

FOOD FOR THOUGHT.

STATE OF ORIGIN

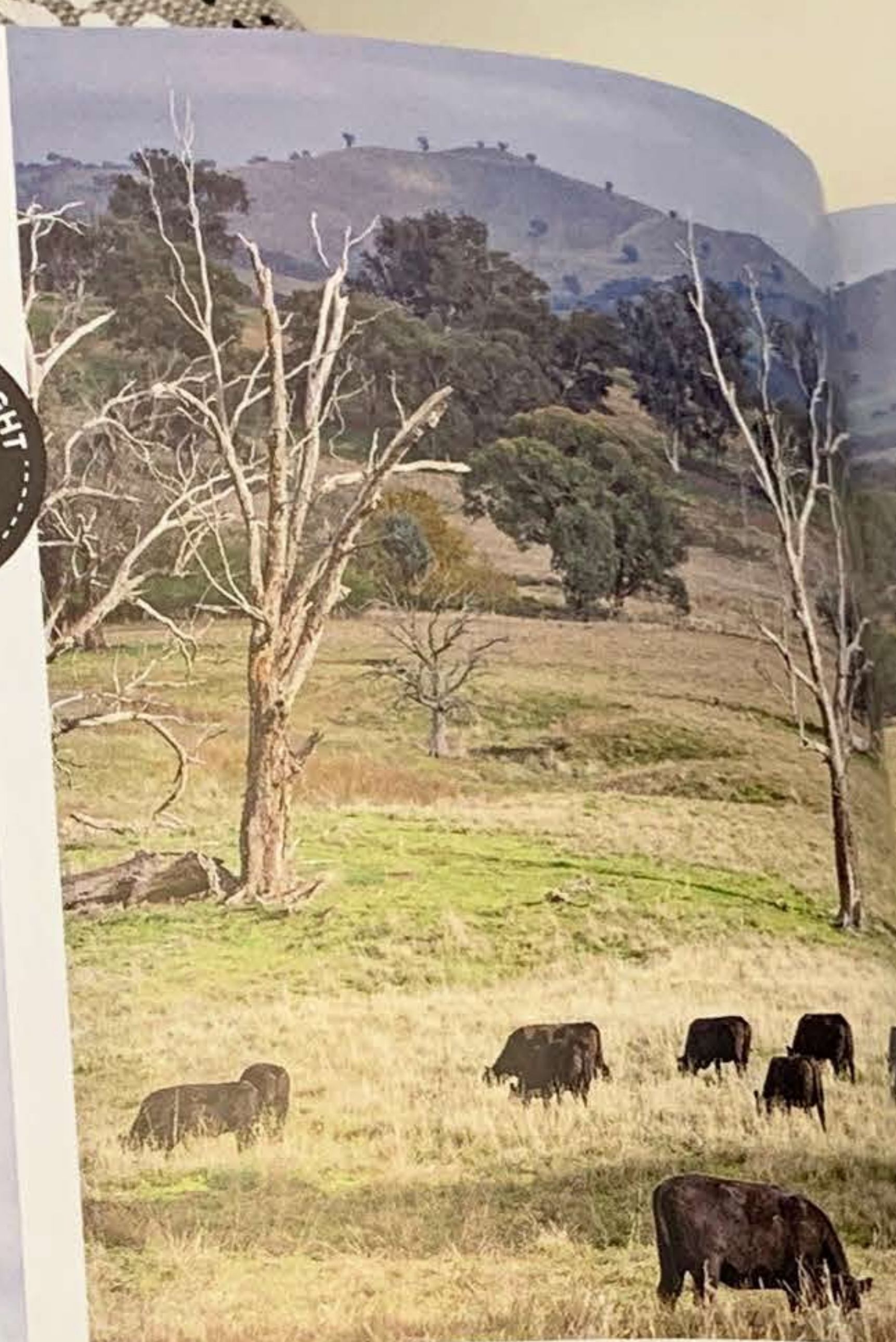


A mobile on-farm butchery unit that processes livestock at the source is hailed by chefs and restaurateurs for being kinder to the cuts of meat and the animals alike.

WORDS ERINA STARKEY PHOTOGRAPHY JAYNE NEWGREEN

A NEW MOBILE abattoir is driving change in the Australian meat industry. Provenir, the brainchild of farmer Chris Balazs, chef Christopher Howe, veterinarian Phil Larwill, barrister Merissa Martinez and marketing manager Jayne Newgreen, is bringing butchery back to the farm, removing the need for live transport. An Australian first, it improves both animal welfare and meat quality, and it's being welcomed by chefs and restaurateurs.

"These guys are just completely revolutionising our commercial food system," says Mark LaBrooy, chef and co-owner of Three Blue Ducks. The restaurant is one of a handful that showcase Provenir meat on the menu. You'll also find it at Melbourne's Rockpool Bar & Grill and Grossi Florentino. "When I first heard about what they were doing at Provenir, the story really resonated with me," he says. "One of the things that upsets me the most about our food system is the way the animals are treated once they leave the farm. It's something people don't want to know about, but it's actually one of the most important pieces of the puzzle when it comes to creating high-quality meat."



ABOVE: Sanbrook discusses her work on the farm with LaBrooy and Balazs.



"YOU'VE GOT A FARMER, A BARRISTER, A VET AND A COOK. THEY'RE SMART COOKIES AND THEY'RE DOING AN AMAZING JOB."
- MARK LABROOY

Livestock are typically transported to a meat-processing plant, usually involving long distances and stressful conditions. When animals are stressed they produce adrenaline, triggering a chemical chain reaction that causes the muscles to tense up and the fat to break down, compromising the taste and tenderness of the meat. "The more stress points you put into the animal, the more you lose all of the hard work that has been put in before that," says LaBrooy.

Provenir, by contrast, brings the processing to the property. The state-of-the-art mobile abattoir employs a mix of technology and psychology to ensure animals are given the benefit of a stress-free slaughter.

This has won over many cattle producers, including Gillian Sanbrook from Bibbaringa cattle farm in Wymah Valley in New South Wales. The company's practices have made a real impression on Sanbrook and LaBrooy.

"The way that the animals are handled within the unit is just so careful and slow and it shows in the meat," says LaBrooy. "If you've even eaten beef that's processed on a property you'll know it's far superior than what you'll usually find."

What sealed the deal for LaBrooy was a pack of Provenir rib-eye. "The meat was just so tender. We couldn't believe it. And this was from a two-week-old steak. It hadn't been aged at all."

And it's not just the premium cuts that impress. "I recently made a tongue curry and it was incredible," he says.

"The thing is, we spend so much time and energy trying to increase the quality of the beef by dry-ageing and curing it when, really, if you take care during the slaughter process, you'll get a product that's just as good as, if not better than, fresh meat."

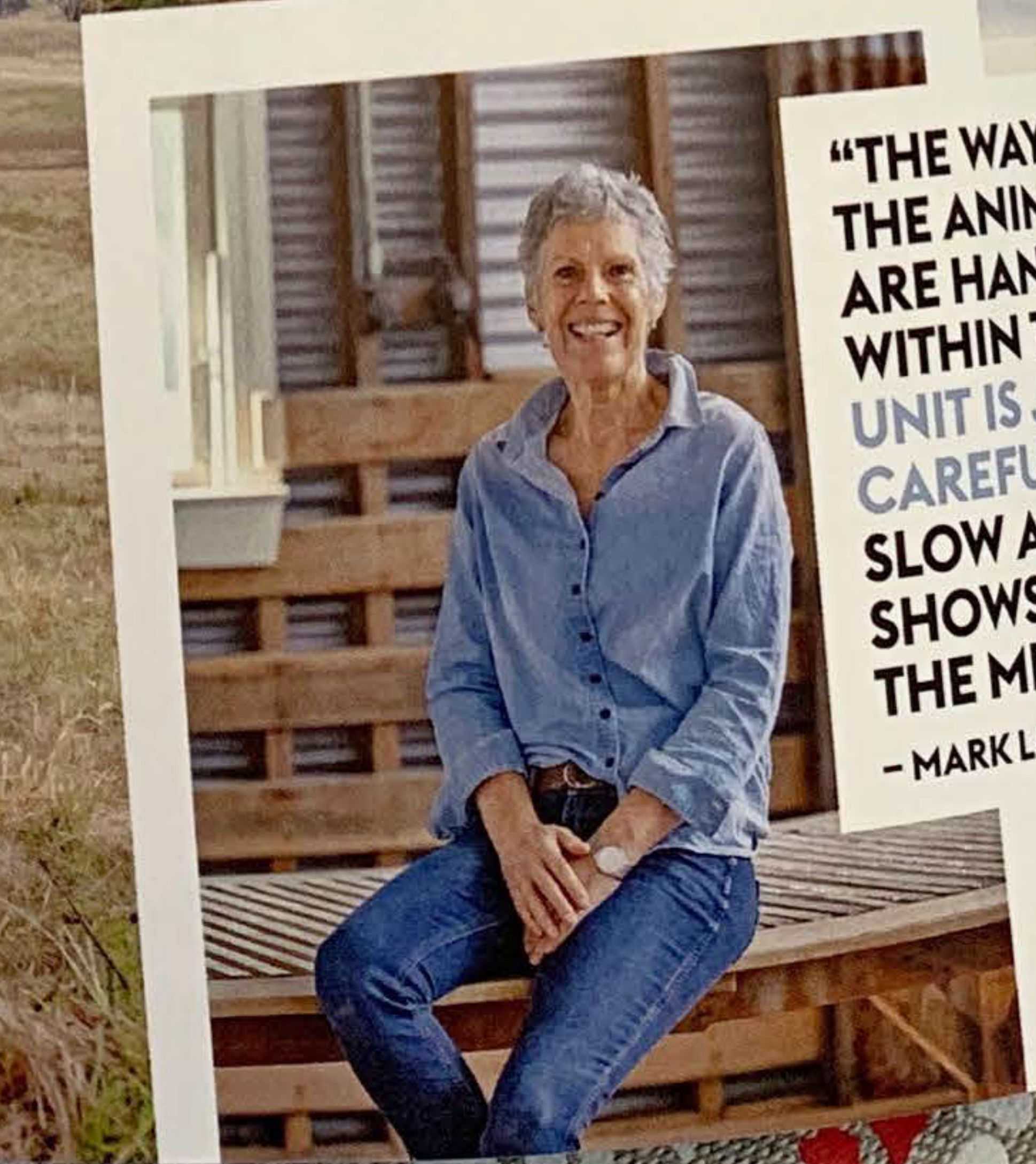
He's likewise impressed with the Provenir co-founders. "I really like the team behind it. You've got a barrister, a vet and a cook. They're smart cookies and they're doing an amazing job."

One of the additional benefits of Provenir – made possible by the logistics of a mobile abattoir – is that it provides a traceable product. All Provenir packs come with a QR code that reveals the provenance of the meat. "Scan the code and it gives you the breed of the cattle, the land on which it was raised, how it was farmed and by whom. No other abattoir offers that," LaBrooy says.

Conscientious consumers will no doubt be impressed by what they learn. Provenir only partners with a small number of regenerative farmers who are committed to raising their livestock naturally. All cattle are grazed on pastures, where they're free to roam. It's a good life, followed by a good death. ✕



CLOCKWISE: Mark LaBrooy samples Bibbaringa farm's produce; Gillian Sanbrook of Bibbaringa cattle farm in Wymah Valley, NSW; Provenir CEO Chris Balazs, Sanbrook and LaBrooy.



"THE WAY THAT THE ANIMALS ARE HANDLED WITHIN THE UNIT IS JUST SO CAREFUL AND SLOW AND IT SHOWS IN THE MEAT."
- MARK LABROOY

