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**FARMER ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS TOWARD A BULL BEEF SUPPLY  
CONTRACT**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of  
Agricultural Science in Farm Management.**

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1993**

## ABSTRACT

The objective of this research was to establish the reasons why past-users (1990-92) of a Riverlands weaner bull supply contract (RWBC) had entered and exited the contract, and what aspects of the current RWBC prevented them from re-signing. A mail survey of past RWBC users in the central North Island who were still farming bull beef was conducted. Useful responses were obtained from 22 of the 35 eligible farmers. The survey design incorporated the Ajzen-Fishbein Theory of Reasoned Action to establish how past-user's subjective beliefs and evaluative attitudes towards aspects of the current contract influenced their overall attitude towards re-signing a RWBC. Information about RWBC entry and exit reasons, and farmer requirements of future meat supply contracts was also obtained.

The results suggest that respondents originally entered a RWBC to obtain the equivalent of 100% funding for cattle at low interest rates, and to increase cattle numbers (which at that stage were more profitable than sheep) by access to such funding. Farmers exited the contract because slaughter prices in the RWBC had become uncompetitive, and because of inflexibility associated with the range of dates available to slaughter cattle. Low belief strengths that a RWBC provides competitive prices compared to the free market, flexible dates for killing cattle, and improved farm profitability compared to non-contract weaner bull systems, are acting against farmers re-entering a RWBC. A future meat supply contract therefore, needs to incorporate price premiums, flexible killing dates, low interest rates, and competitive pricing before respondents, such as those involved in this study, would be prepared to sign. The Ajzen-Fishbein Theory of Reasoned Action provided an effective methodology to identify key aspects of an individual's belief structure which influenced their decision to not sign a 1993 RWBC.

Future research in the area of meat supply contracts should examine more closely, using techniques such as COPE (e.g. Hurley & Valentine, 1993), the cognitive structures farmers hold towards issues such as competitive pricing, farm profitability under contract, and killing date flexibility.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As with all research projects there are numerous people who, in their various (and often unique) ways aided the completion of this masterate.

Firstly, acknowledgements must go to Professor Warren Parker, Professor Bob Townsley, and Associate Professor Kevin Lowe, for their supervision in thesis preparation and presentation.

The encouragement given by Dr Bill Maughan, Associate Professor Frank Sligo, and Evelyn Hurley in pursuing this study topic is greatly appreciated. Also to Dr John Spicer and Dr Ganeshanandam for their time and advice about questionnaire design and statistical analysis.

Thanks are extended to the C. Alma Baker Trust for their considerable financial support. To Riverlands Foods Limited for allowing me to pursue this study topic, and of course to John Read, Will Wilson, and all the team at JRAC for their financial and moral support, not to mention advice and information. "Busy" and "almost" will never have the same meaning again!

On the more personal front, thanks to Simon and Tanya for their humor and numerous other ways they demonstrated their support, and for never doubting there was light at the end of the tunnel! To Janet, Jus, and my flatties of recent times, who endured the myriad of personalities that seem to be associated with completing a task such as this.

Lastly, but not anywhere near least, a heartfelt thanks to my family whose help by being completely removed from this whole process was the best approach they could have taken, but even so know more about masterates than they ever probably wished to!

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Peter Buxton.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

- A:** Overall attitude.
- ADG:** Average daily gain
- AFFCO:** Auckland Farmers Freezing Co-operative.
- b<sub>i</sub>:** Subjective belief.
- BI:** Behavioural intention.
- BSC:** Beef supply contract.
- CA:** Correspondence Analysis.
- CWT:** Carcase weight.
- e<sub>i</sub>:** Evaluative attitude.
- ha:** Hectare.
- IPM:** Integrated pest management.
- JRAC:** John Read Agricultural Consultancy Limited.
- kg:** Kilograms.
- LWT:** Liveweight.
- m:** Months.
- MSC:** Meat supply contract.
- MSWT:** Mean slaughter weight.
- NI:** North Island.
- NZ:** New Zealand.
- OOS:** Out-of-season.
- Riverlands:** Riverlands Foods Limited.
- RR:** Re-entry requirement.
- RWBC:** Riverlands weaner bull contract.
- SN:** Subjective norm.
- SST:** Supersonic transport.
- SV:** Slaughter value.
- SWT:** Slaughter weight.