



Meating Point

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Bringing the Midfield community together



Midfield buys South Australian potato plant

The Midfield Group has expanded its South Australian commitment, purchasing the former McCain potato factory near Penola.

The group has already begun using the facilities at the plant, which ceased operation as a potato processing plant in late 2014.

Midfield's Dean McKenna said the site was well established and would facilitate growth for the group.

"We have a strong relationship with many farmers in south-east South Australia, so it was a very natural progression to expand our operations there," Dean said.

"We're obviously very committed to south-west Victoria and the Penola site will add substantially to our existing business.

"Much of the infrastructure was in place and we are already utilizing the freezers there, which have a 4000 pellet capacity."

Dean said the acquisition was the next step in the company's plans to expand into dairy.

"The site is to the south of Penola and is in excellent condition.

"We are currently looking at developing a dairy factory there, with supply coming from South Australia and also the Western District.

"This investment will offer substantial benefits for farmers. It will provide them



with another option and create diversity in the marketplace."

When the McCain operation closed down 59 staff lost their jobs.

While the new Australian, family owned and operated factory will generate employment, the number of jobs has not yet been

calculated.

"There will be substantial job opportunities in South Australia, but we are still finalizing the exact structure.

"We're in the early stages of planning and will pass on more details in the coming months."

RIP Michael Williams

Midfield mourns the loss of its dear friend and workmate Michael Williams.

Mike was a valued member of the Lowlands team and sadly passed away recently.

Midfield's Brett Woolcock said Mike was

a fun-loving and comical member of the tightknit Lowlands team.

"There was great camaraderie between Michael and his workmates," Brett said.

"He had the capacity to be genuinely

concerned about other people's feelings and was a respected workmate who we now miss, but are grateful that he was our friend.

"We pass on our heartfelt sympathy to his family."

New beef slaughter floor

Midfield's 246 beef slaughter floor has been fully upgraded with a state-of-the-art plant directly from Europe.

Midfield's Matt Fisher said the massive overhaul was undertaken in late May and had doubled the capacity of the floor.

"The previous facility dated to the 1970s and had a maximum capacity of 350 carcasses per day," Matt said.

"The new floor increases our processing capabilities to 700 units per day.

"Aside from productivity increases, the new slaughter line is ergonomic, efficient, easy to clean and uses similar labor units."

Matt said the new slaughter floor became operational in early June and staff feedback had been very positive.

"We have to thank our hard working employees for the hard work and dedication to the upgrade process.

"There was a huge commitment from a range of Midfield employees and contractors, working in shifts around the clock for more than a week to get the job done."

New animal welfare standards

Producers are being urged to familiarize themselves with the regulations surrounding animal welfare on the eve of the introduction of new standards.

Midfield's Noel Kelson said Midfield and all processors were heavily regulated in terms of animal welfare.

"There are international obligations relating to animal welfare and as a nationally accredited organization with the Australian Animal Welfare Certification System (AAWCS), we take this responsibility very seriously," Mr Kelson said.

"Animals with broken legs or other major injuries absolutely cannot be moved or transported and it is the producer's responsibility to make sure these animals are euthanized as soon as possible.

"There will be a change in some people's perceptions of animal welfare standards with the onset of new Primary Production Processing Standards (PPPS) from the 30th of July. This new standard for meat extends the definition of a "meat producer" to include a business, enterprise or activity that involves the growing, supply or transportation of animals for human consumption."

Mr Kelson said the Australian Livestock Processing Industry Animal Welfare System (AAWCS) had been in place since 2013,



New animal welfare standards will be introduced on July 30.

to help facilitate positive and proactive industry animal welfare practices.

"This is an independently audited certification program designed for processors to demonstrate compliance with best practice animal welfare standards.

"They cover all animal welfare activities, from receipt of livestock to humane

processing.

"There is no doubt that both domestic and international expectations of the manner in which people handle animals has come under increased focus in the past few years. All participants in the supply chain need to be acutely aware of their responsibilities for these outcomes."

New website

The Midfield Group will soon have a new website.

Midfield's Sharnie McKenna said work was almost complete on a new fully integrated and functional website that would include

electronic National Vendor Declaration Forms and other facilities.

She said the new site would be user friendly and designed for use on desktop and mobile devices. It was being designed for several

key target markets, including farmers and other suppliers, domestic associates and international customers.

The website is expected to be live in July.

Two decades for Daniel

Computer Science was once a dream of Daniel Byrne – now it could not be further from reality.

It was 1995 when a young Daniel deferred his Computer Science degree for a 12 month stint at Midfield, hoping to earn a bit of money before he moved to Melbourne for University.

"I thought if I could get a bit of money behind me it would make things easier when I moved away," Daniel said.

"Mum and Dad had a farm and we knew Colin through that, so I asked him if he had a job in load out for 12 months. There was a junior position in the office in payroll and I was fortunate enough to get that job. That was 20 years ago and I'm still here."

After 12 months a position became available in the sales team. Daniel took the position and knew he wouldn't be going to university.

"I now have no idea what I would have done with computer science. I was very lucky the opportunity came up at Midfield because I love the work I do and couldn't imagine myself working with computers."

Daniel is now The Midfield Group's Export Sales Manager, a position he says has evolved with the natural growth of the company.

"We were only domestic back when I joined the team. One of my first customers was Kenny Saunders, who had a butcher shop in Camperdown at the time. Now he's the Beef Production Manager here.

"Midfield is now selling to more than 70 countries around the world. My role primarily involves overlooking the team's sales, as well as an element of day-to-day production. I still sell to North America myself.

"The biggest issues we have are dealing with

Daniel Byrne started at Midfield in 1995.



trade restrictions and quality challenges. With quality challenges it's constantly a moving target; from eColi testing in America to HGP free livers in Egypt – country requirements change constantly.

"Every day is a different challenge and being part of a business that has grown so much and continues to grow is fantastic."

Midfield operating Colac scales

Midfield has extended its service to the Colac community, now operating the Colac scales.

Livestock officer Kevin Robertson said Midfield had been operating the service since early this year. "It's basically a depot where we buy all grades of cattle, sheep and bobby calves," Kevin said.

"We only weigh calves there, all other stock are weighed after we transport them to Warrnambool."

The Colac Scales operate Monday (9am-3pm) and Thursday (9am-1230pm).

"Interest in the service is very strong and we're getting lots of positive feedback.

"It's another way Midfield is servicing farming communities."



Midfield's Kevin Robertson at the Colac scales.

Calfeteria keeps kids busy



Ballarat Specialist School is operating an innovative rural-based program to teach its students the business and practical aspects of farming.

Volunteer Don McKenzie said the program involved the operation of a 'calfeteria'.

"Basically what happens here is the students prepare the milk and feed the calves and once they've grown out we fatten them on some land at Mount Mercer," Don said.

"The calves are all donated by Midfield, so we don't have any initial costs, and once they've been fattened we send them back to Midfield and they kindly give us a very good price."

Don said the program used about four or five calves either every or every second term and was also supported by businesses donating pigs and lambs.

"When the cattle are sold, the students go to the sale and get an idea of the auctioneering process, then they take the new calves back to the school.

"The school has many fantastic programs, including two cafes where the students learn hospitality skills and learn about all aspects of working in a café/bakery.

"This means the prospect of students gaining employment in this area after school is much improved."

Ballarat Specialist School provides educational programs for 3-18 year old students with mild, moderate and profound intellectual disabilities associated with physical, social, emotional, behavioural, multiple and sensory impairments.

"As well as the rural program, they have their own market garden and orchard. They also propagate their own plants and care for the trees in the Avenue of Honour.

"The FARM has its own walking and running course and play paddock. The school also has its own Education Residential Unit where students live in for up to 10 weeks learning how to live more independently. At the FARM are two two-bedroom units where students who have developed their independent living skill can live as they would in a community setting.

"It's a fantastic school."

Bringing the Midfield community together



Online NVD forms

Midfield is leading the meat processing industry in the vendor declaration field, moving its bobby calf NVD forms online.

Midfield's Noel Kelson said the Midfield branded NVD form was the first step in a move to translate all NVDs to the online space.

"We're ready to introduce a Midfield branded NVD and hope to have it online by the 30th of April," Mr Kelson said.

"It will be in the bobby calf sector as a starting point. We think this well established supply chain will allow us to iron out any creases and then unroll online NVDs across all categories of livestock.

"It will be accessible from the Midfield website and there will be login access for consumers."

Mr Kelson said there was currently a national review underway that was looking at

developing an electronic NVD at an industry level.

"Basically the need has resulted from the evolution of the NVD process. The first national vendor declaration forms were introduced in 1996, but there were no underpinning quality assurance programs.

"In about 2000 the National Livestock Production Assurance Program (LPA) was established so they could basically give truth or evidence to what the farmer had declared within the vendor declaration.

"The systems have progressed over the last 15 years and farmers now purchase their own NVD book, which has presented a number of problems. Farmers might only use 10 pages out of the book but it's no longer relevant because the current list of questions for overseas requirements has changed.

"Midfield have been working with Dairy Australia and the Australian Meat Industry Council to establish mutual recognition of Dairy Farm QA programs with the regulators so there will not be the need to run two separate on farm QA programs for what is essentially the same outcome."

An online system will remove this problem as it will allow for the form to remain current at all times.

"The NVDs are a critical document for people presenting livestock for processing because the NVD document forms the basis for The Department of Agriculture to sign the health certificates that enables access to international markets.

"It's vital producers take this responsibility seriously and the industry supports producers to fulfill this responsibility."

Working in a global space

Global challenges such as America's West Coast Longshore dispute have daily impacts on Midfield's operations.

Daniel Byrne said the daily changes at a global level, be they disputes, market demands, shifting requirements or others, had dramatic impacts on Midfield's day-to-day operations.

"One of the biggest issues this year has been coming out of the US, where there has been an industrial dispute at the west coast wharfs," Daniel said.

"Those docks process about \$1 trillion worth of stock annually. The dispute started in October last year, after months of negotiations, and dozens of container ships have been held up in the process."

At the height of the protracted discussions there were 25 ships left in limbo, including 20 container ships – some with Midfield product on board.

"It's definitely impacted our customers because they had purchased our meat but couldn't access it as it was stuck on the wharf. Ultimately this affects our cash flow.

"We've been fortunate that we sent frozen



product so the product will be OK. There were people who had sent chilled products and as soon as it got off the container it had to be frozen straight away. Fortunately that wasn't us.

"They've come to an agreement now, so they've been working through the backlog of ships at the ports. It took them months to clear the backlog."

While this dispute has been significant, Daniel said there was always an issue in any

given market.

"There's always something happening, supply challenges mainly but logistic and production challenges as well.

"We might be supplying a market and then all of a sudden a decision is made overnight over there that means we have to change our production and logistically what we have to do.

"It's complicated."

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