

# AUSTRALIAN MeatNews

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Butcher Competitions are back  
Collaboration breeds success in NT  
A simple card to foster loyalty

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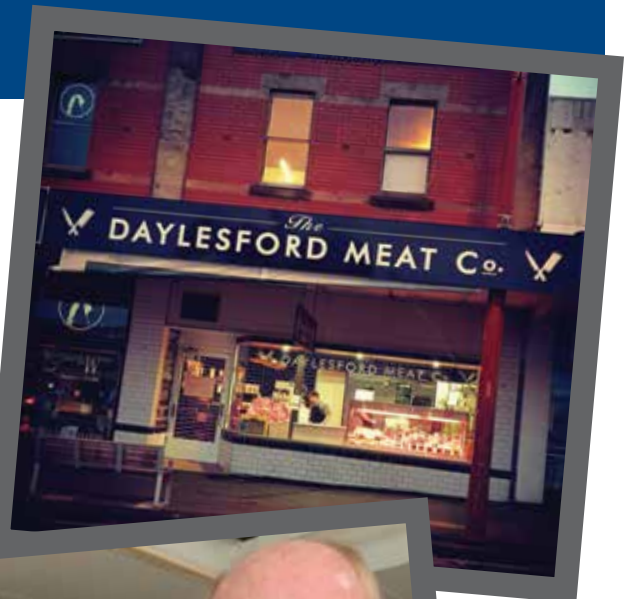
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*Past winner of Butcher Wars, Paul Suleyman reflects on what it is to compete in a butcher competition.*

## Giveaway

Win a copy of *The Total Grilling Manual*. See pages 37 & 39

# Australian MeatNews

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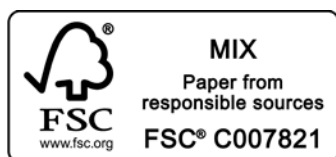
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## Butchers program inspires shop owners to get more pork on the shelf

Australian Pork Butchers is a free program resourced by Australian Pork Limited (APL) dedicated to providing insights, resources, and marketing material to support the sale of pork within retail butchers.

The past year has seen an overhaul for the program, shifting to focus on creating a supportive community and unlocking new communication channels. APL has also been focussed on developing practical resources that can be converted into purchase and consumer instore marketing material that entices the consumer to try pork.

The program aims to communicate directly to retail butchers and their consumers. This unique approach helps overcome the barriers butchers might face in selling pork, then integrating the hurdles to provide a solution of more pork on forks.

The introduction of the Australian Pork Butchers Facebook group is an interactive extension of the successful weekly e-newsletter with snapshot insights, industry updates, marketing advice and an additional platform to showcase their own successes with pork to inspire others.

The online community allows two-way communication with the Australian Pork team and unlocks access to more members of the industry to engage with the program. The average Facebook engagement rate across all industries is just 0.08%, however the Australian Pork Butchers group has an engagement rate of 13%, well above the industry benchmark.

Instore marketing presence remains a priority for the program, establishing a year-round presence to stay front of mind for consumers. To enhance this presence throughout the year, APL launched an additional mid-year pork point of sale (POS) kit last year, supporting the everyday consumption of pork. The kit focussed on versatility, consumer education around quick simple everyday recipes and pork cuts.

The butchers POS kits were also promoted through trade media, with newly created Christmas POS imagery and recipes running in national media outlets in November and December.

APL's market research has shown there is a lack of grab-and-go and valued added options within local butchers. The new value-added content aims to create workroom ready practical recipes that focus on the gaps in the market within butchers and their pork offering.



Value added recipes prove to be an effective introduction to pork for the unfamiliar customer, helping to increase the conversion to purchase pork. The new range was such a success that a top 20 recipe book was created as an added resource available for free through the program. These value-added recipes are available on our website at [www.porkbutchers.com.au/recipes](http://www.porkbutchers.com.au/recipes)

APL are now looking ahead at 2022 to being a year of growth and strength within our community. We will continue to foster our connections, build on resources and garner butcher support. If you are a butcher and would like to benefit from this program, please contact [porkbutchers@australianpork.com.au](mailto:porkbutchers@australianpork.com.au)

## Registrations open for 2022 ICMJ Northern Conference

Registrations are now open for the 2022 ICMJ Northern Conference in Rockhampton from April 20-23.

The three-day event, hosted by CQUniversity and Teys Australia, is open to anyone working or studying in the red meat industry and promises to be one of the industry's premier professional development and networking opportunities. ICMJ Northern Conference Committee Chair, Ethan Mooney said the event is specially designed to showcase the unique challenges and opportunities presented by the beef industry in northern Australia.

He said it's also an excellent opportunity for companies to meet and recruit potential employees through the program's Trade Expo.

"The Northern Conference is a great event for people already working in the meat and livestock industry to enhance their understanding of factors impacting the end product – beef, as well as for university students seeking knowledge, career advice and the opportunity to compete in meat judging competition," he said.

"And then, of course, there are the companies who can come along to meet these passionate young people with hopes of recruiting future red meat industry leaders."

With an exciting program featuring carcass breakdowns, training workshops, keynote speakers, abattoir tours and the Teys Australia meat judging competition, this year's ICMJ Northern conference will be highly informative as well as entertaining.

Keynote speakers at the event include Hogs Breath Café Corporate Executive Chef John Alexander, 2022 Nuffield Scholar and Agriwebb Senior Key Account Manager, Munro Hardy and Chair of the Australian Beef Sustainability Framework and Keppel Brand Director, Mark Davie.

The social component of the program has also been enhanced, culminating in the NH Foods Gala Dinner to be held at the iconic, heritage-listed Rockhampton Custom's House on Saturday evening.

Positioned on the banks of the Fitzroy River in the heart of the Beef Capital, the Gala Dinner will be a celebration of the event's competition winners, the northern Australian beef industry and the red meat industry more broadly.

To kick off the conference, participants will also be treated a special JBS sponsored welcome dinner, featuring brahman hump and Texas-style barbecue beef ribs, slow cooked by the famous Smoking Yak.

The 2022 ICMJ Northern Conference is proudly sponsored by NH Foods Australia, Advance Rockhampton, JBS, Beef Australia and founding partners Teys Australia and CQ University.

The event will be run within the Queensland Government's COVID Safe requirements to ensure the safety of all attendees.

At just \$275pp including GST, registrations for the 4-day event are highly subsidised by industry sponsorship, providing excellent value for money for participants.

The registration cost includes all lunches and dinners on the program including the Saturday evening Gala Dinner.

To register or for more information, visit <https://icmj.com.au/2022/02/17/icmjnorth>.

Registrations close Wednesday 30th March.

The Australian ICMJ program exposes students to the fundamentals of meat quality, carcass specifications required in today's market, the requirements of the modern consumer and the role of new technologies in meeting those needs.

ICMJ's foundation partners include Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) and the Australian Meat Processing Corporation (AMPC).

For more information or to enter as an individual or as a team contact Ethan Mooney at [ethanm@teysaust.com.au](mailto:ethanm@teysaust.com.au). ■

## Addition of casings to Export to China Regulations

Recent changes to the exporting food to China regulations, effective 1 January, 2022 are applicable to the meat industry, in particular casings.

The GACC requirements for meat and seafood products falls under Decree 248, Article 7. Products listed prior to the change in regulations, have no change, however casings now need to be registered.

Casings are described as "... animal tissues that are salted or dried on the retained parts by using organs such as small intestine, large intestine and bladder of healthy livestock, after special processing such as scraping and de-oiling, and is the casing for sausage."

Registration can be done via a self-registration portal through China's International Trade Single Window System. The registration is for food processing and storage facilities that handle products listed in Article 7 (and Article 9, which does not include meat and seafood products).

For more information refer to the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, <https://haveyoursay.awe.gov.au/food-to-china> ■





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## NON-EDIBLE CASINGS

Product Code	Description	UOM	Ideal for
NAT1000111300	Fibrous Casing Clear EP 43 x 500mm	Bundle of 20	Cooked Salami
NAT10001110330	Fibrous Casing Clear EP 55 x 500mm	Bundle of 20	Cooked Salami
NAT10001110327	Fibrous Casing Clear EP 75 x 500mm	Bundle of 20	Cooked Salami
NAT10001110332	Fibrous Casing Clear EP 90 x 500mm	Bundle of 20	Cooked Salami
NAT10001110335	Fibrous Casing Clear G 43 x 450mm CL/WLP	Bundle of 20	Fermented Salami
NAT1000111793	Fibrous Casing Clear G 55 x 500mm CL	Bundle of 20	Fermented Salami
NAT1000111383	Fibrous Casing Clear G 65 x 500 CL	Bundle of 20	Fermented Salami
NAT1000111368	Fibrous Casing Clear G 75 x 500 CL	Bundle of 20	Fermented Salami

## EDIBLE CASINGS

Product Code	Description	UOM	Ideal for
VHSBNO2PAIL	Casing Sheep Bungs No.2	Bag of 10	Fermented & Cooked Salami
VHSBNO3PAIL	Casing Sheep Bungs No.3	Bag of 10	Fermented & Cooked Salami
VHH2832BB1	Casing Hog 28/32	Bag of 1	Italian Sausage
VHH3235BB1	Casing Hog 32/35	Bag of 1	Italian Sausage
VHH3538BB1	Casing Hog 35/38	Bag of 1	Italian Sausage
VHH42BB1	Casing Hog 42+	Bag of 1	Italian Sausage



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 Salami



# World Butcher Challenge Olympics



Often referred to as the ‘Olympics of Meat’, the World Butchers’ Challenge holds captive a global audience that has been eagerly awaiting news of its reprisal since it fell victim to Covid in 2020. The WBC is a bi-annual event and the fact that even the planned two-year gap between competition has butchers busting at the seams (or perhaps steel chainmail in this case), means you can put money on the fact come September 2-3, 2022, this competition, four years in the making, will be bigger and better than ever before.

The last time the best butchers in the world stood face to face was in Belfast, Northern Ireland in 2018. This was where the tourism board of California’s capital city, Visit Sacramento, set their sights on hosting the next competition. Promising to take the challenge to new heights, they’re delivering just that as they’ve cemented NBA basketball arena, the Golden 1 Centre as the backdrop for the hotly contested butcher battle.

The 2022 WBC will be the most universal

yet as the number of competing teams has increased from 12 to 16 – capturing newcomers Canada, Iceland, Portugal, and Wales. Each team of six has 3 hours and 15 minutes to transform a side of beef, a side of pork, a whole lamb and five chickens into a display of truly innovative and world-class saleable products. Independent judges score each team based on technique and skill, workmanship, product innovation, overall finish and presentation.

It’s not just the title of the world’s best butchers and the Friedr. Dick Golden Knife Trophy at steak (pun intended) other awards are up for grabs such as the WBC Devro World’s Best Sausage (gourmet, pork and beef) and the prestige All-Star team – a selection of the six most cutting-edge butchers from across the whole competition.

The WBC is about so much more these days than just the event, with a global community cemented building life-long mentorships and friendships, unlocking business opportunities and

with the overall trade benefiting from an injection of creativity and innovation.

Recognising that the future of our industry is in the hands of the next generation, the WBC has proudly introduced the World Champion Butcher Apprentice & Young Butcher competition. Both individual contests, Young Butcher contestants must be under 35 years of age and entrants into the Butcher Apprentice category must still be working through their trade apprenticeship at the time of application. Modelled on the WBC both groups of butchers have just two hours and fifteen minutes to break down a range of primal cuts into a display of pre-determined products and their own creations.

For more information, go to [www.worldbutcherschallenge.com](http://www.worldbutcherschallenge.com) ■



*Daylesford Meat Co provides a range of traditional cuts and value-add products as well as locally sourced produce.*

## Knowing your product and telling the story

**D**aylesford in central Victoria is an idyllic tourist town, based on its moniker of the ‘Spa Country’ for the local spa at nearby Hepburn Springs and its natural mineral waters.

Drawing visitors has never been a problem – beautiful lake, botanic gardens and convent, and an easy driving distance from Melbourne for a weekend getaway. Foot traffic in the main street means a steady rate of business, including for the butcher.

Up until 2014 Spa Centre Meats was a thriving business, well respected for their knowledge and their product, and customers came from far and wide. But it became obvious to father and son owners, Ron and Matt Layfield, that a re-brand was long overdue if the shop was to continue to grow and stay relevant.

Ron and Matt reached that point, when Ron decided to hang up the apron, and a decision was needed to sell the business, or give it a new lease of life.

“We knew we had the best produce, but we were really terrible at telling the story,” says Matt. “We were the first to admit that we didn’t put the effort in that was required to take it to the next level. After discussing it with Dad, we decided to give it a crack and see if we could turn it around in 12 months.”

By researching what butchers within the greater district of Daylesford were doing, it was evident to both Matt and Ron, that they had a lot of catching up to do. The name Spa Centre Meats was the first thing to go, as it didn’t really speak to customers of butchery. A new name was chosen – Daylesford Meat Co. A renovation, a new look and the targets that Matt had set to achieve in 12 months were achieved in a month.

The majority of the products are still sourced locally, or from the farm Matt runs, Green Hills. Alongside traditional butcher cuts, store manager Paul Tämmer ensures that there is plenty of value-add products such as hams and bacons, pies, lasagnes, quiches, fresh salads for summer, veggies for roasting in the winter. The local traditional sausage, bullboars from the days of Swiss and Italian immigrants is still produced. The aim was to make it as easy as possible for customers to get everything they needed for a meal without the need to go to the supermarket.

Locals remain a core priority to the business – especially with Covid lockdowns in Victoria preventing tourist trade and local restaurants such as the Lake House to operate, but have remained loyal during the tougher times to ensure quality local produce is available on the menu.

The third aspect of the overall business, is the wholesale company, Highland Meats, which provides the Melbourne





*Matt and Ron Layfield at Green Hills, which provides the majority of the beef and lamb for the retail outlet, Daylesford Meat Co.*

market and shop with beef and lamb from the livestock on the farm. Ron started Highland Meats wholesale company in 1990, as well as continuing his partnership in the Daylesford butchery and ownership of the old Trentham meat company, which stayed open until banking closed in the town in the late 90's. In effect, giving Daylesford Meat Co full paddock to plate, supply chain control.



*Daylesford Meat Co underwent a major rebrand in 2014, that has exceeded significantly improved the reputation of the business.*

## A lifetime of experience and trade

Ron's story is somewhat unique in that his career has spanned the full range of skills and knowledge for beef and lamb.

The shop, back in its day, was the retail outlet for the Daylesford meatworks owned and operated by Jim McNamara, and where Ron earned his first pay check as a 15 year old. Jim took young Ron on as his right hand man, and when Jim two years later suffered serious health issues, young Ron at 17 took on the management of the abattoir and the retail shops. Ron managed the abattoir up until 1990, before it changed hands to become a pork processing facility, whereupon he took on the management of the shop. The meatworks has now been fully closed for about 15 years.

While not strictly a butcher by trade, Ron was also heavily involved in meat wholesale – dealing with farmers, livestock markets and processing, through to retail in butcher shops and the supermarkets.

Matt left school at 16 to do his traineeship at the shop, eventually transitioning across to Highland Meats to manage the wholesale business. Currently, Highland Meats supplies up to 1000 lambs a week to butchers and supermarkets, topping up from the livestock markets as needed.

"The cattle market at the moment is horrific," says Matt. "Restocking and the high price at the livestock market means we are lucky to process 20 cattle a week compared to 100 in 'normal' times. You can see that the guys based on volume are struggling, particularly with the added drain of covid illness and isolating affecting production."

## Green Hills for livestock

The farm east of Malmsbury, 20 minutes from Daylesford was bought when Matt was around 18 to better compete for carcase prices. Ron and Matt found that with a competitive market for carcasses, they were becoming price takers, regardless of the quality.

"If our carcase was a higher quality, but not within 20-30 cents/kg of the commodity carcase, we wouldn't get the sale. It was that cutthroat. Most of our farmed livestock went wholesale – up to 80% and a little bit through the shop. We knew our product was worth more than that, so now, wholesale accounts for about 20% while the rest goes through the shop."

The farm currently provides 250 bodies for the shop, based on their own breeding program of Limousin cross Angus cattle. The introduction of Angus over the Limousin is to give that little bit of extra coverage of the leaner muscle characteristic of the Limousin breed.

Annual turn off from the farm between breeding and fattening for processing is around 1000 cattle and 10,000 lambs a year. Ron and Matt, along with sales and farm managers Paul Cook and Brent Streat manage Green Hills, as

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well as an additional 500 acre breeding and background feeding property at the foot of Mount Macedon. All the processing is done at Hardwicks at Kyneton under the Highland Meats brand.

### Continually evolving

The re-brand to Daylesford Meat Co has certainly brought the shop roaring into the 21st century, but Matt knows that to stay competitive, the business needs to keep evolving. Like many businesses in the Covid era, the development of online shopping will be a major part of the future of the business – for retail and wholesale.

The venture thus far into online shopping has proved to be beneficial in that a new online shopper often converts to a loyal customer. It also provides a more effective way of gathering feedback from customers on how the shop and its products are faring. For the shop, Matt envisages that the online shopping capabilities will likely double the shop's capacity within 12 months.

“For us, we followed our gut instinct that the re-brand would work and it did. Trust your gut. If you don't give it a go, you won't know. If we hadn't, we would never have grown our retail, wholesale and farm business into what it is now. The day we decided to have a crack; it turned our fortunes around. It put us in a good place for covid – we didn't run out of meat, we stayed open. So many people in that period came to us because there were no other options and many have stayed with us. Funny how some people find it hard to cross the road from the supermarket until they have to.” ■

## EVENTS FOR 2022

Event	Date	Venue	Contact
FoodPro	23-26 July 2023	Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre	<a href="https://foodproexh.com/">https://foodproexh.com/</a>
AusPack	17-20 May 2022	Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre	<a href="https://www.auspack.com.au/">https://www.auspack.com.au/</a>
Meatstock Butcher Wars	26-27 March 2022	Melbourne Showgrounds	<a href="https://meatstock.com.au/melbourne/">https://meatstock.com.au/melbourne/</a>
	8-9 April 2022	Toowoomba Showgrounds	<a href="https://meatstock.com.au/toowoomba/">https://meatstock.com.au/toowoomba/</a>
	6-8 May 2022	Sydney Olympic Park	<a href="https://meatstock.com.au/sydney/">https://meatstock.com.au/sydney/</a>
World Butchers Challenge	2 - 3 September 2022	Sacramento, USA	<a href="https://www.worldbutcherschallenge.com/">https://www.worldbutcherschallenge.com/</a>
AMIC Sausage King, Apprentice of the Year	14 October 2022	Queensland State Dinner	<a href="https://amic.org.au/events-competitions/">https://amic.org.au/events-competitions/</a>
	22 October 2022	Tasmania State Dinner	
	5 November 2022	NSW State Dinner	
	5 November 2022	SA State Dinner	
	12 November 2022	Victoria State Dinner	
Intercollegiate Meat Judges	20-23 April 2022	Rockhampton	<a href="https://icmj.com.au/our-events/">https://icmj.com.au/our-events/</a>
	5-9 July 2022	Wagga Wagga	





## New technology makes MIJ quality imaging available to more customers

Developed for Australian processing conditions with a unique Australian configuration.

Following on from AUS-MEAT accreditation of the MIJ-30 camera for Marble Score 0-9+, Meat Image Japan (MIJ labo Inc.) have tested and released their new mobile device for the Australian market. The MIJ mobile objective grading camera will make MIJ quality imaging available to more customers – the new addition to the already well known and respected technologies released by MIJ labo Inc. This new device follows similar principles of development and refinement displayed by the MIJ-30 camera, but in a smaller and more available package.

Professor Keigo Kuchida first demonstrated the MIJ mobile phone technology to Australian Wagyu Associations members during the 2017 Japan Tour. MIJ Labo Inc. has been scientifically testing and validating MIJ mobile phone configurations for several years. The new MIJ mobile objective grading camera has been developed for Australian processing conditions with a unique Australian configuration including a specific imaging BEAK.

Like the MIJ-30, the new MIJ mobile technology is capable of rapid and accurate throughput, imaging more than 200 carcasses in the chiller or at a grading stations every hour, under Australian conditions.

The MIJ-30, MIJ mobile, MIJ mobile with BEAK (Australian configuration) are all INPUT devices for collecting carcass ribeye images. A lot of time and research has been spent on camera development for each unit.

All MIJ models have access to the same “MIJ carcass database” and perform automatic analysis. The contents of the analysis include the research results and patented technology of Professor Kuchida for more than 30 years and cannot be imitated elsewhere. The AWA have extensively tested the MIJ mobile side by side with the MIJ-30. The MIJ mobile uploads carcass images to the same cloud-based digital analysis platform as the MIJ-30. This means that image analysis on the MIJ mobile provides the same data output fields as the established MIJ-30 commercial grading camera.

The technology also allows for image capture review, allowing the user to review the image just taken and if required, they can elect to retake the image before saving the image for upload. This paired with a simple Bluetooth barcode pairing of carcasses tags to image ID's means that a full

recovery and comparison of carcasses traits and data can easily be done. If WiFi or adequate Mobile roaming data signal is available, then automatic image upload to the online database can occur. This means that the captured ribeye image can be automatically uploaded and analysis calculated within 5 to 10 seconds, giving real time feedback data for the user.

Key features of MIJ mobile phone objective grading technology:

- Optimised configuration for carcass grading
- Can grade all recognized grading site locations
- Over 200 carcasses graded per hour
- External LED lighting has been added to accurately capture carcass ribeye images
- Easy to use interface for tailoring the device to individual users
- Image captured review
- Overall, the whole device is only about 1.2kg total
- Standard carcass trait reports as for MIJ-30 data

MIJ mobile units will be sold and supported through the Australian Wagyu Association. Contact Aaron van den Heuvel, AWA's Camera Carcass Technician for the latest information about the units. ■



AMIST<sup>SUPER</sup>

# BUTCHER WARS

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# Butcher Wars – more than a trophy

**W**hy on earth would any right-minded butcher think that breaking down half a side of lamb and pork, creating seven dishes – at least – that are Instagram worthy, in 30 minutes in front of a thousand people, is a good idea?

Because it is a challenge, it pushes you, it tests your boundaries. But more importantly it is a chance to learn, to grow personally and professionally. It is an opportunity to meet with other butchers from around the country who share your vision to showcase the skill of Australian butchers.

Butcher Wars has been held since 2016 – albeit two years were cancelled due to covid, with events in Melbourne, Sydney and Auckland. This year, it is back on again and bigger than ever as part of Meatstock and includes a first, the Boning Wars to be held in Toowoomba in early April.

That first competition in 2016 was a leap of faith, not only for the organisers, but also the butchers that competed, with only a vague idea of what the competition entailed. It is now a well respected competition, with many of the original competitors viewed as the old crew and mentors to the young blood coming through the ranks.

AMN spoke to three of the original competitors; Paul Suleyman, Craig Moore and Joel Young.

## Paul Suleyman – the nerve settler

Most people who know Paul's name will be aware that he is regarded as a Master Butcher, and to be competing against him for the first time may send the butterflies going. But backstage, it will be Paul who will give the newcomers a quiet word of encouragement, check that you have the right string and that your knives are sharp.

Paul recalls that the first competition he entered in 2016, in Sydney, it was a 40-degree day and the sweat was pouring off the brow, and he, like the other competitors had no real idea what was expected.

"It was very much just 'rock up and put a display forward', which I did. I was soundly beaten and came last. It opened



my eyes to what could be done in terms of presentation and innovation. I tried again the following year, and the next, and improved with each event.

"My advice to competitors is not based on their individual display, but more to get them to think about the overall strategy to getting it done. Do they know what the hero product will be? What will be the other products that support the display theme? Have they practiced it a few times so that it happens quickly, efficiently and within 30 minutes on the day? It is better to have seven or eight well produced products, than to rush 10."

## Meatstock Honour Roll

### Melbourne

2017 Paul Suleyman  
2018 Daniel McCarthy  
2019 Joel Young

### Auckland

2017 Martin Hiki  
2018 Paul Suleyman  
2019 Martin Hiki  
2020 Gary Thompson

### Sydney

2016 the amazing Diana Edwards  
2017 Paul Brady  
2018 Cal Hogan  
2019 Craig Munro

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Paul says that it is more about innovation and display than anything else. The most inspiring displays he has seen, may not have been a winner once cooked. For example, Paul once tried his hand at a 'meat cake', which looked sensational, but tasted terrible.

"The competition gives me a huge sense of pride and accomplishment, that the judges have appreciated my products and display, as well as my butchery skills. To be up on stage, in a pressure environment with the MC revving everyone up, Shannon and George egging on the butchers and the crowd cheering, is pretty manic. Ultimately it is such a rare opportunity to showcase butchery skills to the general public, and to have our moment in the spotlight."

### Craig Munro – not always about winning

The first year Craig competed, like Paul, he had no real idea of what was to be expected, and planned for his display to be essentially a fancy meat raffle tray. It did not take long for him to realise he had not done enough preparation or planning compared to the other competitors. He came 'flat last'.

However, it was a learning curve, and Craig and his staff regrouped and entered again the following year. The input of Craig's partner, a chef, in the third year of competition, was the turning point for producing a winning display.



*Craig Munro*



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Craig readily admits that he placed a lot of pressure on himself to do better every year, with a mental attitude that was becoming 'win at all cost'. A year out from competition, gave him the freedom to realise that competitions like Butcher Wars, was not always about winning.

"It's not about the trophies it's about the friendships along the way. I stay in touch with quite a number of the guys. It is good to know another butcher who knows what you are feeling or what you are going through and bounce ideas off."

"It is also not just about me. It might be me on stage, but in reality it is our staff and our customers that make up the team."

"For our customers, it is a chance to support their local butcher and reassure them that they do have a quality butcher and shop – it cements the customer base we have and builds further loyalty. People are just happy to see you up there, having go. It is not about winning or losing, but participating and celebrating our industry and our community."

### Joel Young – butterflies and stepping up

Joel distinctly remembers his first competition, where he had heard about a legend butcher and the butterflies starting to take hold. His first meeting of this legend of the industry, was nothing but reassuring – Paul Suleyman calmed his nerves, gave some quiet advice and made sure Joel had everything he needed.





Joel Young

Joel, like Craig and Paul, has now been on the Butcher War circuit for a number of events, but still says the butterflies still happen as the countdown starts. A number of questions run through his mind, not just about his own display, but what others are doing, what the pork and lamb will be like – all the unknowns that can't be controlled.

"It's different to a busy Saturday morning in the shop, in that the shop is a safe environment. You know the procedures, you know the customers, you know what needs to be done and you are conscious of what is going on around you.

"In Butcher Wars, I get tunnel vision and focus on what I'm doing. I stick to things I do every day. I have won a number of trophies based on every day cuts, but the presentation is the key. Focus on what you can do, what you are good at and get it done.

"The nerves, the butterflies, the hard work preparing for the competition are all worth it. There is no greater rush and no better sense of achievement on presenting a display that you are proud of. The crowd of well wishers from your own customers and the general public makes you feel ten feet tall."

Joel added that he is looking forward to the 2022 events, since the cancellations in 2020. "To see butchers I know, respect and look up to that I only get to see at these events is a buzz. It will be good to see new faces and young blood coming through. I'm not that old, but now regarded as a bit of a veteran. Ideally, I would like to do all them especially Toowoomba. I'm looking forward to representing me and my customers and to hold onto the title. It's a lot of fun.

Putting butchers back in the public spotlight like this, shows that butchery is a good trade. For a lot of people, the processing and preparation work goes on behind closed doors. To show a couple of thousand people the art, the skill and passion of being a butcher is what Butcher Wars is about. ■

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# Loyalty brings loyalty

**F**ree eggs, a monthly meat draw, kitchen equipment prizes, giveaway wings or sausages, Christmas clubs, stamped cards ... butchers use a variety of loyalty schemes to keep customers coming through the door.

The benefits are two-fold, loyal customers get the satisfaction of something extra and the shop gets regularity of income. Stores operating loyalty scheme say rewards schemes encourage higher individual spends, more return business and access to email addresses for direct marketing.

## Some reward schemes are simple

Don Cameron and Karen Rix at Master Butchers Whitsunday and MBW On the Barbie do a monthly meat tray draw. Customers simply put their name and number on the back of the till receipt. "We run draws for different things at different times, some in store, some on Facebook," said Karen.

The staff at Boggabri Meats, NSW stamp customers loyalty cards for every spend over \$50. On the 6th stamp they get a choice 1kg marinated wings or 1kg sausages.

Queensland's Super Butcher chain operates two separate reward streams – one for in-store and another for online spends. Customers accumulate 200 points for \$10 discount on the next spend. The level of points varies between products. Bonus points are offered on selected merchandise from time to time. The discount vouchers have a 60-day deadline. Customers signing up to the program receive promotional emails + SMS messages.

In Brisbane's southern suburbs, Ideal Meats offers one stamp per visit for each purchase over \$25. Accumulating 10 stamps allows a customer to and redeem \$25 of non-meat items. Christmas is a peak redemption period.



*David Bobbermen of Ideal Meats, Yeronga*

Owner David Bobbermen said: "Our regulars – we have some people who come in every day – those people get really good value out of it."

He inherited the system when he took over the Yeronga store in 2005. "We were early adopters. But now people don't want to have another loyalty card in their pocket, so we tried an app a few years ago." Results were patchy. "The staff weren't promoting it," he said. "A lot of butchers think their job is at the bench just cutting, they don't do the marketing and sales."

Good staff not only promote cards, but encourage customers to lift each spend over the \$25 threshold, he added.

He would like to see a mobile phone-activated app linked to the store's POS system. "Something that uses your mobile phone number instead of a loyalty card," he said. "We need to get to the same level of smarts as your supermarkets. It's not only about repeat business, it's about data mining about the customer."

## Some systems already embrace technology smarts

Carseldine Quality Meats in Brisbane's north offers a \$10 bonus to spend-in-store after a customer joins its loyalty club. Additionally, 2% of all sales (including sales items) are added to a customer's loyalty dollars used against future in-store purchases. The store uses the customer details to email loyalty-only sales and offers.

In Warrnambool, Victoria, the Meat Barn allows customers to join in-store or on-line to collect a loyalty card in-store or by post. Presented the register, the card earns a 4% discount on all purchases and automatically puts shoppers into a monthly \$1000 cash draw.

Adela Okanovic of Madina Halal Foods in Melbourne said the company was looking into an ongoing reward system runs competition draws throughout the year. "Most modern POS systems have the feature available ... If you don't have a modern register it might be worth looking into other POS systems available."





*Saxon Neal, apprentice at Carseldine Quality Meats*

### Some systems are solidly based in technology

Gold Coast Home Meat Deliveries operates a 'Beef Buck' and 'Steak Lovers' customer loyalty program that awards customers a 'Beef Buck' for each dollar spent online or in-store. They can exchange 500 Beef Buck\$ for a \$20 on the next purchase, which must be of at least \$50 value. The vouchers are stored electronically and issued via email through a one-time, unique discount code. Subscribing to the free program opts customers into receiving emails but no spam and customers can opt out.

Even more sophisticated is the Fresh Meats Rewards app developed by Fresh Meats at Maroochydore.

The loyalty program operates throughout Australia using a digital card linked to an account. Customers can save their registration on their phone or Apple wallet. Program participants scan their code in-store to add a 1 point for every \$1 spent –

With discount vouchers starting at 500 points. Participants also receive a 10% birthday discount and can also earn additional points on special occasions or for non-purchase activities, including reviews, referrals or social media activity. The points stay active as long as there is point-earning activity within any three-month period.

Sign-up data is used for internal sales and marketing purposes only, with no information will be shared externally and participants can opt out of receiving any targeted marketing communications. ■

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# Gidgee your smoke on

New research has found a way to prolong shelf life and maintain colour in lamb meat ... all courtesy of a northern Australian pest plant.

Flavourless smoke drawn from the gidgee tree can slow meat deterioration by 30% and also slows the rate of colour oxidation, according to MLA-backed research.

Flavourless smoke trials on lamb found it can provide a superior visual experience for consumers – almost doubling sales – and could be a cost-effective value-add for processors and retailers.

The work undertaken by Greenleaf Enterprises also claimed that the process is carbon neutral.

“A 40-minute smoke application extends the shelf life, depending on the meat cut and process, by up to 30% beyond the control product. It also kept the meat for redder, longer and almost doubled shelf sales - compared to similar priced and packaged product without the treatment.”

## How does it work?

The researchers believe the composition of the smoke might be key to its preserving qualities similar to factory-created MAP gas mixtures.

Creating flavourless smoke is a patented process generating smoke from burning Gidgee acacia with no added ingredients or processing aids. The smoke is collected and filtered – passing through a super-cold filter to remove the tar, ash and heavy carbon material that give the smoky flavour to preserved meats.

“When these particles are removed, the flavouring component of the smoke is removed, but the meat colour stabilisation and shelf extension benefits are maintained,” said report principals Philip Green and Dr Matthew Flynn.

After filtering, the gas is cooled and filled into compressed air gas bottles.

Preliminary trials indicated improved meat colour and shelf life was achievable after 40 minutes.

“The process is the same principle as any other modified atmosphere packaging (MAP),” Mr Green said. “However, the more complex naturally occurring gas mixture in the smoke seems to have a better impact on shelf life, like that of smoked seafood.

“It is similar to MAP for retail mince or fresh meat products except that flavourless smoke is naturally produced gas, compared with manufactured gas in MAP... (it) is carbon neutral and is produced from sustainable materials, there is a good story to tell.

“Small trials of the product have demonstrated sales rates at twice that of previous sales in retail and at a much faster rate than competitor products adjacent to trial product against foreign product.”

Other benefits reported include improved stock turnover, limiting markdowns and dumps (shrinkage) and lower export costs. Smoked product would have shelf-stability to allow sea freight, leading to savings of up to \$0.70/kg.

The researchers reported that MAP Portioned application – was the easiest way to integrate to current processes. “Disconnecting the existing MAP gas mixture from existing gas flush processes and reconnecting with flavourless smoke is as simple as swapping out a gas bottle,” the researchers reported. “There are opportunities to make the smoking extraction and collection process more efficient by blending gas for different applications, post filtering.

Trials to date show that red meat requires a different smoking technique to that commonly used for fish. It needs a much faster smoking process for optimum colour stabilisation. The key difference from traditional smoked foods is the removal of tar particulates from the gas which also removes the smoke flavours.

“Whilst this technology is not new, there has been no commercial uptake in the Australian red meat industry with no process for applying the smoke in-line application, no reference in Food Standards Australia and limited understanding of how the technology should be applied across different cuts and pack methods,” the researchers said.

## Downsides?

The trial was expensive and was based on small batches. Commercial trials were curtailed by COVID. “Naturally produced smoke is costly and limits application to smaller volumes of high-value products that suffer from shelf life and presentation issues, like bone-in grilling cuts,” the researchers noted, adding that not all lamb products will see cost-benefits from flavourless smoke.

They reported that there was a challenge making an environment that will allow the gas to be absorbed into the meat.

Carbonic acid, formed from the interaction of CO<sub>2</sub> with the meat surface has a toughening effect on the meat. The Greenleaf team reported that, although CO<sub>2</sub> formed a large portion of the flavourless smoke gas, it was naturally occurring and includes other component gases not present in traditional MAP. This organic mix of gas could limit the creation of carbonic acid but would need to be tested.

The researchers sought to clear a way through food labelling laws for the process. The researchers found that food labelling laws do not appear to be a barrier for red meat processors - FSANZ has no concerns about the application of flavourless smoke – but the technique is still subject to the approvals of State Government authorities.

It also recommended involving a state-based food authority to set a precedent and to encourage adoption among other states and processing companies. ■



# Uniquely Territorian

By Stephanie Flynn

While the spread of COVID-19 has ravaged the social infrastructure and meat supply chain nationally, the crisis situation has been compounded and magnified for Darwin-based butchers with the flooding of the city's major supply route from South Australia together with a lack of local supply alternatives due to its tropical climatic conditions.

Retail butchers not only survive but thrive by taking a uniquely 'Territorian' approach – collaboration – as opposed to the competitiveness evident in the highly populated southern and east coast locations around the nation.

Born and bred into West Australian cattle farming families, which honed their skills and resilience, two Darwin-based butchers spoke with Australian Meat News about the specific challenges and survival strategies that face meat retailers in Australia's most northern and isolated city.

## Fannie Bay Gourmet Meats

Terry and Bronwyn Wilkins purchased Fannie Bay Gourmet Meats in 2009 in one of Darwin's most prestigious suburbs, overlooking the Arafura Sea, with Terry returning to his original trade after nearly 17 years in the airline industry.

Terry grew up on his parents' wheat and sheep farm in a regional town north east of Perth before moving to the city to do his apprenticeship and then buying his first butcher shop in his early 20's where he honed his retail skills.

He met and married fourth generation 'Darwinite', Bronwyn, and the two have worked hard to build their retail butchery into a financially successful operation for over a decade.

Approaching the critical age of 60, Terry is now ready to step back from the 60-hour work week which the business has required and plans to either sell the business or place it under management and wind back to part time hours.

"It is a good business, and it has been fantastic for us financially, I do enjoy all the creative aspects of the work like designing the sausages and value-added lines but there comes a time when you need to wind down somewhat," Terry said.

"Building the financial success story of the business has relied heavily on collaboration between us and the other retail butchers in Darwin, I have always taken the view that it is 'us as independent butchers against the supermarkets', which is where the big competition is, and it is a view that most retail butchers up this way share.

"We are up here in the north isolated together so we are in communication, if we can help each other with stock we do, if floods block the supply route, we would rather help each other and then replace it when deliveries arrive, that is the way it is up here," he said.



*Bronwyn and Terry Wilkins have owned Fannie Bay Gourmet Meats since 2009.*

After the many years of experience as a retail butcher in Darwin, Terry understands the unique issues facing the industry in the north and key among them is sourcing product.

The state is renowned for its live cattle export industry most notably because the drought-master breeds like Brahmans can withstand the harsh Territorian climatic conditions.

While the meat is not of the high eating quality of the southern breeds, it is lean and most suitable and preferable for the supply of trim which Terry and other retail butchers source from the local abattoir for their sausages and mince.

It is a similar story with the lack of a grain-fed cattle industry in the north where the animal welfare of cattle would face extreme challenges with heat in the wet season and grains would face pest and disease issues.

According to Terry it has been many years since there were local suppliers of pigs and chickens which he believes is not only, once again, related to the difficulties of climatic conditions and its potential effects on animal welfare but also the lack of small-scale processing facilities. The specifically northern Australian challenge of crocodiles if farms are located close to natural water sources may also be a factor.

*continued on page 20*

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All these factors contribute to the need for retail butchers in Darwin to source most of their products from suppliers in South Australia which relies almost entirely on the freight line of the Stuart Highway through the centre of Australia.

With customer demand keenly supporting direct 'paddock to plate' product, Terry has established a supply relationship with a wholesaler in Adelaide which has direct connections for supply with both local South Australian and east coast farmers of cattle, sheep and pigs.

He also has a direct supply connection established with an organic beef farmer in Western Australia.

But Darwin's supply of meat has been smashed this year not only by the COVID-19 ravaged processing plants in the south but also by major flooding of its key supply route from South Australia with the result that 'Darwinites' faced a total lack of meat and food supply.

"We have experienced a 'triple whammy' this year with supply being particularly challenging not only with the COVID-19 situation facing all butchers and meat processors around the nation, but we have had extreme flooding of the supply route as well as local processors closing for the Christmas and New Year break which they do every year," Terry said.

"With the whole supply chain hit by COVID-19, including abattoirs, transport and freight in the south, the result was that our supplier had half his workforce off with COVID-19, a situation that has had a snowball effect putting retail butchers in a very precarious position, when that happens you only get a small proportion of what you order anyway.

"Then when the flood occurred on the main highway between South Australia and the Northern Territory, we did not get any stock at all so for there have been a number of days that we have had to close our doors due to a total lack of product to sell to customers.

"It has been a nightmare, but with all that we have been very busy in the store and the people of Darwin have been wonderfully patient and understanding, buying what they could buy instead of buying what they wanted to buy," he said.

## LZH Butchers, Parap

Located in an inner suburban shopping precinct famed for its weekly markets, Glen Norton opened LZH Butchers in Parap a couple of years ago just as the first wave of COVID-19 hit globally.

Raised on a cattle station in Western Australia's remote Kimberley region, Glen joined the army where he served our nation globally gaining a myriad of skills over the course of nearly 30 years before returning and completing a mature-aged apprenticeship at his uncle's retail butcher shop in the small town of Derby north of Broome.

He purchased his first butcher shop in Cairns, which he still owns with his brother-in-law managing for him.



*Glen Norton, LZH Butchers in Parap is in the process of establishing a vertically integrated local supply chain.*

No stranger to the difficulties and hardships of food supply across Australia's north and understanding the dearth of vertically integrated infrastructure for the meat supply chain, Glen is using the skills from his varied career to establish a local pig farm and, eventually, an independent multi-species abattoir in Darwin's outskirts.

In year three of his five-year plan, and still possessing the energy levels of a person in their 40's, Glen's first aim is to become relatively self-sufficient in supply for his own retail butcher shop and then eventually build the farming and processing enterprise to supply all butchers in Darwin.

The impact on Darwin's meat supply from recent COVID-19, flooding and resulting freight costs has been a confirmation that he is on the right track establishing local vertical integration for his own and other Darwin butchers' meat supply to supplement the supply sources from South Australia.

"It has been around 15 years since there has been a commercial piggery in the Northern Territory, and it is not without its challenges, but I now have the farm underway with 34 piglets and another four sows about to give birth, I expect to be self-sufficient in around five months in terms of pork supply," Glen said.





LZH Butchers' Jacob Mercieca and his colleagues have been trained to educate customers on cheaper substitute cuts for recipes in the face of rapidly rising inflation.

"The biggest problem has been the difficulty of finding a slaughter facility with meat inspectors which will do small slaughter quantities given the major processors are all geared for export quantities.

"So, the answer is to establish my own small-scale slaughter facility which will serve my own farming needs and eventually be expanded to serve others as well, the regulatory requirements and meat inspections are the subject of discussion with Government at the moment," he said.

Glen's drive toward local supply and vertical integration is further motivated by the need to reduce the already high cost of meat to his customers which was further exacerbated by the added charges, around an additional \$160 a pallet, as freight had to travel via Queensland during the flood of the supply route from South Australia.

With a young family, Glen believes he understands the difficulties faced by his customers as they reel under the high inflation currently being experienced across the board, inflation levels not seen since the 1980s.

According to Glen, the costs to retail butchers in terms of overheads are also rising with the additional burden of COVID-19 testing requirements and mandates adding some \$75 per day every day of the week to operating costs all of which have to be passed on to consumers.

*continued on page 23*

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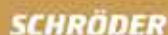
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*Meat supply shortages were evident at all retail butchers as the combined challenges of COVID-19 and floods dried-up sup.*

Many butchers in Darwin have dealt with the rising costs by locating in stand-alone stores away from the major shopping centres, and it is a trend Glen says he has also noticed in Queensland, but this cost control measure only goes so far in the face of rapidly rising inflation and additional financial burdens placed on small business by Government mandates.

"I do believe that a lot of family butcher shops will have to close this year as the result of the squeeze between higher operating costs and as meat and other food prices become unaffordable to the average consumer," Glen said.

Darwin's collaborative approach is not limited to retail butchers assisting each other but extends to other small businesses as well.

Glen's store is located in a village shopping precinct where all businesses collaborate whether it is the bakery, the food outlets or the operators of the markets every weekend.

The markets held every weekend at Parap Village is a great draw card for the retail businesses like LZH Butchers which Glen says is a wonderful route for attracting both existing and new customers alike.

"I do believe we as butchers have a big opportunity and obligation to educate customers on the cuts of meat which can be used to substitute for the high-priced cuts that may feature in a particular recipe they would like to use," Glen said.

"All my butchers are trained to show customers which cut of meat may be cheaper than say a backstrap which could be used as a substitute without affecting the quality of the recipe, it is our way of helping families reduce the cost of living and at the same time assists us to retain customers," he said. ■

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**Nick Benedetto**, Thee Little Pigs, Lockleys SA

# Aim high, sell smart: advice to the beef market

**S**top selling red-meat by the kilo, brand it by region and market it as an 'eating occasion', according to a leading food academic.

Associate Professor Heather Smyth advised a Brisbane MLA breakfast audience to sell red meat like fine wine.

"You need to push the envelope at the premium end and, in doing so, drag the quality of all beef up to new standards of eating quality," she said. "You need to understand flavour complexity and texture in all its diversity, a composition far beyond tenderness and then communicate these hedonistic qualities to your consumer convincingly."

The flavour chemist and sensory scientist has been working with premium food and beverage products for the past 20 years.

"If you haven't noticed, beef is suffering a bit of a brand crisis among consumers," she said. "Among some circles, in fact, beef is a kind of a dirty word."

"Trust is not always associated as being synonymous with the beef industry. Beef is in need of a huge image makeover in Australia."



Heather Smyth  
and MLA's R&D  
manager  
Darryl Heidke.

The audience of 80 people heard the University of Queensland academic pose the question: "Who will be consuming your beef in 2030 and what does this consumer actually want?"

She continued: "More than ever before, the modern consumer believes in the power of their dollar. It's a trend we see as growing, fuelled by social media and our online lives. The modern consumers believe they can impact change by

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the choices they make and the products they purchase with their dollar.

“Another trend that we see growing is the attention that consumers pay to the origin of their products, about three in five consumers nationally, and that trend is on the rise.

“People care about where their food comes from. They deeply care about where it comes from and they want a connection to products that deliver providence, localism and sustainability leadership.

“They want environmentally friendly packaging, ethical production, health and wellbeing and they want their purchases to represent who they are, what they value – their core values.

“They’re willing to pay more for an eating experience that delivers sustainably sourced food offering convenience, health and as well as hedonism or food enjoyment.”

She posed another question: Where are the gaps between where we are today and where we need to be, for these consumers?

“Firstly, there’s the growing number of flexitarians who we need to acknowledge, who associate red meat with environmental impact and who are looking to reduce red meat consumption,” she said. “I’m not talking about the 3% of vegans. You know it’s a problem. Maybe you’re a bit late to the table to address it, but education and advocating for meat and its natural benefits is key.

“Secondly, origin of product. The red meat industry really doesn’t capitalise nearly enough on this opportunity of Brand Australia. Look to the wine industry if you want inspiration – not only do they have Brand Australia, they have regional distinctions: Barossa Valley, Margaret River, Clare Valley, Grampians, South Burnett and a plethora of brands within those.

“There’s nothing more valuable than being able to describe the intrinsic product qualities that naturally come from the land upon which it’s grown.

“Exploit that opportunity. Use provenance as your competitive advantage. It’s a point of difference which cannot be easily competed-with by other countries.

“Only Australian beef can be Australian beef. Australian beef is the best-tasting steak in the world and here is where you will identify your value opportunities,” she said.

“Lastly, focus on delivering value eating experiences that are too valuable to pass up. MSA has achieved a great service by removing tough, poor meat from the market. Fantastic, but it’s not good enough to be better than just bad meat.”

She concluded: “You need to stop selling meat by the kilo, treating red-meat as a commodity, and start valuing the product based on eating occasion. Provide the Australian brand’s points of distinction. Find your champions. Find your Grange Hermitage of beef and celebrate that. And all beef will benefit by association.” ■



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# COVID keeps on giving

In March 2019, the new coronavirus, COVID-19 hit our shores, bringing new challenges and for many, new opportunities.

In our May 2020 issue, *AMN* chatted with industry and reflected on how we got through the first year with lockdowns, worksite closures, loss of business through hospitality downturns, and the insecurity of what the regulations will bring next.

Now, in March 2021 after three waves of Covid variants, we have learned some valuable lessons and seen some heartbreaking, and heart-warming situations.

## Government and policy

Throughout the pandemic, variations in government policy across the states have often conflicted with federal government – border closures are one such case. Mandating vaccinations is another. Throughout the past two years AMIC has worked proactively to ensure members are represented and businesses were given advice on how to manage the workplace, particularly for social distancing and what to do in the event of a positive case.

With the declaration that the meat industry is an essential service came a myriad of challenges – how to manage staff

Patrick Hutchison



levels when team members are socially isolating. The flow on affect to processing lines meant that not enough staff were available from the kill floor, transport to wholesalers to distribute to the general public. Reports by one fast food service company withdrawing some lines of poultry options earlier this year, highlighted the problem.

While the original virus and later, Delta did have impacts on processing and plant closures, the impact of public panic buying was the greater influence on meat shortages in early 2021.

In 2022, the onset of Omicron, a far more contagious variant swept through many businesses at the one of the busiest times of the year – Christmas to Australia Day. For many supermarkets, meat displays simply couldn't be filled, leaving customers without what they came for, and looking for alternatives for dinner. For many butchers, particularly those who have their own supply chains, empty shelves were not the issue.

The reduction in isolation time from 10 to 7 days, and the access to rapid antigen tests (RATs) has significantly helped with the management of the Omicron variant.

## The processor – Australian Country Choice

In an interview with ABC radio, Australian Country Choice CEO, Anthony Lee said that the company could see the writing on the wall for the advent of testing and purchased some 30,000 RATs to test daily the 1000 staff that are onsite each day.

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Australian  
Country Choice  
CEO, Anthony Lee



“What we also saw was that there was a lot of high absenteeism when people felt unsafe to turn up to work. It was really important for us to get people feeling confident to turn up to work. And the RATs were seen as that outcome.”

Back in January when the interview was recorded, ACC were seeing around 15% returning a positive test. As borders to Queensland opened up, the company engaged a third party health care provider to manage the protocols and testing procedures onsite, in an environment where AMIC advocated for free RATs to be available for industry. The relationship with the health care provider was initiated to be in place until mid March.

“I’ve been really proud of all our people who have done an exceptional job to ensure that we have stayed safe and open. It’s been a massive team effort ...”

### The wholesaler – Melrina Meats

Melrina Meats in Melbourne is one of the larger groups in the country supplying carton beef, lamb, mutton and pork across its cold store distribution points in Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane and Sydney. Suppliers include the likes of Teys, JBS, Stockyard and MDH.

When AMN spoke with Ben Barwick, back in July 2020, the biggest lessons learned, was the need to be nimble and react quickly to changing business landscapes. Forecasts and stock levels were once a month out, but rapidly fell to one week with the changes in lockdowns occurring so rapidly.

In the 18 months since that conversation, Ben said that coldstore lead times had still not gone back out to a month,

*continued on page 28*

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*continued from page 27*

but remained nearer to one week, particularly in the wake of the Omicron variant. Shortages from processors and difficulties with transport has meant that orders are filled quickly and the turnaround from delivery to despatch is a question of days.

“The pandemic rollercoaster has continued providing its own set of challenges from panic buying, closures of food service, lockdowns, increases in trade through butcher shops and supermarkets as families stayed home. Being caught with product during a lockdown was a challenge.

“This year’s shortages due to omicron slashed our inventory to about 25% of normal levels. Transport was impacted, where it would be two days out of Queensland, it became 3-4. Things are definitely better this week, and better than the week before, so definitely improving.”

“It didn’t matter which supplier we tried to source from, we were all in the same boat, doing the best we can to get as much product as we could to as many as we could.”

## Competitions and training

It was gut wrenching to see so many butcher industry competitions cancelled – AMIC’s Sausage King, APL’s Pork awards, Meatstock Butcher Wars and the World Butcher Challenge. Even the World Skills for apprentices felt the impact.

This year, 2022 is finally a light at the end of the tunnel, with all the events set to take place. But not without challenges. Vaccination status is a key one for many events and competitors, but one of the unseen challenges, is actually time away from the shop.

For many competitors, they are owner/operators of their butcher shop and with the huge upswing in business in the past 18 months, it is becoming increasingly difficult to spend the necessary time to practice and perfect the display for competition, let alone take the several days away from the shop to attend.

“One of the biggest challenges is interstate travel for butchers,” said Butcher Wars coordinator Shannon Walker. “For those who live near where the competition is held, it is a lot easier, but for regional or interstate competitors it is a big ask for them to leave the shop, when they are already short-staffed.”

Training apprentices has shifted to more of an online platform, but equally finding a shop to do the instore training when there is little time to make a sausage, let alone train an apprentice is exacerbating the issue of a low numbers in the workforce that are trained. According to Paul Meredith, trainer with South West TAFE Victoria, training for 2022 will continue online, but “engagement with apprentices so far hasn’t been great.”



*Travis Berwald*

## Travis Berwald, Washington State, USA

The ways Covid has affected the shop I work in, my community and myself is different in a lot of ways. I live on a small island in the Pacific northwest of Washington state, work for a small “mom and pop” grocery store in a community that is mostly family owned small businesses. We’re not a whole animal butcher shop. We work with sub-primals and cut them down into what we need for our counter.

Covid has taken a toll on our shop. We have had to pull product from several different warehouses and companies to get the product to fill our shelves and with that comes constant price changes, not only in meat but in non-perishable product too. Getting it to the island also has been a struggle with our main transportation to the island being by ferry, which proved a challenge due to lack of crew with Covid related issues.

The team in our shop is very small but has stayed very healthy and has worked very hard to keep the shelves stocked for the customers. I’ve talked and listened to numerous people and butchers throughout the world dealing with these same situations. Being one of the co-creators of @butchers\_lounge\_live on Instagram we’ve made it comfortable for butchers, farmers, chefs to be comfortable reaching out to others in the industry to gain extra knowledge and perspective on what’s really going on outside their shop, community, state or country.

I can’t speak for everyone but it seems like we’re “all in the same boat” trying to make the best out of what we can and that’s what we’ll continue to do. ■





## Gorman-Rupp pump solves blockage issue at Trafalgar plant with outstanding results

### Background

Central Agri Group is one of Australia's leading fully integrated beef farming, backgrounding, feed lotting and meat processing companies. Established in 1991, it has loyal domestic customers, supplies to over 50 exports markets and has invested heavily in state-of-the-art meat processing facilities.

### The Problem

Their Trafalgar plant did however have some issues with their wastewater pump. They were running copies of the Gorman-Rupp self-priming pump on their Green Waste and they were attending the pump daily to fix issues with regard to blockages in the pump. On occasions these issues would cause the well to overflow and require the need for outside contractors to be called in to help deal with the inflow into the well.

Another processor who is running genuine Gorman-Rupp pumps recommended they contact Hydro Innovations.

### Solution

Hydro Innovations recommended the existing pump be replaced with a Gorman Rupp T3A71S-B "Super T Series"

trash pump fitted with an "Eradicator" solids management system, with hardened internal parts to deal with the grit and stringy materials that flow to the well. The well has a high loading of grass and so the pump was setup to deal with the grass.

### Benefits of the Installation

It's now almost 2 months since the installation and the Plant Maintenance Supervisor, Josh, could not be happier. Josh said 'The Gorman Rupp pump is a great pump, far better than what we had before!' He has not had to attend the pump at all compared to the once or twice per day the previous pump required.

The savings are quickly adding up and Josh has all that time back to work on other projects within the plant that he could not get to before.

Gorman-Rupp self-priming trash pumps are available in sizes from 2" through to 10", with flows to 200 litres per second, and pressures to 90 metres. They have been extremely popular in the very difficult wastewater pumping applications in animal process plants across Australia. More information on these pumps may be obtained from [info@HydroInnovations.com.au](mailto:info@HydroInnovations.com.au) ■

# 3D printing trial begins at red meat processing plants

The Australian Meat Processor Corporation (AMPC) has begun trials of 3D printing at red meat processing plants with the delivery and installation of two 3D printers at two plants.

AMPC and Konica Minolta collaborated to establish a world-first, industry-owned additive manufacturing (3D printing) service model to help red meat processors across Australia to print equipment parts, revolutionising equipment maintenance.

Additive manufacturing, also known as 3D printing, has been around since the late 1980s. However, new uses for the technology are constantly being discovered. This led AMPC to investigate its potential in meat processing facilities.

In a high-volume environment like a processing plant, parts such as bolts and rollers can wear or break. With 3D printing, the industry can benefit from part replacement, creation, and refinement.

Brian Armstrong (Draftsperson and Project Support Officer) from the Casino Food Co-op in Northern Rivers NSW said, "This 3D printer is at a whole other level. It's really exciting to see what this will mean for the future of replacement parts at meat processing plants.

"We have already printed a 'gear' which is the size of a dinner plate. It is being used currently in a very harsh environment taking a lot of weight. The gear holds big drums used for just one process we do here. We used the 3D printer to recreate the previous gear which needed replacing."

Casino Food Co-op worked together with AMPC when scoping the use of the 3D printer at their plant. "We went



through and looked at jobs we could use it for here on site, what printable parts we have and what we can try the 3D printer on," said Brian.

"There are so many uses for 3D printing at meat processing plants. It can be used when waiting for parts to be delivered. Plants can print a 3D part so that equipment can be operated whilst waiting for a replacement part from a manufacturer. Alternatively, 3D printed parts can replace the need to go to the manufacturer altogether."

AMPC CEO Chris Taylor said, "AMPC's role, as the research and development corporation for red meat processors, is to look at innovative technology such as 3D printing, and how it applies and can be used within Australian meat processing plants. The ability to simply print a replacement part could drastically reduce downtime and minimise the need to wait for parts."

The two 3D printers will move to different red meat processing plants around the country throughout 2022 as part of the trial.

For background to this project please go to <https://www.ampc.com.au/news-events/media-releases/world-first-3d-printing-of-equipment-parts-for-aussie-red-meat-processors>

For more information

Contact Communications and Media Manager, Maria Stathis on 0428 694 801 or email [m.stathis@ampc.com.au](mailto:m.stathis@ampc.com.au)

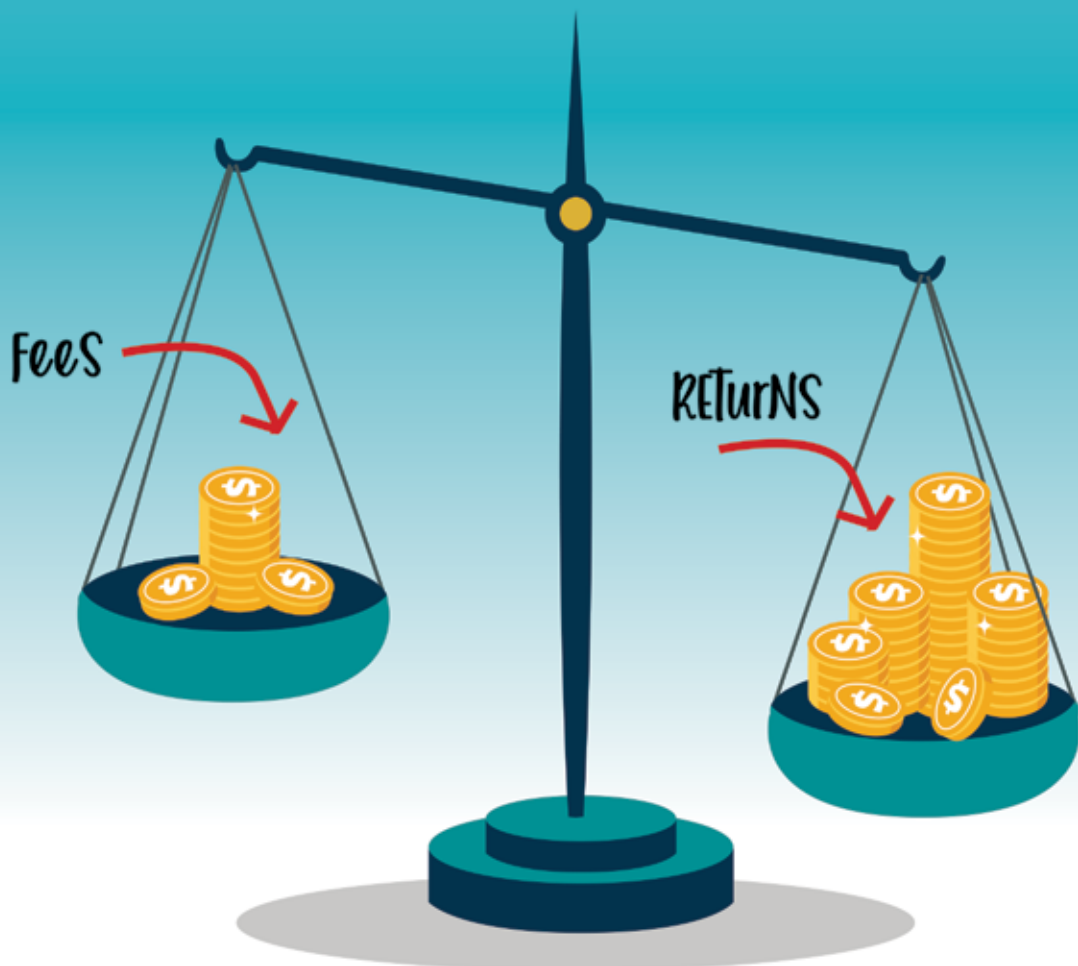




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<sup>#</sup> P.A. to 30 June 2021. Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future performance.

\* Source: Rainmaker Information, October 2021.

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# Floor replacement makes for hygienic abattoir

**E**stablished in 1965, Wodonga Abattoir is a leading export-focused multi-species meat processor, based in northern Victoria, Australia. The facility processes approximately 45,000 tonnes of meat per annum, including 80,000 cattle, 1,200,000 sheep and lambs, and 300,000 goats.

Starting out as a small domestic service works the abattoir primarily services export markets in rendering and skin salting as well as abattoir site operations. These operations process approximately 45 million tonnes of product per annum.

The on-site rendering plant is a high temperature facility processing inedible mixed abattoir material (MAM), fat, bone and raw blood from abattoirs, boning rooms and butcher shops within Victoria and NSW. The end product is tallow, meat meal and dried blood for the domestic and export markets including USA, Canada, Mexico, Japan, Korea, Russia, South Africa, Indonesia, China, Malaysia and Middle Eastern countries with Halal and Organic certifications.

The primary focus for Wodonga Abattoir is the wellbeing and health and safety of all employees along with compliance with FoodSafe and AQIS regulations. The floors and wall joins form a major component of the hygienic operation of the facility.

With usage and time, the floors eventually deteriorate. The key challenges within this intense meat-processing environment are the short timeframes to take up any failing floor coatings and complete repairs in with a rapid turnaround. Due to constant heavy duty washdowns cracks to seals and joints in the floor can occur and if these are not addressed and repaired it can become a serious health and safety issue causing a risk to the plant.

For the past 10 years, ROXSET Australia has worked with the engineering team at both the Victoria and Queensland sites to ensure the integrity of the flooring systems.

Recently, ROXSET completed more than 2000sqm of upgrades to chillers, kill floor, boning room, corridors, beef passage and lamb-kill floor. Taking advantage of the shutdowns during Christmas or Easter, the areas were completed in a short timeframe with the assistance of the large in-house installation team within the company.

A 4-6mm layer of ROXSET SE4 Epoxy was applied to the key processing areas, this gives a non-slip rating of R13 P5 to meet safety and hygiene regulations. A ROXSET SE Charcoal Grey finish with ROXSET SE Safety Yellow was installed throughout the plant. ■



# Rabobank February Meat Industry Outlook

The most recent Rabobank report for agriculture indicates that the beef herd 'is on the mend'. After two years of low slaughter numbers, analyst Angus Gidley-Baird reports that 2022 will continue to see growth in breeding inventory. The impact of restocking and strong demand will be the main drivers for the market, the good news for producers is that pricing will remain strong, albeit softening a little.

According to the report, modelling suggests a 13% increase in slaughter numbers in 2022. Male slaughter numbers in Q3 2021 showed the first year-on-year increase since Q1 2020 and the biggest rise since Q3 2017. The rise in male slaughter indicates an improvement in breeding numbers and calving numbers through late 2020. Increased availability of cattle will improve productive efficiency in processing facilities and support ongoing strong feedlot numbers.

The EYCI has continued to rise in the past two years to record values, contracting only four times in that time. Plenty of rain and good crops, will mean that cattle prices remain firm up until April, but it is likely there will be a new baseline price, on average higher than those prior to 2015.

The MLA February report on Lot Feeding shows that a record has been set in December, for male carcass weights exceeding 350kg/head, while 54.5% of Australian beef production is based on grainfed beef. The number of cattle in the feedlot has hit an all-time record 1,453,580, in part to the approval of new yarding in NSW, rising 3% on the previous study to sit at 80% capacity overall. Most other states actually saw a slight decrease in feedlot capacity.

For export markets, Japanese grainfed markets decreased slightly, but remains Australia's principle export destination. South Korea remains strong, and China grew by 6.8%

## The future for lamb

Sheep numbers are also on the rebuild and as a consequence, slaughter numbers in early 2021 were down on a

five year average. MLA's projections from last October indicate that there may be an 8% increase in lamb production in 2022.

An increase supply does not necessarily mean a softening of price, as consumer demand is high. As a consequence, Rabobank predicts that trade lamb price averages will sit just about AUD8/kg cwt in 2022. ■

## Recovering Volumes of Cattle Lift Production, but Limited Supplies Keep Prices Strong

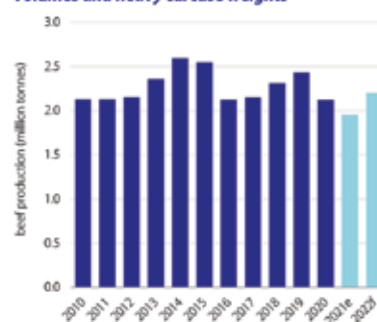


**Eastern Young Cattle Indicator to decline but remain at historical highs**



Source: MLA, Rabobank 2022

**AU beef production to lift with higher slaughter volumes and heavy carcass weights**

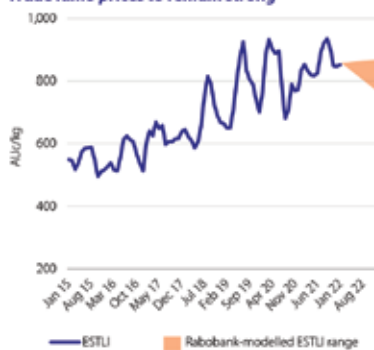


Source: ABS, Rabobank 2022

## Prices Remain Strong as Production Climbs

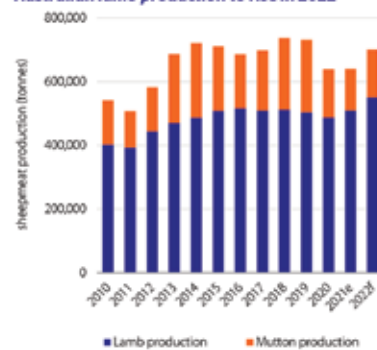


**Trade lamb prices to remain strong**



Source: MLA, Rabobank 2022

**Australian lamb production to rise in 2022**



Source: ABS, MLA, Rabobank 2022

# Don't Mince With Words

**T**he Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Report into meat definitions and other animal products was handed down in February.

Led by Senator Susan McDonald, the inquiry has resulted in nine recommendations which were tabled before parliament.

According to a press release by AMIC, the inquiry's recommendations 'go a long way towards restoring truth in labelling for Australian consumers, while ensuring animal and manufactured plant-based proteins compete on a level playing field'.

"We are grateful for the time and effort from Senator Susan McDonald and from Red Meat Advisory Council, in getting this outcome," said AMIC CEO Patrick Hutchinson.

"It is great to see that all sectors of the traditional protein industry have been recognised and everyone is getting some assistance through the Senate Committee's recommendations.

"The focus at all times has been on regulating meat definitions and meat labelling, the issue is not on the existence of alternative plant proteins."

## Recommendation 1

Develop a mandatory regulatory framework for the labelling of plant-based protein products, in consultation with representatives from the traditional and plant-based protein sectors, food service industry and retailers.

## Recommendation 2

That the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission reviews the placement of plant-based protein products in retailers' stores, including online platforms.

## Recommendation 3

That the Australian Government ensures the application of a mandatory regulatory framework is applicable to cultured meat products, in preparation for the introduction of those products onto the Australian market.

## Recommendation 4

As part of its current review and modernisation of the Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1999, Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) initiate a review in consultation with industry, of section 1.1.1-13(4) of the FSANZ Code and recommend exempting its application to named meat, seafood and dairy category brands.

## Recommendation 5

On conclusion and application of the review of the Food Standards Australia New Zealand Code, that FSANZ develops guidelines to inform labelling and marketing practices for manufacturers of plant-based protein products.



Senator  
Susan McDonald

## Recommendation 6

That the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission develops a National Information Standard that defines and restricts the use of meat category brands to animal protein products. This standard should include guidance on the use of livestock imagery for labelling and marketing of plant-based protein products.

## Recommendation 7

The committee recommends the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, in partnership with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, examines measures to:

- strengthen the plant-based protein product sector's capacity to source its products from Australian grown produce
- support investment opportunities into the Australian plant-based alternative product sector's manufacturing infrastructure to foster competitiveness and market opportunities on the international market.

## Recommendation 8

The committee recommends the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment ensures that the plant-based protein product sector is supported to contribute to the Ag2030 goal of achieving a \$100 billion agricultural sector by 2030.

## Recommendation 9

As part of its review of the Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1999, FSANZ initiates consultations with stakeholders about amending the FSANZ Code to include:

- a definition of plant-based protein products
- minimum compositional requirements for plant-based protein products. ■



# Astech PW Saw – a saw that sees and measures densities to give you equal weighing portions

Cutting Plants and Meat Processing Facilities must maintain adherence to current licensing, registration, cleaning, sanitation and food safety controls to operate. Each facility must maintain and upgrade machinery to improve output yields and efficiencies. It is also in their interests to improve safety efficiencies in the workplace as a duty of care to their staff.

In the current climate of an ongoing pandemic, there are increasing demands on production yet decreasing availability of skilled labour. Many facilities that process meat are moving to equipment that automates repeat tasks whilst improving worker safety. In the food processing industry, precision portioning of large meat primals and high volume meat portioning are labour intensive and repetitive tasks, that can be automated by a Bandsaw that handles these tasks. The Astech PW Saw works out weight to width slicing in a highly tech machinery process that ultimately generates benefits all round.

Cutting plants can raise their duty of care for their staff by installing an Astech PW Saw to meet higher safety efficiencies yet reducing costs. Considering most cutting plants are situated in rural locations, staffing may not be available for the necessary shifts to meet quotas. If a worker sustains an injury at a facility, large costs could be involved in a medial airlift to a city hospital. With a plant down a shift worker, there's also



ongoing hospital expenses, surgery and then subsequent rehabilitation costs incurred in caring for an injured worker.

While automation is making meat processing less prone to injury, working with bone saws does increase insurance premiums, as it's deemed hazardous and dangerous work. The Astech PW Saw (Precision Weight), is a fully automated and enclosed saw which, from the outset, is a far safer piece of machinery to use and greatly reduces the possibility of injury.

Astech PW Saw works with a laser scanning system that measures product contours and density on the in feed belt, to calculate the width for each slice. The saw delivers cuts sliced portions to a consistent weight. These equal weighing portions can be packed, packaged or stored for customers like supermarkets, wholesalers, food retailers and ready to sell suppliers.

Consider investing in an Astech PW Saw, as the benefits far outweigh the alternative of an un-automated, unsafe and outdated methodology where high insurance premiums undercut profits.

Talk to CBS Foodtech to find out more about the Astech PW Saw.

<https://www.cbsfoodtech.com.au/astech>

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# Cooking with Fire

Grilling and low and slow, over a flame is a cooking technique that was mastered eons ago, but still manages to attract new fans, who bring new ideas. *The Total Grilling Manual*, edited by Lisa Atwood, provides a range of techniques, cuts and recipes to guide the home grill to new heights.

Beginning with an overview of tools and techniques for grilling and smoking, Attwood introduces the subjects of wood, charcoal, equipment, fire pit versus off-set smoker with enough information to get you going.

Once the griller has decided on the best method and equipment, Attwood brings together a selection of recipes, sides and sauces for beef, pork, lamb, poultry and seafood. Each section provides an overview of the basic cuts and best cooking techniques.

Recipes range from brisket to Korean bbq short ribs; pork shoulder to pork belly; lamb kebabs, beer can chicken to swordfish. Included in the sides are desserts and drinks to complement the flavours of the meats.

A soft cover book, *The Total Grilling Manual* provides an introductory level to grill and smoking, with enough variation in recipes to tempt the appetite. Recipes and techniques are fully photographed in a no nonsense approach. The editor, Lisa Atwood, a respected cookbook author, says she spent the formative moments of her childhood at the elbow of her father in a halo of charbroil grill heat, before taking on her first grill at 14.

*The Total Grilling Manual*, edited by Lisa Atwood is published by



Welden Owen and available at Paradise Bookshop, Daylesford, for \$69.99. Ph 03 5348 1288.

See page 39 for details on how to win a copy. ■

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The words in the list below are all hidden in the grid. They may be found in straight lines running horizontally, vertically or diagonally. Some of the letters are shared by more than one word. When you have found all the words in the list, there will be 27 letters remaining: these form the answer to the competition.

When complete, send your copy by mail or email. Include your name, address and phone number to go in the draw for another great prize from **BUNZL**. Results will be published in next issue of Australian Meat News. **Entries close 10 April 2022**

Last issues winners and answers, see page 23



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E	O	O	M	H	U	F	T	S	A	M	N	O	I	T	A	L	O	S	I
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## BOOK COMPETITION WINNER

Congratulations to Tom Barratt from Rayner's Gourmet Meats, New Farm in Brisbane who won the copy of: *An Obsession with Ham, the Hindquarters* by Mark Scarborough and Bruce Weinstein.



Dominic submitted a correct entry to the question: *Who won the Gold Medal for the Boneless Ham Category in the AMIC Awards?* Answer: Kawunga Quality Meats, Karwunga, (Hervey Bay) Qld.

Tom operates Rayner's Gourmet Meats in New Farm. The business has a wide range of meats and value-added products. Check-out their Facebook page. The images alone are enough to make you hungry! Thanks for entering our competition Tom, and enjoy the book. ■

## WIN WIN

To enter our competition to win: *The Total Grilling Manual*, edited by Lisa Atwood (RRP \$69.99)

Answer the question below.

Send your answer and name and address & phone number to:

*Australian Meat News* Book Competition

Email: athol@ausmeatnews.com.au (preferred)

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Question: *Who is the only woman to win Butcher Wars?*

**Entries close: 10 April 2022**



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