One of the first things that Mark Spurr did upon his appointment as the new Managing Director of Meat and Livestock Australia, was to spend a day in Armidale in January looking at both the technical and field aspects of livestock improvement including the operation of BREEDPLAN.

Mark has an extensive international background in the food industry, in management, administration and accounting. He was keen to see how the $3M that MLA invests per year with Armidale-based researchers is helping to revolutionise decision making systems in the beef and sheep industries. By the end of his visit, Mark gave this research and related industry servicing the “thumbs up” saying it left him with a lasting impression of being ‘world class’.

The morning session covered the meat quality research of the Beef CRC, particularly the DNA tests for marbling and tenderness; the work of AGBU in developing the genetic evaluation engine of BREEDPLAN and LAMBPLAN; the e-sheep initiatives of the Sheep CRC and the work of ABRI in delivering practical industry services based on much of the above research. The afternoon included a visit to the Angus Society and an inspection of the advanced beef cattle breeding program at the White family’s “Bald Blair” stud. Here, Mark was impressed to see a range of technologies including gene markers, BREEDPLAN, BreedObject, Net Feed Intake, Embryo Transfer, TGRM and Internet cataloguing all being combined to accelerate genetic progress and maximise seedstock marketing opportunities.

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The evening was spent at “Wongwibinda” which is home for ABRI’s Chairman, Ed Wright and his wife Sally. Over dinner Mark met with a number of local commercial producers who were enthralled by his “fireside chat” which included his vision for success of Australia’s red meat industries in a tough global food market. Mark was accompanied by the MLA’s Manager of Livestock Production Innovation, Dr Len Stephens, who voted the whole exercise as a triumph in communication allowing MLA to see first-hand how the beef and sheep industries were benefiting from MLA’s investment in research.

Arthur Rickards
Managing Director, ABRI

http://breedplan.une.edu.au