



Dr David Homer

David Homer graduated from Sydney University in 1985 with a first class honours degree in veterinary science. He also has a postgraduate qualification in technology management from Macquarie University. Over the last 15 years he has provided research and technical advice to multi-national pharmaceutical companies and is currently the manager of large animal veterinary technical services for Merial Australia. His special interests include parasitology and livestock productivity.

PRODUCTIVITY – MORE THAN JUST WEIGHT GAIN

Productivity is more than just weight gain. The simple and somewhat traditional definition is that productivity is all about selling cattle heavier than when they were purchased. Some consideration is also given to the cost of inputs being less than the value of the meat produced. A more comprehensive definition is that productivity is weight gain that is achieved in a consistent and predictable manner yielding meat of the appropriate quality for the designated market. This definition should also include consideration of the sustainability of the practices used to achieve the weight gain.

Genetics, nutrition, management practices and disease control, including control of parasites, all play a part in achieving real productivity. Using an integrated and tailored parasite control programme can be a significant stepping stone in achieving the consistent and predictable production of quality meat. Such programmes will also ensure that the gains made are sustainable by improving the reproduction indices of breeding stock, minimising the development of resistance to available treatments and controlling the level of contamination of pasture to minimise infection of the next generation of stock.

The fundamental issue is just how do you go about developing a strategic and tailored parasite control programme to ensure for producers that any achieved productivity is worth more than just the weight gained.