

Feedlot has \$40m at stake

Peter Morley

IT takes three trucks a total of 10 hours to deliver the 400 tonnes of grain consumed daily by 35,000 head of cattle on Grassdale, eventually to become one of Australia's biggest feedlots.

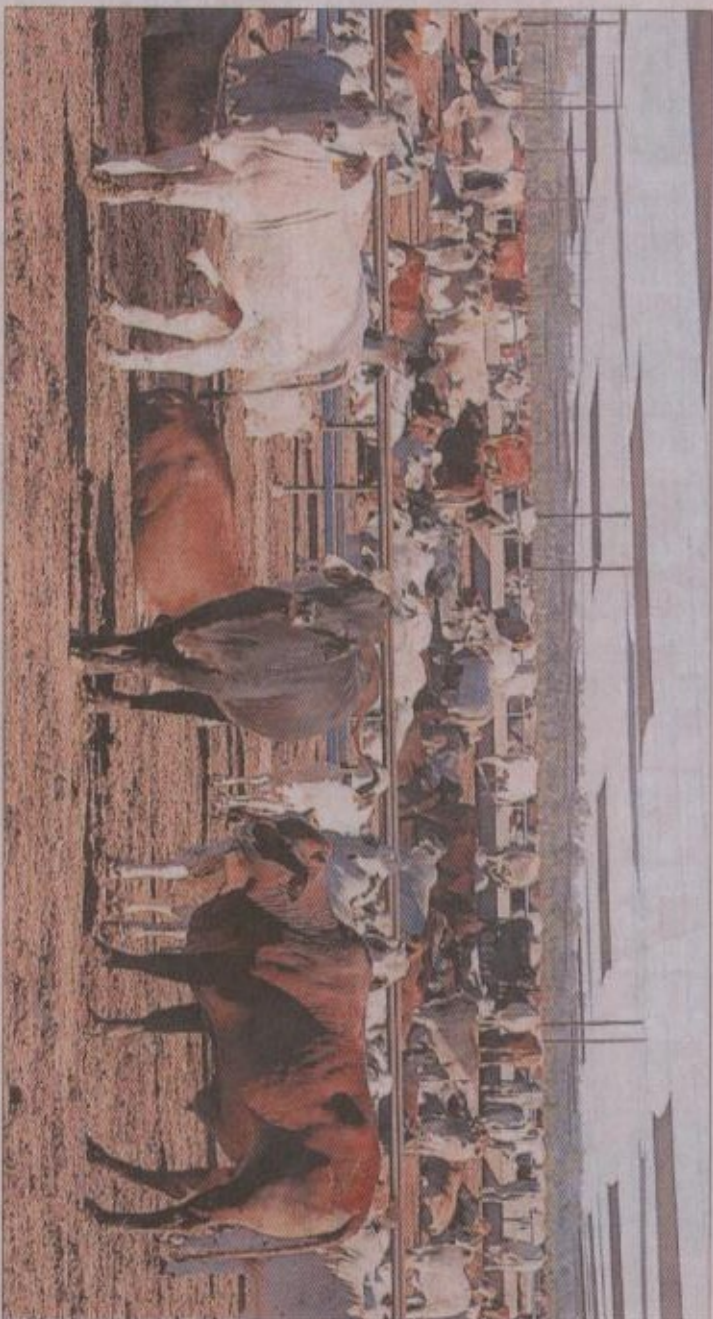
The facility has been designed to hold nearly 50,000 head in shaded yards that cover 40ha where most of the cattle are fed for 100 days before they are turned off.

Primary Industries Minister Tim Muhrin this week officially opened the first stage of the complex, a greenfield facility built about 40km southwest of Dalby on the Darling Downs. It is southern Queensland's first large-scale commercial feedlot to be built from the ground up in the past decade with owners Mort and Co sinking \$40 million into the state-of-the-art venture.



Waste water is treated and recycled and manure is dried, pulverised and spread over 2800ha of farming land where stage and lucerne hay is grown for the animals.

But the farm cannot produce the amount of grain needed for the facility, according to manager Ben Maher.



NO bull ... when in full operation the state-of-the-art Grassdale feedlot near Dalby, above, will hold 50,000 head of cattle making it one of Australia's largest, according to its manager Ben Maher, left. Pictures: David Martinelli

"We are using 400 tonnes of grain a day which currently is sorghum that is sourced from around the Darling Downs which produced a good crop this summer," he said.

"When that supply is exhausted we will look to wheat."

Mr Maher said store cattle for the feedlot had been purchased from throughout Queensland and New South Wales. After fattening they would go off for processing.

Grassdale also handled private consignments of cattle for the top end of the retail market.

Meanwhile, natural beef will be developed as the new national brand for pasture-fed beef, much of which is produced in the Queensland range lands.

The cattle section of Queensland rural lobby group AgForce has convinced the Cattle Council to investigate the new beef identification standard.

Grain-fed beef has its own certification and AgForce believes it is time for grass-fed or natural beef to be distinctively identified for the benefit of consumers increasingly interested in how food is produced.