turn provides sustainability for the operation,” Mr Forest said.