

PASSION FOR CATTLE

Cade Ebdon, a recent recruit to our buying team, brings with him a passion for cattle. He became involved in showing cattle as a young bloke and has been around them ever since.

At school he did work experience with Roberts and then went on to commence a traineeship with the firm.

He then went travelling and worked on numerous properties in New South Wales and Northern Territory where he gained wide experience. While working on an NT station he suffered a broken leg and came back home to Tasmania to recuperate.

As the leg mended he started looking for another job and soon found himself in the southeast of South Australia working as a livestock agent in the Millicent and Mount Gambier districts. This led on to seven years working in the game.

Cade says 'you have to come home to roost eventually' and that brought him back to Tasmania and Greenham.

He grew up at Yolla, near Wynyard, and his father was a butcher. "I guess to some extent, it's no surprise I ended up where I am."

He describes his job with Greenham as "an opportunity you couldn't knock back" and says it's great to be part of a company willing to spend money in a small community and grow their business.

"I wouldn't want to work anywhere else. The company has been so welcoming – I feel like I've been here 10 years.

"It's been great working with Peter Greenham and his father, and getting to understand their approach to the business. And Graeme Pretty has really shown me the ropes – he certainly understands the cattle game."

Cade is based at our Smithton plant but buys cattle all over the state. If you have cattle to sell, give him a call on 0409 437 950 and take advantage of his enthusiasm and experience.



BRANDING, WHY DO WE NEED IT?

Meat is one of the last foodstuffs to be given the branding treatment, and there's a good reason for that.

But first, let's review the history of branding in the food industry. Older readers will remember what grocery stores were like 50 years ago or more before the advent of supermarkets. Most foods were stored in bulk – in bags, containers, bins and so on around the shop. The staff (almost always wearing white aprons) would carefully measure and weigh everything from raisins to oatmeal and sugar into brown paper bags.

Gradually manufacturers started pre-packaging their products and selling them under a brand name. These brands represented a consistent level of quality and allowed consumers to develop trust. They came to learn that for example, if they bought ABC sultanas they would get a better product than the XYZ brand.

However, XYZ might be cheaper and that could be a consideration if the budget was tight. Brands allowed consumers to exercise choice and it gave them control instead of the grocer.

Manufacturers helped the process along with advertising and promotion aimed at winning the hearts and minds of consumers and increasing their sales and market share. They looked at ways of differentiating their products and making them more attractive to buyers.

Processed foods were the first to receive branding treatment. The staples, such as bread, milk, meat and vegetables took longer, in some cases much longer.

Milk for example, was treated very much as a commodity until the 1980s, and it's only in the relatively recent years that the branding of meat has become commonplace.

And to a large extent we have the MSA grading system to thank for that. There is no point in creating a brand if you can't be sure that the product underneath it will be of a consistent quality. Consumers want to be able to buy a product by a brand name and know exactly what they are getting.

Until the introduction of the scientifically based MSA system it was difficult for meat processors to have that confidence.

MAJOR RENOVATIONS EXPAND PRODUCTION

Major renovations carried out in September will boost the kill at Smithton from 340 to 420 head per day.

The plant had to be closed for two weeks while the work took place. It involved gutting and renovating the boning room, and installing an extensive range of new conveyors and machinery, all designed to greatly improve efficiency.

Staff will find it much easier to work in the new environment. The size of the room has been doubled.

Chiller capacity also received a major boost. We are now operating four chillers where previously it was two. Apart from providing for the extra 80 head per day, the extra space will relieve pressure on overall storage capacity and provide a buffer against any unexpected delays in shipping.

All the modifications have been planned with environmental responsibility in mind, and are designed to reduce the plant's carbon footprint.

A new, higher capacity more efficient boiler was also installed to meet the needs of the expanded operation.

We know MSA grading works and our Cape Grim and Tasmania Natural brands are living proof. When customers buy meat under these brands they know what they are getting. They develop trust and come back for repeat purchases, and they are also prepared to pay a premium for the assurance provided.

With the success of these grass fed brands under our belt, we are now introducing a new brand to cater for feedlot cattle coming through the plant.

Pure South Natural Angus beef brand is based on the same principles – no HGP's, no antibiotics during the feeding period, and no genetically modified feeds. It's another avenue for adding value to our throughput which in turn allows us to pay farmers the best possible prices.



RGM/GRT34753



Tasmanian

MEATWORKS MESSENGER

OCTOBER 2010

As we move into spring I don't think there is any risk in marking down 2010 as another great season in Tasmania. I'm sure that it would have been nice to have more or less rain at different times, but overall there isn't much to complain about.

Our marketing efforts continue to a bear fruit with steadily increasing sales both at home and abroad. There is a growing appreciation of just how fortunate mainlanders are to have a highly fertile island to the south producing such wonderful meat for them.

FOCUS

Our focus is on grass fed beef but we are also aware that lot feeding has an important role to play even though Tasmania is better off than the other states when it comes to consistency of rainfall and pasture production.

For that reason we have introduced the Pure South brand to accommodate lot fed cattle. It's based on the same rigorous standards as our other brands – there is certainly no compromise on quality – but it provides a focus for grain fed beef while our other brands can continue to focus entirely on the attributes of the grass fed product.

Focus is extremely important marketing. You have to stand for something – you can't be all things to all people. Have a look at the article on the back page that provides an interesting reflection on branding.

BIG INVESTMENT

Getting sales is crucial but it is just as important to maintain production capacity and standards. That's why we have just spent several million dollars on a major upgrade of the Smithton plant. There is more information also on the back page. While the aim of the exercise was to increase our kill, we are also delighted that it will increase employment and provide a significant boost to Circular Head.

You will get a chance to see what we have done when we hold our open day on November 27 (see adjacent story). We see ourselves in partnership with farmers because we need each other to achieve success. We can achieve far more by working together.

I look forward to meeting you at the open day.

Peter Greenham

GREENHAM



CHANCE TO MEET CUSTOMERS

Our open day at Smithton on Saturday, November 27 is shaping up as a huge event. It will bring together participants in the beef supply chain ranging from farmers who breed and raise the raw material right through to those who put the end product on the plate.

Invitations have gone out all Tasmanian farmers on our books.

Representatives from our major Japanese customer, the Aleph chain of specialist beef restaurants, will be in attendance. Aleph is a very successful operation across Japan and a major Greenham customer.

Cattle in our Aleph program need to be tagged by the age of 12 months and must meet stringent requirements. We process them between 18 and 27 months in a carcass weight range of 220–350kg. The result is some of the best beef that our wonderful state can provide.

Aleph started in 1968 as a small restaurant serving hamburgers and salads at Morioka in the northern part of Japan's main island. It's been expanding ever since and now manages nearly 300 restaurants nationally and has more than 720 employees.

The company has strong environmental credentials dating back many years. It notes that Japan has only 1.4% of the world's arable land but accounts for 47% of the world's agricultural consumption, calculated in terms of money spent, and has long sought to find solutions to this issue.

Aleph president, Akio Shoji, even went so far as to start an experimental farm and livestock operation in order to better understand how meat is produced.

The company also has a goal of cutting its CO2 emissions in half (by unit of revenue) by 2020 compared with 2000.

This background provides an understanding of the Aleph requirements under our supply arrangement – no antibiotics, HGP's, or genetically modified feed, and a very limited use of drenches.

The open day will provide farmers with an opportunity to receive feedback from this very important customer.

Farmers will also be able to connect with our Australian wholesalers who play such a crucial role in developing the domestic market for our Tasmanian branded beef. You'll be able to have a chat to them about what their customers are looking for.

All our board members will be in attendance along with MLA representatives. We are also extending invitations to Tasmanian politicians in the north-west part of the state.

The program commences at 10 am at the plant in Bacon Factory Road where tours will be available through until midday.

Visitors will then move to the Smithton Football Club for lunch and drinks. The day will close at 4:30pm.

Contact our staff at Smithton on 6452 2701 if you need any further information.

Aleph Inc.

LONG ROAD FROM NAVAL APPRENTICESHIP TO MANAGING OVER 700 BREEDERS

In keeping with the experience of many farmers, King Islander Scot Wright's entry into the industry was far from an easy journey with many twists and turns along the way.

But as he showed Meat Worker around his home property located right in the centre of the island it was clear the rewards had been worth the effort. There is a quiet pride in his achievements as he discusses his Charlyn Angus stud and points out the infrastructure built with his own two hands – sheds, yards, a covered cattle handling set up and much more.

Scot grew up on his parents' farm and left home at 15 to join the Navy as an apprentice electrician – his father gave him the choice of either school or a trade – but he and the senior service didn't get on so well and he was back home after two years.

A couple of months later he headed off to see the world, working his way around Australia, at times with up to three horses and nine dogs in tow. The Northern Territory gave him mustering experience and by the age of 19 he was head stockman on Mataranka Station near Katherine.

Then followed a stint in Queensland before moving to Victoria where he followed in his father's footsteps and took up shearing. Over the time he has shorn in Tasmania, done a few sheds on King Island when there was more sheep around, and run a contracting business in Queensland. His top tally was around 260.

In 1986 he bought a farm back home but when interest rates hit 20% soon afterwards, he sold up and headed back to Queensland.

A GRADE AFTER ONLY FOUR GAMES

At Injune 90km north of Roma he got roped in to playing rugby league and was promoted to the A grade team after only four games. "I still knew nothing about the rules but wasn't bad at mowing down the opposition." He went on to play for five years and still follows the code closely.

The wandering came to an end when his father decided to retire and gave Scot the opportunity to buy the property. "We agreed on a price above the going rate but with no deposit which made it achievable," Scot said.

Since then he has added 250 acres of coastal country to the original 500 acres, and he also leases a further 150. And just to keep himself out of trouble, he also manages 'Borrodale' at the north of the island where he looks after 450 breeders.

The home block, where Scot lives with his wife Heidi and their three children, consists of 400 acres of pasture with 100 acres still under timber. It's been sown down with a mix of white clover, ryegrass cocksfoot and fescue.

JUST THE TIM TAMS IF PADDOCKS TOO BIG

A flexible rotational grazing system is employed. The time cattle remain in each paddock varies throughout the year in line with pasture growth. An extensive fencing program has reduced the average size of paddocks. "If the paddocks are too big they just eat the Tim Tams," Scot says with a smile.

Scot says he has no trouble with staggers at home but it is a problem on the managed property. "We've got the mix right on our own place but there's too much ryegrass at 'Borrodale'."

Copper deficiency is a problem in the area and all cattle receive the trace element in slow release form along with cobalt and selenium. "You can drench scouring cows but you won't get the results without giving them copper. Drenches just don't seem to work without it," he said.

A contractor spreads fertiliser in a split application – 25kg/ha of phosphorus in autumn and 35kg/ha of potash in spring. Scot doesn't like applying potash earlier in the year because of the losses that occur due to leaching during winter. He also applies lime sand at 7 tonnes/ha, of which 60% is available as lime.

Heidi and Scott run 300 breeders including 100 stud cows on the home block and there are 70 cows at the coast, 50 of which Scot has AI'd to a Charolais bull that throws low birth weight calves. He handles all the AI work himself.

All calves are tagged at birth with the stud calves also being weighed using a homemade cradle/platform that is towed behind the quad bike. "It's nice and light and I can take it anywhere. I don't weigh the commercial calves, just make an estimate. Once you get your eye in, you get pretty close to the mark," Scot said.



PADDOCKS ARE KEPT SMALL AND SCOT USES ROTATIONAL GRAZING. IN BIG PADDOCKS CATTLE ONLY EAT THE 'TIM TAMS', HE SAYS!

WENT OUT OF THEIR WAY TO HELP

The Wrights have been selling cattle to Greenham for the last two or three years. "We find them very good to get along with. We had a bit of a problem back in January with the timing of a consignment and they absolutely went out of their way to look after us. There's no way anybody else would have given us the same help."

Scot is keen on the Aleph program and impressed with the way Greenham manage it. "They pay for the Cattle Care audit, and also given us a supply of CattleTranz to make sure the stock are in the best

possible condition at slaughter. They're fair dinkum about the job.

"And with Aleph you aren't committed to fattening them all the way. Last year I sold some to another Aleph producer, John Kay at Smithton, who took on the finishing," he added.

Because he already has meticulous records on his computer, Scot finds compliance with the audit requirements no problem at all. "The last one only took two hours. I use Practical Systems Stock

book software to record everything that happens – movements between paddocks, vaccinations, the whole lot.

"It's a great program, easy to use and clearly put together by somebody with a farming background. I keep the laptop beside the armchair and often update records while watching telly at night.

"And this is coming from a bloke who said he would never have a quad bike, mobile or computer. Now I have all three and couldn't do without them," he laughed.

Scot comes across as someone who doesn't mince his words and that's certainly the case when he starts talking about King Island branding.

"A beast born and raised on King Island is definitely King Island beef regardless of where it's slaughtered. It's surely more King Island than something brought cross from the mainland after a tough year and fattened here for a few months.

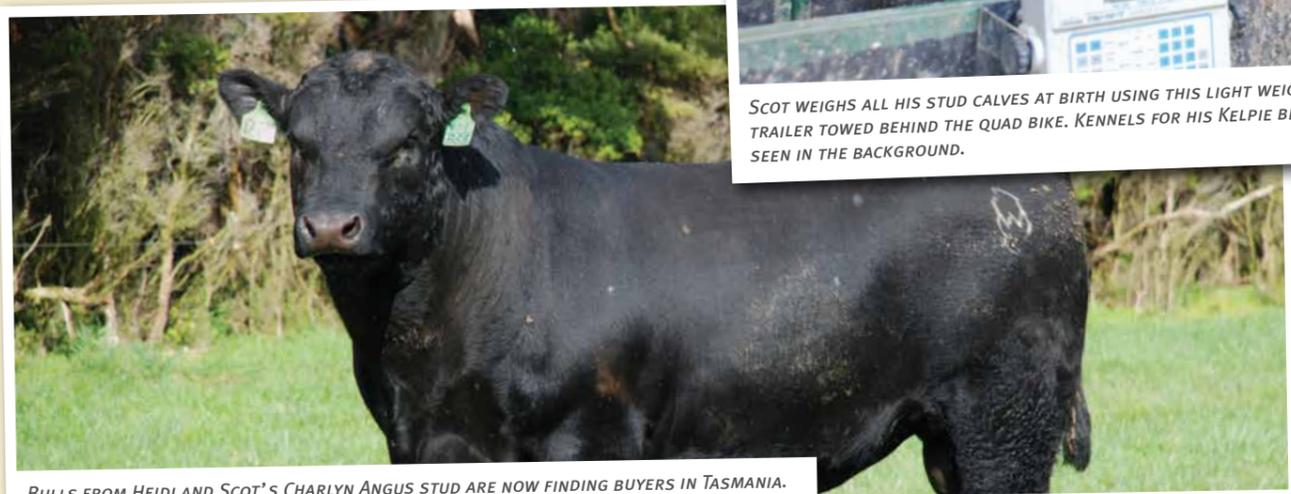
"You've only got to think about the wine industry. If you make wine from grapes grown in the Tamar Valley it's always going to be Tamar Valley wine – it doesn't matter where it's bottled.

"The main thing is that Greenham are buying cattle here and providing competition. Our industry would be in a sad state without it," he said.

Scot hasn't lost the fondness for working dogs and stock horses acquired during his mustering years up north. He breeds Kelpies and has some handy looking horses in a paddock next to the house.



SCOT WEIGHS ALL HIS STUD CALVES AT BIRTH USING THIS LIGHT WEIGHT, LOAD CELL EQUIPPED TRAILER TOWED BEHIND THE QUAD BIKE. KENNELS FOR HIS KELPIE BREEDING OPERATION CAN BE SEEN IN THE BACKGROUND.



BULLS FROM HEIDI AND SCOT'S CHARLYN ANGUS STUD ARE NOW FINDING BUYERS IN TASMANIA.



IN ADDITION TO THE 500 ACRE HOME BLOCK SITUATED ALMOST IN THE CENTRE OF KING ISLAND, THE WRIGHTS ALSO HAVE 250 ACRES ON THE WEST COAST.