



Deal will see Coles boost WA's beef industry

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Coles will more than double the amount of WA beef on its supermarket shelves to about 70 per cent after the State Government yesterday announced lucrative contracts committing more than 200 head of cattle to the retail giant every week.

The multi-million-dollar injection into the State's struggling red meat industry could see WA beef processors Harvey Beef and Western Meat Packers soon offering more than 500 head each week.

Agriculture and Food Minister Kim Chance said the new contracts would coincide with the State Government's Buy West, Eat Best marketing campaign to identify WA produce, to be rolled out next month.

Harvey Beef chief executive Michael Rapattoni said the contracts symbolised a new era for the State's biggest beef processor as it turned its

focus to domestic markets.

Harvey Beef announced last week that it had increased its kill space to a capacity of 1000 head of cattle each day to accommodate the growing demand for WA beef.

"It's now up to the producers to increase volume and that's what the industry needs," he said. "We had a very productive day last week with 20 producers who were really keen about supplying cattle . . . the next 12 to 18 months will look good for the WA beef industry."

Western Meat Packers Group general manager Linchon Hawks said the WA-owned business was committed to supporting domestic customers' needs over its export markets as he predicted positive returns for beef producers.

"The price depends on the markets but we do see at the moment that the price of cattle is going up and I believe

we will be there some time in the near future," he said.

Cattle are already on feed to meet the supermarket giant's increasing demand for WA beef, according to Mr Hawks, who also confirmed his assurance the initial 100-head weekly target would be achieved.

WA Farmers Federation meat section president Mike Norton said yesterday's announcement would ensure the viability of the WA red meat industry.

"The announcements of Coles' commitment to both Harvey Beef and Western Meat Packers will do well to re-instil confidence in the industry," he said.

Richard Brown, from Coles WA, said customer demand had driven the supermarket chain to pursue a competitive deal with Harvey Beef and Western Meat Packers.