

Dorper Lamb sells itself as luxury brand for export

By JACINTA BOLSEN BROEK

DORPER lamb is set to become a luxury brand.

That's the opinion of Dorper Lamb director Graeme Howie, who this week told *Farm Weekly* South East Asian markets were developing a taste for WA's Dorper lamb.

"As the world's tastes change and a food obsession trend emerges, a growing indulgence in luxurious wines and food products such as the Wagyu beef brand have paved the way for other red meat markets," he said. "The Dorper Lamb brand is considered a luxury food brand in Singapore, more than just another food product.

"The demand has become so strong, we can't supply the whole market," he said.

"It is set to become a high demand product that will be a luxury top end food brand.

"A lot of people in these markets previously didn't eat lamb at all, because they didn't like the smell of Australian lamb.

"But they have moved to eating Dorper lamb.

"The Malaysian market has increased its volume to about 500 to 800 lambs a month."

The Dorper Lamb brand has been established in Malaysia and Singapore for more than six years and supplies top end hotels and restaurants, but the WA company is planning to take its product across South East Asia.

Mr Howie hopes WA's Dorper Lamb will move into a niche top end market in South Korea.

"We did our first trial consignment by air two months ago into South Korea," Mr Howie said.

"We are hoping to supply a large group in that country, once we can get the market established.

"They like the taste, but we will get some more feedback and hopefully we will be able to sell them some more, but it is still early days."

While talks have been focused on China, Mr Howie said exporters need to be looking more broadly.

"We hear all about China, but South East Asia is growing just as fast, maybe faster," he said.

"They are easier markets to work in and have the buying power there already.

"We are seeing high demand for lamb.

"The young people there are becoming 'foodies' and want to try new things, but cooking at home has become a big thing."

Mr Howie travelled to Indonesia this week to discuss the potential of establishing a Dorper lamb trade.

"There is potential here, we are looking to supply carcasses into Indonesia," he said.

"It has the potential to go live, if the market dictates that."

Mr Howie said he established relationships with industry in Indonesia through his previous involvement in the live export trade of cattle.

"The people I was involved with previously have gone into the sheep and lamb business," he said.

"They have built a feedlot and lamb-processing works and we are looking at doing something with them."

While South East Asia is the main focus for Mr Howie, he said Dorper

Lamb would still focus on existing customers and other markets.

"We are pretty entrenched into Singapore and Malaysia, but in time we will look at Europe and also the Middle East," he said.

"I have also been speaking to Agriculture and Food Minister Ken Baston to develop some commercial contacts in Iran to reopen the market and supply back there.

"It will be good to get that back up and running.

"I think you have to have fingers in different markets, because you don't know what will change.

"The volume is there, if we get to 500 to 1000 a day it will be a huge business because we don't need to process 3000 Dorper lambs a day.

"I am pretty confident we have enough lamb to supply these markets.

"We have some pretty big growers.

"One grower will produce about 15,000 Dorpers for us this year, and that is just one of 20 or 30 good Dorper lamb growers.

"We get a call every week from someone that has lambs ready to go."

Graeme and Nina Howie set up the Dorper Lamb company in 2005 to create a true paddock to plate operation, bringing prime, sustainably-farmed WA lamb to kitchens and dining rooms around the world. The main retail outposts for the company include Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong but it also services the domestic market.

"Both domestic and international markets are going strong," Mr Howie said.

"We have a large domestic market with four vans on the road that home deliver, which has taken off.

"Domestically there is a trend to buy online, but it takes time.

"We are starting to get about 5-10 orders a day.

"We have a mobile compatible website, so you can just buy off that.

"Prices are just as competitive domestically as a butcher shop, sometimes even less."



□ Dorper Lamb a luxury food brand on the global market.



□ Dorper Lamb director Graeme Howie at Tony Roma's Perth.