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## Zanda McDonald's legacy



*Zanda always stood for doing the right thing by his livestock*

One year ago today, the Australian beef industry lost one of its greatest modern leaders with the death of Zanda McDonald.

THROUGH his public endorsements and use of topical anaesthetic on cattle being de-horned, castrated and branded on his family's properties across northern Australia, Zanda McDonald was out to prove that a little extra trouble in the yards could reap a lot of extra benefit.

It's a philosophy that has grabbed the attention of global livestock welfare authority Professor Temple Grandin, who believes the Australian company Animal Ethics has hit on a winner with the development of a topical preparation to relieve cattle pain.

In a letter sent last month to Animal Ethics owner Allan Giffard, Prof Grandin said she was "very impressed" with the product, and could see it being used in the United States.

"Ranchers who raise cattle in extensive pastures need a product that they can easily apply at the time of castration. Handling each beef calf twice to first apply an anesthetic and then do the surgery will cause too much stress in wild, extensively raised cattle," the letter said.

"I strongly recommend that topical anesthetic gels should be approved by the FDA for use in farm animals."

But the question of who will pay for the product to be developed into a commercial preparation registered for cattle remains unanswered.

The product being used in trials is based on Tri-sulfen, the compound now used to kill pain in about 75 per cent of Australia's mulesed lambs.

Building on Animal Ethics' research, Bayer developed and released the product in 2011, but Bayer Animal Health country division head Andrew Mason, said adapting it for use in the cattle industry would cost upwards of \$5 million.



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“It would take five to seven years to get it into the market. From a commercial viability perspective, for us it doesn’t stack up,” Mr Mason said.

Mr Mason said regulatory hurdles and the time taken to clear them were the financial disincentives for Bayer to pursue the project on its own.

But he said the company was willing to continue trialling the product with existing partners, Meat and Livestock Australia and the Sydney University.

“Our next stage is to say to industry: ‘Here’s the solution, and we’re going to have to form collaborations’,” he said.

“We’re not walking away from it, but we need industry support.”

Mr Mason said he believed Zanda had set the commercial cattle producer a fine example in his preparedness to get on the front foot with animal welfare.

“Zanda was actively doing something about it, but he was proactive in saying this was something we needed to address as an industry. He always stood for doing the right thing by his livestock.”

Animal Liberation Australia executive director Mark Pearson said livestock producers like Zanda McDonald had helped to reshape the animal welfare debate.

“We welcome this really important advancement in the acceptance that farm animals do feel pain – that’s the middle ground now.”

Mr Pearson said the challenge for the beef industry now was to make a pain-relieving product commercially available, and soon.

“We really need to ramp up R&D into not just developing a product but also breeding out horned cattle,” he said.

Director of Animal Ethics and board member of AWI Meredith Shiel said that without Zanda the cattle industry needed to continue to push the middle ground forward.

“Zanda was so inspirational and passionate about recognising early on that the cattle industry didn’t want to end with the situation the sheep industry found itself in – a head butt between the animal liberation movement and producers,” Dr Shiel said.

She believes the beef industry can keep public opinion on side if it keeps moving forward with each step made possible by scientific advances.

“It’s about accepting that we can’t solve these things overnight but we can make progress, and that’s what Zanda was about it – how we can solve it.”

When the McDonalds start mustering on their Cloncurry district properties later this month, Zanda’s mother, Christine, said they would once again be using the pain-relief spray that Zanda so championed.

<http://www.farmweekly.com.au/news/agriculture/cattle/beef/zanda-mcdonalds-legacy/2694026.aspx?storypage=0>