

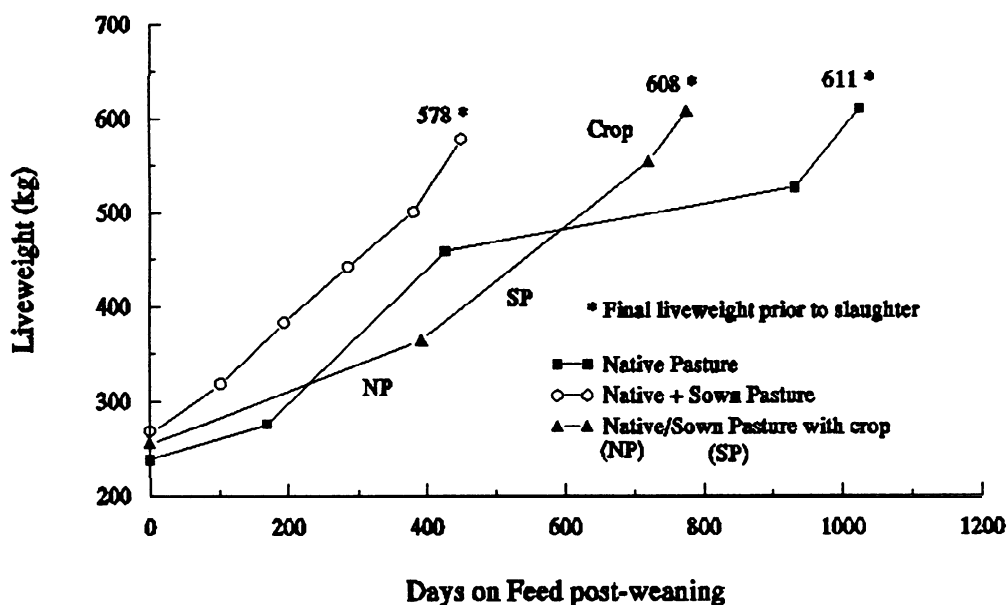
LIVEWEIGHT GAINS OBSERVED FOR STEERS GRAZING DIFFERENT COMMERCIAL PASTURE SYSTEMS THAT TARGET THE JAPANESE GRASS-FED MARKET

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Within an MRC sponsored project to increase annual liveweight gain and product quality in the Queensland beef industry, has been the need to collate definitive data on production characteristics from commercial properties. Currently there is increasing market pressure to produce Japanese grass-fed carcasses at approximately 2 ½ years of age and younger in order to meet premium market specifications, given that reduced age of turnoff allows a greater assurance of acceptable meat quality.

This paper reports preliminary production data from various grazing systems on 3 commercial properties in S.E. Queensland using *Bos indicus* X *Bos taurus* steers to produce carcasses for the Japanese grass-fed market. These systems were: native speargrass (*Heteropogon contortus*) pasture only (NP) on forest country, NP and sown pasture (*Chloris gayana* and *Panicum maximum*) followed by finishing on forage oats on forest and scrub country respectively, and sown pasture (*Medicago sativa*) on alluvial soils with access to NP (*Urochloa spp.*). Steer liveweights from these systems are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Liveweight curves for steers on native pasture, native and sown pasture, and native/sown pasture with forage crop finish.



It is evident from Figure 1 that only those producers with land classes that can sustain pasture improvement and/or cropping options will be likely to have the flexibility in turnoff age to meet premium grass-fed markets. Given the recognition that management practices such as forage crops and sown pastures are needed to compliment native pasture in order to produce market required carcasses (Venamore et al. 1986), economically viable systems to achieve this are being investigated. These include the use of strategic energy/protein supplementation on pasture.