



Blackall cattleman aims for perfection

BLACKALL cattleman, Ashley Adams, has high hopes that the name TendaBeef will one day become known across the Australian meat and livestock industry as a symbol associated with consistent eating quality.

Mr Adams, the 2008 Rabobank Red Meat Industry Awards producer award winner, is well advanced as one of the early adopters of GeneStar tenderness marker testing within his 3700 Brahman, Simmental and Santa-infused cattle run at Darracourt, a 26,000-hectare property near Blackall.

Through selective breeding based on GeneStar test outcomes, his aim is to produce cattle with a five-star or higher tenderness test rating, which in turn will qualify for the TendaBeef brand program. Other producers in Central and Northern Queensland are also restructuring their breeding programs to supply livestock under the label, after applying similar testing and selection programs.

Cattle bearing a TendaBeef ear tag (symbol pictured), could one day attract premiums from feedlots and processors, and the brand is designed to carry through to supermarkets or butcher shops, where it has obvious potential to be used as a quality retail marketing tool.

Mr Adams said he had fielded interest from producers using various breeds, from as far north as Hughenden, and south to Roma and Narrabri.

He and his wife Margaret have now tested about 2200 stud and commercial cattle within their herd over the past four years. The Darracourt sire bat-



tery currently includes six eight-star bulls, and 35 carrying six to seven stars for tenderness.

Mating the superior performing females to higher star-rated bulls has produced 200 mostly crossbred steers for sale this year, which are guaranteed to carry at least five stars for genetic tenderness.

"To be realistic, I have no great expectations that a processor is going to offer me a big premium for those steers this first year," Mr Adams said.

"However, processors are now beginning to understand that producers can in fact influence the tenderness outcome through genetic selection. Sooner or later those premiums will start to emerge.

"A beast with a TendaBeef

tag in his ear means a processor can potentially manage that carcass more efficiently, in terms of ageing time and other issues, in order to guarantee a tender piece of beef."

Close to 50 percent of the Darracourt calf drop this year will carry five tenderness stars or better, up from just 8pc when the program started four years ago.

"Ultimately, our aim is to guarantee that 100pc of our calves carry five stars or better. There's absolutely no reason why that can't happen, over time," Mr Adams said.

A sophisticated IVF reproductive program is being used to hasten genetic progress. GeneStar tenderness test results are also being used to better manage breeders with low tenderness scores.

Those females are being joined to extreme high tenderness score bulls, so that the resultant progeny will be significantly improved, and the lower score animals will eventually disappear from the system.

While higher star-rated bulls are harder to find within the Brahman breed than others, examples do exist. Three years ago, the Adams bought one of the few seven-star tested bulls to be identified so far within the Brahman breed. The same bull also had the second-highest eye

muscle area scan in that year's Brahman Week catalogue.

"It's important for people involved with Brahman cattle to embrace GeneStar technology, because they can maintain their advantage in terms of environmental adaptation while also building better performance in overall meat tenderness," Mr Adams said.

"Many butchers currently avoid Brahmans because they lack the reputation for consistently good eating quality. But with DNA testing, we can help break down that tenderness bias."



Blackall's Ashley Adams collects his Beef Producer of the Year award from Rabobank's Justin Harrison.



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Lurleen's keeps suppliers close

Andrew Mirosh, executive chef at Restaurant Lurleen's, Mt Cotton, collects the MLA Casual Dining Award from managing director, David Palmer. Lurleen's, in the picturesque surrounds of the Sirromet Winery on Brisbane's outskirts, uses a range of branded meats on its menu including Barcoo Beef, and executive chef Andrew Mirosh is a frequent visitor to the Toowoomba cattle sales. The restaurant holds themed gourmet dinners featuring red meat and ensures it maintains close relationships with its suppliers.



IT'S ALL IN THE DNA

Catapult Genetics would like to congratulate Ashley Adams on his win as 2008 Beef Producer of the Year and for his early adoption of progressive technology like GeneSTAR®



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