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Southern Processors Expected to Stay in Queensland Through Christmas

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Southern cattle processors are set to remain active in Queensland (QLD) saleyards until at least Christmas 2025, driven by a shortage of slaughter cattle in southern states and robust global beef demand. This article explores the dynamics fueling this trend, its impact on Queensland's cattle market, and the economic implications for producers amid seasonal and policy challenges.

A scarcity of slaughter-ready cattle in Victoria and New South Wales (NSW) has pushed processors north, creating a domino effect across

Queensland's beef industry, according to Global AgriTrends analyst Simon Quilty, speaking at a Mackay beef expo (*Queensland Country Life*, 2025). Southern buyers are competing for heavy bullocks and females, with Queensland's favorable 2025 wet season allowing producers to hold cattle longer to add weight. "We've got strong demand and a good season, so producers are capitalizing on extra feed," said Elders Queensland manager Scott Mawn, based in Townsville (*Queensland Country Life*, 2025). This has driven up competition, particularly for Brahman and crossbred cattle in far northern Queensland, with live export prices for feeder steers to Indonesia tipped to hit \$3.70-\$3.85 per kilogram by year-end.

StoneX's 2025 outlook forecasts a record 9.3 million cattle slaughtered nationally, the highest since 1978, with grain-fed turnoff exceeding 3.25 million head (*North Queensland Register*, 2025). However, analyst Ripley Atkinson warns of softer prices due to oversupply in northern regions, especially southern Queensland, where feeder steers are abundant (*North Queensland Register*, 2025). Southern markets may see price rises if spring rains enable herd rebuilding, but dry weather could trigger a sell-off, depressing prices. "If producers panic-sell, we'll see downward pressure," Atkinson noted.

The Labor government's inaction on streamlining agricultural exports or easing regulatory burdens hasn't helped producers navigate these market swings. Global demand, a weaker Australian dollar, and low global beef supplies are driving exports, with the United States (US) expected to receive a record 415,000 tonnes in 2025 (*North Queensland Register*, 2025). Queensland's cattle market remains robust, but processors and producers must balance supply gluts and seasonal risks to maintain profitability through Christmas.