



final report

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Executive summary

MLA hosted 3 Pasture & Livestock Update events in WA in 2018, supported by Evergreen Farming, a state wide pasture systems grower group.

Built on the past six years of successful WA Pasture Updates, this year's events saw a combination of field walk and formal presentations in three regional locations, two which had not been visited in the years that Pasture Updates has been running in Western Australia.

Programmes were based around past MLA research and development that had local and/or regional relevance, with a mixture of farmers and researchers as presenters of the information.

The agenda for each day was developed with a large amount of input from local grower groups, researchers, consultants and MLA staff.

Events were held in Moora on Thursday 7 September with 69 attendees, Wednesday 20 September in Lake Grace with 53 attendees and Thursday 21 September in Cranbrook with 66 attendees. The combined attendance of 188 people exceeded the target of 150.

Feedback from attendees was excellent, with 93% of attendees rating the content as "Excellent" or "Very Good" and 84% planning to make changes to their business as a result of attending Pasture Updates.

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1 Background

As a core component of the Feedbase Investment Plan (FIP) for southern Australia, the first round of Pasture Updates ran from 2013-2015 with the key aim of increasing producer awareness of pasture based R&D in the FIP, and seek to establish a feedback-feed forward loop with producers on the pasture science and needs.

Pasture Updates target livestock producers and advisors and deliver regionally relevant research outputs and signpost relevant learning and information opportunities. Pasture Updates reconnect producers with the research underway and initiate the adoption of new research, as well as inform future direction. Pasture Update events will strongly contribute to impact by raising producer awareness early and feeding into skill and knowledge building programs.

This unique idea addresses the historical ad hoc nature and often fragmented delivery and promotion of R&D initiatives. Ongoing Pasture Updates enables pasture based issues and initiatives to be interactively addressed by industry participants on a localised basis. Pasture Updates also support practice change by livestock producers and advisors, from signposting to information, training, tools and products from MLA and others, to build Knowledge, Attitude, Skills & Aspirations (KASA).

Pasture Updates were conducted from 2016-2018 in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, and in Western Australia. A total of 39 events were held.

The purpose of a Pasture Update is to:

- Raise the awareness of research output from the Feedbase Investment Plan and other MLA and partner projects related to pasture that are relevant regionally and locally.
- Communicate the opportunities arising from improved pasture technologies
- Signpost participants to additional information, associated tools and/or training programs to further improve their skills.
- Showcase producers who have made change on-farm (via visit or speaker)
- Based on MLA's provided M&E framework, assess:
 - shifts in knowledge, skills and confidence and where appropriate, practice change
 - participant's reflections on direction and research needs around the topics presented.

2 Project objectives

1. Coordinate the development and implementation of two Pasture Updates per annum in Western Australia from 2016-2018. Locations are to be varied across the State providing broad coverage enabling access by as many producers as possible.
2. Average of 75 producers participated at each event targeting a total of 150 producers per year and 450 producers over 3 years.
3. At each event, 50% of presentations are of MLA funded research output relating to increasing pasture (feedbase) production and utilisation into product. Balance is other producer / consultant / advisor contributions to these same end points.
4. Partnerships established in each State (regional producer networks, private sector, agency) to support the development and delivery of the updates.

5. Development of an M&E plan before project start, based on MLAs new M&E framework for extension projects.
6. Annual reporting of monitoring and evaluation results that demonstrate shifts in awareness, knowledge, and where to access information and participant's reflections on direction and research needs around the topics presented.

3 Success in Meeting the Milestones

3.1 Pasture Updates WA - Moora

The Midlands region of WA was the location of the first Pasture Updates 2018 for WA, with the event held in Moora. 69 attendees participated in a programme incorporating a farm walk to paddocks of interest in the morning and formal presentations back at the Moora Bowling Club in the afternoon.

The programme consisted of a mixture of topics, with the majority having some input from MLA work either currently, or in the past. A slightly different approach was taken this year with a greater number of speakers and topics, but less time spent on each. This resulted in a very diverse programme that hopefully had something for everyone.

Integral to the success of bringing Pasture Updates to the regions, is working in with groups in the area. The Moora Miling Pasture Improvement Group (MMPIG) was approached early in 2018 to gauge their interest in co-hosting an Update in their area. There was genuine interest, so Evergreen Farming worked closely with MMPIG to develop a program that suited everyone's needs. MMPIG also helped to promote the event locally. Organisations including DPIRD, Murdoch University, UWA, WALRC, ALOSCA, Heritage Seeds and AgPro Management were also pivotal in shaping the agenda and promoting the event.

Handouts, including MLA fact sheets, publications and brochures, were available for attendees to take home.

3.2 Pasture Updates WA – Cranbrook

The lower Great Southern region was chosen for the final event for the year, with the farm walk and the afternoon session held in and around Cranbrook. 69 people attended throughout the day's activities.

The programme consisted of a mixture of topics, with the majority having some input from MLA work either currently, or in the past. A slightly different approach was taken this year with a greater number of speakers and topics, but less time spent on each. This resulted in a very diverse programme that hopefully had something for everyone.

Integral to the success of bringing Pasture Updates to the regions, is working in with groups in the area. The Gillamii group was approached early in 2018 to gauge their interest in co-hosting an Update in their area. There was genuine interest, so Evergreen Farming worked closely with Gillamii to develop a program that suited everyone's needs. Gillamii also helped to promote the event locally. Organisations including DPIRD, Murdoch University, UWA, SARDI, WALRC, ALOSCA, Heritage

Seeds, AgLime and AgPro Management were also pivotal in shaping the agenda and promoting the event.

Handouts, including MLA fact sheets, publications and brochures, were available for attendees to take home.

3.3 Monitoring and Evaluations

At all three events, feedback was gathered voluntarily regarding the programme and participant's intentions after attending. A total of 40 feedback sheets were collected at Moora, 18 at Lake Grace and 28 at Cranbrook, which was 46% of attendees across the three events. Total area of land represented by respondents across the three locations was 194,885 hectares. The vast majority of respondents heard of the event via email.

It was clear from responses that the programme content was highly valued and relevant to the attendees. The relatively even spread of feedback across all sessions demonstrated that the programme was well planned with strong background research to ensure there was useful information for a wide ranging audience. The highlight of each event though was clearly the on-farm paddock sessions, hence these being a standard inclusion in all Pasture Updates WA events.

	Moora	Lake Grace	Cranbrook
Content of programme average (scale 1-5 where 1 is high and 5 is low)	1.4	1.7	1.6
Relevance of programme average (scale 1-5 where 1 is high and 5 is low)	1.4	1.5	1.6

Attendees were asked to rate the overall content of the whole day at each location, which demonstrated high satisfaction with both events. Event hosts were pleased to see that, of those who filled in that section, not one respondent from either location rated the event as 'fair' or 'poor'.

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor
Moora	24	15	1	0	0
Lake Grace	8	8	2	0	0
Cranbrook	15	9	3	0	0

Attendees were asked if they plan to make changes to their business as a result of attending the event. 83 to 86% of attendees plan to make changes.

	Yes	No
Moora	83%	17%
Lake Grace	83%	17%
Cranbrook	86%	14%

4 Conclusions/recommendations

The change of dates from early August in previous years to mid-late September this year (to avoid a clash with LambEx) did not appear to cause any problems, even though September is full of Spring field days and ram sales.

The field walk component in the morning continues to prove very popular and has remained unchanged over the last 3 years.

This year more topics and speakers were added to the Afternoon sessions, with each speaker asked to produce a short sharp presentation. This allowed more topics to be covered, which many attendees appreciated, but did restrict question time after each speaker. The ability of different speakers to get their message across in 10 minutes differed significantly, and more work needs to be done to assist speakers to produce short, sharp and to-the-point presentations.

The renaming of Pasture Updates in WA to Pasture & Livestock Updates provides an opportunity for a one-stop shop for livestock producers. The excellent presentations by researchers from Murdoch University in 2018 highlighted this opportunity, with many attendees highly rating these talks.

A farmer panel (as had been used in 2016 and 2017) wasn't used in 2018 so as to fit in more technical topics. However, 1 to 2 farmers per location were asked to speak on a technical topic and they were always very well received.

Each Update ended with a "clicker" session run by Tim Watts gathering market research to inform WALRC R, D&E priorities. Despite a few technical difficulties, and running over time, these sessions were well received. Given the success, WALRC will continue using "clickers" at other events to gather producer feedback.