

MSA (MEAT STANDARDS AUSTRALIA)

Alison Heap

“Seeing is deceiving. It’s eating that’s believing.” James Thurber

This quotation from the 1950’s might well describe why the Meat Standards Australia (MSA) grading scheme came into existence.

So often we can forget that we are part of the beef industry and not just the cattle industry. The consumer is often forgotten. Many consumers have felt that the beef they buy has not been of good quality. In order to address this the Meat and Livestock Association (MLA) set up tens of thousands of taste tests to determine the factors which make a piece of beef good to eat?

Out of this research came the very complex MSA grading system. This allows for 16 different boning tables (grades), 16 being the lowest. However abattoirs may only accept the higher boning tables and **most producers of British breeds would hope to be in the top 5.**

In the past the scheme was criticized for not giving an adequate premium to producers of quality beef. Producers, naturally, market their beef to the highest bidder either within contracts to the supermarkets, feedlots, through the saleyards or privately to butchers.

What has all this to do with Devon’s? **Purebred Devon cattle grade very highly in the MSA scheme.** Both in compliance and boning table achieved.

Members who have supplied purebred Devon cattle to MSA abattoirs for many years have compliance records well over 95%. Fewer than 5% fail to comply in the top boning tables. They do this because they easily lay down fat evenly across the carcass and have fine muscle texture. Their docile nature allows them to tolerate handling and transport stress, meaning a very high percentage have flesh with low pH when they are killed, which means they are tender to eat.

According to the MLA many of the cattle submitted for MSA grading fail to meet specifications, the major problems being too high pH, too little fat or uneven fat distribution, over fat or a carcass weight that is outside of the specifications. All of these failures are heavily penalised in price. Long gone are the days when the steers just had to look fat and well. The kill data from MSA goes into a national database and is a powerful tool for the producer. It enables you to benchmark your animals against others in your area, state or nationally. Follow this link to benchmark your animals

<http://www.mla.com.au/Marketing-beef-and-lamb/Meat-Standards-Australia>

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