

## Accredited and accountable for food chain safety

*The feed that livestock consume quickly becomes part of the human food chain, and stockfeed manufacturers have developed a proactive quality assurance program to help protect the health of livestock and the quality of food they provide.*

By Catherine Norwood

South Australian pork producer Mark McLean buys more than 3,000 tonnes of feed a year for his 600-sow piggery at Waikerie, and needs to know that every delivery he receives is contaminant free, safe for his animals to eat and can be traced back to its point of origin.

Murray Bridge dairy farmer Brian Thomson feeds his 300-cow herd manufactured stockfeed as an essential dietary component, to maximise milk production and maintain cow health in an industry suffering the effects of falling milk prices and reduced production resulting from climate variability.

Both farmers rely on Australia's FeedSafe program to ensure that the feed they use meets the quality and safety standards their industries, and their animals, require.



**Waikerie pig producer Mark McLean says the traceability of inputs that FeedSafe provides is an essential part of the pork industry's quality assurance to customers.**

Mr McLean says there is a lot riding on the quality and safety of the feed – from the health of his animals and compliance with mandatory pork industry practices, to Australia's reputation as a supplier of clean and green food.

“If I produced my own stockfeed on the farm, I would have to meet the same quality standards that my stockfeed supplier Laucke Mills does to meet the pork industry's QA program. But that is something I can outsource.

“I rely on Laucke's FeedSafe accreditation to ensure that the appropriate manufacturing processes have been used, and that all feed inputs can be traced. In the end I have to sign the declaration for traceability and that feed is free of contamination, so I have to be able to trust that they have done the right thing.”

Steve Fairey, sales manager at Daveyston-based Laucke Mills, says the pig and dairy industries have been the most proactive in protecting their reputations as safe suppliers of food. The traceability of stock feeds has therefore become an important issue in the past few years.

“We also have ISO9001 and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) accreditation, but the FeedSafe program is the quality assurance program that's designed specifically for the stockfeed industry,” Mr Fairey says. “It provides the guidelines when it comes to the assessment of our inputs, the operation of our plant, and the processes we use in manufacture”.

“I think mills that don't have FeedSafe accreditation will find increasing restrictions in their sales in future as more livestock industries begin to insist on higher levels of accountability for their feeds.”

FeedSafe is a quality assurance initiative of the Stock Feed Manufacturers' Council of Australia (SFMCA), launched in 2003, with three main aims, says SFMCA executive officer John Spragg.

“It is to provide safe feed for animals, protect the safety of human food, specifically in meat, eggs and milk, and to protect the domestic and international reputation of Australia's livestock industries as being clean, and free from contamination,” he says.

“International markets can be extremely sensitive, and just one positive sample of meat with a chemical residue, for example, could result in Australian products being banned; so there is a lot at stake.”

About 12 million tonnes of stockfeed is consumed in Australia each year. Beef feedlots are the major users accounting for 26 per cent, followed by the dairy industry at 25 per cent, poultry meat at 19.4 per cent and the pig industry 16 per cent. Chicken layers, aquaculture, the horse industry, live sheep and cattle exporters and lamb feedlots are among the other, smaller users.

About 90% of all the stockfeed sold in Australia comes from FeedSafe accredited feed mills. Mr Spragg says the stockfeed industry is keen to see all feed manufacturers FeedSafe accredited.

“Consumers want greater accountability about what goes into their food chain and many food industries demand total traceability of inputs. That’s what FeedSafe provides.”

At Murray Bridge Brian Thomson buys up to 240 tonnes of pelleted feed a year from Meningie Fodder, plus mineral and feed additive supplements for his dairy herd, in addition to locally-produced pasture, hay and silage.



**Murray Bridge dairy farmer Brian Thomson says the quality and nutritional analysis of FeedSafe products helps him to provide the best dietary mix to maximise production.**

He used to grow most of his own feed, with irrigated pastures, but drought in the Murray Darling Basin for the past five years has limited his water allocations and he now buys in all his feed. He says rising costs, falling milk prices, and reduced milk production that followed reduced pasture supply has made it more critical than ever to ensure his cows have the best mix of protein, energy and dry matter to maximise production.

As a FeedSafe-accredited manufacturer Meningie Fodder carries out continuous sampling of both raw materials and finished products, with annual independent audits evaluating the company’s testing procedures. This ensures all of its products provide the required levels of nutrition and are fit for their intended purpose.

Company owner Jo Lokan says feed manufacturers can’t afford to be complacent about the quality of their products, because what they produce ends up in the human food chain.

“Feed manufacturers are an important part of the chain of accountability. The FeedSafe program enhances the reputation of Australia’s livestock industry as a whole, and the clean, green image of our agricultural production,” she says. “There is a wider value in the program for manufacturers, in addition to ensuring that our own manufacturing processes meet good practice guidelines.”

To achieve FeedSafe accreditation feed manufacturers must meet minimum standards in the maintenance of their premises, mill buildings, plant and equipment, staff training, the sourcing, purchasing, quality and storage of raw materials as well as feed formulation, manufacturing and labelling.

FeedSafe conducts annual, independent audits that also consider loading, transport and product delivery procedures, product inspections, sampling and testing and customer complaint procedures.

For more information on becoming FeedSafe accredited contact the Stockfeed Manufacturers’ Council of Australia’s executive officer John Spragg 03 9769 7170 mobile 0402 831 843, email [jspragg@sfmca.com.au](mailto:jspragg@sfmca.com.au) or visit <http://www.sfmca.com.au>.