

Meat appeal high on lamb producer list

March 10 2014, by Vicky Manley



“Scientists aim at getting a balance between the sensory and the yield nutritional value of the meat,” Dr Jacob says. Credit: Stijn Nieuwendijk

Consumers' want for visually appealing meat, and the genetic science behind producing such a trait has been explored in a recent summary paper which described key industry findings on the quality of Australian Lamb.

Paper co-author and Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia's (DAFWA) Robin Jacob says the findings were drawn from

12 research papers published in a special edition of *Meat Science*.

The studies were largely focused on lamb's sensory and visual appeal, and nutritional attributes as well as establishing breeding values for genetic traits needed to produce high quality lamb.

"The studies are consumer focused, looking at what consumers want such as sensory eating quality, tender meat [shear force], nutrition and value for money," Dr Jacob says.

"Consumers associate meat colour with freshness."

What makes the meat tender and palatable is the fat content, which is also responsible for accelerating the age pigment, making it go darker in the shop fridges.

"Tests on the meat showed that taste and tenderness were best when intramuscular fat concentration (IMF) was above 4.5 per cent but some balance was needed because very high levels reduced the colour stability of the meat," Dr Jacob says.

In one study researchers from DAFWA and Murdoch University used a large flock resource across eight sites throughout Australia including the main DAFWA research station in Katanning in WA's south.

Another key summary finding was that the best quality lamb meat is inheritable, and that levels of iron, minerals and zinc are inheritable traits.

The paper also detailed how farmers can now access information to help select and breed from the best inheritable stock.

"The research had strong links with Sheep Genetics, Australia's national

breeding evaluation service for sheep breeders and buyers and in so doing provided practical applications of the research for farmers," Dr Jacob says.

For example, nutritional intervention such as finishing lambs on green pastures produces healthy levels of omega 3 fatty acids.

"Scientists aim at getting a balance between the sensory and the yield nutritional value of the meat," Dr Jacob says.

"New farming practices and technologies allow farmers to grow larger and leaner lambs.

"This collaborative research combines the disciplines of genetics and meat science to balance meat quality, [nutritional value](#) and [meat](#) yield in genetic selection programs."

Provided by Science Network WA

Citation: Meat appeal high on lamb producer list (2014, March 10) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-03-meat-appeal-high-lamb.html>

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