

CULTIVATE WA

THE ROYAL AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

DECEMBER 2015 | VOLUME 7

Show and tell

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2015 IGA PERTH ROYAL SHOW

Girl power Women take over the shearing boards



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EDITOR'S NOTE

This is the final edition of Cultivate for 2015 and I would like to thank you for your support and wish everyone a safe and happy Christmas.

I hope you have enjoyed sharing the year with us though the pages of Cultivate. Meeting the people who are the face of our industry and along the way discovering what is happening at Claremont Showground and the Show.

This edition is packed with inspired offerings from award winning olive oil and wine to top shearers, livestock breeders and the highlights of eight days of competition and celebration at the 2015 IGA Perth Royal Show.



Dr Rob Wilson, President
The Royal Agricultural Society of WA

CONTACT US

If you would like information about any of the articles please email us at cultivatewa@raswa.org.au.

Publisher: Royal Agricultural Society of WA
Claremont Showground, 1 Graylands Road
Claremont WA 6010 | Telephone: 08 6263 3100





Show Stoppers

Traditional Show attractions, an entertainment spectacular and new learning exhibits won praise from visitors at this year’s IGA Perth Royal Show

Animals and interactive exhibits were among the top three attractions at the Show, with the City Farmers Animal Nursery the number one destination for visitors closely followed by IGA Fresh from WA. The district displays took on a new look with an app developed by the winning Coastal group downloaded 6,000 times. Children got their hands dirty at the new attraction Discover Dirt and a sea of red poppies took people's breath away at the 10th Light Horse exhibit. Two monster trucks roared around

the Main Arena twice a day making a lot of noise much to the delight of crowds. A guinea pig called Nibbles won The Great Cavy Race. Just over 4,500 coffees were served in the Police Pavilion as part of the coffee with a cop initiative. Around 150,000 people watched the IGA Fireworks Spectacular. 60 baby chicks hatched in the City Farmers Animal Nursery. Six cows in the milking station produced 30 litres of milk a day. The Petey Pie Bakery, an educational display from the Baking Association of

Australia, went through half a tonne of meat and a tonne of flour producing its delicious pies and sausage rolls. A sensational sugar art reproduction of Monet’s Water Lilies was on display in the Cookery Pavilion. 96% of customers were satisfied with the Show with 69% delighted. Winston the steer sold for \$7,500 to raise money for Black Dog. More than 18,000 children participated in the Junior Farmer initiative and 6500 tractor licences were issued at Farm 2 Food and 12,200 IGA Follow the Yellow Brick Road bags were sold.



There was a special 10th Light Horse exhibit which commemorated the ANZACs and highlighted Claremont Showground’s role as a training and accommodation centre for the regiment during World War I. Volunteer of the Show Chris Horvath was instrumental in bringing the exhibit to the Show and provided memorabilia from his personal collection.

Below: A new food precinct whet the appetite of WA’s top chefs, Peter Manifis, Scott Taylor, Eamon Sullivan and Don Hancey.

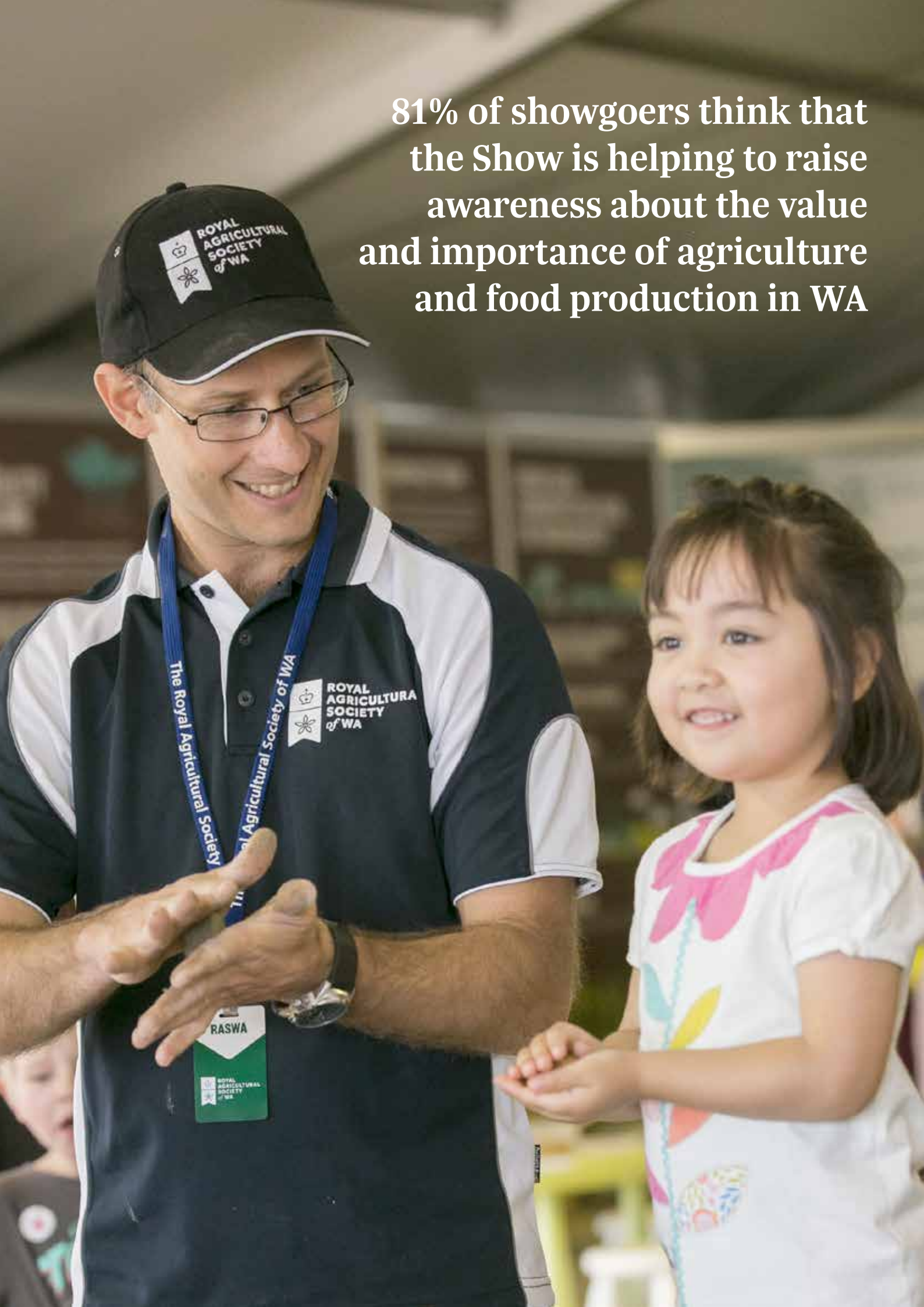


Visitors extracted the DNA from thousands of strawberries at the newest Show exhibit Discover Dirt.



Above: 2,000 children made sushi and rice crush at the IGA Cooking with Kids classes.

81% of showgoers think that the Show is helping to raise awareness about the value and importance of agriculture and food production in WA



Animals are one of the top three Show attractions.



A Great Dane named Jimmy Barnes won Best in Show at the Perth Royal Dog Show. Rory and Lynette Booth are the proud owners of the dog whose Show name is Rorlyn Working Class Man.



There were over 1,000 entries in the IGA Perth Royal Show Cookery Competition which featured a special class to commemorate the ANZACs.

Left: Minions were everywhere. There was a minion cake in the Cookery Pavilion, minion hats were the fashion statement and the winners of the novelty calf competition, Jesse and Tyson Edwards and two miniature Herefords, were dressed as you guessed it, minions.



At Farmtech, dads couldn't stop themselves wrestling the controls of the CBH Group Grain Train from their children.



Girl Power

Six professional women shearers and shed hands were not only taking a stand against cancer when taking over the boards at the IGA Perth Royal Show, they were demonstrating their place in the wool industry

Jilly Wegner, a shearer, businesswoman, wife and mother of five, was part of an all-female team to make the trip from her Nungarin farm to help raise awareness of, and funds for, breast cancer as part of the Heiniger Female 50 event which raised close to \$8000.

The event, organised by the Royal Agricultural Society of WA competition announcer, Kevin Gellatly; Heiniger

Australia and New Zealand managing director Gary Lyons; and Mrs Wegner's husband, Todd, a territory sales manager for Heiniger, saw the wool pavilion reduced to standing room only.

Wearing pink singlets and with six of the 50 sheep dyed the same colour the girl power contingent took up their handpieces to shear in the shortest possible time.

"We shored those 50 sheep in 14mins

12 seconds," says a delighted Mrs Wegner who has spent the past 16 years shearing both professionally and on a semi-retired basis and believes the event highlighted the importance of women in the shearing industry.

"Lots of people don't realise women can shear professionally, long term and full time. It is all down to technique. We need to use balance, and shear smarter, not harder. The fitter you are the easier

it is to shear, so exercise and using weights play a big part too."

Originally from a cattle property in New South Wales, Mrs Wegner learned to shear as an agricultural student in Queensland.

"I came across to WA on a working holiday in 2008 and met my now husband Todd, who was a shearer for 30 years before he joined Heiniger.

The couple, whose 500 acre farm is given over to cropping, hay and 250 ewes, have an entrepreneurial spirit. Fearing the only hotel in the 300-strong community that had been closed for two years would be "lost forever," they bought the property.

"It was built in 1927 and has 11 bedrooms, a large restaurant, public and lounge bars as well as a substantial beer garden. We draw on the surrounding towns that are within 40kms so are kept pretty busy."

Having worked in hospitality while a student and then as a shearers' cook "on and off", being in charge of the kitchen, managing the hotel and caring for her three school age children aged 10, 8 and 2 years, does not faze this 'mistress of all trades'.

With the back up of two full-time employees, her 25-year-old step-son Beau and his girlfriend Jemma, running the Wegner-owned farm supplies and general store this busy woman still finds time to shear neighbouring farmers' sheep when asked and always likes to be involved when it comes to the community.

"We held a speed shearing competition at the beginning of November to raise funds for a friend whose son has Leukaemia and needs to move to Perth for treatment.

"It is really, really important to raise awareness, detection rates and funds for cancer," emphasises Mrs Wegner.

It is for that reason the gauntlet has been laid down to interstate female shearers.

"We want to see if they can shear their sheep faster and raise more money than us," says one woman who won't be putting aside her shears for quite some time.



"Lots of people don't realise women can shear professionally, long term and full time. It is all down to technique. We need to use balance, and shear smarter, not harder."



Above: Jilly Wegner has been shearing for 16 years.

Fashion Sense

Westdale farmer Mike Morrissey's claim to the Supreme Fleece at this year's Perth Royal Wool Show confirms the fibres his sheep are producing is a step closer to achieving his vision – the Ultimate Comfort Merino – he hopes will earn a share of the lucrative sporting apparel market

In his sixth decade, Mr Morrissey has been championing the wool industry for a good proportion of those years and he isn't about to step aside any time soon.

"We've been entering the Show for 15 years and always been the bridesmaids, just out of the ribbons, and I am still waking up in the mornings questioning if we really did win supreme and runner up," says a thrilled Mr Morrissey, from his stud in Westdale.

Not that he really should be surprised. For this winning 5kgs fleece, off the back

of a ram running around the paddock with the ewes, had a comfort factor of 99.6 per cent and was awarded a score of 95 out of 100 by the Show's judges.

And it is all down to genetics.

"Since 2009 we have been bringing in genetics from the Karori Merino Stud in New England, northern New South Wales, improving the gene pool. The intention is to create a line of the breed that produces the ultimate comfort in lightweight next to skin knitwear.

"To qualify the Merinos have to be below 17 microns and have a comfort

factor of 100%, when tested on the hip prior to shearing, to produce garments that have no prickle or itch."

A feat this tireless man has been attempting to achieve since he became chairman of the Wool Company Australia (WCA).

"Formed by a group of wool farmers in 1999, as a lobby group to get funding into this important area of research into wool suitable for next to skin wear," explains Mr Morrissey.

"We lobbied for research into wool quality. The first project looked at

Below: Fashionable winning fleece displayed by judges (l to r), Rim Burgess, Graeme Luff, Tim Chapman and Cameron Henry.

"If we can crack this and get wool of a high enough quality through to the Italians, with their technology, we can marry the two together and create a cashmere like feel with double the strength of normal wool."

fibre crimp and curvature. The second project, which was awarded \$100,000, looked at the quality of 168 garments sourced from around the world that were supposed to be able to be worn against the skin without any adverse reaction. "The average micron of the garments was 20.3 and the average prickle factor was 4.3% which meant 4.3% of fibres were over 30 microns so most of the garments being sold then were not suitable for next to skin wear. I was pretty devastated, particularly when everyone said you could not breed Merinos with no fibres over 30 microns, they didn't exist and it was too hard.

"I decided to try and prove there was a way to breed Merinos that could, and would, produce wool so soft it could be branded as 'Ultimate Comfort Merino.'

"In 2006 and 2007 I put together 80 kilos of what I call the silky, unusually soft Merino wool. When tested it gave a reading of 15.4 microns – in 2008 the wool was processed at Ag Research in New Zealand and we took the knitted fabric to Bali and had it made into various tops and leggings. They were of exceptional quality."

With a view to capitalising on this new found 'evidence' that Merinos can produce super soft wool, Mr Morrissey bought rams from the Karori Stud.

"We have been testing the wool of all our young rams, for fibre distribution

and resistance to compression since 2009, and we have managed to breed Merinos with wool that is of an incredible softness similar to cashmere," says Mr Morrissey.

The rams that were bought in from the northern New South Wales stud has, according to Mr Morrissey, changed his sheep dramatically.

"Within three years of introducing the new line we have seen massive changes. Last year we had a young superfine Merino ram that, at eight months old, was producing wool with 12.0 microns. That came out of left field and we call him a gift from God. We mated him to 70 ewes and we had 70 lambs. Where he is going to take us we don't know."

What is for sure is this farmer is intent on realising his ambition by processing a small amount of the wool, from individually tested Merinos, into yarn, in Italy.

"If we can crack this and get wool of a high enough quality through to the Italians, with their technology, we can marry the two together and create a cashmere like feel with double the strength of normal wool.

"The end result - fine yarns – which will make for exciting new fabrics for the younger generation, such as leggings for the aerobics, mountaineering and skiing markets. That is the bigger picture for West Brook."



Premium Experience

Parliament House opened its doors to award winning food, beer and wine from the Perth Royal Show Premium Produce Awards as well as other fine foods from around WA.

Jointly hosted by the Minister of Agriculture and Food and the RAS the event featured a signature cocktail created by Andrew Bennett of Cocktail Gastronomy featuring Granny Smith apples and accompanied by a Shark Bay tiger prawn canape.

Guests were inspired by Dorper Lamb, Linley Valley Pork, Blackwood Valley Beef, Princi's Fremantle wild boar and venison, Meedo Station's Rangeland goat, Gourmania's lobster and Bookera Goat Dairy haloumi.

Chef Don Hancey created a lobster bisque while Peter Manifs drew praise for a baby goat tagine.

However it was the dessert table that stole the evening with apple and custard tarts, strawberry daiquiri macaroons, passionfruit mousse ice cream pops, white chocolate pannacotta with raspberry jelly, mango and coconut mousse domes, and award winning chocolate.





A spirit for community

Anne Thompson's own admission that she went 'kicking and screaming' to move from the family's Collie farm to Boyup Brook in 2008 is a distant memory, and one she recalls with laughter. Six years on, this wife and mother has made her own impression in the small south western community of WA

Not least for the mixed farm – sheep, grain and prize winning Charolais cattle – Anne, husband Andrew and son, Harris, 18, – have built up, but for the reputation this woman has gained for buying and taking over the town's IGA store with little retail knowledge and becoming a successful

businesswoman in her own right. "We had a farm in Collie and built up our Venturon Charolais Stud over the years. I grew up in Collie so all my family and friends were there. I was working for the Miners' Credit Union, and had been for 24 years," says Mrs Thompson. "Having sold the farm to Griffin Coal

and moved to the farm in Boyup Brook property, I continued to travel to Collie for work."

Until, that is, the local IGA store came up for sale.

"I wanted a business and to become part of the district," says Mrs Thompson "and with no retail background but good, financial knowledge we bought the store. Working in retail was a learning curve. And when the GFC just happened to change everything within 12 months of owning the store, I had to gather knowledge far more involved than you could imagine."

Part of the realisation it was a 'sink or swim' situation this enterprising woman gained a Lottery West subsidised grant and studied for a Diploma in Retail Management, through Deakin University.

With a 'hands-on' attitude Mrs Thompson refused to outsource a manager, preferring to take on the role herself. It is a frame of mind that ensures this particular boss has an understanding of every aspect of the business.

"I do the books, organise additional features the shop may need, price match, update stock, and do the orders.."

"Initially when I took over the store we ran a lot of casual staff as well as a full time butcher. These days we still have the same butcher but include our own beef label, Venturon Beef, and now have on the books 40 staff, of which 15 are local school children – something I am adamant about is providing employment for young people."

With community involvement being an important part of owning the IGA store, Mrs Thompson has developed a good knowledge of knowing just what her customers want. "You get to know your own community and with Boyup Brook being a small but diverse farming community, we buy the best of what is available produce-wise."

"We buy fruit and vegetables straight from Canning Vale markets three times a week. Our Venturon beef we provide, seasonally and other meat, and fish, is sourced from our Bunbury distributor.

We use local pork from a Boyup Brook farm and buy in Mt Barker chicken."

With the emphasis on trying to get everything 'right', this is one shop owner who will consistently strive for improvement.

"Every day we try to get it right. One day you may have a special on and the whole town wants it. Sometimes we find we don't have enough storage so I am in the middle of organising additional shelves for products to keep the community happy."

When she is not at the store, Mrs Thompson is supportive in other areas. "I am on the board of the local cooperative and they do a lot of good work for the town which is all part of being a community."

This is how this shop keeper can be found volunteering to cook the annual senior citizens' lunch organised by the Shire of Boyup Brook!

Despite not having the time to help out on her own family farm and stud which runs 100 Charolais, and a

commercial mixed herd of 300, these days, Mrs Thompson is always there to lend a hand to prepare the cattle for the IGA Perth Royal Show.

"We have been showing cattle at the Royal since 2008 and been fairly successful."

Awards have included championships and grand championships. This year the Stud laid claim to the Interbreed junior champion bull.

Despite leading a full-on life this is one family who "still have time to enjoy what we do. We are really passionate about the cattle and farming and enjoy where we live. It is a beautiful part of WA."

"And it has opened up a whole new world for us by buying the store."

Above: Anne Thompson and her family have been showing cattle at the IGA Perth Royal Show since 2008.



The taste of success

Relaxing over a long lunch while drinking Chablis at a neighbouring vineyard led to an idea, an experiment, and Denmark's Castelli Estate scooping five major awards at the 2015 Perth Royal Wine Show with its Chardonnay Il Liris 2013

And senior winemaker Mike Garland couldn't have been more thrilled. As fast as he sat down having received one award – he was up on his feet to be presented with yet another.

"I never envisaged carrying off so many awards," says a modest Mr Garland who pulled the trophies from under those with a nose for wine, collecting: Best Wine of the Show, Best West Australian Wine, Best White Table Wine, Best West Australian White Table Wine and Best Chardonnay, from more than 2100 exhibits from across Australia.

"Stylistically it's something we thought of and started from scratch. We had a specific goal in mind when we started making Il Liris and entered the Show to 'see how it goes'... it turns out the flavour, texture and structure was something the judges were looking for."

According to Mr Garland his "15 minutes of fame" led to the 'top drop' selling out within a day. "Winning awards is an endorsement and builds your reputation.

"That was the immediate effect – and it was very satisfying," says this seasoned winemaker, who pointed out the prize winning wine was made from all Denmark fruit, and picked about three weeks earlier than usual to achieve the perfect balance between acidity, sugar and flavour.

"It's the best wine I have produced in 20 years of winemaking," he claims.

Although not willing to give away any Il Liris 2013 'trade secrets', Mr Garland says the earlier the grapes are picked, the higher the acidity.

"We hand pick the fruit on three different occasions at various ripening levels. For the Il Liris we picked

relatively early and placed the fruit straight into the press, and then directly to barrel. That ensures there is no 'settling' whatsoever – the juice is very cloudy and fermenting on these solids giving the wine flavour, texture, character and the aromatics of high end burgundy whilst retaining the flavour of Chablis that is a 'tighter' style than traditional Australia Chardonnay."

While the Castelli vineyard produces 26 different wines, by far their most popular narrows down to: Cabernet, Shiraz, Riesling, Chardonnay and sparkling.

The winery has seen a rapid growth since the Castelli family bought the property, and production commenced in 2007.

"Then we were producing 30 tonnes of grapes. Now we are probably up to 160 tonnes which is about 10,000

cases of wine a year. I would like to see production step up to 500 tonnes; equating to 30,000 to 40,000 cases a year, but this can't happen overnight.

"We have been incredibly lucky to establish ourselves within the wine industry in a short space of time. Our local market takes in Perth, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. Our biggest export is to China, a little bit to Singapore and the USA."

What sets the Castelli vineyard apart from its competitors is, according to this vino connoisseur, a reputation for consistency of product across the range.

"A lot of wines by bigger companies are price driven. For us that is really hard and there is no point in competing at the lower end of the market. We have to compete on quality, selling more mid-priced wines – that is where our growth has been – around the \$32 a bottle mark."

Mr Garland points out other areas of the winery that 'bite' into the Estate's coffers.

"Oak barrels are a massive cost and the price of fruit will vary from \$1200 to more than \$3000 a tonne. There is a huge variation between the climate and quality of fruit. You cannot make great wine out of rubbish fruit. Some Chardonnay and Pinot are grown on

"We have been incredibly lucky to establish ourselves within the wine industry in a short space of time."

site but we source all Riesling, Cabernet and Shiraz from regions slightly further north – Mt Barker is better suited to these varieties. A lot of people have tried growing fruit for Cabernet and Merlot in Denmark but it doesn't work. It is a little bit too cold and wet here, and the soil a little bit too rich."

The returns on wine, according to Mr Garland, are not seen immediately.

"Despite the outgoings, our 2015 reds will not be bottled until next year and not sold until the year after that. The returns in winemaking are not immediate. It is very much a buyers' market. There are so many steps in the chain."

Which is one reason this Great Southern winemaker, decided to sell his own winery, to move to Castelli.

"My wife and I had bought a small, established vineyard at Mt Barker in the mid 90s," says Mr Garland. We partnered with friends of ours to develop a small wine making facility on site.

"We were a reasonably successful

business but we had no backing – no capital at all and were very much reliant on wine sales. It is almost impossible, without capital, to grow the business. Keeping your head above water is really tough."

When Sam Castelli approached or should we say 'poached' him in 2007 to head their wine products, Mr Garland didn't hesitate.

"What sets the Castelli's apart is they spend a fair amount of time finding the right people, trust them and don't interfere. As far as wine making philosophy and procedures go, it is left up to me. They are also very proud people and care about what product has their name on it."

"The Castelli Estate is a successful brand and I take a lot of satisfaction on being part of that."

Above: Mike Garland savours the top drop, Chief judge Andrew Spinaze presents one of the five awards to Catelli's Mike Garland.

Life in the fast lane

Sarsha Wetherell is one of those people with the wind at their feet – trying to get them to slow down is like stopping the flyaway seeds of a dandelion

With a firm focus on family, a ferocious competitive spirit, a passion for farming, hockey, hairdressing and being a wedding and funeral celebrant - not necessarily in that order, this is one woman who manages to “have it all.” And she has the testimonials and awards to prove it.

For almost 40 years this seasoned exhibitor has made the ‘pilgrimage’ to the IGA Perth Royal Show.

As a six-year-old Sarsha, with parents Loreen and Tony Kitchen – long-time exhibitors at the event – claimed success in the equestrian classes until ponies and horses were moved aside in favour of bovines!

Having grown up on a cattle farm in Elgin dating back two generations, Sarsha was initially unimpressed as the cattle took over.

“At first it was much to my disgust but I have always loved cattle, so it didn’t take too long before I realised my calling!”

That ‘calling’ has seen Sarsha and her own family continue the family’s



Below: Three generations of Sarsha’s family travel to the Show each year.

“We put it down to years and years of hard work and learning – we never stop learning how to improve our cattle. The harder you work, the bigger the rewards.”



reputation within competitions and the cattle industry.

Together with her husband Kane, a former dairy farmer converted to beef, the couple run a commercial and small stud of black Simmental on 290 acres at their hometown of Boyanup.

For ten days each year, the combined family make the drive from their homes with three trucks of cattle, one truck with feed, and two trailers full of bedding, equipment, clothes and groceries, to exhibit their stock.

“It’s a family thing that our family do all together - the three generations. We have a really good time, it is exhaustingly hard work, but we always learn a lot and we love the competition, which is strong at the Show. It is our annual holiday and we have only ever missed one Show – it is in our blood and we wouldn’t have it any other way,” says this seasoned exhibitor.

It seems nothing gets in the way of competing at the Show. Ten days after giving birth to her second child Fletcher now 11, the Wetherells’ were back at the Showground.

“Lane, our eldest son, 16, came to the Show at three months old; Bede, at six months and that was only because of the months in which they were born,” quips this full-on mother who says she

used to bath the children in a bucket on the kitchen table at the cattle lane quarters, continues to wash the families’ clothes in the washing machine they installed – still in use years later and cooks a three course meal each night at the Showground!

With 30-head of cattle being judged it is a case of everyone chipping in to help.

Except for the night duty – this is where experience of attending offspring that needs feeding, falls on this mum who gets up throughout the dark hours to ensure calves feed – usually at different times.

“I know each cow’s udder, and for each individual there is a different time of bagging up for milk production. It means I am up at different times in the night to let each calf feed so the udder is perfect in the morning.”

That ‘perfection’ and the years of hard effort the families have put in to their show cattle has consistently paid off. Renowned for carrying off annual awards, the families have claimed the prestigious Governor’s Cup not once but four times, proving they are serious contenders on the Show scene!

“We have done very well for many years,” says Mrs Wetherell. “We put it down to years and years of hard work and learning – we never stop learning how to improve our cattle. The harder you work, the bigger the rewards. It is always important to understand, cattle judging is one person’s opinion on that day and not to lose focus on your own direction if you are not the ribbon winner on the day.”

It seems that statement is the pinnacle of Sarsha Wetherell’s success in whatever she turns her hand to.

As a 15-year-old she left school to become a hairdresser, owning her own salon by the age of 22 years with a client

base that stretched from Bunbury to Manjimup. Despite selling the salon nine years ago, Mrs Wetherell maintains a Tuesday morning for a handful of clients who have been with her from the beginning.

“I gave the salon up with my third pregnancy to become a celebrant which was my new ‘calling’.” “I conduct approximately 50 ceremonies a year and absolutely love it. For the last two years I have included funerals which I find an incredible privilege.”

And if that is not enough this woman of action conducts elopement ceremonies, emcees events, coaches boys’ hockey (including her own sons) to the elite level, and plays in her local A Grade hockey competition.

“We are a family of hockey players. Last year Kane mucked out, and fed the cattle, before going off to play in the over 35 WA State matches and has represented Australia over the past two years.”

Commitment is second nature to this family. When the winter is over, the Show a past event, summer dawns with every conceivable outdoor sport you could imagine for this farming and sporting family.

A close family with an idyllic lifestyle but life has a way of throwing curve balls...

“Lane has a serious congenital heart defect and we have lost count of the number of surgeries he has undergone, not that it deters him from playing sport,” says his mum, matter-of-factly.

Throughout the Show Mrs Wetherell, having recognised she would need surgery for a bulging disc, kept up her steely resolve until after the event. First injury to be addressed was the finger she had broken on the last day of the Show – on the way home she called into the emergency department at Bunbury Hospital.

Clearly, no setbacks stop this family from their usual pace of life!

“And when I have more time and the boys are older, I would like give back to the RAS – I would like to become a Councillor,” says Mrs Wetherell, adding - “The busier I am, the better I function.”



Championing Success

Farmer, bush builder, master shearer, trainer, and astute businessman are just some of the terms used to describe one man who has made his mark within the sheep and wool industry

From the grass roots of his upbringing on the family's 950 acre sheep and cattle property in Rocky Gully, west of Mt Barker Don Boyle knew where he was headed in life.

It was confirmed when, as a 14-year-old pupil, he would be called upon to shear the sheep at his local high school. At 15, further education would be found in the outside world.

"There wasn't much work on the farm and there wasn't much money around in those days," says Mr Boyle, "back then, in the 1960s, we would get 14 pence a sheep which was good money."

And the spoils kept coming. "There were very quick rises in the early 70s when the currency changed to dollars and cents."

Married at 20 years of age to wife Janine, the couple bought their first home – a government owned house.

"It was freehold; we have never rented or leased property," says this 'old school' farmer who started running his first shearing team from the start of his nuptials! "And I still have the same wife," he jokes.

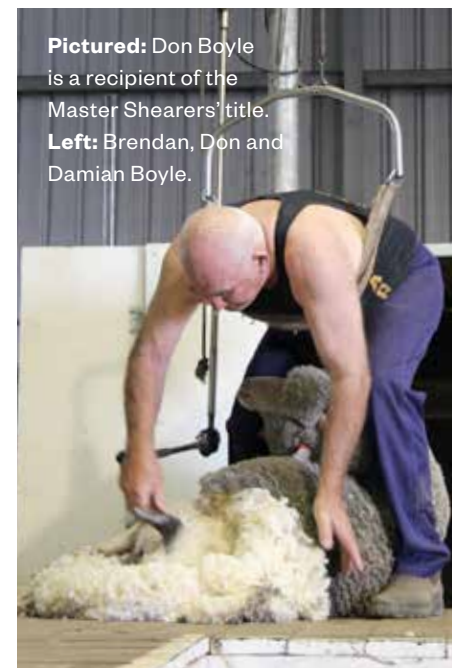
It took another 'bought and sold' home when, in 1977, now with four

children completing the family, the first bush block was bought and paid for.

"I bought a 1500 acre block at west Kendenup cleared it, built a house on it and a four-stand shed. Another move – to Katanning and finally, a second farm comprising 2200 acres at Broome Hill became the permanent family property: "that we have consistently added to since then," says Mr Boyle.

Most moves have involved building not only one family home but all the shearing sheds at each property.

"I've always enjoyed the challenge of building," says this man who recognises



Pictured: Don Boyle is a recipient of the Master Shearers' title. **Left:** Brendan, Don and Damian Boyle.

he is a "bush builder" with no formal training but, in his congenial manner, adds: "They definitely stand the test of time!"

In between stretching the acreage to 11,000, building, shearing, organising his own shearing teams as a contractor, being on the wool committee of the Royal Agricultural Society of WA, taking out the Rural Achiever award in 2001 and it was in 2004 this multi-tasking sheep farmer swept aside other industry professionals to claim the WA State Training Board Medal for outstanding achievement in training.

"I have trained hundreds within the industry. I held the contract with the Great Southern TAFE for about six years. I took the training aspect on because I wasn't happy with the way the system was – seeing young shearers coming through not trained properly.

"Training makes a difference," he adds – "one that can be seen in the competitions."

Shearing competitively didn't kick in for this farmer until he hit 40.

"A couple I used to shear for in Mt Barker asked me to compete in the local show, and paid my entry," says Mr Boyle. "That set me on to road to competitions."

Since then this is one shearer who has been compiling his own portfolio of success on the boards.

Competitions in England, Ireland,

Scotland, Wales, South Africa, New Zealand and his own nation led to a tally of medals culminating in this well recognised champion, being awarded a Master Shearers' title.

"You are only bestowed that title, once," says Mr Boyle whose two sons Damian and Brendan, have followed in his footsteps when it comes to the world of farming, shearing and contests.

Like their father, as youngsters, they were keen to pick up a hand piece and both have carved out their niche within the agricultural world as well as on the contestants' circuit.

Brendan, 37, married with three children has made a business from shearing. Having worked internationally as well as on home ground, he has his own shearing teams with about 250,000 sheep on the shearing run; 12,000 acres and still expanding, to include a road train to meet contracts to transport grain and fertiliser.

While competitions have been a large part of Brendan's life as a shearer – "and I intend to keep on the boards for another decade," he vows, it is his expertise within the industry that is sought after by the Australian Wool Industry (AWI), as a speaker at different universities, as well as a trainer to youngsters going into the profession.

Not surprisingly:

"As a family we are turning over 500 bales plus so we are in the top 10 per cent in Australia and the top 5 per cent in WA."

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With that being no mean feat it is little wonder this farmer has the ability to claim anything he turns his hand to – including fund raising.

When his father, in 2005, was diagnosed with prostate cancer and the prognosis looked grim Brendan vowed to raise funds to help fight the disease, by shearing for 24 hours.

"I thought we were going to lose him,"

says Brendan." I shored 973 ewes, broke the record for shearing that number in that time and, together with other members of the community including the playgroup, cricket club, hotel and many others, the total sum raised was over \$50,000.

Equally successful in his own right is brother, Damian, 38, married with two young children on 2800 acres at Tambellup with a further 7500 acres at West Broome Hill.

Damian, who says he has always wanted to be a shearer from "a young fella", recalls crutching sheep at the age of 13 years while his father was competing in the world shears competition in England. "So he didn't have to do that when he got home."

It was at the age of 14 that Damian took his place on the boards of competition.

"My first competition was with my dad, in Victoria. I shored in the learners and was second. The old man got second in the Open. From there I was shearing full time from 15 and always went along with dad to the competitions.

From then on Damian was a fierce contender whether competing in WA, interstate or internationally, quickly working his way through the placings in the Under 21, intermediate, seniors and the Open. Having clinched his first

Perth Royal Show (PRS) title at the age of 18 Damian, known as one of the 'cleanest' shearers in the sheds, went on to claim 19 more awards from his 20 PRS contests.

And for the past six years Damian has taken the Open title of the Alexandra Fine Wool Championships held in New Zealand. No mean feat!

Viewing shearing as a sport as well as a livelihood, Damian has no intention to give up his 'pole positions' any time soon!

"I have trained my sons well," says the patriarch, wryly.

Quality is in the flavour

The criteria for entrepreneurial couple Dawn and Mark Quackenbush to move from their Bellevue home included an “extraordinary family property, lifestyle, land and the landscape.” They didn’t factor in walking away with acclaimed trophies for the fruits of their labour

Having bought a 200 acre property nestled high in the Darling Scarp in a pristine valley surrounded by forest at Karrakup almost two decades ago, the family found themselves not quite secluded – being infolded by aged olive groves planted on contours, cascading down to the lake.

“It’s a stunningly beautiful property,” says Mrs Quackenbush who carried off the Best WA Oil of Show at the recent Perth Royal Olives Show, having scored silver medals in 2014 and 2013 with the ‘liquid gold’ derived from the numerous trees on the land.

“Our first entry into the Show was only three years ago. We were excited winning silver in previous Shows. This year, to win a gold and named Best WA Olive Oil of the Show – we were ecstatic.”

The Silver Lakes Extra Virgin Olive Oil, according to the 15 judges, has a ‘complex palate of fruits, with a balanced bitterness and pungency.’

The taste is something family and friends have long been used to as the Quackenbushs’ originally gave away their produce, in flagons rather than small bottles!

“Although until recently our olive oil production has been more of a lifestyle than a business, we have continued to refine our process and the quality of the produce to get it all to the level it is now. So while we didn’t set out to make it a business, it has become one.”

Now turning over just under 900 litres annually, Mrs Quackenbush points out it has been a process to get it where it is today.

“When we first came here the property comprised a mixture of pasture, extensive natural forest, and some aged olive groves combined with various indiscriminate plantings. To get the groves back into working order we removed the things growing where they didn’t belong. It has taken a number of years to re-establish and unify the landscape with substantial pruning, drainage, irrigating and the addition of extra olive trees.”

“It has been trial and error – having



to learn not to pick the fruit too early or too late. In the early stages we researched and attended a number of courses – we were naïve but just pressed on. It has been hard work, and we have invested an enormous amount of energy into the property but it has been our passion.”

Although Mrs Quackenbush attributes the soil and the climate to being conducive to projecting the oil to its current status, there are other factors to take into consideration.

According to this producer they intend to continue to perfect the process.

“We endeavour to ensure every aspect of growing - to the final product, is perfect,” says Mrs Quackenbush.

“From the speed of the picking which is done by hand from the end of April to May depending on seasonable conditions and ripening of the fruit, minimising the time between harvest and extraction. We don’t use fertilisers or pesticides and the water we use from Cardup Brook is of incredible quality. We are not classified as organic but the unspoilt, harmonious environment exists here is in the produce.”

With the reputation of the oil spreading and the increase in production the couple have been able to meet wholesale demands.

“We had a surplus of it and two years ago we received an enquiry to supply

a Perth restaurant. The plan now is to move into retail outlets, and the international market.”

Being a player on the global stage is not new to this couple. Wine too, under the label Silver Lakes, is a contender.

“We first planted vines in 2000 and our first vintage was 2003. We have a very small vineyard with three hectares under vines – our Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz and Viognier have previously medalled with our Cabinet Sauvignon and Viognier at the Perth Royal Wine Show.”

The wine produced from this vineyard, says Mrs Quackenbush, is less than 20 tonnes of fruit a year.

“It is very small and, like the olives, we just continue to improve the quality and it is all about quality, really.”

With no distributor – the couple sell the wine locally in Oakford and Forrestdale, through a major liquor outlet and export a sea container of wine to China, annually.

“We didn’t set out to make wine or olive oil our livelihood,” stresses Mrs Quackenbush who is more than happy with the end results.

And the title: Best WA Olive Oil of Show has sent a confirmation message – “Having obtained the Best Oil of Show has reminded us of the authenticity of the produce – we believed in it before and now we have confirmation.” And that goes for the wine, too.

The new shape of agribusiness

The day might have long passed since Australia rode on a sheep's back but agribusiness today is big business, with big potential

Agriculture has a huge footprint, touching about half Australia's land mass. Yet its direct influence measured through the likes of national income has declined dramatically, from one-sixth of the economy 50 years ago to just one-fiftieth today.

That does not mean agriculture is fading away – rather, that other sectors, such as services and resources, have grown significantly.

The Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, in its new Rural Industry Futures publication, still describes agriculture as the mainstay of the economy, underpinning many other industries and providing a significant portion of export earnings.

Documents supporting the Federal Government's recent Agriculture Competitiveness White Paper point to the importance to the economy of agriculture and downstream activities in the food and fibre supply chains – and present it as a major driver of economic activity, employment, social cohesion and prosperity for many parts of rural and regional Australia.

SUPPLY CHAIN

A look through the farm gate reveals a much bigger national food and beverage industry, which starts on farms and fisheries and extends right through to restaurants and bars – and employs 1.6 million people.

Annual retail turnover of food in WA alone exceeds \$16.5 billion.

Analysis several years ago by the National Farmers Federation showed that when value-adding processes beyond the farm and the broader

field of economic activity associated with production are accounted for, agriculture contributes a sizeable 12 per cent to the nation's gross domestic product.

RAS president Dr Rob Wilson sees the broader perspective on agriculture, as an integral part of the food and fibre chains, as a positive one.

"It's quite different to think about a sector with maybe 150,000 people contributing 2 per cent of GDP compared with one like the end-to-end food and beverage industry that generates 1.6 million jobs in the country, in regional towns and in the capital cities around Australia," Dr Wilson says.

"That's really what agriculture and agribusiness is about today. It's about feeding the supply chain to meet the needs of what Rural Industry Futures describes as choosier consumers in a hungrier and wealthier world."

Australia currently accounts for only 5 per cent of global food trade but it has the fifth biggest net food trade surplus, behind Brazil, Argentina, the US and the Netherlands.

The Asian Development Bank estimates Asia will have about half of the world's economic output by 2050 and so there will be strong global competition for the region's markets and for investment.

At the current agriculture and food production levels Australia could supply about 2 per cent of Asia's requirements.

Australian Farm Institute, the farm policy think-tank, calculated that after supplying the domestic market Australia's farmers export enough, based on the current average daily calorific intake in Asia, to feed about

61.5 million people.

"On that basis, each of Australia's 120,000 farmers annually produces sufficient food for 707 people – not a bad effort, given the challenging environment in which farmers operate under here in comparison with overseas locations," institute executive director according to Mick Keogh.

PRODUCTIVITY FRONTIER

The hungrier and wealthier world defined by the RIRDC presents increasing opportunities for Australian agribusiness – but there are caveats and it is not a foregone conclusion.

India, for example, is a net exporter of food and Australia could not, by itself, feed half of its nearest neighbour, Indonesia, with its population of more than 250 million.

Australia produces only about one per cent of the value of global agricultural output, with production of even its largest industries, other than wool, representing less than 4 per cent of total production.

According to the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences, China's cattle herd is four times the size of Australia's and Brazil and Argentina have huge potential in most of the products Australia is good at.

Documents supporting the White Paper stated: "The agriculture sectors in all of these economies have much catching up to do, whereas Australia is at or near the agricultural productivity frontier on a global scale. It is harder to stay in the lead of the race than come from behind."



Winning Combinations

It was a learning curve for sheep producers as the auctioneer's hammer rested on \$18,500 – the highest price paid for a ram at the all breeds stud ram and ewe sale during this year's IGA Perth Royal Show

The animal, which had won the supreme champion White Suffolk award, was bred by staff and students at Kiara College as part of the school's agricultural program.

Gaining excellent prices for the sale of livestock and winning awards at major shows has earned the College, and its students, a formidable reputation as serious contenders within the agricultural industry, for some years now.

Located on the edge of the Swan Valley, Kiara College currently has 130 of their 400 students enrolled in the agricultural program devoted to farming and the rural industry.

According to teacher Rob Liebeck, students from Year 7 through to Year 12 can enrol into the cattle, sheep, horticulture, aquaculture and poultry, hands-on curriculum.

"This program provides training

pathways into a cross section of agricultural industries," says Mr Liebeck.

"The experience the students gain is valuable for a broad range of careers including veterinary science, agribusiness, horticulture and landscape design."

The 25-acre 'city farm' incorporates a White Suffolk stud, a free range production system for poultry that includes a breeding program, and a cattle feeding production enterprise.

"We have a nucleus breeding flock of 65 White Suffolk Stud ewes with the aim to produce stud rams for sale. We also run a comprehensive embryo transfer and AI program. The students are involved with all aspects of the enterprise from basic husbandry skills through to genetic and visual evaluation. We also simulate real life experiences such as running a mock sheep auction

where students investigate the genetics and breeding qualities of individual White Suffolks with the intention of bidding for these within an established budget.

Money from the sale of the ram at this year's Show is being ploughed back into the agricultural program to improve genetics and equipment needed for the day to day operation of the farm.

As with all farms there needs to be an income in order to be viable.

"Our main source of income is from our sheep and cattle with a small amount coming through from the sale of eggs and the \$3 per head charge for primary students of visiting schools to have a 'hands-on' tour of the farm," confirms this former farmer who hails from a wheat and sheep property in the Merredin area.

"We buy on average 12 steers a year with the intention of taking them to the Royal Show to be judged on the hoof and hook. Money raised all goes back into the coffers.

"The students, during those 12 months, learn how to assess the different breeds for temperament, manage nutritional requirements and develop handling skills – the cattle need to be trained, groomed, and taught how to be led. We run our own cattle and sheep paraders' competitions for students to demonstrate their expertise before moving on to the Show circuit."

The diversity of the program allows for the students to take part in a number of competitions from regional shows to the eight-day IGA Perth Royal Show and includes cattle, sheep and farm skills events.

"Our students get excellent results from the competitions entered," confirms Mr Liebeck who points out how important the program is to the College and the participating students.

"Being involved in industry-related competitions is a unique experience and builds students' skills, confidence and self esteem. The Royal Show in particular is definitely a great motivator and many students refer to this as their highlight for the year. There is a shortage of qualified, personnel in the agricultural industry and we provide a pathway to meet some of the shortfall."



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Season's Greetings

from the team at the Royal Agricultural Society of Western Australia