

# Goodbye to the tough steak

BLACKALL cattle producer Ashley Adams, Darra-court, doesn't believe consumers should ever have to eat a tough steak again.

Mr Adams, who runs a Brahman and Simmental stud, has made it his crusade to educate the public about new technology that can predict both tenderness and marbling.

"Using DNA testing we now have the technology to test for both tenderness and marbling," Mr Adams said.

In 1998, a company called Genetic Solutions was formed by Dr Jay Hetzel and Dr Gerard Davis, two scientists formerly employed by CSIRO. Together, they developed live animal DNA testing for beef eating qualities.

This test can be used by livestock producers to improve the quality of their beef herds and involves simply taking a hair sample from each animal and, once analysed, it can tell if the beast will create tenderness or toughness, as well as accessing marbling ability.

Over the past four years, Mr Adams has used this technology to adapt his herd to the science.

Trading as TendaBEEF, he says he can now identify which of his cattle will be high in tenderness and pro-



Ashley Adams (centre) and wife Michelle, of Blackall, accept the Rabobank Agribusiness award from Rabobank team (from left) Angus McLean, Craig Swalling, Longreach, and Brad James, Rockhampton.

Picture supplied

duce good marbling.

Mr Adams said, for the producer, this same test also reveals the feed efficiency of the animal.

"This is the ability to convert feed into beef. Higher le-

vels means less feed consumed for the same weight gain."

Mr Adams' work is well known in the region and his commitment to this campaign was recognised when

he took out the Central Western Rabobank Agribusiness award recently.

"All breeds have these genes, some more than others, now we can identify these animals so we have the

ability to eliminate the tough meat from our herd – we are producing a quality-assured product for the food industry. But it isn't rocket science, either. It is just part of the natural make-up of

some animals."

Research has found that some animals release an enzyme so when slaughtered this helps break down the muscle fibre naturally.

The test can measure tenderness from 1 to 8, with 8 being the top end of the scale.

"With MSA premium meat that is cryovaced, they artificially create this enzyme by leaving the meat for up to 39 days at zero degrees – a costly process in storage," Mr Adams said.

"But if you breed animals with this high gene factor, you can eat the meat within hours."

Mr Adams said there are breeds like Murray Grey, Angus and Bazadais that are more prone to having this gene, but it is in all breeds – it is just a matter of finding the good cattle.

Mr Adams has been crossing to try and find the right combination. He has been using a three-way cross putting Santa Gertrudis over his Brahman and Simmental herd, which he has found is providing him a high infusion of the gene.

"This identified beef will also suit the grass-fed product for the consumer, hence reducing the demand for grain-fed beef," he said.