

final report

Project code: B.ENV.0021 Clare Hamilton

Prepared by: Resource Strategies Pty Ltd

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Meat & Livestock Australia Limited
Locked Bag 991
NORTH SYDNEY NSW 2059

Landleader Trial Coordinator

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Background

This paper reports specifically on the June trial of the paper based Landleader survey. In conjunction with the “Landleader Focus Group Meeting Report” it covers the outcomes of the land manager trials and issues arising with key contacts used during and leading up to the trial period from a coordination perspective. This report will feed into the full evaluation of the Landleader project.

The paper does not report on the web based survey or the CATI telephone based survey although both were a part of the broader national trial of Landleader. There was a link between the paper based and web based survey as land managers who registered an interest in the paper based survey were in most cases also given the option of completing the survey on line.

The trial commenced after significant changes were made to survey format and questions following feedback from the focus group meetings held in Bendigo and Dubbo.

The target for the paper based trial was set at 100 returned surveys, with the project team estimating that this should be achieved if 150 land managers were to agree to participate in the trial. In addition to this it was estimated that 6 sheep and wool producer groups, 10 Landcare Groups and 10 CMA/NRM coordinators should be targeted. The project team also identified target CMAs and natural resource regions based on their sheep and cattle numbers, and to avoid specialised cropping areas.

Network coordinators

Establishing a core group of key contacts was critical in the roll out of the trial. These contacts were selected for their ability to tap into farming and natural resource networks which comprise of land managers involved in the broadacre grazing industry.

The network coordinators were generally project managers, coordinators and facilitators involved in Landcare, catchment management authorities (CMAs) and industry extension programs. A list of these key contacts is included in attachment 1.

Contact with the network coordinators began in early April with a general introduction to the project being sent by email, and follow up telephone calls to most catchment management authorities/natural resource management bodies. This initial contact was followed by a series of email and telephone communications regarding Landleader and the trial and lasted well into the trial period.

The network coordinators were asked to ‘spread the word’ rather than advocate for the program as some expressed a concern about promoting something they had not seen. They used newsletter and email to distribute information on the Landleader trial, inviting land managers to contact the Trial Coordinator if they were interested in participating.

An early intention of the trial was to hold workshops where participants completed the survey in a facilitated session. This was not embraced by the network coordinators who saw no value in calling a group of land managers in to a central point to complete the survey. While the contacts were generally happy to distribute the information on the Landleader trial, they were reluctant to facilitate or arrange meetings of land managers to complete the survey. The project team agreed to postpone the facilitated sessions until after participants received their Land Manager Reports, and incorporate them into the evaluation of the project.

Registered participants

A total of 240 paper surveys were distributed during the trial period. Of these 120 were sent to individual land managers, the majority of whom made contact by email to register their interest. Seven network coordinators requested surveys which they were to distribute to their members. In total 120 surveys were sent to network coordinators.

All surveys sent in South Australia were sent to the mailing lists of SheepPlus Coordinators as no individual land managers registered on their own behalf. Six Queensland land managers registered their interest to participate; 9 surveys were sent to members of Leading Sheep groups who did not directly register to participate. All other surveys were sent to people who registered to participate.

The Western Australian, Sheep's Back Coordinator was approached to have surveys sent directly to his members, but declined the offer.

The distribution of 240 surveys by State was:

NSW – 100

Victoria – 67

Queensland – 15

Tasmania – 44

South Australia – 13

Western Australia – 1

A full list of all land managers who registered their interest in the Landleader trial and who were sent paper surveys is included in the accompanying file *June trial registered participants*.

Issues arising

The following issues arose during the trial period:

- The network coordinators were reluctant to coordinate the distribution of surveys, but were happy to pass information on to their networks;
- No coordinators or land managers were interested in participating in a workshop specifically to complete the survey in a group setting, however there was some interest in facilitated feedback sessions once the benchmark reports were received;
- The Lake Cowal Foundation (NSW), which delivers PMP workshops, saw value in including the completion of the survey in its workshops, however the time constraints of the trial prevented it happening;
- Contact through the networks did not seem to work as well in South Australia and Western Australia as in the other States;
- Concern was raised in Tasmania and Victoria by existing EMS coordinators and facilitators, about the number of EMS and other such projects being rolled out over the last 12 months. This concern was not raised by any land managers or in any other State;
- One network coordinator in WA suggested the timing of the trial may have contributed to the poor response rate in that State; and
- Distribution of the Landleader information by the network coordinators was predominantly by email and most expressions of interest in participating were received by email.

Conclusion and recommendation

The overall response to the Landleader trial was very positive. Land managers who made contact to register their interest were genuinely interested in contributing to the collection of data which would demonstrate the credentials of their industry as well as wanting to be involved in the benchmarking exercise.

Relying predominantly on network coordinators may have limited the distribution of information on the trial. Similarly, participation is likely to have been limited because email was used as the main

communication tool. More extensive promotion needs to be considered to ensure a greater participation rate and a wider range of participants. This would include early promotion in the print media and by radio.

It is essential that there is some integration, or at least linkages made, between the large numbers of EMS programs being trialled by organisations across Australia. While most people involved in these alternate approaches understood the unique features of Landleader, the development of linkages would reduce duplication of effort and potential confusion with land managers.

Any future roll out of Landleader will critically need to develop strong advocates for the project in Western Australia and South Australia. Investing time and energy in this will ensure a balanced national approach.

This initial trial of Landleader has lead to the development of many good relationships with network coordinators and participating land managers. It is important that the Landleader project capitalises on the good will and interest that has been generated as this will provide a sound base for future developments in the project.

Clare Hamilton
29 June 2007