

BeefBot: Harnessing Advanced LLM and RAG Techniques for Providing Scientific and Technology Solutions to Beef Producers

Zhihao Zhang¹, Carrie-Ann Wilson¹, Rachel Hay¹, Yvette Everingham¹, Usman Naseem²

James Cook University, Australia¹, Macquarie University, Australia²

{zhihao.zhang, carrie.wilson1, rachel.hay, yvette.everingham}@jcu.edu.au
usman.naseem@mq.edu.au

Abstract

We propose **BeefBot**, a LLM-powered chatbot designed for beef producers. It retrieves the latest agricultural technologies (AgTech), practices and scientific insights to provide rapid, domain-specific advice, helping to address on-farm challenges effectively. While generic Large Language Models (LLMs) like ChatGPT are useful for information retrieval, they often hallucinate and fall short in delivering tailored solutions to the specific needs of beef producers, including breed-specific strategies, operational practices, and regional adaptations. There are two common methods for incorporating domain-specific data in LLM applications: Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) and fine-tuning. However, their respective advantages and disadvantages are not well understood. Therefore, we implement a pipeline to apply RAG and fine-tuning using an open-source LLM in BeefBot and evaluate the trade-offs. By doing so, we are able to select the best combination as the backend of BeefBot, delivering actionable recommendations that enhance productivity and sustainability for beef producers with fewer hallucinations. Key benefits of BeefBot include its accessibility as a web-based platform compatible with any browser, continuously updated knowledge through RAG, confidential assurance via local deployment, and a user-friendly experience facilitated by an interactive website. The demo of the BeefBot can be accessed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r7mde1EOG4o>.

1 Introduction

The latest development of Large Language Models (LLMs) has advanced the field of Natural Language Processing (NLP), delivering a strong foundation for a wide range of potential applications. However, applying generic LLMs to solve domain-specific problems presents several challenges, such as understanding domain objects' uniqueness, aligning domain's diversity of constraints, and producing

consistent domain-related contents (Ling et al., 2023). In the context of the beef industry within the agricultural sector, these challenges are particularly pronounced. With a generational shift in farming, many younger producers may not be fully versed in traditional practices, underscoring the importance of accessible, digital platforms that offer instant access to a wealth of historical and cutting-edge knowledge. Furthermore, the unique challenge of the beef industry lies in the rapid pace of development in agricultural technologies and innovations, coupled with frequent updates to government regulations and guidelines, necessitating a tool that can provide up-to-date, reliable advice.

To address these challenges, recent studies have pursued two primary methods of knowledge injection (Wang et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2022) in LLMs including fine-tuning and Retrieval Augmentation Generation (RAG) (Ovadia et al., 2024). While both approaches can improve LLMs' responses with precision and concision, fine-tuning incorporates additional domain knowledge into the model, whereas RAG prompts the model with external data (Balaguer et al., 2024). Given the variability in different domains, these methods have been applied accordingly in several areas for LLM applications, including health (Singhal et al., 2023), finance (Yang et al., 2023) and agriculture (Arora et al., 2020). Although both methods can be utilised for adopting LLMs in new domains, most of the existing models tend to utilise either fine-tuning or retrieval augmentation with prompting, and their respective advantages and disadvantages are not well studied. Furthermore, agriculture includes sub-fields like horticulture, arable farming, animal husbandry and forestry, which is still too general for direct industry application purposes. Additionally, the lack of easily accessible platforms also prevents the adoption of domain-specific LLM in industrial settings, often due to the required expertise in deep-learning and programming.

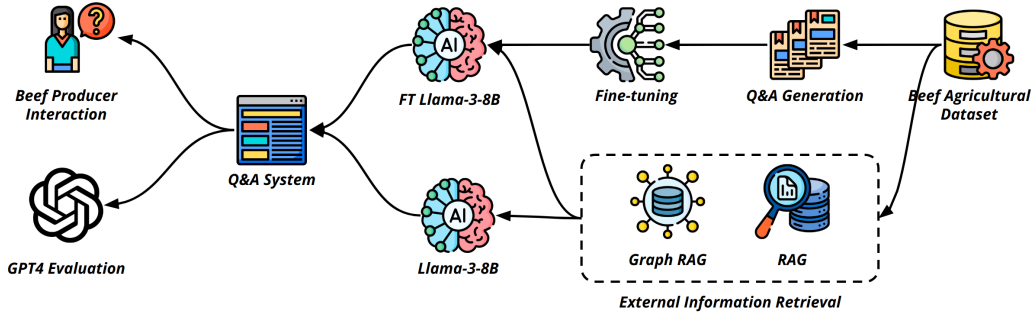


Figure 1: Overview of Beef Agriculture Pipeline for LLM

Contribution. With this in mind, we propose BeefBot, a LLM-powered web-based interactive chatbot, designed to support beef producers by providing immediate actionable recommendations and long-term strategies for their specific on-farm problems and goals. Its primary function is providing optimal solutions from the available knowledge in the beef industry, while taking into account farm-related variables such as economics, cattle breeds, grazing land management, and drought resilience strategies. More precisely, we first developed a pipeline to evaluate the impact of RAG and fine-tuning techniques on the performance of open-source LLM in the beef agriculture domain. The LLM was equipped with the optimal combination of these techniques, forming the complete architecture of BeefBot’s backend. It can deliver answers through an interactive website similar to ChatGPT (Ouyang et al., 2022), with significantly reduced hallucination in out-of-knowledge response. This enhancement is designed to provide more precise and relevant responses for beef producers, thereby enabling them to focus more on implementation.

2 Beef Agriculture Pipeline for LLM

The pipeline is designed to utilize open-source LLMs to generate comprehensive responses for beef agriculture-specific questions. Its structure is shown in Figure 1. The beef agriculture dataset is gathered from trustworthy sources¹, comprising diverse content from text, podcasts, and videos. Following the data collection, we generate question-and-answer pairs for model fine-tuning and implement both original RAG and knowledge graph RAG. This aims to leverage different methods for

¹Details on the specific websites utilised are withheld due to intellectual property concerns. It is important to note that all data collection and processing activities were conducted in compliance with ethical standards and considerations.

improving the LLM responses in the beef agriculture domain.

2.1 Data Collection

We implemented a comprehensive data collection pipeline to extract and collect information from several trustworthy websites. This process includes two primary components: a web parsing algorithm and a resource downloading subroutine. The web parsing algorithm aims to scrape raw text data from source websites while removing any sensitive information, such as participants’ names and business information in interviews or case studies. During web scraping, the algorithm identifies the webpage structure, removes trivial information such as web headers and social media links, but captures multimodal resources, including podcast and video content. The resource downloading subroutine targets those available multimodal contents and utilises open-source tools^{2,3} to download them. The downloaded multimodal content was further transcribed into text by the latest speech-to-text model Whisper (Radford et al., 2023). Both scrapped and transcript raw text are stored into plain text documents and indexed by their titles and source URLs. Together, this formed a comprehensive data collection, enabling us to provide the LLM agriculture pipeline with information and resources from the multimodal context in the beef industry domain.

2.2 Fine-tuning QA Generation

High-quality and contextually grounded questions that comprehensively reflect the collected text are essential for language model fine-tuning. Inspired by Alpaca (Taori et al., 2023), we utilize Llama-index⁴ to transform the plain text into instructive question-answer pairs as the fine-tuning dataset. To

²<https://github.com/yt-dlp/yt-dlp>

³<https://github.com/spotDL/spotify-downloader>

⁴<https://docs.llamaindex.ai>

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GPT-4
You are a Teacher/ Professor. Your task is to setup a quiz/examination. Using the provided
context, formulate 5 question-answer pairs that captures an important fact from the context.
<content> text chunk </content>

You MUST obey the following criteria:
- Restrict the question to the context information provided.
- Do NOT create a question that cannot be answered from the context.
- Phrase the question so that it does NOT refer to specific context and person. For instance, do
NOT put phrases like "given provided context" or "in this work" "How Jerry deal with" in the
question, because if the question is asked elsewhere it wouldn't be provided specific context.
Replace these terms with specific details.

- BAD questions:
What did the author do in his childhood
What were the main findings in this report
- GOOD questions:
What did the farmer do in his farm
What were the main findings in the original Transformers paper.

- Return your response in JSON format
Generate question:
Generate answer:

```

Figure 2: Fine-tuning QA Generation

achieve this, we split the long text documents into small text chunks of 2,000 characters and combine them alongside a carefully crafted prompt, following the Guidance framework⁵. For each text chunk, we utilise GPT-4 with the complete prompt to generate five specific question-answer pairs. This singular and unified process ensures the relevance and coherence of each question-answer pair given the source text. The prompt is shown in Figure 2, and the question-answer pairs are saved as instructive data instances in a JSON file. We divided the collected 24,057 instances into two sets: 19,245 for training and 4,812 for testing.

2.3 Model Fine-tuning

Model fine-tuning can inject factual knowledge into LLM parameters and provide promising results for completing in-domain tasks. We fine-tune the Llama-3 which is the latest generation of Llama model family. Llama (Touvron et al., 2023a) is an open-source autoregressive LLM based on the transformer architecture (Vaswani et al., 2023), comparable to GPT-3 (Brown et al., 2020). It leverages three main improvements over prior proposed models, including pre-normalisation (Brown et al., 2020), SwiGLU activation function (Chowdhery et al., 2023) and rotary embedding (Black et al., 2022). Llama-3 (Llama Team, 2024) is the third generation of Llama, which competes with ChatGPT (Ouyang et al., 2022). It features with twice context windows and more training data compared

to the Llama-2 (Touvron et al., 2023b). These enhancements, along with grouped-query attention, enable Llama-3 to outperform many open-source LLMs such as Mistral and Gemma on reasoning, coding, and knowledge tests, indicating its capability in diverse tasks (Llama Team, 2024). Therefore, we fine-tune and validate the Llama-3-8B (Llama Team, 2024) model with the collected instruct data. The entire model is trained using paged AdamW for a single epoch, with a warm-up step of 100 and learning rate of 1e-5. Our implementation is based on HuggingFace Transformers (Wolf et al., 2020), following the instructions from Alpaca (Taori et al., 2023). To optimize the fine-tuning process, we deployed it with Fully Sharded Data Parallelism (FSDP) (Zhao et al., 2023), which allows the sharding of model weights, optimizer states, and gradients, enabling the efficient use of multiple GPUs in parallel. The entire fine-tuning process utilised 3 NVIDIA H100 GPUs over a duration of 5 hours.

2.4 Retrieval Augmentation Generation

Another method to improve the response from LLM is Retrieval Augmentation Generation (RAG) (Lewis et al., 2020). This method aims to extend LLM capability to precisely manipulate knowledge and handle out-of-knowledge queries to reduce hallucination in knowledge-intensive tasks. To prompt engineer the Llama-3 model with RAG system, there are three components involved in establishing: 1) vector database for knowledge con-

⁵<https://github.com/guidance-ai/guidance>

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Llama-3-8B
You are an expert in the beef industry. Please provide
information on cattle breeds, production processes, environmental
impact, market trends, nutrition, regulations, and sustainable
practices in cattle farming.

Use the following context as your knowledge, inside
<context></context> XML tags to provide advice for the question.

<context>{context}</context>

When answer to user:
- If you don't know, ONLY say "I don't know".
- If you don't know when you are not sure, ask for clarification.
- Use step-by-step thoughts and make the answer more structural.
- Use '\n\n' to split the answer into several paragraphs.

Question: {input}
Your answer:

```

Figure 3: RAG Prompt

text reference, 2) model serving for instant inference, and 3) prompt designing for hallucination reduction.

Vector Database. We utilise Chromadb⁶ to build a large-scale vector database with all the available documents collected from trustworthy sources. This vector database is constructed by truncating and embedding the collected document from Section 2.1 into text blocks, with a maximum of 500 tokens per block for context-related reference. The vector database can be continuously updated with the latest external resources, and we index all documents with unique IDs along with their original source URLs in the vector database to maintain the traceability of each text block.

Model Serving. The fine-tuned model is served via Ollama⁷, with a temperature of 0.1 and a repeat penalty of 1.15, to respond to in-coming queries with external context. Unlike traditional deep-learning pipelines that require complex dependencies and initial model loading for the first launch, Ollama serves the model as a system-wide service via a Docker-like container, making model inference simpler and faster.

Prompt Designing. As shown in Figure 3, we integrate LangChain⁸ prompt templates within the RAG system by sending the most relevant text excerpts from the vector database, along with the queries, to the model. This approach allows the model's responses to include both its internal knowledge and external in-domain knowledge with proper references. To minimise hallucination, we prompt the model with a static response "I don't know" for queries beyond its knowledge scope.

⁶<https://www.trychroma.com/>

⁷<https://ollama.ai/>

⁸<https://www.langchain.com/>

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GPT-3.5
You are a data scientist working for a company that is building a knowledge
graph database. Your task is to extract information from data and convert it
into a Knowledge graph database.
- Provide a set of Nodes in the form [head, head_type, relation, tail,
tail_type].
- It is important that the head and tail exists as nodes that are related by the
relation. If you can't pair a relationship with a pair of nodes don't add it.
- When you find a node or relationship you want to add try to create a generic
TYPE for it that describes the entity you can also think of it as a label.
- You must generate the output in a JSON format containing a list with JSON
objects. Each object should have the keys: "head", "head_type", "relation",
"tail", and "tail_type".
Be Concise.

Examples: {examples}

For the following text, extract entities and relations as in the provided
example.
Text: {input}

```

Figure 4: Graph RAG Prompt

2.5 RAG with Knowledge Graph

RAG with knowledge graph or Graph RAG (Edge et al., 2024) is an updated version of RAG, which enhances the model capability to answer global questions requiring the understanding of an entire document. Based on the original RAG, there are two extra stages involved: 1) deriving an entity-based knowledge graph from source document and 2) related entities' community summaries pre-generation. Apart from these changes, the model serving remains the same for consistency.

Knowledge Graph Derivation. Collected documents are spited into manageable text chunks and each text chunk is further processed to identify and extract their entities and relationships. To ensure a comprehensive extraction while maintaining cost-effectiveness, we utilise GPT-3.5-turbo with multipart prompts, demonstrated in Figure 4. The extracted entities and relationships are then summarised into single descriptive blocks for each graph element. We incorporate Neo4j⁹ to store the graph elements and build an undirected weighted graph, where entities are transformed as nodes and relationships are transformed as edges.

Community Summaries Pre-generation. For each community in the Neo4j graph database, report-like summaries are generated, which provides an overview of communities' semantics. When a question is received, relevant community summaries are retrieved for answering the question based on the relevance. The final answer is then generated by summarising all the summaries to provide a comprehensive response.

2.6 Pipeline Evaluation

To better understand the benefits of each method for LLM in the beef agriculture domain, we evaluated

⁹<https://neo4j.com>

Llama3-8B	Relevance	Groundedness	Helpfulness
OG	75.12	78.74	74.49
OG-RAG	76.14	78.35	72.76
OG-GRAG	76.46	79.37	73.31
FT	78.19	80.39	74.49
FT-RAG	68.11	73.54	63.78
FT-GRAG	69.76	76.14	66.46

Table 1: Evaluation results. "OG" represents Original Llama3-8B model. "FT" represents Fine-Tuned Llama3-8B model. "GRAG" represents Graph RAG.

different combinations using the same evaluation metric. The combinations include both the original Llama-3 and fine-tuned Llama-3, with and without RAG and Graph-RAG systems. Since human evaluation is expensive and non-experts cannot determine the correctness of the technical answers, we utilised GPT-4 as an evaluator by providing the ground-truth answers as guidance.

Evaluation Setup. Following the similar idea in Section 2.2, we applied GPT-4 to generate 200 question-answer pairs from the collected beef agriculture documents. The detailed evaluation generation prompts is shown in Appendix. After filtering out the duplicate topics, there is a total number of 127 question-answer pairs that can represent the ground-truth dataset. We prompt the models with the questions and provide GPT-4 with the ground truth answers and model generated answers for evaluation.

Evaluation Metrics. To better reflect the application in the industry domain, we introduce three different evaluation metrics: **1) Relevance:** How closely the model answer addresses the specific question. **2) Groundedness:** The correctness of the answer compared with the ground truth. **3) Helpfulness:** The usefulness the answer can be utilised or implemented by a beef farmer. For each metric, GPT-4 will provide a score from 1 to 10, where 1 is the worst and 10 is the best. We take the mean value of each combination and linearly scale up the scores to 100 for evaluation.

Evaluation Result. The evaluation results are summarise in Table 1. Compared with original Llama3-8B model, both RAG system and fine-tuned model have better performance in relevance and groundedness. The Helpfulness are slightly worse in RAG system and remains the same in fine-tuned models. This might due to the technical knowledge injection into the model, which lead to more technical language during question answering. For original

Llama3-8B model, Graph RAG improve its answer in all three metrics comparing with original RAG. For fine-tuned Llama3-8B model, it's worth noting that the integration of RAG and Graph RAG decrease the performance of the model. This might be caused by catastrophic forgetting where model can loss its major reasoning capability while acquiring new domain knowledge (Luo et al., 2024). However, we observe that even under this circumstance, Graph RAG still outperform RAG in all three metrics. We also compare the performance with the proprietary models, although their performance are better than the open-source models, the concerns about privacy and cost-efficiency preventing deploying them into real-world application.

3 BeefBot Architecture

According to the observation from the beef agriculture pipeline, we propose a chatbot named BeefBot. It offers beef producers a well-designed, interactive Graphic User Interface (GUI) accessible through the web browser. Therefore, we designed both back-end and front-end of the system to ensure accuracy and efficiency of answering relevant beef production questions. This equips beef producers to tackle specific agricultural challenges with technology and scientific insights. Its design is shown in Figure 1, and the backend and front-end are described in the following sections.

3.1 Backend System

To streamline the application and simplify deployment, BeefBot's backend is constructed using a Flask HTTP server¹⁰ with API calls. More specifically, the Llama3-8B model is hosted on RunPod¹¹ with Ollama API exposure. The Graph RAG database is stored on a Neo4j database, and the retrieval information is available during Ollama API calls. Langchain fuses the backend logic and provides a textual response to post via the Flask HTTP server. When there is a user query, Langchain retrieves the Graph RAG context and sends it to the Llama3-8B model along with the original query via an Ollama API call. The returned model response is extracted and formatted as a markdown text for the Flask HTTP server for front-end posting.

¹⁰<https://flask.palletsprojects.com/>

¹¹<https://www.runpod.io/>

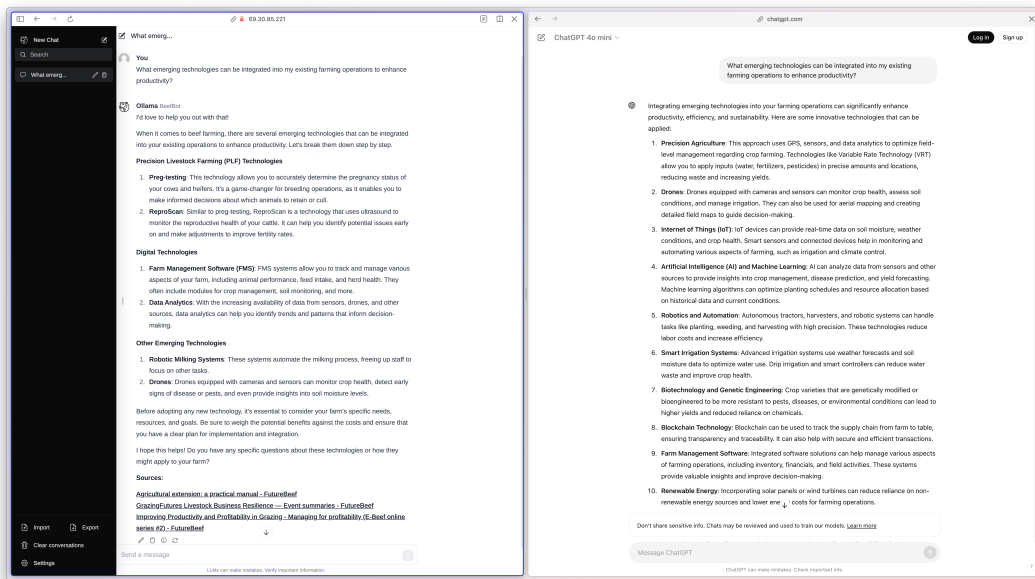


Figure 5: Comparison between front-end responses from BeefBot and ChatGPT for the same question. BeefBot (left) features responses tailored to the beef industry domain, while ChatGPT (right) offers generic responses.

3.2 Interactive Front-end Website

BeefBot offers an interactive web front-end built on the ollama-webui lite ¹². As shown on the left side of Figure 5, beef producers can interact with BeefBot by typing their questions into the text bar located at the bottom of the webpage. By integrating the BeefBot with external resources through the Graph RAG, its responses include all the source URLs referred to in the context. These clickable links guide beef producers to the websites of the mentioned techniques, helping them find the optimal solution for their specific problems without extensive web browsing. The conversations are searchable from the sidebar, which helps the user to find the previous information efficiently. To ensure privacy, all chat history is stored in the random access memory (RAM) of the host machine. Therefore, exiting each web session or clicking "Clear conversations" in the sidebar wipes out the entire conversation with BeefBot. We also provide a method that allows the user to export or import their conversations for continuous usage.

3.3 Case Study Comparison

As demonstrated in Figure 5, we compare the responses from BeefBot and ChatGPT to the same questions likely to be asked by beef producers. Even though the question does not specifically mention the beef industry, BeefBot tailors its response

¹²<https://github.com/ollama-webui/ollama-webui-lite>

in that direction with actionable suggestions, such as Preg-testing technology, ReproScan technology, and Farm Management Software. These actionable suggestions align with our 'helpfulness' metric, as they reflect practical solutions that beef producers can implement, which evaluates the utility of answers in real-world applications, ensuring they are actionable and tailored to user needs. In contrast, ChatGPT tends to provide general answers within the broader agriculture domain, some of which are only high-level concepts, including artificial intelligence, robotics, and blockchain. Moreover, ChatGPT's responses rely solely on its internal knowledge without any external references, making it challenging to verify their correctness.

4 Conclusion

We propose BeefBot, a web-based interactive chatbot powered by a LLM, designed to offer precise, immediate, and long-term solutions to beef producers by leveraging the available knowledge in the beef industry. BeefBot's architecture, including its RAG system, model serving with Ollama, and front-end interface, is largely domain-independent and can be reused across sectors. Domain adaptation primarily requires collecting domain-specific data, generating high-quality Q&A datasets, and fine-tuning the LLM accordingly. This process would typically involve moderate effort depending on the data availability and complexity of domain-specific tasks.

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A Appendix 1

Generate 5 question and answer pairs for the following content in the <content></content> tag:

<content> {content} </content>

Follow these steps to ensure the questions and answers are practical, detailed, and suitable for farmers and industry professionals:

1. **Understand the Context:** Ensure each question and answer is relevant to the northern Australian beef industry and addresses real-world concerns of farmers.
2. **Use Simple Language:** Write in clear, straightforward language that a beef producer would use and understand. Avoid technical jargon unless it is commonly known in the industry.
3. **Cover a Wide Range of Topics:** Include questions from the topic list below to ensure comprehensive coverage.
4. **Ensure Practicality:** Each answer should provide actionable advice or information that can be directly applied by farmers in the Australian beef industry.
5. **Reference Provided Knowledge Set:** Base your answers on the documents provided as the ground truth dataset. Ensure the answers are directly supported by and verifiable within these documents.
6. **Reflect Real-World Concerns:** Craft questions that mirror the actual problems and scenarios beef producers encounter. This includes daily operational issues, long-term planning, and unexpected challenges.

Instructions for Generation:

Step 1: Start with a broad topic from the list.

Step 2: Identify a specific issue or common question within that topic.

Step 3: Formulate a clear and concise question a farmer might ask.

Step 4: Provide a detailed, actionable answer directly supported by the ground truth dataset.

Step 5: Repeat the process, ensuring no duplication of questions or answers.

Figure 6: Evaluation Prompt