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WATSONIA 2002 GROWERS OF THE YEAR

AF Smith & Co of Geraldton, who supply Watsonia about 130 baconers a week, have won the Watsonia Contract Grower of the Year Award in the category of more than 4000 pigs supplied per annum to Watsonia.

Inaugural winners of the competition, they also won two years ago, reflecting a remarkable consistency.

Confirming this consistency, Watsonia Livestock Manager, Dean Gaskell, revealed that Allan and Win Smith this year achieved the highest ever proportion (83 per cent) of pigs falling within Watsonia's peak weight and grade criteria in this category since the competition commenced in 1996.

Mr Smith, who announced his retirement from the pig industry during his acceptance speech on Friday night at Burswood Resort, has supplied Watsonia for 60 years.

In the less than 4000 pigs per annum category, CA & EM Benson & Sons of Mingenew won for the third successive year.

Colin Benson, who also runs his own trucking business and transports pigs for three other Watsonia producers at Dalwallinu and Miling, has recently expanded his business to include contract hay baling, while wife Elaine and son Jeremy run the recently upgraded piggery operation.

The Benson family consistently supply Watsonia about 70 baconers a fortnight.

Westpork won the inaugural Watsonia Pork Producer of the Year Award, also announced at Burswood during the gala dinner attended by about 120 producers and Watsonia management.

In expansion mode, Westpork currently has more than 5000 sows and has recently advertised for contractors to grow out 8000 to 12,000 weaners per year.

According to Mr Gaskell, Westpork's performance and consistency is demonstrated by the fact that 92 per cent of the pork grade pigs they supply Watsonia meet the company's weight and grade specifications.

Pork Producer of the Year is an objective award based on the highest percentage of pork pigs falling within Watsonia's peak weight and grade schedule, which is 31 - 45.9kg carcase weight and 11mm back fat.

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Pork pigs represent about one fifth of Watsonia's total production and are supplied to the domestic market only, with Coles the major customer.

Westpork General Manager, Neil Ferguson, who accepted the award, is a member of the Watsonia Pork Alliance Committee.

Now in its third year, the Committee's other producer members are Barry Goldsmith, of WE & NB Goldsmith & Sons, Pingelly, Alan Rose of Great Southern Pig Company, Graham Dent of Bimbadeen, Cuballing and Errol Howard of Western Piggery, Wannamal.

Winners of the 2002 Watsonia Ambrose Golf Challenge, held earlier the same day at Burswood, were Joe and Biagio Settineri of Westonia, Steve Martin of Wannamal and Joe Coelho of Watsonia.

Winners of the 2002 Watsonia Round Robin Tennis Tournament were Steve Lyneham of Popanyinning and Clare Smith of Mukinbudin.

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Authorised by Watsonia and issued on its behalf by Brendon Cant & Associates, Tel 08 9385 7779.

MEDIA CONTACT: Dean Gaskell, Watsonia, Tel 08 9418 0717.