

## **Young Beef Producers' Forum a success once again**

Optimum, opportunity and optimism were recurring themes throughout the fourth annual Young Beef Producers' Forum held in Roma on November 13 and 14.

The event attracted around 80 young people involved in the beef industry, from the ages of 18 to 35, and was made possible by loyal sponsors, including platinum partners Meat and Livestock Australia and National Australia Bank Agribusiness, as well as the Angus Youth organisation.

The two days were made up of an innovative program presented by a high calibre of speakers, who came from a variety of locations to give a broad industry representation.

The forum was opened by AgForce immediate past president, Peter Kenny, who gave a thought provoking perspective on the future of the beef industry. Business section speakers included Michael Lyons, Wambiana, Charters Towers who spoke on his family's approach to balanced business growth, which has been a key in the operation expanding from 2500 head of cattle and two family members in 2000 to 12000 cattle and seven family members in 2008. National Australia Bank representative, Greg Noonan gave a detailed overview and forecast of the current and future economic climate in the agricultural industry. Young entrepreneur, Charlie Blomfield, Carthona Agriculture spoke on agricultural investment opportunities, particularly in relation to carbon, while MLA's Rebecca Austin gave an update on the key innovation and capability activities of the company, including new technology in the processing sector.

The production section proved popular with young producer Justin MacDonnell from the Acadia Valley speaking on the industry push for natural beef, a strategy being developed to create a certified grassfed product to benefit producer and consumer alike. Dalene Brook from Organic Beef Exports gave an interesting presentation on the marketing opportunities and challenges in organics, including entertaining examples of the variance of etiquette in overseas countries. Alf Collins Sr concluded the section, with an in depth presentation to challenge widespread management techniques in relation to cost of production, using his family's operation, Collins Belah Valley Brahman to illustrate his ideas.

Sustainability and policy were covered by Drew Wagner from AgForce speaking on the current situation in regards to the topical Emissions Trading Scheme, while Oscar Pearse, AgForce's Cattle Policy Director gave the young crowd an overview of lobby groups and policy, and how they can get involved to influence industry decisions. Jane Hamilton and Rebecca Gowen from Queensland's Department of Primary Industries introduced the new initiative, FutureBeef to the crowd, and used the time to gain feedback and input from participants to shape this program.

A great night was had by all at Sandon Glenoch Angus dinner, which combined great food, great music and great entertainment. The sirloin that was donated by Certified Australian Angus Beef was cooked to perfection, and guest speaker Kirsty Dunphey made a great impression on the crowd with entertaining excerpts of her life journey from broke at 19 to retired at 27. A new initiative that certainly proved a hit was 'Perfect Match', a lighthearted game to address the realistic issue of finding a partner in the bush. Strategic questions developed by the committee were all bush related, and made for some highly amusing answers from the witty young men hand picked as contestants.

Friday morning saw a small group of speakers rise quite early to be interviewed by Arlie Douglas, rural reporter for ABC radio, who broadcast live from the forum.

In the personal and family section Andrew Badgery, Rural Retirement Specialists, Singleton give holistic insight to strategy for succession, while James Lord, May Downs, Mt Isa told his interesting story of property purchasing, business management and the psychology behind his decision making. Amelia Becker, McInnes Wilson Lawyers gave a presentation on estate planning documents, and certainly opened eyes to the importance of such documents, such as enduring power of attorney.

The forum was brought to a close with a tour to NAPCO's Goldsborough group of properties outside Roma, managed by Stewart and Emma Taylor. Stewart explained his management strategies to the group which he uses to operate the 43000 acres of backgrounding country.

Once again the Young Beef Producers' Forum was a great success, receiving an overall rating of 4 or 5 out of 5 from 96% of participants.

Kate Tickle  
Queensland Angus Youth Coordinator