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NEWS FROM THE TASMANIAN INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

Monday 24 August 2015

Heart-smart lamb on the menu

Omega-3 rich lamb could soon be on the menu thanks to Tasmanian research that has found feeding sheep polyunsaturated oil supplements like canola, rice bran and flaxseed oil produces lamb that is both healthier and tastier.

Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA) Associate Professor in Animal Science and Genetics, Aduli Malau-Aduli, is leading the research that has been assessing the impact on meat from feeding sheep pellets containing 5 per cent polyunsaturated oils.

"The results are very promising and we have found that not only does the meat contain high enough levels of omega-3 fatty acids to deliver health benefits, but that the bad fats, or saturated fats, are also significantly lower in the meat," Associate Professor Malau-Aduli said.

"Saturated fats are detrimental to human health, hence the increasing interest in the search for meat with high unsaturated fat content and in particular, omega-3 fatty acids that can help combat heart disease and arthritis."

The research undertaken by TIA, which is a joint venture between the University of Tasmania and the Tasmanian Government, demonstrated that the meat from sheep fed polyunsaturated oil supplements contains enough omega-3 to be officially considered a source of dietary omega-3 - at least 30mg of omega-3 per 100g of meat.

Red meat, like lamb, does not normally contain omega-3 fatty acids, but this discovery will open a potential new market for sheep graziers to produce high levels of omega-3 lamb.

"Taste tests results have also been promising with the lamb fed with canola supplements showing superior eating qualities," Associate Professor Malau-Aduli said.

Research team member, TIA PhD student Aaron Flakemore's goal is to see lamb on supermarket shelves with a Heart Foundation Tick sticker.

"There is quite a bit of diversity between sheep - some sheep convert the oil to unsaturated fats better than others.

"So there is potential to start selecting and breeding sheep that are better at making healthy fats."

The research is supported by CSIRO, CopRice Feeds and the Australian Wool Education Trust.

Associate Professor Malau-Aduli will deliver a free public talk in Hobart as part of the University of Tasmania's Research Week at 5.30pm on Wednesday 2 September at the Brunswick Hotel. The event will include lamb canapes for guests. [Book online.](#)

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