

# JIM CUDMORE

## CHAIR, FEEDLOT INDUSTRY ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE

**A move to fine-tune the rules and standards that underpin quality assurance in lot feeding will bring added clarity to the industry's national accreditation scheme, JIM CUDMORE says.**

*Clarity.* It's a word that comes up time and again as Jim Cudmore, Chair of the Feedlot Industry Accreditation Committee (FLIAC), outlines the benefits a suite of small but technically important changes to Australia's National Feedlot Accreditation Scheme (NFAS) Rules and Standards will deliver.

The update will be introduced in November to take effect on 1 March 2018.

"There aren't too many significant changes," says Cudmore, who has been involved in beef production in Australia since the 1980s.

"What the changes are doing is providing a greater level of clarity around specific areas of the Scheme: simple things like the feedlot definition. Industry ran the risk of having production systems that had evolved over the past five years or so wanting their product to be called 'grain fed beef' when in actual fact they weren't part of our quality assurance scheme and couldn't be.

"Then there were requirements to improve clarity around contingency planning and incident reporting, which were more or less there previously but weren't as clear or concise as they could have been.

"The review of the NFAS, even though it hasn't made that many significant changes to the program, has rejigged it in a much more user-friendly way and created more clarity around people's responsibilities."

Cudmore began his lotfeeding career as the livestock manager for the Mitsubishi feedlot at Quirindi, NSW, in 1989 before returning to Queensland to join Kerwee Lot Feeders at Jondaryan in the mid 1990s. Having moved on from Kerwee in 2012 he now undertakes "project work – helping companies to get things done".





He is one of seven members of FLIAC, a committee within AUS-MEAT Ltd that has oversight of the NFAS on behalf of the grain fed beef industry.

The NFAS currently has about 400 member feedlots accredited under outcome-based guidelines and audited independently by AUS-MEAT every year for continued certification.

Cudmore says he does not envisage accredited operators needing to make many, if any, alterations to their day-to-day practices in order to satisfy the amended Rules and Standards.

“They are already doing most of these things,” he says.

“The changes are about increased clarity and increased purpose – and then implementing this in a business. This will give feedlot operators improved understanding of their obligations under the Scheme and give new people joining a business the opportunity to gain a very clear understanding of their responsibilities.

“While these changes will have minimal impact on day-to-day feedlot operations, they will require people to modify the Quality Management System that underpins their business, and grain fed beef production in Australia as a whole.”

Cudmore says about eight or ten years ago, industry moved the NFAS to an ‘outcome-based’ quality assurance program where the Scheme defines a topic and provides a required outcome.

“Then it’s up to the individual operator as to how they address and achieve that particular desired outcome. The current improvements build on that.”

He says one of the major pluses will be enhanced certainty around things that were previously “a bit tricky” – particularly incident reporting and risk assessment.

“We found through the review that generally feedlots had considered some risks and contingencies to their business but not all of the potential impacts, and some feedlots hadn’t considered many at all. Feedlot operators are responsible for large numbers of cattle in one facility so we are now asking them to assess the risks of particular events and put together a plan to mitigate any negative consequences.”

Cudmore says one of the many strengths of the NFAS is its ability to reassure customers and consumers that lot feeding cattle in Australia is sound, safe and accountable.

“Industry decided six or seven years ago that it needed to be more transparent to enable customers and consumers to understand more about our production system. Yes, we are intensive, but we have systems in place in feedlots that provide responsibility and accountability, and through third-party independent auditing annually, feedlots can demonstrate how they have a positive impact on the environment, cattle welfare and beef acceptability. Feedlots in the Scheme all have people trained in these facets.

“We’ve started shining a light on what we do so that people can understand it. That way, hopefully, those who aren’t well informed now or don’t have in-depth knowledge of our industry won’t jump to conclusions that we’re something that we’re really not.



“One of the strengths of this program is that we’re comfortable anyone can have a close look at our industry and we can show that we do have good systems in place to achieve the desired outcomes for livestock and the environment, and we can be responsive to continual improvement.

“The reality is that we *are* an intensive livestock industry – we can’t get away from that – but we can demonstrate that we do a good job of satisfying the needs of our livestock as well as the needs of the people who are working with them, and also be open to scrutiny and assessment by third-party auditors.”

### **MORE INFORMATION**

To learn more about the National Feedlot Accreditation Scheme, phone AUS-MEAT Limited on 07 3361 9200 or visit <https://www.ausmeat.com.au/services/list/livestock/nfas/>

