

SCOTT BRAUND

GENERAL MANAGER OF FEEDLOT AND FARMS, MORT & CO

With up to 72,000 head of cattle on grain, one of Australia's biggest feedlot operations praises industry for maintaining clear, attainable standards, SCOTT BRAUND says.

Mort & Co has thrown its support behind the latest updates to the National Feedlot Accreditation Scheme (NFAS), with general manager of feedlot and farms Scott Braund applauding the Scheme for setting achievable standards.

With feedlot operators to be audited against these new standards as of March 2018, "I think this is a great example of well-orchestrated change", Braund says.

Initiated by the Australian Lot Feeders' Association (ALFA), the NFAS is an independently audited quality assurance scheme managed by the Feedlot Industry Accreditation Committee (FLIAC) and has been in place for the past 23 years.

After more than 20 years working in the industry, Braund remembers his first workshop in 1995, just one year after the Scheme's inception.

"It was quite an interesting couple of days as a person new to the industry; back then I probably never understood the true significance or gravity of what the workshop was about.

"Looking back from where I am now, it was obviously a pretty big step."



Braund says the NFAS has continued to change and grow with the feedlot industry, becoming ingrained in everyday operation for accredited properties.

"To market your cattle as 'Grain Fed' in Australia, you have to be accredited. There are roughly 400 accredited feedlots. It goes up and down a little bit season to season but, by and large, it's reasonably consistent.

"The major part of the Australian domestic market and large retailers are highly engaged with the NFAS; that's evident in their supply base."





Braund says non-accredited operations tend to be more opportunistic, using a temporary feedlot system in times of drought or to supply a small domestic market.

“Those people do present some risk to me on the basis that, if something untoward should happen in a feedlot anywhere, from a public perception perspective it’s just going to be a feedlot, not whether it’s accredited or not.

“There are plenty of management responsibilities involved with being NFAS accredited. You have to be on your ‘A Game’ every day.”

With Mort & Co currently running an aggregation of three sites across the Darling Downs and northern NSW with a combined capacity of 72,000 head of beef cattle, Braund says the new NFAS Rules and Standards are a positive step in improving the feedlot system.

“These changes are not big. There’ll be some things that need to be addressed around risk assessment and contingency planning, and operators will need to become familiar with the updated reporting requirements.

“The feedlot industry is used to these things – accredited feedlots do this and industry is well and truly up to meeting the challenge.”

Braund says a 2015 review of the original NFAS guidelines identified a number of opportunities for improvement within the scheme, with this update reflecting the work done previously.

“You have to stay current,” he says. “There’s no doubt the expectations of the community have changed since 1994.

“Historically, contingency management within the NFAS system was localised around things like having a separate water supply and was quite narrow in its focus, whereas the new NFAS risk assessment process is more like a modern health and safety system which requires us to take a view of the wider risks associated with our operation and the mitigations of that.

“It’s actually quite a modern and holistic approach to managing contingency risk within our business.

“Not only are consumer expectations becoming higher due to food safety and environmental factors but people understand that the feedlot industry is working in this space, and has been for 20 years, so they feel they can ask us to do more now.

“We’re being looked at and the fact we have a system means it needs to be credible and working. It’s one thing to say you have a system but another to actually do the things you say you’re doing.

“Particularly in the past four to five years, the pressure being placed on the NFAS is more than ever because people know we’re working in quality assurance.”

Braund says Mort & Co will continue to embrace future changes to industry and encourages other operators to be proactive.



“It’s really important, and something ALFA is aware of, that you have to take people on the journey with you. We know the feedlot industry is made up of a really adaptive, forward-thinking bunch of people. Collectively, as an industry, we do this pretty well.”

MORE INFORMATION

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