

CARCASS TRAITS OF *BOS INDICUS* X *BOS TAURUS* STEERS PRODUCED FOR THE JAPANESE MARKET

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Matching production to changing market specifications requires modified management practices and adoption of new technology. To obtain premium export prices, beef carcasses must meet market specifications. Burrow *et al.* (1988) have previously assessed the suitability of *Bos indicus* crossbred genotypes for market requirements.

The purpose of this paper is to report preliminary carcass and meat quality information (with *Bos indicus* type cattle) as described using AUS-MEAT standards, from various production systems on 3 commercial properties producing export Japanese steers. These systems were: native speargrass *Heteropogon contortus* pasture (NP), NP with leucaena supplement in winter (NP+L), buffel grass (B), and 120 day feedlot finish (92% concentrate) after growing on buffel grass *Cenchrus ciliaris* (FL). Carcass specifications for Japanese grass-fed and short-fed steers were respectively: hot carcass weight 300–400 kg, 290–390 kg; fat depth (P8) 12–22 mm, 12–32 mm; dentition 0–7, 0–4; fat colour 0–5, 0–4 (0 light to 9 dark); meat colour 1–5, 1–4 (1 light to 9 dark). Individual producers determined time of slaughter based on liveweight and visual finish. Carcass information is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Number and age at slaughter, and percentages of carcasses achieving preferred carcass traits for Japanese grass-fed and short-fed steer markets from *Bos indicus* type cattle grazing native spear grass (NP), NP with leucaena supplement (NP + L), buffel grass (B) or B followed by 120 days in feed lot (FL)

System	NP	Grass-fed NP + L	B	Short-fed FL
No. slaughtered	22	41	82	183
Mean age (months)	44	42	37	28
Percentage of carcasses achieving criteria				
Carcass weight	95	82	79	93
Fat depth (P8)	82	63	55	87
Fat colour score	70	65	n.a.	98
Meat colour score	80	100	n.a.	100
Dentition	90	100	100	92
n.a., not available.				

A smaller proportion of carcass of grass-fed steers met market specifications, with most variation apparently within the carcass weight, fat depth and fat colour criteria. Scope exists therefore for manipulation particularly of current pasture-based systems to achieve target criteria. While currently the commercial value for grass-fed steers is essentially assessed on carcass weight and fat depth, the lower percentage of carcasses from grass-fed systems meeting fat colour requirements is of concern. Improved nutritional and managerial practices to allow producers to meet market requirements are being investigated.

BURROW, H. M., RUDDER, T. H. and WILSON, R. W. L. (1988). *Proc. AAABG* 7:444-7.