2019-20
MEAT STANDARDS AUSTRALIA
ANNUAL OUTCOMES REPORT

**Delivering consumer
confidence in eating quality**

CONTENTS

2019-20 HIGHLIGHTS

A RECORD-BREAKING
3.8 MILLION
CATTLE WERE MSA GRADED, REPRESENTING **46%** OF THE NATIONAL ADULT CATTLE SLAUGHTER

MSA DELIVERED AN ESTIMATED
$172 MILLION
IN ADDITIONAL FARM GATE RETURNS TO BEEF PRODUCERS

THE HIGHEST EVER
58.03
NATIONAL AVERAGE MSA INDEX

4.3 MILLION
SHEEP FOLLOWED MSA PATHWAYS, REPRESENTING **22%** OF THE NATIONAL LAMB SLAUGHTER

A RECORD 94.4% COMPLIANCE TO MSA MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR BEEF

67% OF SURVEYED BUTCHERS RATED THEIR SATISFACTION WITH MSA BEEF AS **'GOOD TO EXCELLENT'**
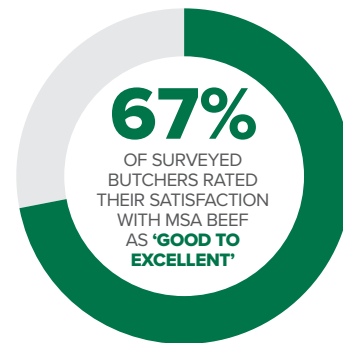
19,000 SAMPLES TASTED BY **2,800 CONSUMERS**, TAKING THE TOTAL TO **1.2 MILLION TASTE TESTS** WITH **171,000 CONSUMERS**

106 NEW
CUT BY COOK COMBINATIONS INTRODUCED TAKING THE TOTAL **TO 275**

860
END USERS
(BUTCHERS, WHOLESALERS, INDEPENDENT RETAILERS AND FOODSERVICE OPERATORS)
RECEIVED MSA TRAINING, WITH **8%** DELIVERED ONLINE

2,000
BEEF AND SHEEPMEAT PRODUCERS RECEIVEDFACE-TO-FACE MSA EDUCATION

David Packer, MSA Program Manager

PROGRAM MANAGER'S REPORT

In 2019-20 the world-leading eating quality grading program, Meat Standards Australia (MSA) delivered an estimated $172 million in additional farm gate returns to MSA beef producers.

In 2019-20 MSA represented 46% of the national adult cattle slaughter, a 3% point increase on the previous year. An additional 276,000 cattle were processed through the MSA program in 2019-20, taking the total to approximately 3.8 million, the highest number of cattle graded in a year since MSA's inception.

Two-thousand beef and sheep producers received face-to-face MSA training, and 2,300 producers undertook training via the MSA e-learning portal. This commitment to education is reflected in record-breaking national average compliance to MSA minimum requirements for beef at 94.4%. With the increase in cattle volume, the quality of cattle presented for MSA grading improved, with the national average MSA Index reaching 58.03, another record for the 22-year-old program.

4.3 million sheep followed MSA pathways in 2019-20, representing 22% of the national lamb slaughter, with 64% of these going into MSA trademarked brands. It is estimated that MSA-licensed processors that have optimised their supply chain for eating quality, accounted for 56% of the national lamb slaughter.

As of 30 June 2020, 197 brands are licensed to utilise the MSA trademark, demonstrating their commitment to using MSA to underpin their eating quality performance.

In export markets, the United State Department of Agriculture (USDA) again approved MSA as a Process Verified Program (PVP). More brand owners took the opportunity to utilise the USDA PVP shield on MSA products in the United States, taking the total to three supply chains.

Industry is continuing to embrace the EQG cipher, which was commercially implemented in 2017, as part of the Beef Language Review, with operators that represent 50% of MSA beef utilising the cipher within their business.

MSA beef model 2.0

In 2019-20 MSA implemented several enhancements to its beef model. These upgrades were endorsed by the MSA Pathways R&D Committee, MSA Beef Taskforce and the Australian Meat Industry Language and Standards Committee, consisting of leading Australian meat and animal researchers and red meat industry representatives.

The following enhancements are underpinned by rigorous science and consumer evidence:

> Hump height is now used as a direct predictor of eating quality.

> A new MSA vendor declaration.

> A refreshed myMSA platform.

> Expanded cooking styles, beef cuts and ageing regimes.

> MSA has changed the way it treats modified atmosphere packaging (MAP).

I am looking forward to working with the team to support industry to capture even more value from the MSA program. With a new five-year strategic plan in place, MSA will continue to be the driving force behind doubling the value of Australian red meat and ensuring that red meat is the most trusted source of the highest quality protein.
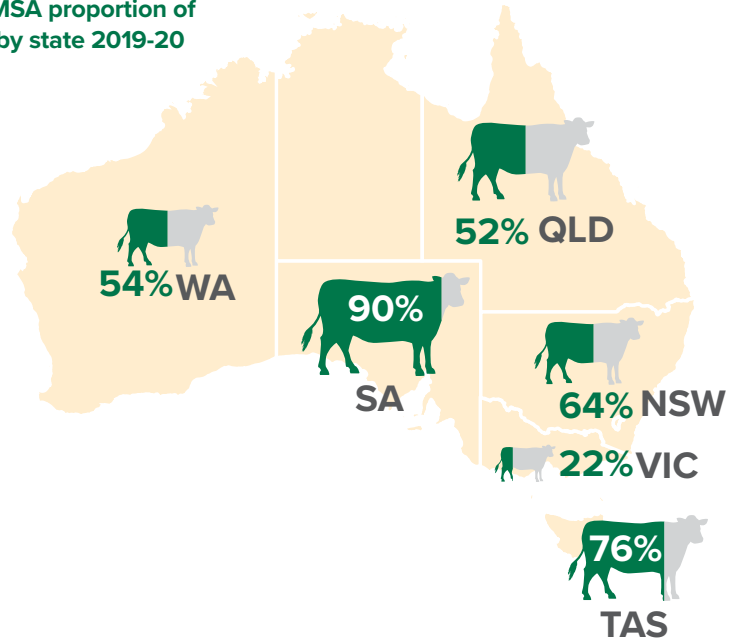
MSA BEEF

Approximately 3.8 million cattle were MSA graded through 39 Australian beef processors, representing 46% of the national adult cattle slaughter in 2019-20. This is an increase of 3% points on the previous year.
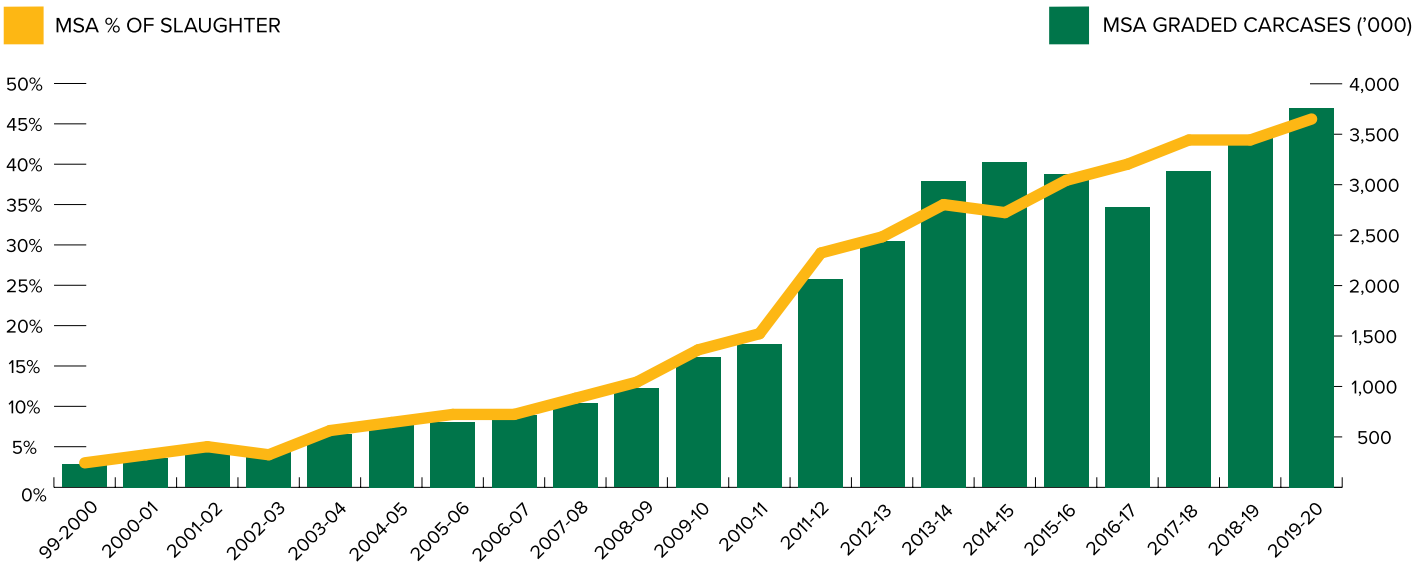
By volume, Queensland continues to process the greatest number of MSA graded cattle with 1.8 million head, while South Australia had the greatest MSA proportion of the state slaughter with 90% MSA graded. Victoria showed the greatest growth with an increase of 17% of cattle being MSA graded.

An additional 2,900 beef and sheepmeat producers became MSA registered in 2019-20. MSA registered beef producers represent 24% of Livestock Production Assurance (LPA) accredited cattle properties. Eleven-thousand beef producers consigned cattle via MSA pathways, nationally. NSW had the highest number of individual producer consignors with 3,000.

Figure 3. MSA proportion of slaughter by state 2019-20

52% QLD

54% WA

90% SA

64% NSW

22% VIC

76% TAS

Figure 1. National MSA beef grading volume 1999-2020

MSA % OF SLAUGHTER

MSA GRADED CARCASES ('000)

Figure 2. MSA graded carcases by state 2015-20

2015-16   2016-17   2017-18   2018-19   2019-20

MSA GRADED CARCASES ('000)

State	MSA cattle 2019-20	% MSA of slaughter
NSW	1,031,168	64%
QLD	1,790,398	52%
SA	176,386	90%
TAS	163,557	76%
VIC	370,646	22%
WA	228,111	54%
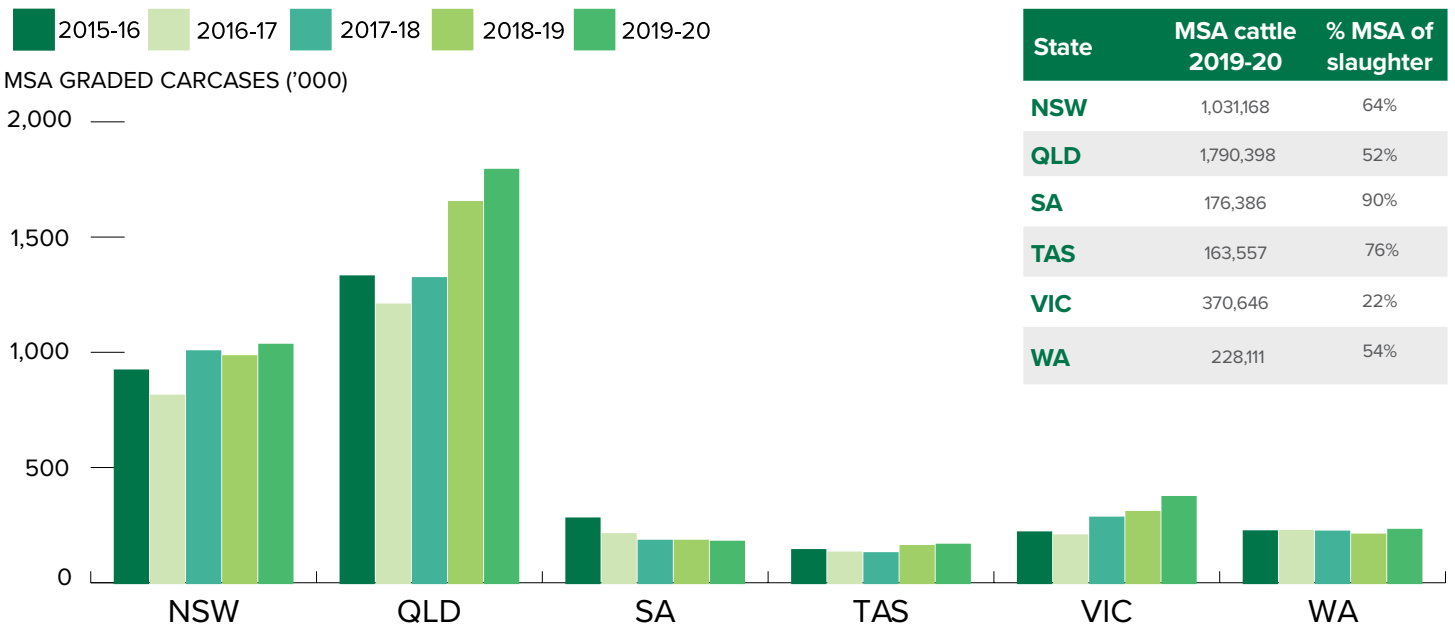
MSA BEEF CARCASE COMPLIANCE

Compliance rates vary from region to region, according to seasonal conditions. Nationally, compliance to MSA minimum requirements increased to **94.4%**. August 2019 saw the greatest total non-compliance at 7%, nationally.

Non-grainfed cattle represented 38% of MSA-graded cattle	**Grainfed cattle represented 62% of MSA-graded cattle**
MSA compliance for non-grainfed cattle improved from 89% in 2018-19 to 90% in 2019-20	**MSA compliance for grainfed cattle remained stable at 98%**

Figure 4. Reason for MSA non-compliance 2019-20

% NON-COMPLIANCE

TOTAL NON-COMPLIANT   pH   RIB FAT
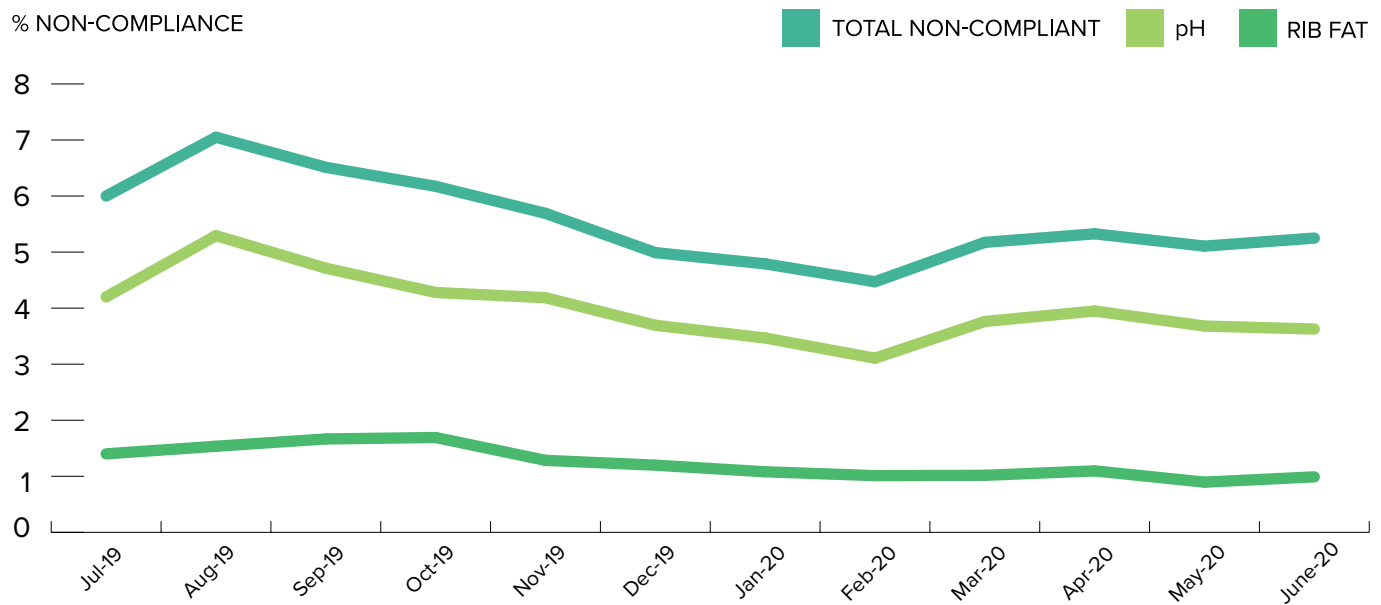
Figure 5. MSA non-compliance by state 2019-20

% NON-COMPLIANCE   NSW   QLD   SA   TAS   VIC   WA

MSA INDEX

In 2019-20 the average MSA Index for MSA compliant carcases in Australia was a record **58.03**, an increase of 0.55 Index points from the previous year. This increase in eating quality is commendable given the trying climatic conditions experienced around Australia over the past 12 months.

> The average MSA Index for non-grainfed cattle was 58.65 - an increase of 0.79 Index points from 2018-19.

> The average MSA Index for grainfed cattle was 57.68 - an increase of 0.82 from 2018-19.

Using MSA Index percentile bands

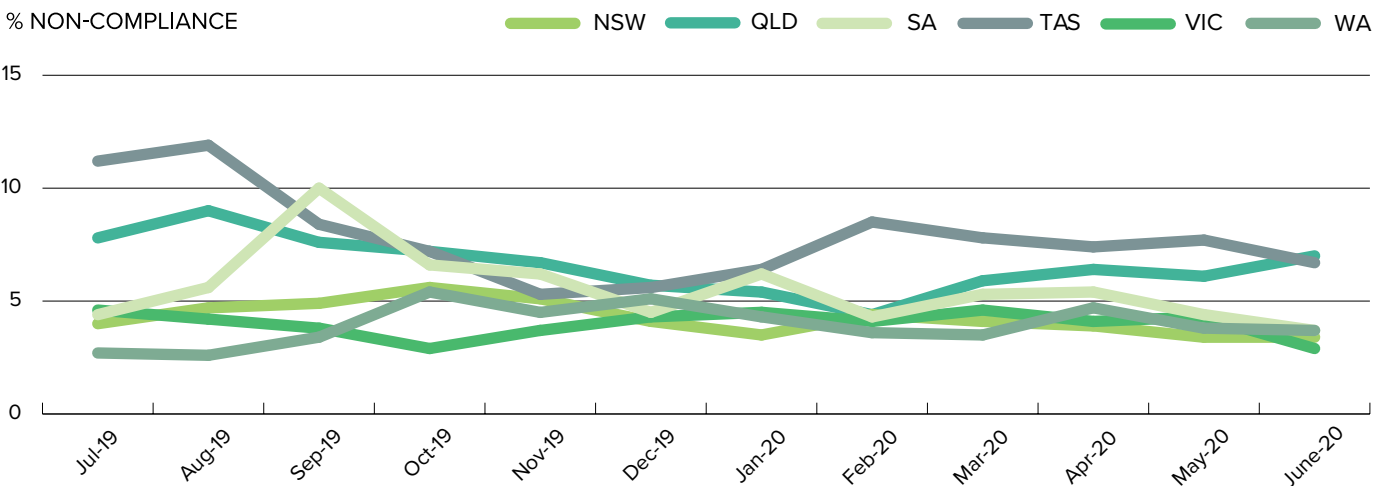If your average MSA Index results were equivalent to or higher than the figure shown in the Top 25% percentile band (Table 1), then your cattle fall into the top 25% of eating quality results for MSA-graded cattle for that group i.e. nationally, non-grainfed or grainfed.

Grainfed cattle are defined as those that meet the National Feedlot Accreditation Scheme (NFAS) requirements for grainfed classification. MSA-graded cattle that do not meet this requirement are classified as non-grainfed.

To understand more about your MSA Index or calculate the impact of changing carcase attributes, producers can use the MSA Index calculator.

www.mymsa.com.au/msamobile

58.03

MSA Index

Illustration is for example purposes only.

Table 1. MSA Index percentile bands

Percentile band	Avg National Index	Non-grainfed Index	Grainfed Index
Top 1 %	67.32	66.10	67.64
Top 5%	64.72	63.85	65.22
Top 10%	63.33	62.87	63.69
Top 25%	61.28	61.33	61.24
Middle 50%	58.59	59.44	57.82
Bottom 25%	55.29	56.68	54.74
Bottom 10%	51.77	53.42	50.92
Bottom 5%	49.16	50.79	48.76
Bottom 1%	46.04	45.11	46.30

Table 2. Effects of carcase attributes on the MSA Index

Carcase input	Relative importance of these traits in influencing the MSA Index
HGP status	Very high
Milk-fed vealer	Very high
Saleyard	Very high
MSA marbling	High
Hump height (for cattle with greater than 0% Tropical Breed Content)	High
Tropical Breed Content (TBC)	High
Ossification score	High
Rib fat	Medium
Hot Standard Carcase Weight (HSCW)	Low
Sex	Low

Figure 6. MSA Index over time 2011-20
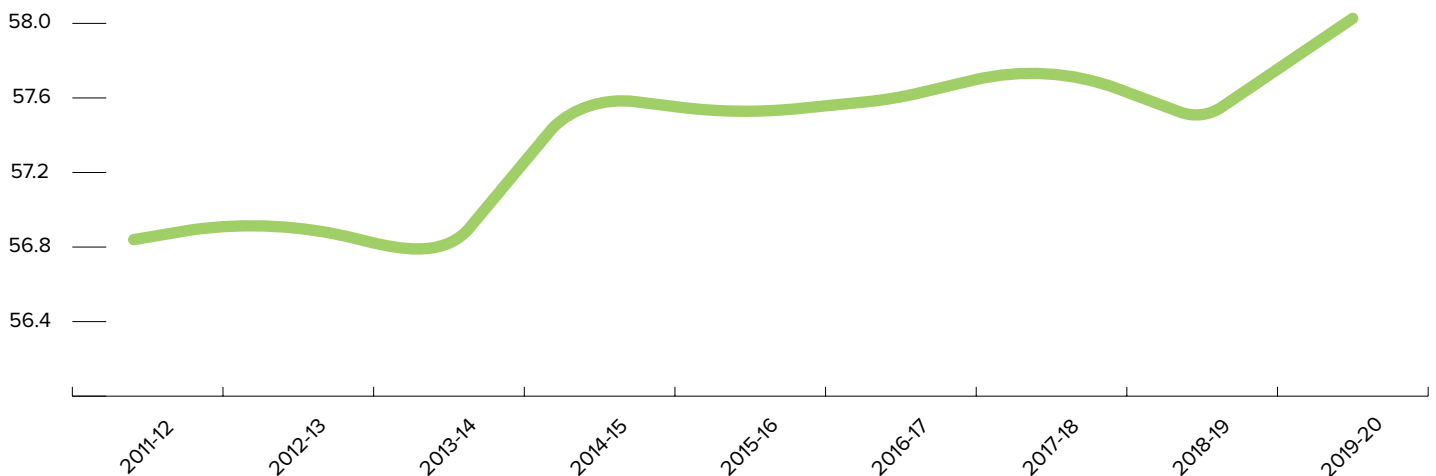
MSA SHEEPMEAT

In 2019-20 4.3 million sheep, an increase of 200,000 sheep from the previous year, followed MSA pathways, through 17 MSA-licensed processors. Twenty-two percent of the national lamb slaughter followed MSA pathways, a 2.5% point increase from 2018-19. Sixty-four percent of these lambs were trademarked under 21 MSA-licensed brands.

By volume South Australia processed the greatest number of MSA lambs at 1.7 million head and had the greatest proportion of the state lamb slaughter following MSA pathways at 78%.

It is estimated that MSA-licensed processors that have optimised their supply chain for eating quality, accounted for **56%** of the national lamb slaughter.

96% of all lambs presented for MSA met the program's minimum requirements

64% of MSA-compliant lambs were subsequently trademarked to support **21** MSA lamb brands

MSA registered sheep producers represented **33%** of Livestock Production Assurance (LPA) accredited sheep properties

Figure 7. National MSA sheepmeat volume 2010-20

- % LAMB SLAUGHTER
- MSA CARCASES ('000)
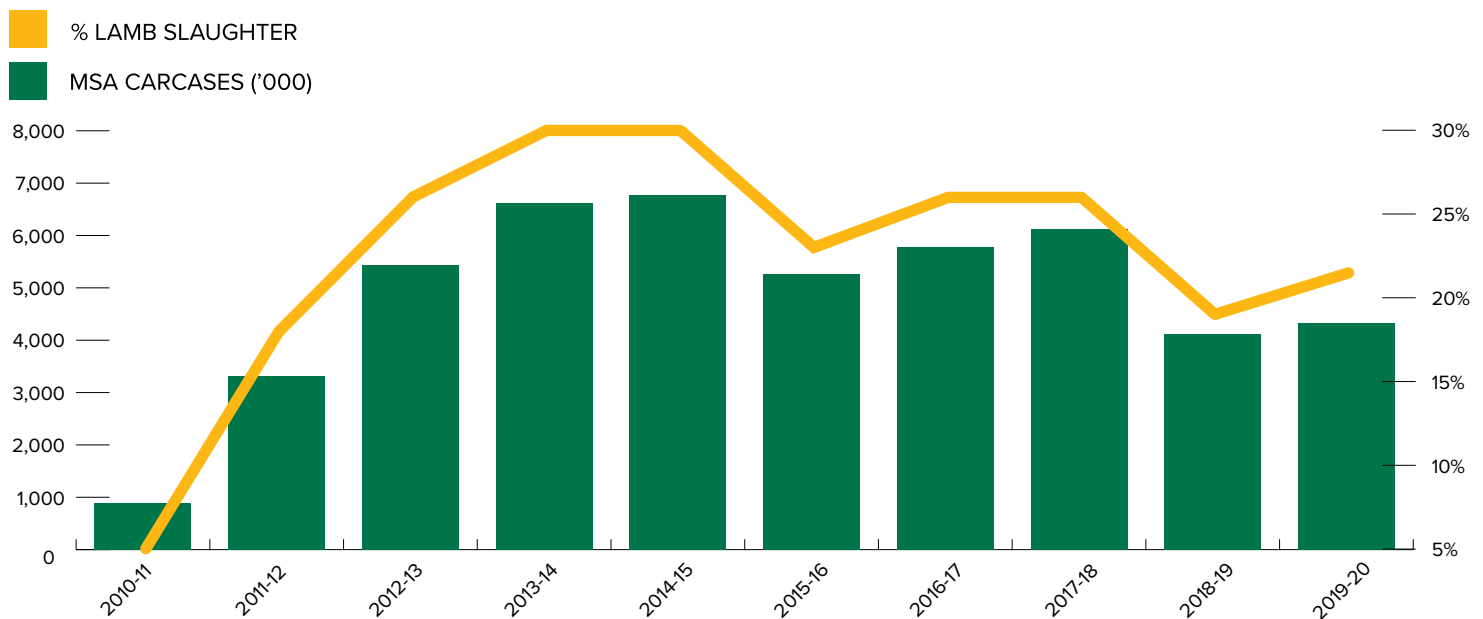
Figure 8. MSA trademarked lambs 2015-20

MSA GRADED CARCASES ('000)

INFORMAL   TRADEMARKED   TRADEMARKED (% OF TOTAL)
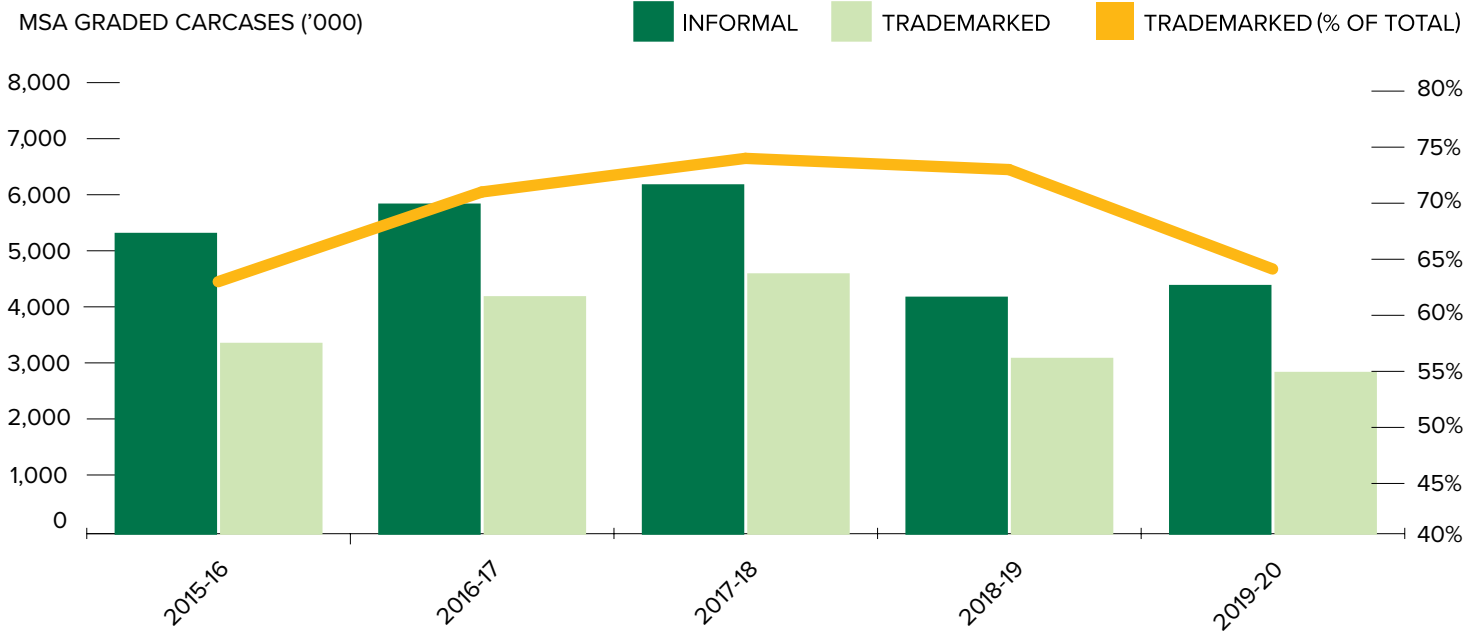
Figure 9. MSA sheepmeat volume by state 2015-20

2015-16   2016-17   2017-18   2018-19   2019-20

MSA GRADED CARCASES ('000)

State	MSA sheep 2019-20	% MSA of 2019-20 slaughter
NSW	513,529	11%
WA	537,306	22%
SA	1,696,969	78%
VIC	1,576,233	15%

SUPPLY CHAIN IMPACT – EDUCATION

Two-thousand beef and sheepmeat producers received face-to-face MSA education at 39 producer workshops or information sessions.

In the retail and foodservice sector, more than 860 end users (wholesalers, retailers and foodservice operators) participated in MSA training, of which 8% was conducted online.

MSA-licensed processors continued to receive training and support through remote and virtual technologies during COVID-19 restrictions.

End user masterclasses were also held throughout the year with high volume foodservice and catering operators, showcasing opportunities to utilise red meat.

myMSA Portal

myMSA is an online portal where producers can easily access feedback tools, including MSA Index performance, customised reports and benchmarking, as well as order MSA vendor declarations and complete refresher training.

> 4,000 producers utilised the myMSA feedback system 16,300 times.

Refreshed myMSA

myMSA was updated as part of the MSA model enhancement, giving MSA-registered producers access to a range of new features including:

> **Opportunity Index:** the Opportunity Index helps you focus your attention on where financial gains can be made and to benchmark carcase attribute performance. It tells you what your Index would have been if non-compliance carcases met the MSA minimum requirements.

> **New look and feel:** the myMSA portal has been refreshed and is easier to use. New features include:
> - Easy navigation on the left-hand menu
> - Help prompts on every page
> - Accessible on any device
> - Re-designed reports to make interpreting carcase feedback, easier.

The **2019 Australian Beef Eating Quality Insights (ABEQI)** was published in September 2019. The report is generated from the analysis of MSA grading results of 6.6 million cattle, processed across the country during the 2017-18 and 2018-19 financial years.

The report aims to help beef producers optimise the eating quality of their cattle by demonstrating the impact of various production factors on the MSA Index.

Find the report at www.mla.com.au/msa

16 supply chain participants engaged in the week-long MSA meat science course

860 end users (wholesalers, retailers and foodservice operators) participated in MSA training, with **8%** of this training conducted online

44 new MSA graders were trained and accredited

2,000 beef and sheepmeat producers received face-to-face MSA education through **39** workshops or information sessions

2,900 cattle and sheep producers became registered to supply livestock through the MSA program this year, of which **77%** registered online

**2,300** people undertook training via the MSA producer e-learning portals

39 processor operatives completed MSA training in the impact of processing on red meat eating quality

SUPPLY CHAIN IMPACT – PRODUCERS

The National Livestock Reporting Service (NLRS) reported over-the-hooks cattle price indicators for MSA cattle as consistently higher than non-MSA cattle in 2019-20.

Based on the average carcase weight (279kg) of MSA cattle in 2019-20, MSA beef producers potentially received an estimated $75 per head in additional returns for young, non-grainfed cattle and $35 per head for cattle that met grainfed specifications.

Figure 10. Over-the-hooks price differentials over time 2011-20
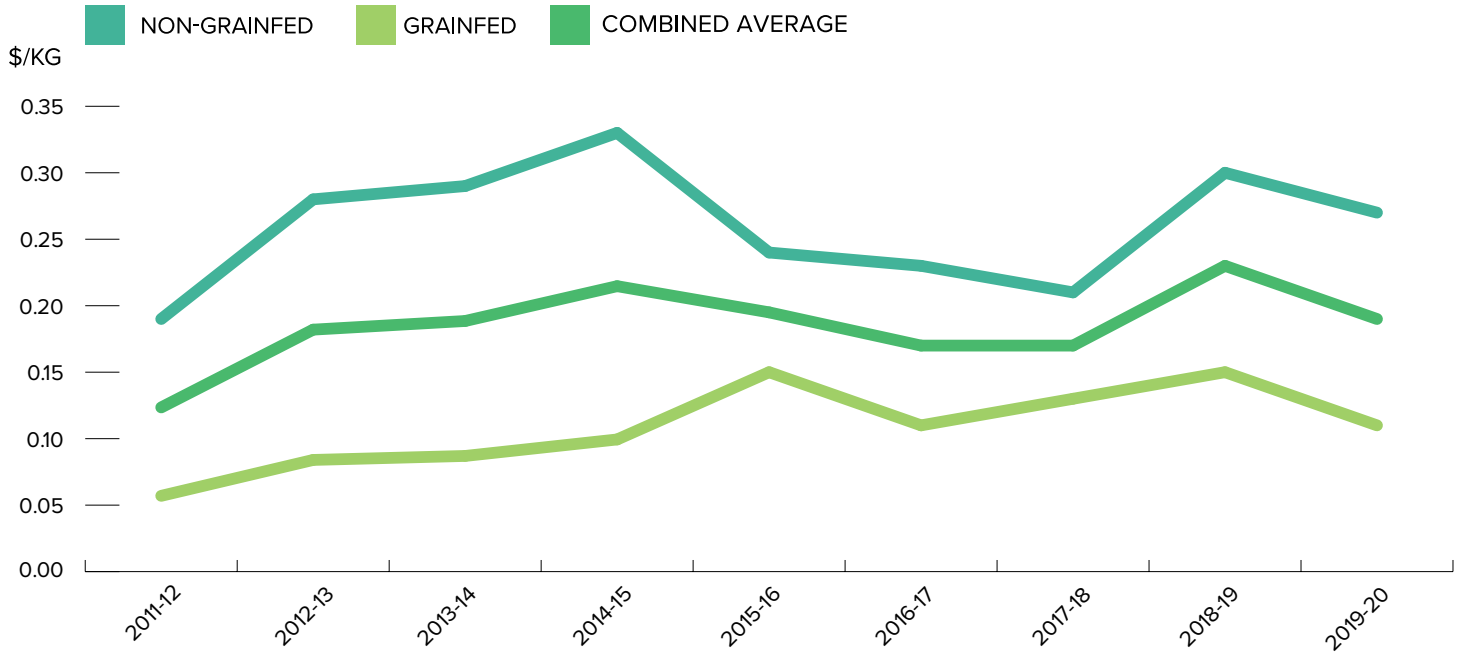
The average price differential for MSA young cattle (excluding accredited grainfed cattle) across all weight ranges was **$0.27/kg**

The average price differential for MSA cattle that met grainfed accreditation standards was **$0.11/kg**

SUPPLY CHAIN IMPACT – END USERS

The average price of MSA beef and lamb was higher compared to equivalent non-MSA cuts at independent butcher stores in 2019-20. The average price differential for MSA beef was $1.22/kg and the average price differential for MSA lamb was $3.55/kg.

MSA cube rolls averaged the highest price differential for beef at $2.29/kg followed by tenderloins at $2.11/kg.

MSA lamb cutlets averaged the highest price differential for sheepmeat at $7.25/kg.

20 brands are now utilising exporter guidelines to communicate MSA in international markets

1,200 end users, representing **3,500** outlets, are licensed to promote MSA products

67% of surveyed butchers rated their satisfaction with MSA beef as **'good to excellent'**

67% of surveyed butchers are aware of MSA lamb

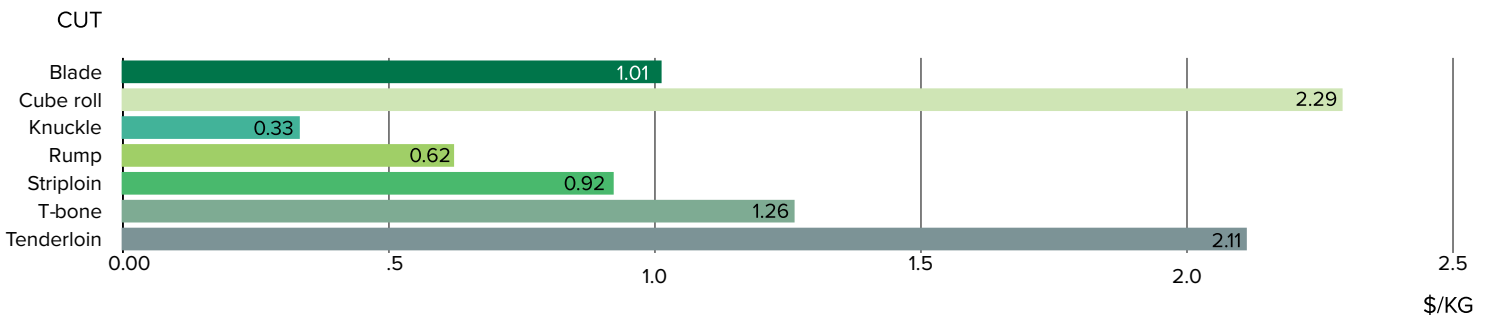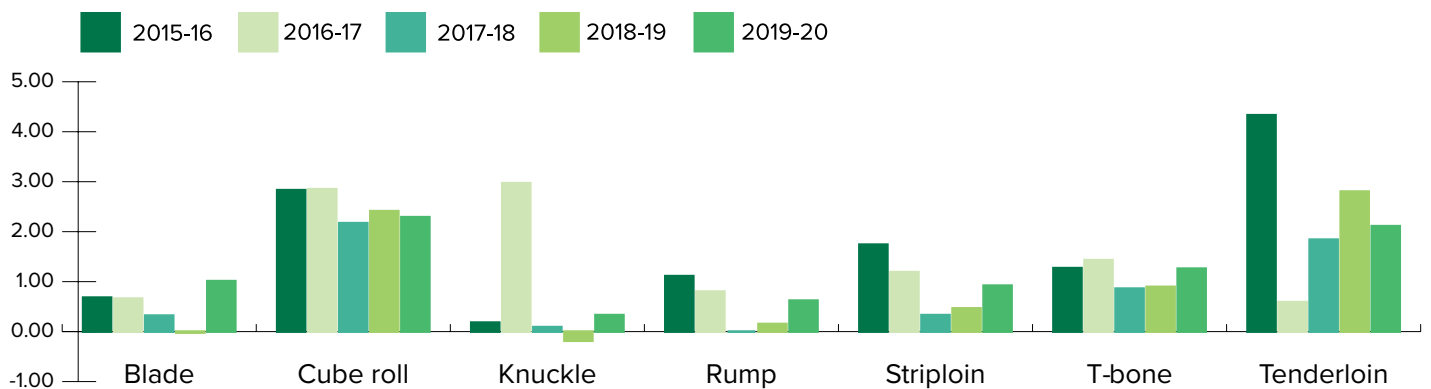**Figure 11. Average MSA beef retail price differentials by cut 2019-20**

Figure 12. Average MSA beef retail price differentials over time 2015-20

Source: National Field Services

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

The MSA Strategic Plan 2015-20 reached completion this year. During this time the program worked to address research priorities to enable MSA grading eligibility for all cattle and to describe the fitness for purpose of all beef primals, and expand the MSA sheepmeat cut by cook offering.

All research priorities are set by the MSA Beef and Sheepmeat Pathways and Taskforce committees.

2019-20 priorities included:

> continued investigations into the impacts of rail transport for cattle, as well as rest and recovery strategies for long distance transport

> continued investigations into determining optimised production systems for raising dairy animals for beef production, including an MSA-accredited pathway for veal

> understanding the impacts and eating quality outcomes of reconditioning cull females

> continued investigations into understanding the effect on eating quality, of purpose feeding young entire males as an alternative to castration

> commenced research into understanding the eating quality of Wagyu and F1 Wagyu

> estimation of age and maturity of beef and sheep in the live animal using near-infrared spectroscopy using hair and collagen samples

> continued research into developing cut by cook combinations to launch and expand the MSA Mark II Sheepmeat Model and provide linkages to genetics

> completed additional Australian and international consumer research into low and slow cooked brisket and rib cuts, to explore further value-added opportunities for cuts across the carcase

> independent grading of Breed Information Nucleus (BIN) project cattle

> validation of objective carcase measurement technologies.

In addition to the large research portfolio, industry endorsed the upgrade to the MSA beef model, which was implemented in 2019-20. This model update is the accumulation of seven years and $12 million worth of R&D investment, and 52,000 additional consumer taste tests.

PROGRAM INTEGRITY

During 2019-20 670 audits were conducted on MSA licensees from saleyards and processors through to retailers, wholesalers, supermarkets and foodservice outlets.

> 3.1% of end user outlets audited received corrective action requests (CARs)

> 3.3% of saleyards audited received CARs

> 7.7% of processors audited received major CARs.

Table 3. Audits conducted 2019-20

Audits	
Processor	95
Saleyard	30
Wholesaler	180
Supermarket	108
Retailer	142
Foodservice	87
Independent boning rooms	28
Total	**670**

MSA also conducted 95 site visits with MSA-licensed processors to support their continued success in utilising the MSA Standards. MSA also visited 212 active MSA graders around Australia to conduct on-site grading checks. Forty-four new MSA graders were trained and signed off to commence grading.

MSA retained certification to ISO 9001:2015 Standards and the USDA Process Verified Program.

In export markets, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) again approved MSA as a Process Verified Program (PVP) with more brand owners taking up the opportunity to use the USDA PVP shield on their MSA product in the United States. Two new MSA supply chains became licensed to utilise the USDA PVP trademark and claims in conjunction with the MSA trademark in the United States.

EXCELLENCE IN EATING QUALITY SERIES

In September and October 2019, MSA beef producers who consistently deliver superior eating quality beef were recognised through the biennial MSA Excellence in Eating Quality Series.

The six state-based events featured, the 'Consumer trends driving on-farm change', forums and awards presentations.

Awards were announced for Most Outstanding MSA Feedlot, Most Outstanding MSA Beef Producer – Band 1 (larger consignment volumes), Most Outstanding MSA Beef Producer – Band 2 (smaller consignment volumes) and MSA Excellence in Eating Quality Progress Award for showing the greatest improvement in their MSA results since the last Awards series.

The criteria for the awards included outstanding compliance rates to MSA specifications, as well as high eating quality performance as represented by the MSA Index results for MSA graded cattle during the 2017-18 and 2018-19 financial years.

View the full criteria and watch winner interviews at **mla.com.au/msa**

Winners of the Most Outstanding MSA Beef Producer - Band 1 category

Western Australia

Wayne and Carol Dumbrell

Winners: Wayne and Carol Dumbrell, Walpole

Enterprise: Running a herd of 220 Angus-Friesian cross, Murray Grey-Friesian cross, and second-cross females across 260ha near Walpole, the Dumbrells turn off animals for Woolworths at roughly 10-months-old, targeting carcase weights of around 240kg.

Winning formula

Management: "MSA guidelines and feedback have led to small changes here and there in how we manage our animals. We typically run our cows in mobs of 40, and a month before selling we'll draft them on size and weight to make sure they're happy and settled in their mobs before we truck them out. The effort we put into this system is fairly quickly returned through the premium we receive for consistent MSA compliance," Wayne said (pictured above with Carol).

Nutrition: "We're careful to make sure the animals are on a consistently rising plane of nutrition, receiving more and better-quality feed right up until they leave the farm. We graze on ryegrass and clovers in winter, and kikuyu in summer, using a rotational grazing system and then supplementary feeding hay to fill any feed gaps."

Selection: "Docility, fat cover and marbling are key traits we select for when choosing bulls as well, and the results are pretty quick to come back in the MSA data. If an animal doesn't perform, it's relatively simple for us to look at the data and see what went wrong and then set about addressing the problem."

South Australia

Dawn and Adrian Stoeckel, Sam Kekovich and Roz Stoeckel

Winners: Dawn and Adrian Stoeckel, 'Beacon Hill', Swan Reach

Enterprise: In South Australia's Mallee region, the Stoeckels run about 600 purebred Black Angus breeders across 5,000ha, crop around 3,000ha of wheat and barley, and 1,000ha of rye and barley for grazing when needed. Cattle turned off for Teys Australia's Naracoorte facility, targeting 600kg + liveweight, supplying Teys Australia's flagship South Australian beef brand, 36 Degrees South.

Winning formula

Management: "Our young cattle spend about 12 months in the paddock on grass, mainly native perennials and clovers with some medic sown over it and feed sown for the cattle in tough times. We feed them straw and molasses and a bit of urea when it's dry like it is now, then they come into the feedlot and go onto a mix of grain, potatoes, straw, vetch, canola meal and vitamins. In good years, we put them in the feedlot at 420kg and they spend 80 to 90 days there and they're up to where we want them to be. At the moment, they're going in at around about 300kg to 350kg and spending 100 to 120 days in the feedlot," Adrian said (pictured above).

Feedback: "I study our MSA feedback regularly. Our MSA Index averages around 61 and upwards, which we're very pleased with. They dress out extremely well weight and quality wise."

Tasmania

Michael, Mitchell and Donna Kay, Smithton

Winners: Michael and Donna Kay

Enterprise: The Kays run a 450ha cattle finishing operation near Smithton, Tasmania, where they turn off 600 steers each year at 600-700kg liveweight.

Winning formula

Feedback: "Our focus on meeting MSA and company specifications means we look closely at pH, fat and carcase indexes. This data influences both our buying decisions and our on-farm practices. The feedback and data proves that low-stress handling leads to better performance and better beef. With the data and feedback we receive, we can clearly see which animals perform best and under which conditions. It's allowed us to be more targeted across the board, from buying, to handling, and selling decisions," Michael said (pictured above).

Management: "Our buying decisions revolve around consistency, and we always look to buy even lines of steers that are compliant with the NEVER EVER and GAP programs. We then graze them in an intensive rotational system, in small mobs of 20 to 35 head, rotated every two days across small paddocks. This keeps the cattle on a rising plane of nutrition, while also resting paddocks and avoiding over-grazing and pugging issues, particularly when they are near-finished and conditions are wet. By running in smaller mobs across tight weight ranges, we can avoid drafting and mixing cattle in the lead up to transport and slaughter. This means we keep a close eye on their performance, and avoid unnecessary separation anxiety and stress when they leave the farm."

Victoria

Jim Gaylard, Trawalla property manager, Rose Grange Pastoral Company, Little River, near Geelong

Winners: Jock Richmond, Rose Grange Pastoral

Enterprise: Rose Grange Pastoral run 900 Angus females and turn off grass-finished steers and cull heifers annually for MSA targeting 300-330kg carcase weights.

Winning formula

Nutrition: "[Cattle are] run predominantly on a mix of phalaris clover and ryegrass pastures, with supplementary silage in the summer and cereal hay in the winter for fibre. Our steers are finished on an oat-lucerne mix or on straight grazing oats or grazing wheat. A big thing for us is ensuring the animals don't have any setbacks at any stage of their life from a nutritional point of view," Jock said.

Feedback: "We use the myMSA platform to access carcase feedback and tools, and the first thing we always look at is our average MSA Index. Our ultimate goal is to average an MSA Index of 65. I'm a big believer that if we can maintain the eating quality of our meat, it augers well for our product. If we look at the Index and see that our Index is down a bit, then we'll go through the feedback and pull it apart to see if a batch of steers were, for example, lower in intramuscular fat (IMF) or if the eye muscle area (EMA) was back. If our Index isn't where we're aiming for, then we want to know why."

Selection: Jock said genetics were important in improving eating quality, with bulls selected for a range of Estimated Breeding Values (EBVs) including 600-day weight gain, EMA and IMF data.

New South Wales

Karen, Mark, Lucy, Peter and Ron Campbell, Merriwa

Winners: Peter, Wendy, Ron, Betty, Mark and Karen Campbell

Enterprise: The Campbells run a mixed-farming operation on 2640ha, where they breed Angus cattle, run a cross-bred lamb enterprise and crop around 600ha. The family supplies 450 head of cattle per year to Woolworths under a supplementary-fed contract, which allows the Campbell family to finish stock using grain.

Winning formula

Nutrition: "The cattle are mostly managed in a rotational grazing system on native and improved lucerne-based pastures, but in recent dry times, we have finished them in drought paddocks using a grain ration of wheat, barley, sorghum and hay to help stock reach live weights of at least 500kg," Peter said (pictured above).

Feedback: "You've got to know your product and you've got to know what the supplier wants – MSA helps us understand this. We know off the back of the indexes provided to us, which were an average of 62.51 during 2017-19, through MSA that we're doing something right – our buyer tells us that Woolworths are happy with our product and that's exciting for us as a business."

Management: "MSA figures show how stress in cattle has a direct correlation with high pH levels. If you've got cattle that want to run or spook easily, the pH levels go up very quickly, and that can make for tough beef."

Queensland

Geoff and David Burey, Brownleigh Pastoral Company

Winners: Geoff and David Burey, Brownleigh Pastoral Company

Enterprise: The family runs a composite breeding herd of primarily Charolais-Angus cross cattle, comprising between 800-1000 females in a normal season, and turning off an average 800 head annually, targeting carcase weights of 300-320kg.

Winning formula

Feedback: "Among the benefits of being an MSA producer is that it gives us specifications to aim for. We use the carcase feedback as reassurance for us that we're meeting the market and still hitting the nail on the head as far as specs are concerned," David said (pictured above).

Selection: "We generally buy in a few bulls every year to ensure genetic diversity and we generally go to Minnie-Vale Charolais near Narrabri, and source Angus bulls from Clunie Range at Coolatai. But if you had a look around our paddocks at the moment, it would be 70-75% home-grown bulls. Our genetic pool is fairly sound – we keep a few fresh ones coming along and keep a few of our own after marking every year. The genetics are working with our calving percentage always well over 90%, usually about 95%."

Management: "All of the cattle are yard-weaned around March every year, and we hold them on the block where they were bred. They're on grass until they reach a liveweight of 300-350kg. Pastures include improved Buffel grass and bambatsi, and we also put them on fodder crops such as oats."

Winners of the Most Outstanding MSA Feedlot category

Western Australia

Angus Lawton, Rob Mott, Dale Ure, Reid Brennick and Zoe Aitken, Kalannie

Winners: WestBeef Feedlot

Enterprise: The feedlot turns off the company's own British and European breed cattle for MSA grading, as well as custom feeding for clients. Located on 1,030ha, the feedlot is licensed for up to 7,500 head, and has 900ha of farming and backgrounding country.

Winning formula

Management: "Until earlier this year, we had a constant stream of our own animals coming from our property at Esperance and other great southern backgrounding properties at about 400-430kg and being fed for between 100-120 days. They were primarily Angus cattle," Feedlot Manager, Dale Ure said (pictured above). "We do a lot third-party feeding for regular clients, utilising a range of feeding programs to target different markets."

Handling: "We treat every animal the same when it comes to low-stress stock handling and ensuring high standards of animal welfare. Everyone on the husbandry team has received low-stress stock handling and all of our yards and handling systems have been designed with low-stress stock handling in mind. The infrastructure is designed so you can move cattle without having to be in close proximity to them, so you're not putting them under stress."

South Australia

Iranda Feedlot General Manager, Thomas Green, Tintinara

Winners: Iranda Feedlot

Enterprise: The 17,000 head feedlot is run alongside a backgrounding property running 1,400 cows, and farming operations including pivot irrigation for growing fodder crops for the feedlot, across an aggregation of 15,000ha. The feedlot turns off 50,000 head annually, with all cattle sent for MSA grading.

Winning formula

Nutrition: "We grow our own Lucerne hay and cereal grain silage in winter and corn and sorghum silage in summer," Feedlot General Manager, Thomas Green said (pictured above).

Management: "We have installed new handling facilities throughout the feedlot and we really concentrate on low-stress animal handling. Animal welfare is key, and we work really closely with our processing facilities. For example, if there's a heat event, we really monitor conditions and when we're sending cattle for processing. If that means we have to shift cattle in the middle of the night to avoid heat, that's what we do."

Feedback: "At the production level, MSA compliance is a good indicator that you're doing that right thing. If your cattle are grading and all reaching MSA specifications, you're not getting bruising or any dark cutters, then it's an indicator of quality and that you're doing it right. I look at the feedback provided on the myMSA platform, but we are looking to start to feed that information into our feedlot software to track animals through from purchase to carcase. In the very near future we'll be pulling data out on a daily basis."

Victoria

David Gillet, Jalna Feedlot, Anakie, near Geelong.

Winners: Jalna Feedlot

Enterprise: 10,000 head, delivering 70-day trade cattle that are a combination of British breeds and crosses, and 100-day custom fed Angus steers for the Coles Finest brand.

Winning formula

Handling: "We manage all our stock by horseback, and the cattle quieten down very quickly with calm handling," David Gillet said (pictured above). "It's also a case of being aware of the impact of stress – for example, choosing the coolest time of the day to load out in summer."

Management: "MSA is also about acclimation, nutrition, transport, staff and facilities and simple things like making sure that water troughs are clean and feed is sufficient. We have two or three companies that supply grain and supplements and we have a nutritionist who visits monthly to design rations and a consulting vet. Both do a lot of training with our staff – we have 18 staff between the farm and the feedlot – and we are continually upgrading our knowledge of animal welfare and pen riding techniques. Industry standards are extremely high right now, but we don't want to just be meeting these standards, we want to be staying 10 steps ahead."

Feedback: "[MSA] certainly helps to constantly review your practices and I encourage everyone in the industry to get involved. We use myMSA and this helps us see what cattle are meeting contract, allowing us to achieve performance targets."

New South Wales

NH Foods Australia Group Livestock Manager, Stephen Moy and Whyalla Beef General Manager, Tony Fitzgerald, at Bective Station Feedlot.

Winners: Bective Station Feedlot

Enterprise: Based on Liverpool Plains and leased by Whyalla Beef (owned NH Foods), Bective Station Feedlot has a capacity of 5,000 head. The feedlot is focused on turning off cattle for NH Foods Angus Reserve brand, one of Australia's largest verified Black Angus beef brands. Cattle are finished on a barley-based ration for a minimum of 270 days.

Winning formula

Nutrition: "For us nutrition is continually evolving, as seasonal changes affect availability of different commodities available to us. Our cattle are fed a barley-based ration and perform extremely well. All our programs have defined feeding key performance indicators set to them around average daily gain, feed conversion and numerous other feeding criteria.

Feedback: "This market acceptance of the MSA standards gives our customers the confidence to know they are purchasing a consistent, high quality product," Tony Fitzgerald, Whyalla Beef General Manager said (picture above). "As a feeder and processor of stock we work with our suppliers to identify cattle that perform well in our operation. Compliance is the basis for the establishment and expansion of a branded beef program – without compliance, there is no brand."

Handling: "In addition to nutrition, we recognise the importance of well-handled cattle. MSA figures show how stress in cattle has a direct correlation with high pH levels."

Queensland

Kerwee Feedlot Livestock Manager, Stevie-Lee Wayman, Jondaryan

Winners: Kerwee Feedlot

Enterprise: The business has a 20,200-head capacity, operating as part of the vertically integrated Kerwee Group, supplying Wagyu and long-fed Angus cattle for its Stockyard Beef brands.

Winning formula

Feedback: "[MSA] provides consistent measurements to manage variability and provide feedback to suppliers," Stevie-Lee Wayman, Kerwee Feedlot Livestock Manager said (pictured above). "The myMSA tool benchmarks our product against the national herd and allows analysis specific to our cattle and feeding types compared to other similar programs. We use myMSA on a weekly basis to view customised reports for each of our feeding programs, and these reports feed out monthly key performance indicators. We also use MSA feedback to guide our suppliers in which traits need improvement."

Nutrition: "We feed cattle the same ration every day so we consistently turn-off the same product all the time. Feed efficiency is more critical than growth rate for our own high value product."

Handling: "Our stock people are all trained in animal welfare standards in order to minimise stress and eliminate any injury or bruising. Good weaning practices and pre-arrival vaccinations keep cattle in good health through the feeding period. Daily handling of stock mean they are kept calm at exit and trucking scheduling is managed weekly to ensure hot weather and time in lairage doesn't affect carcase grading results."
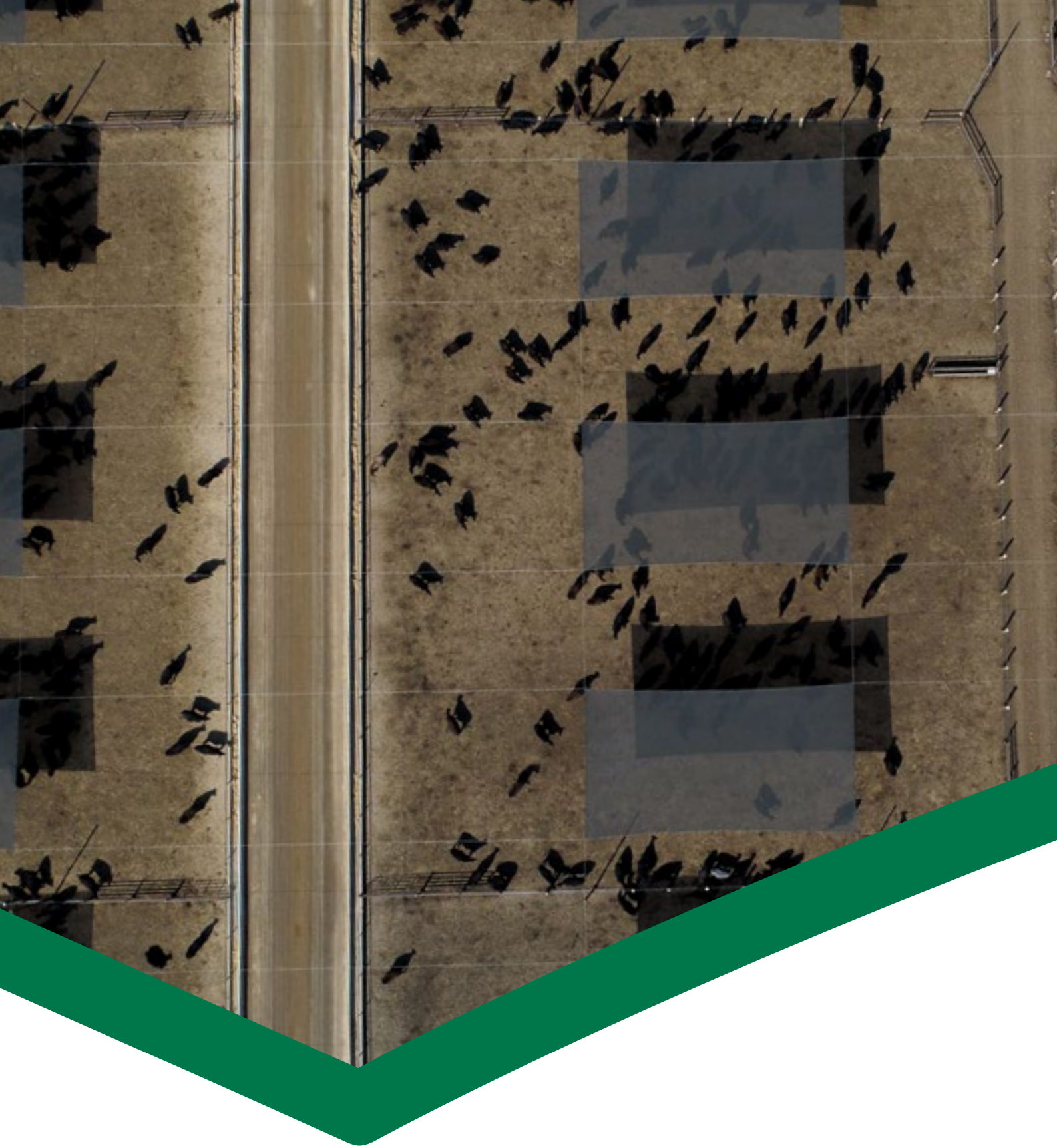
**MSA – taking the guesswork
out of buying red meat.**

MSA

PO Box 2363
Fortitude Valley BC QLD 4006

Tel: 1800 111 672

Fax: 1800 999 672

Email: msaenquiries@mla.com.au

www.mla.com.au/msa