

Normanville Meatworks Pty Ltd

ABN 26 959 810 279

Hayflat Rd, Normanville
P O Box 294
Yankalilla SA 5203
05.05.08

email: normeat@optusnet.com.au
Ph 8558 2279
Fax 8558 2595

TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON RURAL AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS AND TRANSPORT

***Thank you for the opportunity to express some ideas
in relation to meat marketing and branding.***

Background.

The issue of meat marketing, grading and branding has been a contentious issue for 35 years that I know of. I joined AQIS (then D.P.I.) in 1973 and the problem of grading was an issue at that time. When speaking of lamb the grading as it stands is judged on whether a young ovine has still in place its juvenile or milk incisor teeth. These teeth can stay in place for up to 10-12 months depending on factors such as breed, feed and treatment. With such an arbitrary grading system the issue of whether in the animal is a lamb or sheep depends on the rupture of one tooth i.e. one day the animal is a lamb worth \$90-00, the next day it could be a hogget worth \$45-00. This dentition grading system also applies to beef and the misuse of Yearling to Prime is also a concern.

Internationally the lamb definition is assessed in different ways, for example New Zealand describes lamb as young sheep with no more than 2 permanent incisor teeth that have risen to full height. This probably occurs from up to 12-15 months of age.

Science.

The meat and livestock Australia has spent considerable time and expense to investigate the eating qualities of beef and lamb. The Meat Standards Australia (M.S.A.) investigations into Beef eating quality highlighted the fact that age was not the only factor affecting eating quality. The same science was applied to Sheep meats and the Sheep Meat Eating Quality (SMEQ) trials revealed that young sheep with 2 permanent incisor teeth in full wear had as good as if not better eating qualities than lamb with no permanent incisors. This varied with breeds and fat depth but was overall a very good indicator.

Recommendation.

It is my opinion that the current definition of lamb is too arbitrary. I, and most of my colleagues, believe that a quality based assessment of what is lamb and what is not is more fair to both producer and processor. The same system should apply to Beef to give the consumer exactly what they pay for. After all we rely on repeat business and if we were to supply inferior quality to quality customers we would not have a business. The science is there to back up the expansion of lamb definition and it would resolve an issue that has been around for decades.

As for regulation we are the most regulated and controlled industry. National Standards are audited in our plant by AUSMEAT 4 times per year for quality and AUSMEAT definitions. We also have food safety and regulatory audits by the Meat Hygiene Unit of South Australia twice per year. So I think we have necessary regulatory controls in place, however. I think that quality assessment in place of dentition would remove the necessity of some unscrupulous processing to mark hoggets as lamb.

Yours faithfully,

R.B. WEDD,
MANAGING DIRECTOR.