

FEEDBACK

MLA – FOSTERING PROSPERITY

AUTUMN 2026



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FEEDBACK



Cover: Craig and Jo Stewart – the couple behind the 100% goatmeat salami that’s improving carcass utilisation – celebrate the quality and versatility of Australian farmed Boer goat, while giving pork a run for its spot on the charcuterie board. Read their story from page 6. Image: Clancy Paine

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MLA acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we live, work and care for. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, as we recognise their history, culture, connection to land and water, and share in their commitment to caring for Country.



A note from the MD

Welcome to the autumn edition of *Feedback* magazine.

Livestock producers across the country have had a challenging start to the year with floods in the north and fires in the south. We recognise these extreme natural disasters can be devastating to impacted producers, livestock and the community.

To support producers through these times, MLA has resources for recovery and getting back into business (see page 2).

Trade conditions continue to dominate headlines with China announcing significant out-of-quota duties on beef following a safeguard investigation over the past couple of years.

As a major supplier of beef to China, this is a stark reminder of the shifting global trade dynamics which our industry navigates. MLA is working closely with industry to identify alternative markets for product that would otherwise have gone to China above our 205,000t quota.

Global opportunities

Disruption in one market inevitably creates movement in others, and this is where our global marketing and market access efforts become critical. Turn to page 39 to read a timely overview of the demand outlook across key regions from our latest global snapshots.

The outlook remains positive across major markets for Australian red meat. In the US, tight domestic supply underpins strong demand for imported product, while Japan and Korea remain stable, high-value destinations for Australian product.

We're also seeing encouraging growth across the Middle East and North Africa, supported by strong engagement at Gulfood 2026 (page 34). South-East Asia continues to emerge as a high-growth region, and the Australia-UK Free Trade Agreement is translating to increased exports.

Domestically, demand remains robust, and we expect more product to seek a home here as global conditions evolve.

These dynamics reinforce the importance of maintaining a diversified, agile export footprint.

In April, I'll head to South-East Asia to visit key markets for Australian livestock and red meat. I'll meet with members of Indonesia's

cattle industry association (GAPUSPINDO), Australian Livestock Exporters' Council and LiveCorp, to support industry in the important areas of live export and biosecurity. Read more about our Indonesian partnership on page 38.

Power of marketing

Marketing Australian red meat remains a major lever for driving demand. Our recent beef and lamb campaigns delivered strong engagement and increased sales.

Beef's 'The greatest' campaign featured prominently throughout The Ashes Test matches between Australia and England (Channel 7), reaching an audience of more than 20 million and driving a growth in beef value of 13.4%, compared with the same period last year. Aussie Beef will feature during SBS's broadcast of the 2026 FIFA World Cup in June and July, to continue linking beef to iconic moments of national pride and celebration.

This year's summer lamb campaign smashed records for audience engagement, with 37 million views of the 'The happiness list' three-minute ad at time of printing – surpassing the (also record-breaking) views for the 2024 and 2025 ads. This translated into an additional 244,874 Australian households purchasing lamb in January (compared with the same period in 2025). See page 3.

This edition also shines a spotlight on marketing opportunities for goatmeat, including our cover story on The Gourmet Goat Lady (page 6) and market insights (page 44).

Delivering value

Looking ahead, MLA's strategic focus for 2026 remains firmly on value-based marketing (VBM). Our VBM activities continue to build momentum, as we deepen market and customer insights, refine brand specifications, advance objective measurement technologies, strengthen data and feedback systems, and invest in on-farm productivity through ag-tech and genetics.

We'll be talking about this in more detail at industry events including LambEx26 in Adelaide in July. ■

Michael Crowley – MLA Managing Director

- ✉ I am always keen to hear MLA members' thoughts and
- ✉ feedback – please email me at managing.director@mla.com.au



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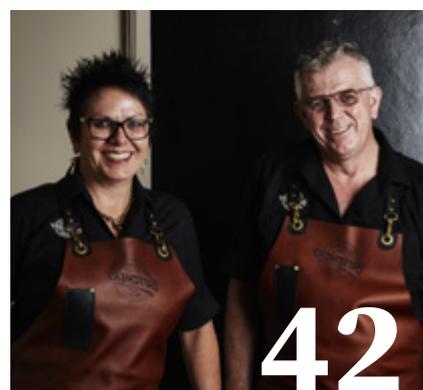
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This season...



Improve

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Equip

your pest toolbox:
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Explore

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Looking forward to LambEx

Save the date for the world's largest sheep, lamb and wool conference: LambEx. MLA will be on the ground at LambEx26, at the Adelaide Convention Centre from 7-10 July. Come along to hear about the latest industry research and innovation, learn about our marketing, communication and insights activities, and check out tools, resources and information on upcoming events to increase the productivity and profitability of red meat and livestock businesses.

Inspire. Inform. Innovate.
LambEx

- 👉 LambEx26 registrations are open: lambex.org.au
- 👉 Sign up to MLA's e-news, *The Weekly*, for more details about MLA activities at LambEx: mla.com.au/enews



Can you help share the story of red meat?

If you're heading to the Sydney Royal Easter Show in April, come and visit the Australian Good Meat stand in the Ag Discovery Pavilion.



Showgoers can explore how beef and lamb make their journey from paddock to plate through an engaging virtual reality experience. It's a chance to learn about the care, dedication and innovation behind the Australian red meat industry.

- 📧 To play a part in sharing this journey, contact Kelly Hawley: khawley@mla.com.au
- 👉 Learn more about Australian Good Meat at goodmeat.com.au



Resources to prepare, recover and rebuild

As producers across the country get back on track following bushfires and flood events, MLA has compiled a list of handy resources, tools and case studies. Check out our natural disaster recovery hubs at:

- 👉 Flood hub: mla.com.au/flood-recovery
- 👉 Bushfire hub: mla.com.au/bushfire-recovery

Let's get productive and profitable

The *Productivity and Profitability Podcast* is coming back. With our new partners, neXtgen Agri, we will be back on the airwaves from June.

- 👉 Keep an eye on on MLA's enews, *The Weekly*, for details of when the podcast launches (sign up at mla.com.au/enews).
- 👉 In the meantime, check out our webinar and podcast library for topics that might be relevant to you: mla.com.au/pandp



New on-farm projects

MLA has announced 18 new Producer Demonstration Sites (PDS) projects to commence in 2026. These projects equip beef, sheep and goat producers to test and prove what works on commercial properties – building skills and enabling faster adoption of proven practices across the red meat industry. The PDS program brings local producers together to trial new approaches, measure the results and share what they learn. It's all about region-ready solutions that save time, lift productivity and improve decision making.



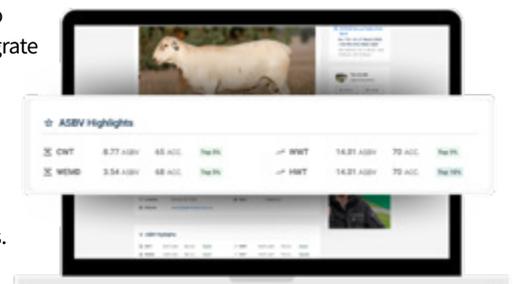
- 👉 mla.com.au/pds-projects-2026

Sheep Genetics on AuctionsPlus

MLA has collaborated with AuctionsPlus to enable sheep breeders to seamlessly integrate Sheep Genetics data into online stud listings for the first time.

Through this integration, buyers will now have direct access to verified Australian Sheep Breeding Values (ASBVs) within AuctionsPlus' enhanced digital catalogues.

This ensures producers and purchasers can make more informed decisions based on trusted genetic information, supporting productivity and profitability across the supply chain.



The integration builds on MLA's long-standing investment in Sheep Genetics, which underpins programs such as MERINOSELECT and LAMPLAN.

- 👉 To view the platform, visit pages.auctionsplus.com.au/sheep-genetics
- 👉 For more information on Sheep Genetics and how to access ASBVs, visit sheepgenetics.org.au

Lamb: the secret ingredient to happiness

MLA's annual Summer Lamb Campaign is roasting the record books.

Not only does the 2026 campaign celebrate lamb as the dish that brings Australians together, the three-minute ad has well and truly surpassed the total views of the 2024 and 2025 ads, which themselves were record-breaking.

Up to the end of February, there were 37 million views of this year's ad, 'The happiness list' – and these are translating to a strong increase in how many, and how often, Australians are buying lamb.

How happy are we really?

This year's ad tackles the news that, in 2025, Australia slipped to 11th place on the World Happiness Index. However, it's proven through the work of Lambassador Sam Kekovich that nothing captures true Aussie happiness better than sharing delicious Australian lamb.

This 2026 campaign shines a light on the unmistakable Aussie way of life. From sausage sizzles that bring people together to ducking into the shops in your swimmers, the campaign reminds us that happiness is not about rankings, but about togetherness, the outdoors and sharing a good lamb meal.

To support the campaign, MLA conducted its own Australian Happiness Census, polling real Australians nationwide.

The results showed three in four Australians said they were happy most days or always, with millennials leading the way at 85%.

Eating lamb was found to correlate with an increase in happiness compared to non-lamb eaters, with half of Australians believing lamb should be a weekly ritual. Roast leg of lamb topped the list of favourite dishes, followed by chops and cutlets.

National tradition

According to MLA's Chief Marketing and Communications Officer, Nathan Low, the campaign is about more than just advertising lamb.

"The Summer Lamb campaign has become a tradition that Australians look forward to every year," Nathan said.

"Just as summer means cricket, beaches and barbecues, it also means lamb on the table. This campaign celebrates that shared ritual and reinforces lamb as a symbol of connection, pride and the Australian way of life."



Ad boosts lamb sales

Early indication of January sales results from Nielsen Homescan have been positive:

Household penetration up

244,874

additional Australian households purchased lamb
(compared with December 2025)



Lamb on the rise

Frequency ↑ | Value ↑
Volume ↑ (vs December 2025)



Australia's lamb industry continues to provide solid supply to domestic consumers, with good production levels seen throughout 2025 ensuring that lamb remains readily available across supermarkets, butchers and foodservice outlets nationwide.

"The Summer Lamb campaign is one of MLA's most important initiatives for driving domestic demand," Nathan said.

"The results are in, and the record views of the Summer Lamb ad have coincided with record sales. January 2026 had the highest ever lamb sales for January and was the second highest ever month in terms of retail value according to Nielsen IQ Homescan data." ■

How value-based marketing delivers for producers

Value-based marketing (VBM) is built on a simple idea: when the market values something, producers who deliver it should be rewarded. MLA is investing to make that happen by lifting both live animal value and carcass value, and by improving the feedback producers receive along the way.

A big part of this is investment in better livestock genetics tools, using objective data to help producers select for traits the market pays for – such as lean meat yield and intramuscular fat. MLA is also supporting the rollout of objective measurement technologies at processing to provide more accurate and consistent measurement of yield and quality, and create clearer market signals.

Just as importantly, MLA is enabling digital tools that return carcass performance and animal health feedback to producers. This information helps guide breeding, feeding and turn-off decisions, closing the loop between on-farm choices and market demand.

Together, these investments are helping shift the industry from selling commodities to capturing value back to the farm gate.

Keep an eye out for MLA's *Value-based marketing roadmap* for industry, which will be released soon. ■



The stock/take

with Stephen Bignell, Manager – Market Information



MLA's Market Information team unpacks trends and data, to help inform your business.

What's driving record beef producer confidence?

The confidence of Australian beef producers is at record high levels, with half intending to expand their herd.

The latest Beef Producer Intentions Survey (BPIS), conducted by MLA, collected responses from almost 3,000 grassfed beef producers nationwide. The results point to a confident and expansion-minded industry in 2026.

The survey shows 50% of Australian beef producers intend to expand their operations in 2026. When extrapolated across the national herd, these intentions imply an overall herd increase of approximately 3%.

Record confidence

Producer sentiment has reached an all-time high, rising to 79 points, up sharply from 49 points in 2024 and just 11 points in 2023. This uplift closely mirrors the improvement in cattle prices over the past 12 months, underpinned by strong global demand for Australian beef.

Every state recorded an improvement in sentiment. South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia posted the largest increases, rising 46, 49 and 53 points respectively, albeit from lower starting points compared with other states.

Notably, sentiment between northern and southern producers is almost identical, with the north at 79 points and the south at 76 points, despite markedly different seasonal conditions experienced during 2025. This highlights the significant influence cattle prices continue to have on producer confidence, often outweighing seasonal variability.

Girl power

Producers planning to rebuild or expand herds cited expectations of favourable seasonal conditions, strong cattle prices and a desire to

grow their businesses as the primary drivers behind increased herd sizes in 2026.

Interestingly, projected herd growth is expected to occur despite indications that fewer bulls will be produced compared with last year. Instead, the main mechanism for herd expansion is the retention of a higher proportion of heifers, rather than increased bull numbers.

Among producers intending to reduce herd size, the most common strategy is the sale of older cull cows. Combined with increased heifer retention, this trend is expected to alter herd demographics, resulting in a younger national breeding herd than has historically been the case.

Breed focus

Breed composition remains largely unchanged. Angus cattle continue to dominate the southern breeding herd, accounting for about a third of all southern breeders, well ahead of Hereford, which sits at approximately 10%.

Wagyu cattle remain overwhelmingly concentrated in Queensland, where northern producers use the breed primarily to improve fertility outcomes. Brahman, Droughtmaster and Santa Gertrudis continue to underpin northern production systems.

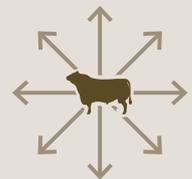
The survey also examined sales channels and branding practices, confirming that saleyards remain the primary outlet for southern cow-calf producers selling weaners, while northern producers continue to favour alternative pathways. ■



~3,000
grassfed beef
producers surveyed

50%

of Australian beef
producers intend
to expand their
operations in 2026



79 points:
Producer sentiment
hits an all-time high
with improvement
recorded in every state

Brahman, Droughtmaster and Santa Gertrudis

underpin northern
production
systems and

Angus cattle
account for about
a third of all
southern breeders



DIG DEEPER



Scan or click the QR code to read
the results of previous surveys:



Sheep:



Beef:



The survey was conducted prior to the North Queensland flood events and the announcement of Chinese safeguard measures – future sentiment and intentions may shift as the impacts of these developments become clearer.

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ON FARM

RESEARCH IN ACTION



Seasonal action plan

WA producer Tahree Kammann uses data to make weaner management decisions – turn to page 10 to find out the impact this is having on the herd at ‘Hillside Station’ in the Pilbara. Image: Paul Bell – Feral Films

Northern

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Set weaners on the path for lifetime performance

16

Restore under-performing land for rainfall resilience

Southern

12

Discover the causes of ewe mortality and how to increase survival

24

Unlock market compliance with these on-farm practices

The goat that crashed pork's party

Could goatmeat redefine Australia's deli game? Here's the story behind the 100% goatmeat salami challenging the pork industry.

When producers Craig and Jo Stewart welcomed a single Boer kid onto their Central Western NSW property as a pet for their then 8-year-old daughter, they had no idea they were about to trigger a series of events that would result in the disruption of an entire meat category.

Yet, almost two decades on, the couple behind 'The Gourmet Goat Lady' have turned calm stockmanship, tight genetics and relentless logistics into a premium brand – featuring a 100% goatmeat salami that's giving pork a run for its money on the charcuterie board.

For the love of goats

When they originally took over 'Inglewood' – the third generation Stewart-owned family farm at Collie, NSW – in the 1990s, Craig and Jo had no intention of reshaping the 100-year-old beef cattle and cropping business.

They eventually added 'Beuna Vista' at Gilgandra to the business. In 2008, while visiting a friend and local stud goat breeder near Beuna Vista, Jo and their daughter Abbey were offered 'Olivia', a female goat not suitable for production.

"Our daughter was absolutely taken by this goat and, since she wasn't a stud animal, the breeder was quite happy to let us take her home," Jo said.

"Olivia was our first experience with a goat. She was sassy and a little bossy, but she was also wonderful and we couldn't help but fall in love."

Things spiralled quickly from there – they purchased 10 more Boer does and brought in a buck and by 2009, Jo and Craig had gone from one lonely goat to a herd.

Introducing The Gourmet Goat Lady

Despite having an established herd, the Stewarts did not have a commercial future in mind for their goats.

That changed during a family holiday in 2009, when Jo wandered into a local butcher shop and was stunned to see beef mince selling for A\$15/kg.

SNAPSHOT



CRAIG AND JO STEWART – 'Inglewood', Collie, NSW



AREA
1,040ha

ENTERPRISE
800 Boer does, 50 Hereford cows and some cropping

PASTURES
Native pastures, medics and fodder crops

SOILS
Grey clay loams, red clay and sandy loams

RAINFALL
500mm

“Those small layout changes quickly translated into calmer stock, smoother processing days and a system that worked with the goats rather than against them.”

» Goats may be a recent addition to the third-generation Stewart family operation, but Craig and Jo's affection for the animals and passion for the industry has quickly become central to life at 'Inglewood'. Image: Clancy Paine

“At the time, we were heavily focused on cropping and our beef business,” Jo said.

“And standing there in the shop, I thought, ‘someone’s making money here – and it’s not us.’ It made me want to seriously look at developing a branded beef product.”

However, when the pair later sat down with a business advisor to explore the idea, he asked a simple question that changed everything: “What about your goats?”

Curious about whether there was a genuine domestic appetite for farmed goatmeat, the Stewarts commissioned a feasibility study exploring who eats goatmeat, how often and in what contexts.

They learned that goat is the most widely consumed red meat globally, with strong culinary traditions across multiple cultures – yet high quality, farmed goatmeat, particularly Boer, remained scarce in Australia.

With more than 90% of the goatmeat produced in Australia from rangeland goats (sometimes known as wild or feral goats) and the majority of that exported, the Stewarts realised they had a product with potential.

“We ate goatmeat for the first time in 2010,” Jo said.

“We tried rangeland, then Boer – and we knew we had a winner.”

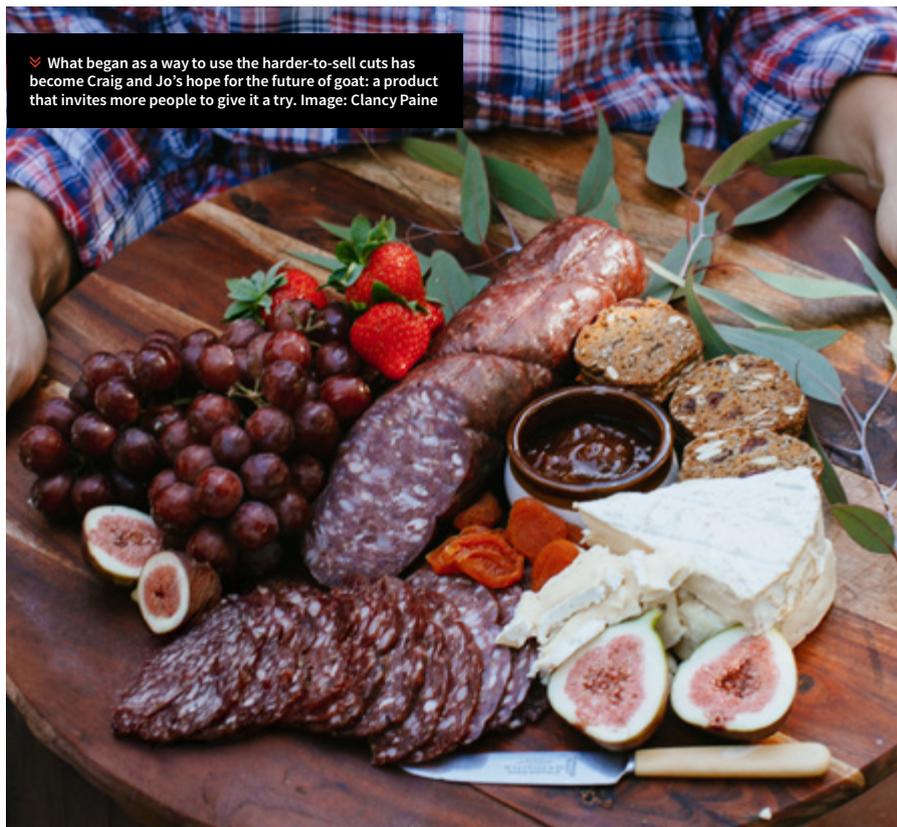
That same year, Jo took part in MLA’s last Paddock to Plate CoMarketing initiative before getting involved with MLA’s Product and Packaging Innovation program. It set her on the path to becoming – as one consumer dubbed her – The Gourmet Goat Lady.

Changing tunes on-farm

While Jo took the lead in exploring markets, recipes and product opportunities, Craig quietly reshaped the production system behind the scenes. He has curated a purpose-built on-farm operation grounded in high animal welfare standards and a data-driven breeding program.

From the beginning, Craig recognised that while the fundamentals of good stockmanship carried over from their cattle operation, a change in execution was required.

After spending time observing the behaviours of their herd, his first point of action was to



What began as a way to use the harder-to-sell cuts has become Craig and Jo’s hope for the future of goat: a product that invites more people to give it a try. Image: Clancy Paine

make practical adjustments to their infrastructure. This included:

- upgrading fencing
- installing covered yards
- building wider laneways to improve visibility and reduce stress.

“Those small layout changes quickly translated into calmer stock, smoother processing days and a system that worked with the goats rather than against them,” Craig said.

However, despite the improvements, Craig soon noticed persistent issues affecting kid survivability.

“Pretty quickly, I picked up on issues relating to poor mothering, deformed teats and problem hooves,” he said.

To combat this, Craig turned to insights from sheep producers and began tightening his selection criteria.

“I learned that teat traits are highly heritable through the sire line, so a buck with poor teat structure will often pass those defects to his daughters – which can lead to mismothering, feeding issues and higher kid losses later down the line.

“I also learned that our does were probably a bit too big,” he said.

“We originally ran 100kg does, but we used data collected via eID tags to inform reproductive decisions and now have our does averaging 75kg.”

With an improved production and herd survivability, Craig said a sequential result has been improved eating quality of their goatmeat – something he feels is a great return on investment.

Think Italian

As the Stewarts’ herd grew and demand for their fresh cuts of goatmeat increased, feedback from their butchers and food wholesalers made Jo increasingly aware that some parts of the carcass simply didn’t sell as quickly as others.

“They informed us legs and shoulders were easy to sell, but racks were surprisingly difficult despite being such a prized cut in lambs – it was clear this model wasn’t working for us,” she said.

“Goatmeat is an incredibly hard sell to those who are unfamiliar with it. I kept thinking: ‘there has to be a way to use more of the carcass in a way people want to try’. That’s when salami came up.”

The idea first surfaced after years of watching pork-based salami dominate deli cabinets.

“If pork could carry spices, ferment beautifully and hold its structure, why couldn’t goatmeat? Especially farmed Boer goat, which had the right texture, tenderness and subtle fat profile.”



The Stewarts’ farmed Boer goatmeat has the right texture, tenderness and subtle fat profile for salami.

continued from previous page

Investing in infrastructure has provided a great return on investment for the Stewarts, improving herd flow, welfare and on-farm efficiency. Image: Clancy Paine Photography



“We’d not only created a product that improved carcass utilisation, but also one that highlighted the quality of goatmeat and opened salami up to an entirely new market of people who don’t consume pork.”

What started as a curiosity quickly turned into a serious project and Jo began calling smallgoods makers to ask a simple question – would they consider making a pure goat salami?

Most were sceptical as traditional salami relies heavily on pork fat, and goatmeat – especially in Australia – wasn’t commonly explored in fermented products.

Eventually, she found a willing partner: Papandrea Fine Foods, a specialist salami manufacturer open to experimenting.

Together, with the support of MLA, they mapped out what a 100% goat product would require – from adjusting fat ratios to meeting strict safety and fermentation parameters.

“Because no protocol existed for goat-based uncooked, fermented smallgoods in NSW at the time, the product needed to pass a series of additional checks and approvals,” Jo said.

“This included providing farmed goat assurances, batch testing and detailed validation through the NSW Food Authority. It was a significant undertaking – but one that paid off.

“When we finally held that first batch in our hands, it was a pinch yourself moment.

“It was mild, clean, had great texture and didn’t need a scrap of pork – a gamechanger.”

The first commercial batch sold out almost instantly. Then came the awards season – and the salami took out both a gold medal and best-in-class at the 2025 Melbourne Royal Australian Food Awards, beating traditional pork salamis on their home turf.

“Chefs who tasted it were surprised by its delicate, almost sweet profile and consumers from communities seeking pork-free options immediately recognised its value,” Jo said.

“We’d not only created a product that improved carcass utilisation, but also one that highlighted the quality of goatmeat and opened salami up to an entirely new market of people who don’t consume pork.”

New opportunities

In 2025, Jo and Craig said goodbye to their 400ha block, Buena Vista, as they prepared for semi-retirement at Inglewood. Their downsizing has included farewelling 400 does, 300ha of cropping and some of their beef herd.

But, with a proven 100% goat recipe that appeals to new consumer segments, retirement is not on the cards just yet for Craig and Jo. They’re now looking beyond the

Australian border at countries where pork-free products are in demand.

“Craig is looking to further improve our herd quality with the use of estimated breeding values for buck selection and I’m looking at ways to improve our products’ reach,” Jo said.

“But as things progress, what I’d really love is to see goatmeat recognised for what it is – a delicious, high quality protein we can all enjoy.” ■

» Turn to page 44 to learn about global opportunities for goatmeat.

TOOLBOX

- Find out where you can buy The Gourmet Goat Lady’s 100% goat salami: thegourmetgoatlady.com.au
- The Stewarts showcased their goatmeat salami at MLA Updates 2025: updates.mla.com.au
- Learn more about MLA’s Product and Packaging Innovation Program: mla.com.au/innovation



Jo Stewart thegourmetgoatlady@gmail.com John Marten jmarten@mla.com.au

Setting weaners up for lifetime performance

For northern producers, weaning is one of the most influential management points in the production cycle.

When it's well planned and well managed, it sets calves up to be healthier, calmer and more productive for life. But when it isn't, the impacts can be long-lasting, affecting growth, health, temperament and ultimately profitability.

MLA's updated *Weaner management in northern beef herds* manual is designed to support northern producers in lifting performance through best practice weaning.

More than the weaner

The implications of weaning extend well beyond the calf.

Decisions made at this stage influence the cow's recovery and body condition, which are essential for her ability to successfully rear another calf and conceive again in the next season.

Weaning management also affects labour requirements and the overall efficiency of the production system, particularly in extensive northern operations.

According to Ainsley Smith, MLA's Project Manager – Beef Productivity, weaning represents a significant opportunity to lock in productivity gains that compound across the animal's lifetime.

"The period immediately after separation is when calves are most vulnerable to stress, disease and nutritional setbacks, but it's also when good management delivers the greatest returns," Ainsley said.

On the right track

Ainsley said successful weaning starts well ahead of separation, with decisions around cow body condition, feed availability, fencing, water access,

labour and markets all playing a role.

"The end of the wet season is a critical window for many northern producers, with the opportunity to assess feed availability and plan for the year ahead. Those who take a proactive approach can avoid reactive decision making and instead implement a structured weaning program suited to their environment, infrastructure and target markets."

Best practice weaning supports a smooth transition to a forage-based diet while maintaining growth and supporting the cow and calf for future success.

Providing good quality hay and clean water from day one and gradually introducing pellets or concentrates helps calves learn to use troughs and settle more quickly in the yard environment.

Over time, this contributes to heavier weaners, improved survival rates and better performance through backgrounding, finishing and reproduction.

Healthier weaners

MLA's weaning manual brings together the latest evidence on nutrition, health, handling and infrastructure, with a strong emphasis on preparation before calves enter the yards, including securing gates, ensuring reliable water access and having appropriate feed ready from day one.

Well-planned weaning, pays for life

From preparation and nutrition to health and low-stress handling, MLA's updated *Weaner management in northern beef herds* shows how small improvements at weaning can deliver lasting gains in productivity, welfare and profitability.

Scan or click the QR code to read:



It also lays the foundation for better animal health outcomes.

"Vaccinating calves as soon as possible after separation – once they are settled – and planning timing of routine husbandry procedures helps support the calf's immune function and reduces disease and setbacks during this high-risk period," Ainsley said.

Using low-stress stock handling and taking the time to train calves in the yards helps maintain feed intake, reduce stress and develop calmer, more manageable cattle.

"These early experiences in the yard influence temperament later in life. This has implications for labour efficiency, safety and performance in yards and transport."

Where paddock feed is dry or low in protein, targeted supplementation can play an important role in maintaining growth and reducing setbacks through the post-weaning period.

By addressing these considerations early, producers can improve labour efficiency and ensure cows and calves are well prepared for the next stage of production.

➔ continued next page



continued from previous page

Three top weaning tips

1 Plan weaning early and prepare the system

Use the cow's body condition to guide the timing of weaning. Before calves enter the yards, secure all gates, block access to forcing pens and races and ensure reliable water access. Plan your labour, infrastructure and feed availability to reduce stress on both cattle and people during the weaning period.

2 Focus on settling calves and maintaining intake

Provide clean water and good quality grass hay from day one and introduce pellets or concentrates gradually so calves learn to use troughs. Use low-stress stock handling and take time to train calves in the yards.

3 Manage health, handling and the transition out of the yards

Vaccinate calves as soon as possible after separation (preferably before routine husbandry procedures) and follow veterinary advice for additional vaccinations and boosters. Complete castration, dehorning and branding once calves are settled, using best practice techniques and appropriate pain relief and avoid extreme heat or wet conditions. Before release or transport, ensure calves are well fed, fit to travel, able to find water and not exposed to toxic weeds. Where paddock feed is dry or low in protein, provide targeted supplementation.

Overcoming challenges

The manual also recognises the practical challenges faced in northern systems, including labour constraints, enterprise size, variable seasons and limited infrastructure. It outlines flexible, evidence-based strategies that can be adapted to individual operations while maintaining core principles.

Ainsley said the manual provides producers with evidence-based guidance to support weaning decisions.

"Small improvements at weaning can deliver significant and lasting benefits for productivity, profitability and animal welfare. It's worth planning to get it right." ■

» See next article to read how a WA producer manages weaning.



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✉ A weaner with an Optiweigh unit at 'Hillside'. Image: Tahree Kammann

Don't 'weight' for weaners

Real-time data has shed light on early growth patterns on a vast Pilbara, WA, cattle station.

Located east of Marble Bar, 'Hillside Station' spans 650,000 hectares of red sandy clay, loamy sands, spinifex, buffel grass and perennial river flats.

It's a landscape known for extremes. With temperatures regularly reaching mid-40s and rainfall of about 300–350mm falling almost entirely during the wet season, timing and decision making are crucial.

Weaning focus

Hillside is one holding within Brent Smoothy's Smoothy Cattle Co enterprise. Its role is to allow weaners to move from the Pilbara to Queensland once they reach trucking weight. If they miss that window, they stay through the wet, adding pressure on pasture, increasing feed costs and raising labour needs. Hillside is one of the stations involved in producer-led research through the Pilbara Extension Network, facilitated by the Pilbara Innovation Partnership.

One of Hillside's managerial team, Tahree Kammann, launched the project to explore how hay quality and mineral supplementation influence early growth rates to gain insight into rumen development and transition-to-paddock performance.

Seven mobs of weaners (290 head) joined the trial at 90–145kg (average 128–136kg). They were allocated to one of four treatment groups:

- Super grade Rhodes (high) with Multimin
- Super grade Rhodes without Multimin
- P2 Rhodes (low) with Multimin
- P2 Rhodes without Multimin.

SNAPSHOT



TAHREE KAMMANN (MANAGERIAL TEAM) – 'Hillside Station', Marble Bar, Pilbara, WA



AREA
650,000ha

ENTERPRISE
20,000 Droughtmaster cattle, including 10,000 breeders

PASTURES
Spinifex, buffel grass, perennials

SOILS
Red sandy clay, red loamy sands

RAINFALL
300–350mm

All weaners received Ultravac 5in1 and Milne Early Weaner pellets.

After 7–10 days of yard weaning, mobs grazed in paddocks for 45–60 days, with liveweight recorded using Optiweigh units at induction, on 5 August and 23 August.

Animals sent to Queensland early were excluded from the data to ensure consistent comparisons.

Importance of feed quality

The most consistent finding across all mobs was that feed quality – not mineral status – drove sustained performance.

High quality Rhodes hay supported more reliable average daily gains (ADGs) both in yards and after weaners transitioned to paddock grazing.

In contrast, P2 Rhodes hay delivered decent gains during yard weaning but struggled to maintain momentum in paddock conditions.

This showed that early rumen development and feed digestibility were more influential than single-dose mineral supplementation.

Mineral supplements showed occasional short-term benefits but did not produce a strong or consistent effect across treatment groups. The evidence suggested that mineral availability was not the main limiting factor in this environment; feed quality and rumen maturity were.

Ag-tech shapes decisions

Sapien data-management technology in the yards and Optiweigh real-time weighing in the paddock changed the way decisions were made at Hillside Station.

Instead of relying on visual estimates or post-muster weigh-ins, the Optiweigh units provided live insight into weight stability, gains or declines.

This enabled Tahree to identify which animals were ready to truck, which were stalling and when intervention might be needed. It helped prevent minor losses from turning into significant declines.

The data also revealed a clear behavioural difference between mature and less-mature weaners.

Heavier, more rumen-developed animals (130kg+) consistently achieved stronger, more reliable ADGs, especially on high quality hay without Multimin. Some of these animals recorded paddock gains of up to 1.52kg/day.

Conversely, lighter, less rumen-developed weaners showed more volatile weight trends. Some gained modestly, some stalled and others lost weight. This indicated that rumen maturity was a better predictor of long-term growth potential than starting weight.

Lessons learned

Tahree said one of the key operational lessons from the project was that maintaining strict consistency in treatment management was essential.

“Correct drafting, accurate pen allocation and ensuring uninterrupted access to hay, pellets and water made the data more meaningful,” she said.

“The importance of timing was reinforced – running a trial between mustering and trucking windows requires careful planning, adaptability and clear non-negotiables.”

Informing the future

While this trial wasn't designed to generate financial return on investment data, its value lies in building knowledge to better inform decision making next season and scientific refinement in the seasons ahead.

It confirmed that not all weaners respond equally, identified that rumen readiness is the key driver of performance and that hay quality drives sustained weight gain during the transition from yards to paddock.

Looking forward, Hillside's managerial team plans to expand on this initial phase.



Priorities include tracking how hay treatment affects longer-term weaner performance once they arrive in Queensland, exploring ways to better support lighter weaners in rumen development and evaluating targeted supplements like B12.

The Optiweigh unit and data collection will continue to be utilised across the entire operation.

“My goal wasn't to chase perfect results – it was to understand what drives performance here, in our environment, with our cattle,” Tahree said.

“Now we've got a starting point we can build on scientifically over the coming years.

“In 2026, we'll continue trialling different weaning protocols, collecting data and exploring rumen development to lift ADGs, so we can keep making the best, evidence-based decisions for our weaners.”

This trial shows how producer curiosity, backed by real-time insights and practical tools, can lead to improvements in genetics, nutrition and management. Knowledge fosters better decisions – and at Hillside, those decisions are becoming clearer. ■

Producers leading change

An 18-month pilot in the Pilbara, WA, is proving what's possible when producers lead the way in research and development.

The Pilbara Extension Network (PEN), delivered through the Pilbara Innovation Partnership (PIP), supports seven pastoral stations to design, deliver and evaluate projects that matter to their business.

Each station nominates a project lead who shapes a project around a challenge specific to their operation, which can generate insights to benefit the northern beef

industry in the long-term. Topics span grazing strategies, genetics, land rehabilitation, workforce development and data use.

The collaboration between PIP, funding partners WA Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, MLA, Rio Tinto, and producers ensures investment flows into locally identified priorities, aligning people, skills and leadership with improved landscape conditions and long-term productive capacity.

Hillside Station is one of the businesses involved in the initiative.



▲ Pilbara producer Tahree Kammann.
Image: Paul Bell – Feral Films



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Practical resources for Merino ewe survival

Findings from an Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) and MLA co-funded project will underpin the development of best practice management resources to help wool growers optimise ewe survival before, during and after lambing.

Known as the periparturient period, this is a vulnerable time for ewes and their lambs. The project focused on the prevalence and causes of Merino ewe periparturient mortality and trialled practical intervention strategies to determine their impact on ewe survival.

Understanding ewe survival

As Merino ewes make up about two-thirds of Australia's breeding ewe flock, it's critical to optimise their health and survival to improve overall productivity and wellbeing.

A national online survey conducted with 160 Merino producers across WA, SA, Victoria and NSW provided valuable information around rates of ewe mortality across a 12-month breeding cycle.

Most producer respondents were scanning and managing ewes according to litter size and reported ewe mortality rates during lambing for self-replacing Merino flocks of 1.95% which were below the industry average (2–10%).

A team of researchers, veterinarians and consultants from Pinion Advisory worked closely with a group of 14 participating Merino producers in key Australian wool-producing regions to test the practical intervention strategies. AWI General Manager – Research, Bridget Peachey, said this will inform the development of resources to help producers boost ewe and lamb survival.

“We know that ewe losses tend to occur mainly during and around lambing, so this project aims to trial and develop cost-effective and practical intervention strategies to increase ewe survival rates,” Bridget said.

“Advice on best practice will be developed and made widely available for adoption by Merino sheep and wool producers.”

“We know that ewe losses tend to occur mainly during and around lambing, so this project aims to trial and develop cost-effective and practical intervention strategies to increase ewe survival rates.”

Top causes of ewe mortality

Producer-reported data and veterinary investigations were used to determine the pattern of periparturient mortality across the farms as per the producers' regular management practices.

All the producers kept a farm diary to document ewe mortalities over the lambing season, including reporting cause of death if known. Veterinarians visited host farms to conduct autopsies on deceased ewes to determine the cause of death at key stages of the lambing season.

Across all participating regions, the top three causes of ewe mortality in the study were:

- dystocia (a prolonged or difficult birth)
- hypocalcaemia (low levels of calcium in the blood)
- metritis-related septicaemia (an acute inflammation of the uterus that occurs within 1–10 days after giving birth).

These were either sole or contributing causes of death. The frequency with which different causes were diagnosed varied across the seven participating regions. Regionally-important causes of mortality included pregnancy toxemia, vaginal prolapse and ruminal acidosis.

Intervention strategies

Of the 42 Merino businesses that participated in the first phase of the project, 14 businesses trialled an intervention strategy during the 2025 lambing season while being guided by a project veterinarian, who conducted post-mortems of any mortalities.

Intervention strategies during the project included:

- **Calcium supplementation:** Given to ewes during the periparturient period.



✔ Veterinarian, Elsa Glanville. Image: Elsa Glanville

- **Body condition scoring and weight of ewes prior to lambing:** Lighter ewes were drafted out to allow differential management through feeding in a containment feeding system.
- **Body condition scoring of ewes at joining, scanning and weaning:** Ewes were drafted into groups to allow for differential feeding to reach target condition at lambing.
- **Vitamin E supplementation:** Ewes received supplement in either a containment feeding system or while being grainfed on dry pasture in the lead-up to and during lambing. This was used in conjunction with body condition score monitoring.
- **Vitamin ADE supplementation:** Ewes received a commercial injectable supplement one month prior to lambing.

The project also quantified the economic impacts of Merino ewe mortality and intervention strategies at farm and industry levels to help drive industry adoption of best practice management.

Veterinarian insights into ewe mortality

Elsa Glanville was one of five core veterinarians guiding participating producers through their involvement in the project.

Elsa, who is based in the Central Tablelands of NSW, has also been involved in the design, collation and interpretation of results across the project.

She said seeing producers' enthusiasm to understand what's going on in ewes over lambing, the pattern of ewe mortality across their flock and helping design targeted intervention strategies has been a highlight.

"Marked differences in the pattern of ewe mortality between regions highlight how important cross-regional projects are to informing practical, relevant recommendations," Elsa said.

"Some of our Central NSW producers commented that they're unsure how applicable management recommendations based on research from other regions are to their farms.

"They were excited about being involved in this project and took great care in documenting observations over lambing."

Elsa said producer-reported causes of death, as well as veterinarian post-mortems, revealed differences in ewe mortality in her region compared to others, emphasising the importance of incorporating different production regions into the project.

She said another take-home message from this research was the importance of investigating rather than assuming causes of death.

"Across the project, around 60% of dystocia cases had no external evidence of birthing difficulties. If we hadn't opened those ewes up, we wouldn't have made a diagnosis of dystocia.

"Equally, cases of metabolic disease like hypocalcaemia show little on post-mortem and require lab samples for confirmation."

Her advice for producers is, where possible, to get a vet or someone trained in conducting post-mortems out to help figure out what's going on.

"Then you can tailor a response that's appropriate to the challenge. This is what we've done with our intervention strategies, especially on one farm with a specific disease challenge, and it's been a really rewarding process," Elsa said.

Setting up flocks for success

Jillian Kelly was another of the project's veterinarians who guided producer

participants during their on-farm implementation of the various project interventions. She was pleased the project confirmed that if producers use the right management strategies, they will set their flocks up for success.

"It's great to have northern NSW included in this sort of science. The producers have been really keen to be involved to learn more about what really happens on their farm during lambing," Jillian said.

"I'm excited that the project has highlighted that good ewe survival is possible under our extensive management conditions and that the main causes of death such as hypocalcaemia and dystocia have practical strategies such as calcium supplementation and body condition scoring that can be undertaken on-farm to manage them.

"This gives us more impetus to drive best practice ewe management for improved outcomes." ■

» *Turn the page to meet two producers involved in this project, to see how they are improving ewe survival rates.*

This article was adapted with permission from the original article by Richard Smith that appeared in the September 2025 edition of AWI's *Beyond the bale* (page 10–11): [wool.com/beyond-the-bale](https://www.wool.com/beyond-the-bale)



📍 An Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) and MLA project focused on optimising ewe and lamb survival before, during and after lambing. Image: AWI

Value of vitamins for ewe survival

Providing Merino ewes with essential vitamins supported survival rates for Central NSW sheep producer, Gabby Kelly.

Gabby, along with her family (including her parents Stuart and Melanie, uncle Andrew and children, sister Claudia and grandparents Cliff and Robynne), were host producers in an Australian Wool Innovation and MLA co-funded project focused on practical management to reduce ewe mortality.

The project (see previous page) investigated causes of ewe mortality and various practical intervention strategies and their impact on ewe survival before, during and after lambing.

Take your vitamins

The causes of ewe mortality reported in phase 1 of the project (2024) informed the selection of the vitamin ADE injection trial for the 2025 lambing cycle on the Kellys' farm.

Guided by veterinarian Elsa Glanville, Gabby recorded on-farm data around the impact of an intervention which saw half of their 1,000 two-year-old maiden ewes with single pregnancies receive a vitamin ADE injection a month prior to lambing (the 'treatment group').

The other 500 were placed in the 'control group' and were managed according to their usual on-farm strategies, including classing and feeding ewes based on their body condition, weight and single or twin pregnancy status.

Elsa and Gabby wanted to know if the injection would help reduce vaginal prolapse rates – which, along with dystocia, is a big issue in the Kellys' region – and the ewe and lamb mortality associated with it.

"Most commonly, ewes prolapse after lambing – we don't know what causes it

but if we can reduce the risk of prolapse, it will have a positive impact on our survival rates," Elsa said.

Typically, vaginal prolapse occurs prior to lambing and uterine prolapse after lambing. However, in phase 1 of the project, on farms across the Central Tablelands, ewes experienced vaginal prolapse both before and after lambing.

Pinpointing the risk factors for vaginal prolapse can be difficult and may be multifactorial. The trial on the Kellys' farm was based on the results of a small trial in New Zealand, which showed a significant reduction in the incidence of prolapse in ewes treated with commercial vitamin ADE prior to lambing.

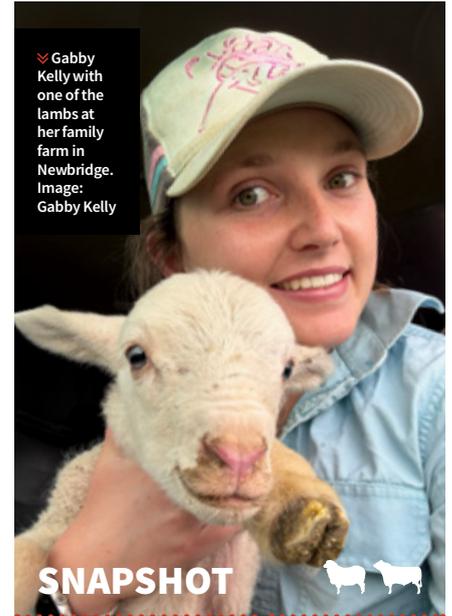
Following the 1mL vitamin injection, preliminary results suggest Gabby recorded fewer prolapses in the treatment group that received the vitamin injection than in the control group.

Additionally, preliminary results suggested ewe mortality during lambing was lower in the treated ewes than in the control ewes.

However, Gabby said prolapse numbers were significantly lower than usual. Anecdotally, this was a trend observed across other Central Tablelands farms with spring lambing Merino ewes in 2025.

Overall, lamb survival rate to marking was 82%, up 5% on the previous year's maiden ewes, with Gabby acknowledging this could also have been due to good preparation and the good season they had during their 2025 lambing cycle.

"We had perfect weather for lambing, they were ideal conditions," Gabby said.



SNAPSHOT

KELLY FAMILY –
Newbridge and Caloola, NSW



AREA
2,225ha

ENTERPRISE
22,000 Merino sheep, 600 Hereford cattle

PASTURES
Variable

SOILS
Loam

RAINFALL
662mm

Good return on investment

A comprehensive cost-benefit analysis is still being conducted, however the return on investment of the vitamin injection appears solid.

"Most commonly, ewes prolapse after lambing – we don't know what causes it but if we can reduce the risk of prolapse, it will have a positive impact on our survival rates."

▲ Ewes and lambs at the Kelly family's farm are managed carefully to achieve optimum survival rates. Image: Gabby Kelly

“It’s around one dollar a head, so \$500 to give the treatment group the injection – so if we gain four extra lambs from implementing the vitamin injection, it’s covered the cost of it,” Gabby said.

Careful management

Throughout the lambing season, Gabby checked the ewes every morning and helped pull lambs if they were stuck.

“There weren’t many lambs stuck – with maidens they are more likely to have dystocia as their bodies still need to adjust to birthing, but looking at all the data sheets I might have only pulled three lambs that didn’t make it, but three or four that I helped did survive,” she said.

Ewes are put in paddocks with grass high enough to provide ample feed and shelter for lambing.

Ag-tech fine-tunes management

With the help of AgriWebb, Gabby splits up groups of 250 ewes according to nutritional requirements into 25ha paddocks.

“AgriWebb is so helpful – you can put in roughly how much feed is in each paddock and it will tell you when to take the sheep out. You can record drenching and even the serial number of the drench.”

Following lambing, Gabby supplementary feeds ewes if needed.

“This keeps them in good condition and adjusts the microbiome in the lamb’s gut, as well as gets them used to the big red trailer which means feed,” she said.

Frequent worm tests are undertaken to ensure they catch any ewes before they go downhill. Keeping them in good health is a top priority.

Gabby has finished her gap year back on the family farm and she’s looking forward to completing her Certificate III in Agriculture ahead of studying to be a large-animal veterinarian. ■

Well-nourished ewes fit for lambing

N SW wool producer Jock Fisher is seeing the impact on survival in his 4,000 Merino ewe flock from a strategic supplementation program.

Jock’s Gulargambone property, ‘Athlone’, hosted an Australian Wool Innovation and MLA co-funded project (see page 12) investigating Merino ewe mortality before, during and after lambing.

Under the guidance of veterinarian Jillian Kelly, he implemented a calcium supplementation intervention to determine impact on survival rates.

Strategic supplementation

Jock’s astute management of his flock and a string of good seasons have resulted in positive ewe and lamb survival rates without the need for calcium supplementation.

During a three-year drought, however, Jock needed to supplement ewes with calcium to prevent hypocalcaemia (low levels of calcium in the blood). Along with dystocia (a prolonged or difficult birth) and metritis-related septicaemia (an acute inflammation of the uterus following birth), hypocalcaemia is one of the leading causes of ewe mortality in the region.

As part of the project’s trial of a range of practical interventions to determine their impact on ewe survival, Jock gave his ewes a calcium supplement over the 2025 lambing season.

Jillian suggested changing up his usual ratio from one bag of salt to three bags of lime, to one bag of salt to one bag of lime.

Ewes received the supplement over 12 weeks, from joining, to six weeks after lambing.

Jock fed out the supplement in cut-in-half drench containers, positioned near water points.

“I filled them weekly and they still weren’t empty after a week. They weren’t eating that much of it – over the whole period I only found the containers empty once or twice,” Jock said.

“But during the drought we had a few years ago, they ate a lot more of it.”

Following the trial, ewe and lamb survival rates were positive – he only lost two of 1,190 twin-bearing ewes. The previous year’s survival rates were similarly good, despite ewes not receiving the calcium supplement.

“I think if we did the intervention for five years we would see a bigger difference – because we’ve had

SNAPSHOT



JOCK FISHER – ‘Athlone’,
Gulargambone, NSW



AREA
5,665ha

ENTERPRISE
4,000 Merino ewes and 4,000 lambs (ewe lambs classed, wethers sold as prime lambs)

PASTURES
Summer grasses, native grasses, medics and clover

SOILS
Heavier black country, red and light sandy country

RAINFALL
450mm

a good few seasons, the ewes’ calcium levels have been pretty good anyway,” Jock said.

Careful management

As part of his usual on-farm management, Jock visually condition scores ewes pre-joining and separates those needing additional feed until they reach their target condition.

“We take out the really light ones – in our 2025 season there were only 10 out of 4,000 we had to remove and feed up,” Jock said.

Jock uses containment feeding when required, using trail feeding to start with but moving to containment feeding if the season is particularly bad.

“If we look at the ewes and they’re not doing well, we’ll start feeding them with barley and lupins, but we haven’t needed to do that since 2019,” Jock said.

Jock supplements his ewes with vitamin E or vitamin ADE injections every year pre-lambing to ensure they are in the best possible condition.

He rotates paddocks and reserves particular paddocks for joining and lambing. Lambing paddocks typically have trees, shelter, easy access to water and ample feed available. ■

Rain ready: unlocking soil potential at Farnham Plains

Three key production challenges face 'Farnham Plains Station' in Queensland's mulga region: hard-setting clay soils, episodic rain and long feed gaps.

Lauren Beresford, fifth-generation grazier and a recipient of the 2024 Lachlan Hughes Foundation scholarship, used these challenges as the inspiration behind her claypan restoration project. The project later earned Lauren the Foundation's 2024 Tree of Life Award.

After returning home to the family property five years ago, Lauren set about examining how she could use regenerative practices in her region's semi-arid country, where clay soils have minimal topsoil, poor infiltration and shed water quickly.

She landed on a novel, cost-effective way to transform an area of previously unproductive claypan on her property by using her own cattle.

Regenerating the claypan

Lauren's innovative approach saw her use the resources she had on-property to make an area of claypan adjacent to the main cattle yards and stables more productive.

"The area my project focused on had poor physical, chemical and biological soil health, with low microbial activity and low available nutrients," Lauren said.

Importantly, her solution avoided the need to bring expensive inputs over long distances onto the property.

Instead, she decided to temporarily hold her weaners in a fenced-off area at the highest point of the claypan, so their manure, urine and hooves could nourish and break up its unproductive soils.

Some minor land contouring reduced run-off, allowing water to soak deeper into the soil – which after a period of rest began to spring back to life.

"I decided to yard the weaners overnight in an area of claypan near the house during our annual weaning – I fenced it off and gave them access to hay.

"During the day they were tailed out on good quality, diverse pastures.

"After nine nights they had trampled the soil surface and broken up the crust, as well as enriched the soil with dung and urine," Lauren said.

Rest and recovery

After the weaners were moved on, Lauren left the area fenced-off to rest, and with the help of leftover hay that she had spread out, mulch started to form.

"I left the area of claypan to do its thing. Our reward has been new plant growth and insights into how we can make further areas of claypan on the property more productive," Lauren said.

Lauren planted saltbush seedlings on the lower side of one-to-two feet high earth contour banks that she had formed using a grader. Despite the hard toffee rock beneath the shallow claypan preventing her from building them up any higher, they did a good job in stopping water run-off and increasing infiltration. The plantings helped stabilise the contour banks, caught dust and contributed to ground cover, which further improved water infiltration.

Some well-timed rainfall meant vegetation began to cover the freshly churned and nourished soil. While not yet ready to support increased carrying capacity, Lauren sees the long-term potential in regenerating further areas of land with minimal expense.

Resilient to floods

After severe floods in March 2025, the project area of revegetated claypan fared far better than other unrestored areas of claypan on the property, with a variety of pioneer and low succession plants, particularly winter annuals, emerging.



Lauren Beresford and Millie at 'Farnham Plains Station', Eulo, Queensland.

SNAPSHOT

LAUREN BERESFORD –
'Farnham Plains Station',
Eulo, Queensland

AREA
30,100ha

ENTERPRISE
Crossbred beef cattle breeding enterprise
with Santa Gertrudis, Angus and Brahman

PASTURES
Native pasture and mulga

SOILS
Softer alluvial country types,
gidgee, mixed mulga lands

RAINFALL
300mm

"I left the area of claypan to do its thing – our reward has been new plant growth and insights into how we can make further areas of claypan on the property more productive."



"The contouring and ground cover reduced erosion and the plants kept growing – it's a way we can insure ourselves against future extreme weather events," Lauren said.

Lauren hopes by demonstrating how producers can reinvigorate similar types of land easily and cost-effectively, greater productivity will be enjoyed in the region.

"I wanted the project to be simple and easily replicated by others," she said. ■

Four steps to more fertile land



✔ Weaners were contained for nine nights on the project's area of claypan with access to hay.

1

Start small

Choose an easily accessible area close to existing infrastructure.



✔ Weaners nourished and broke up the soil.

2

Piggyback on existing management activities

During weaning, drafting or induction, concentrated cattle numbers can be used to break up and restore unproductive land.



✔ Contour banks effectively trapped flood waters, allowing for increased infiltration.

3

Make the most of available water

Consider land contouring to catch and retain as much water as possible.



✔ A reinvigorated claypan.

4

Rest and recovery

Use fencing to give your target area enough time to regenerate following animal inputs.

✔ Lauren has transformed the claypan into a flourishing area.

TOOLBOX



- 📍 MLA's Grazing land management hub: mla.com.au/grazing
- 📍 Lachlan Hughes Foundation: lachlanhughesfoundation.org.au
- 📍 MLA's disaster recovery resources: mla.com.au/dealing-with-natural-disasters



✉ Lauren Beresford lauren.beresford@gmail.com
✉ Ainsley Smith asmith@mla.com.au

✔ The Clarkes began tagging ewe lambs with eID in 2021.

Simplicity powers eID success

Mid North SA sheep producers, the Clarke family, have scaled up their use of electronic identification (eID) from a simple start to make sure it met their key needs first – such as flexibility in managing sheep around their cropping program.

The Clarkes run a self-replacing Merino flock on five properties, spread across approximately 50km between Wirrabara and Hammond.

Ian and Susan Clarke have been farm managers since 1988, with their son David coming into the business full-time in 2013.

Their cropping program accounts for more than three-quarters of their farm income, with the remainder from the sheep.

Flock management

Their sheep are managed to fit around the cropping program. The flock is run as two big mobs for most of the year, then managed as smaller mobs for lambing.

Mob size is reduced to fewer than 100 for ewes bearing multiples, while single-bearing ewes are generally run as a single mob of up to 300.

Ewes are typically mated in March and April and are pregnancy scanned 80–100 days post-joining.

The Clarkes began tagging ewe lambs with eID in 2021, after attending an information day organised by the Upper North Farming Systems group.

They approached eID adoption from the perspective of starting simply, then slowly adding improvement goals and associated data collection over a few years.

Why eID was introduced

The Clarkes had a list of improvements which have been supported by data from eID. These included:

- higher scanning and lambing rates (in particular, getting dries to below 5%)

- reliable individual animal identification, to enable boxing/splitting mobs at different times
- reliable tracking of individual ewes' breeding performance across multiple years
- fast growth rates in lambs
- best use of available feed.

Although they first applied eID tags to ewe lambs in 2021, basic data collection didn't commence until 2022, when the Clarkes purchased a stick reader and began pregnancy scanning ewes.

After they purchased weighing equipment in 2023, they began collecting weight data for ewes, followed by wether lambs in late 2024.

They collect data on:

- pregnancy scanning results (multiple/single/dry)
- birth status of ewe lambs (twin/single)
- ewe lamb weights at weaning and opportunistically at other times
- occurrence of flystrike and high dag scores
- paddock of birth.

eID equipment

Data is collected using a Gallagher HR4 stick reader and a set of wireless load bars installed on a Combi Clamp handler.

Data is sent via Bluetooth to a Gallagher animal performance application installed on a smart phone. The app has similar



✔ Mid North SA sheep producer David Clarke at 'Clarisglen'.

SNAPSHOT

DAVID, CHLOE, IAN AND SUSAN CLARKE – 'Clarisglen', Wirrabara and Hammond, SA

AREA
1,600ha

ENTERPRISE
Self-replacing Merino flock based on 500–650 ewes and a cropping program of 1,100ha with cereals, legumes and canola

PASTURES
Sown barley and vetch

SOILS
Variable – heavy red clays to loams

RAINFALL
290–450mm

Lambing percentage has improved by about 20% over the past five years. This has been achieved by removing unproductive dry ewes, as well as retaining and breeding from twin-bearing ewes for longer.

functionality to a scale indicator without the upfront cost, however there is a monthly subscription fee for the app.

The equipment they purchased was chosen based on:

- the desired functionality
- mid-range price
- simple set-up that gets the job done
- lower upfront cost.

David recommends assessing different brands before purchasing equipment.

“It’s worthwhile considering the merits of all the components of the system you intend to use as it can be difficult to integrate components from different brands,” he said.

Data collection tips

Data collection outside of pregnancy scanning is arranged around other activities. Birth status of ewes is collected at marking, by reading eID tags of singles and twins in their separate mobs. Weight data is collected at weaning and shearing.

Collecting data has not created any additional labour requirements. Data is transferred into excel spreadsheets on a ‘year of birth’ basis, creating sets of data for different age groups for ewes.

Data in the form of drafting lists is also stored and retrieved from the Gallagher app in the yards as needed, to guide manual drafting.

David said his experience of initially setting up and using the eID equipment was pretty good and he received good after-sales support from his local reseller.

A major limitation with collecting weight data has been the distances between the Clarkes’ grazing properties, as the weigh equipment is fixed at the main yards at the shearing shed.

Easier flock management

eID streamlines livestock management around the demands of their cropping program.

Prior to implementing eID, groups had to be kept separate from scanning through to lambing.

This made livestock management tasks, such as shearing or moving between paddocks, more complicated and time consuming.

Now that they use eID to identify ewes as twin or single bearing at scanning, all ewes can be boxed together into one big mob immediately following scanning for greater ease of management.

They can then be reliably separated three-to-six weeks prior to lambing into twin and single mobs for better lambing outcomes.

Increasing lambing percentage

A key driver for introducing pregnancy scanning in 2019 was to increase lambing percentage.

eID subsequently enabled dry maiden ewes to be easily identified and potentially kept for a further year before being sold if they scan dry a second time, as opposed to older ewes which are sold off following being identified as dry.

Implementing pregnancy scanning also revealed a 40% loss between scanning rate and lambing percentage.

Using eID to simplify the management of ewes based on their pregnancy status is closing this gap.

Twin-bearing ewes are given supplementary feeding where possible, from the time they are separated from singles up until lambs are 10–12 weeks old.

Keeping records of individual pregnancy status has enabled David to build up a lifetime reproductive performance profile for each ewe – which aids keep/cull decisions.

Ewes that have twinned are retained to an older age than singles, while dries (apart from maiden ewes) are immediately removed.

Ewes that have only born singles have a higher culling pressure applied at all age stages.

Lambing percentage has improved by about 20% over the past five years. This has been achieved by removing unproductive dry ewes, as well as retaining and breeding from twin-bearing ewes for longer and managing the nutrition of twin-bearing ewes to improve foetal survival rate.

Monitoring weight gain

David began recording average daily weight gain to provide data to identify poorer performing ewe lambs for earlier removal as lambs rather than hoggets.

Since 2024, all lambs have been eID tagged and monitored for weight gain.

Data collected is used to identify which animals in the Clarkes’ containment yards, especially in difficult dry times, can be pushed to finishing weight quickly and sold, versus those that will be put onto maintenance and finished later in the year when better feed is likely to be available.

David is also using weight data to monitor for the prevalence of oversized animals – which can pose a management issue, such as at shearing.

Using the eID data to make these decisions allows him to allocate feed resources effectively, maximising profit and simplifying management.

He also uses the wand reader whenever sheep are in the yards to identify ewes with high dag scores or which are being treated for flystrike and these go on a list for subsequent culling. This ensures decisions are based on data, not just visual classing or age.

This has particular significance in difficult seasons when efficient management of feed becomes critical for profitability.

Future plans

David has done two rounds of flock profile DNA testing and, based on the results, has begun to apply selection pressure for eye muscle depth and fat to improve stock resilience.

Recording weaning weight and post-weaning weights against birth status may also be undertaken in future to better assess feed conversion efficiency. ■

LESSONS LEARNT

- ✔ Start small and simple. Collect a small amount of data to begin with – don’t swamp yourself.
- ✔ Don’t be afraid to get data management/use advice from a consultant. Value your own time properly to understand the value a consultant can bring. They can complete tasks much more quickly.
- ✔ Always create a backup copy of original data before doing significant changes. Avoid creating self-inflicted, office-based problems.
- ✔ Remember to get the BucketFile that accompanies your eID tags from the manufacturer. Tick that box.

This case study was developed as an initiative of eID Advantage Program from the Government of South Australia, supported by MLA and AWI Extension SA.

Cream of the crop: beef from dairy paves sustainable pathway

Transforming the management of non-replacement dairy calves by creating a viable beef from dairy pathway is the key focus of a recently launched Dairy Australia and MLA initiative – CalfWays.

The CalfWays partnership will drive welfare, environmental and productivity outcomes across the supply chain.

With more than one million dairy calves born each year, the benefits are set to be significant.

Developed by Dairy Australia in collaboration with more than 150 stakeholders, the initiative aims to ensure all dairy-origin calves which are not required for herd maintenance will have a valued market pathway, primarily as beef cattle, by 2035.

Chair of the project's Steering Committee – former CEO of the Australian Meat Industry Council, Patrick Hutchinson – is well placed to lead the initiative with his wealth of experience in agribusiness strategy, sustainability and trade negotiation. He's keen to gain momentum for the development of partnerships and co-investment structures to fund the initiatives outlined in the *CalfWays Sustainable Dairy Calf Management Roadmap to 2035*.

“CalfWays gives both the dairy and red meat sectors a real chance to fix a longstanding challenge by creating a genuine, valued pathway for every calf,” Patrick said.

“What excites me is that this isn't theory, it's practical, commercially-minded work that brings the whole supply chain together.

“If we get this right, we improve welfare, strengthen farm businesses and build a pathway that is sustainable for everyone, from producers through to processors and retailers.”

Creating value

Establishing market chains for male and non-replacement female dairy calves will remove the need for routine on-farm euthanasia or early life slaughter. This is good news for industry-wide productivity, animal welfare and emissions reductions.

To leverage the value creation potential of non-replacement dairy calves, producers need access to the right breeding, rearing and production knowledge and resources.

CalfWays will facilitate industry partnerships to generate market demand and increase awareness of techniques such as the use of sexed semen, genomic testing and strategic breeding aimed to optimise herd composition.

This will ensure that all calves born are better suited to either herd replacement or market needs.

CalfWays presents multiple opportunities for value creation across the supply chain:

- **Dairy farmers:** Non-replacement calves represent a potential revenue stream if they can be integrated into the beef market.
- **Rearers and finishers:** Benefits from increased demand will incentivise the rearing of calves to meet market specifications.
- **Meat processors:** Increased value from more sales of red meat that includes beef from dairy.
- **Dairy processors and retailers:** Value in sustainable calf management from a sustainability and corporate social responsibility perspective.

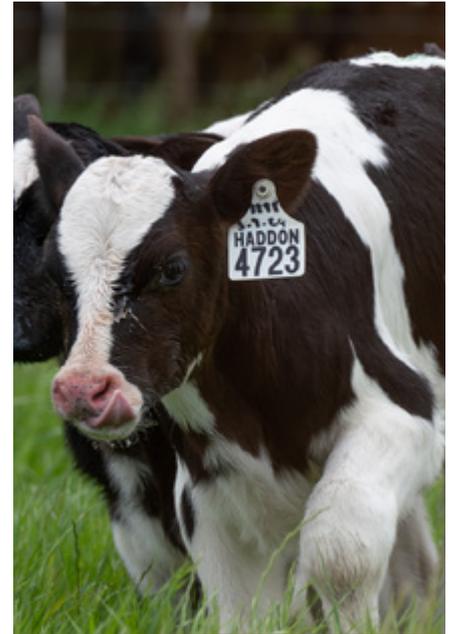
Eating quality

Meat Standards Australia (MSA) consumer sensory trials have shown that dairy beef, when raised with the right nutrition and growth pathways, performs well in terms of tenderness, juiciness and flavour. Well-finished Holstein and Jersey cattle can produce beef of comparable eating quality to traditional beef breeds – a key factor that makes beef from dairy a valuable addition to the beef supply chain.

Lowering emissions

Beef from dairy is well aligned to industry's emissions reductions goals. By integrating dairy calves into productive markets, CalfWays supports opportunities for supply chains to reduce scope three greenhouse gas emissions.

This is because beef from dairy emissions intensities are significantly lower than conventional beef, due to the attribution of dam emissions to both milk and beef. ■



Four steps to grow demand for beef from dairy

The four CalfWays themes are centred around growing demand for beef from dairy and supporting producers from both the dairy and beef industries:

- 
Stakeholder commitment: Sustainable practices for thriving and valued calves
- 
Capability building: Value creation capability for dairy and beef stakeholders
- 
Market connections: Robust opportunities for Australian dairy and beef stakeholders
- 
Fostering partnerships: Stronger dairy and beef industries through collaboration and innovation.

📌 A CalfWays webpage will launch soon – keep an eye on mla.com.au and *The Weekly* e-news for details.



Beef from dairy boosts profitability

For one long-established dairy farming family in Tasmania's Central North, beef from dairy has never been a sideline – it's been part of the business for generations.

The current operators, Marcus and Zuleika (Zed) Crowden, are continuing the system Marcus' father began, using the farm's large land base to run a profitable, strategically managed dairy beef enterprise alongside milk production.

With 700 cows in milk, the business now draws roughly one-third of its income from beef and two-thirds from milk.

Managing non-replacement calves with clear purpose

The Crowdens view non-replacement calves as an opportunity, not a byproduct.

All non-replacement calves are grown out on-farm, finished to high liveweights and processed directly through Greenham.

Steers reach about 650kg liveweight and heifers approximately 600kg.

The herd, built from medium to large Holstein cows crossed equally to Hereford and Angus sires, produces consistent carcass results.

In the last financial year, 698 head were supplied to Greenham at an average carcass weight of 301kg, reflecting strong growth and reliable market alignment.

Calving is split between autumn (producing animals finished at 26–28 months) and spring (stock finished closer to 30 months of age).

The farm operates grain-free, making late autumn and winter finishing more challenging, but strong pasture growth in spring and summer provides compensatory gains.

From Christmas to August, about 40 head are sold each fortnight – roughly two semi-loads per month – which ensures steady cash flow and well-timed destocking.

Beef from dairy blends values and practicality

For Marcus, dairy beef is both tradition and logic.

“We've always done it – with the size of the farm, we either need to grow crops or run beef cattle to utilise the land,” Marcus said.

Strong values underpin the system as well. He opposes bobby calf practices on principle.

“You shouldn't just mate a cow to then just throw away the income that could be generated from the calf. If you can turn that calf into something profitable, why wouldn't you?”

Productivity and emissions insights

The dairy enterprise supplies milk to Cadbury and therefore reports its emissions profile annually. The dairy component consistently sits just below average, which in turn makes the dairy beef operation appear extremely low emissions on paper.

While this currently has no effect on the farm gate price, Marcus believes demand for low-emissions beef will grow and sees long-term potential in this space.

Breeding and management strategies

“The bobby calf issue is a real issue and one I'd like to see real change on – the CalfWays project is a step in the right direction,” Marcus said.

“It's one of the first projects that I can see making a real difference.”

Reproduction is tightly managed to maintain herd replacement levels while supporting beef production. Cows that conceive in the first three weeks to sexed semen produce the 25% of heifers needed annually.

SNAPSHOT



MARCUS AND ZULEIKA CROWDEN – Central North, Tasmania



AREA

1,000ha (with 300ha irrigation)

ENTERPRISE

1,000 dairy (700 milkers, 300 juveniles), 1,300 dairy beef, 200 Angus, fodder, potatoes

PASTURES

Perennial ryegrass – improved pastures

SOILS

Red basalt to heavy black clay

RAINFALL

1,200mm

All remaining cows are joined to Angus or Hereford to produce beef calves. The beef enterprise does not negatively affect milk production – the two operations complement one another, particularly through improved pasture utilisation. ■

» Zuleika (pictured) and Marcus Crowden view non-replacement calves as an opportunity, not a byproduct, of their dairy business. Image: Zuleika Crowden

“The bobby calf issue is a real issue and one I'd like to see real change on – the CalfWays project is a step in the right direction.”



Marcus and Zuleika Crowden maruscrowden@gmail.com David Beatty dbeatty@mla.com.au

Reducing emissions in the rangelands

Against the often-harsh backdrop of Australian rangelands, red meat production can be challenging. According to a new project, such conditions also create difficulties for producers to reduce their enteric methane emissions, although they are not impossible to overcome.

Research has revealed optimal interventions for rangeland producers to reduce their emissions without compromising profit, productivity or biodiversity habitat.

“Reducing enteric methane is a challenge regardless of whether you’re in the rangelands or elsewhere, because enteric methane can account for 70–80% of direct farm emissions,” University of Tasmania Professor Matt Harrison said.

“In the rangelands, it’s difficult because some of the levers you could pull elsewhere are disabled by lower rainfall, lower pasture production and lower capacity to sequester carbon.”

Keeping profit in mind

Throughout the project, the context of 14 farms across Australia have been modelled, considering what intervention would best suit their environment and their business.

“We looked at pathways to reduce emissions, with close attention to the trade-offs and co-benefits such interventions may have on profit, productivity and biodiversity, because even if greenhouse gas emissions could be reduced to net-zero, a producer won’t want to do it if it reduces profit,” Matt said.

The research found that planting anti-methanogenic pastures to manipulate livestock emissions was one of the most beneficial interventions on profit and emissions. In the rangelands, however, the ability to manipulate existing pasture species is limited.

Opportunities to reduce emissions

Matt said while soil carbon sequestration in the rangelands is lower than that in higher rainfall zones, enteric methane emissions per hectare in the rangelands are much lower than those in high-rainfall zones. This is because stocking rates in rangelands are typically much lower.

“The scale of rangelands enterprises offers greater opportunity for carbon sequestration and biodiversity habitat improvement in woody vegetation compared with intensive zones, because land area in the rangelands is more abundant, although potential for carbon sequestration via woody vegetation is very much site-specific,” he said.

With this in mind, Matt said the most effective intervention for rangelands producers revolved around good herd management – with a focus on improving emissions intensity (kilograms of carbon dioxide equivalents per kilogram of liveweight) through improving reproductive performance.

Better breeders reduce emissions intensity

A significant proportion of the emissions per kilogram of liveweight are attributed to maintaining the breeding herd. The more liveweight produced through successful offspring, the more kilograms to attribute emissions too, reducing the emissions intensity.

“If your calf mortality is high because of poor cow nutrition, focusing on improving breeder nutrition to reduce calf mortality will improve productivity and reduce emissions intensity,” Matt said.

“If you can increase the whole enterprise ratio of growing animals to mature animals, that will also improve your emissions intensity by having less cows in the paddock which aren’t growing. Increasing the proportion of growing animals to adults will further reduce whole farm emissions intensity.

“Improving your emissions intensity is really a co-benefit of improved animal management and improved nutrition,” he said.

Fine-tuning carrying capacity

Productivity can be better sustained by optimising – not necessarily increasing – carrying capacity to your environment.

“Try to calibrate your whole-farm stocking rate to the worst conditions you can expect, within and across years. This is the number of animals you can sustainably carry in the worst conditions.”

Matt said, often those conditions are drought.

“Droughts are common in the rangelands. It’s important to plan for them and learn from those producers who are in highly drought-prone regions.”

According to Matt, in good seasonal conditions, lower stock rates can be compensated for by

having fatter animals and better liveweight gain. Lower stocking rates also tend to reduce the need to destock or buy in feed during dry conditions.

“When existing stocking rates are excessive, pastures are often overgrazed, increasing the risk that the most productive and palatable pasture species are lost. This reduces ground cover, increases soil erosion and causes losses of productive pasture species. Together, these factors reduce livestock nutrition to the point where mortality and animal welfare becomes a risk,” Matt said.

“But every environment is different. Optimal stocking rate depends on how long pastures are grazed, soil type and rainfall, which together influence pasture growth and recovery from grazing.”

Every farm is different

Throughout the project, Matt and colleagues have been working with producers across Australia to model the impact of interventions they’re interested in undertaking, including whether it will be environmentally impactful and beneficial to their operation.

For one producer, addressing feral browsers was the answer that unlocked every co-benefit.

“There was an issue with excessive rabbits grazing his pasture, so we modelled the impact of a game-proof fence along a 3km stretch, fencing off his native bushland,” Matt said.

“We found that would improve profit, liveweight gain, pasture growth and soil carbon.

“This improved economic, environmental and agronomic outcomes. That producer has now fenced off the bushland based on these results.

“For some producers, this work is about building an awareness of practices they can implement and what sustainable pathways mean for their operation, whether it’s now or in 10 years.”

It is important to note that impacts of any practice change depend on historical management, climate and context. Because every farm is at a different current state, the relative benefit, or lack thereof, associated with any practice change varies for farm to farm and year to year. ■



Sustaining the rangelands through stocking rate

WA beef producers Ashley and Debbie Dowden may run less than a third of the region's recommended stocking rate, but it's proving to be a more sustainable approach on the 200,000ha they call home.

"We're located in the southern rangelands of WA. It's some of the most challenging agricultural country and we run about 1,000 breeders," Debbie said.

"If we did run the recommended 3,500 animals on our property, the land condition would deteriorate until the property isn't capable of supporting any livestock."

The Dowdens participated in a recent MLA-supported project, where modelling of their property found their stocking rate was, in fact, more sustainable than the traditional approach.

Reducing emissions

The project looked at interventions suitable for reducing emissions in rangelands, without compromising profit and productivity.

"Our land is already marginal, so we understand how incredibly important it is to be environmentally sustainable," Debbie said.

"We're looking at interventions to lower emissions, but unless there's a market for those interventions or a possible return on investment, they're too expensive in a rangelands environment."

Interventions that are common in higher rainfall zones – such as planting trees – are not viable in rangelands. Instead they are focussing on creating an efficient and high quality herd, and regenerating existing native vegetation.

"We're really specific with our heifer selection and culling. That way we run an efficient herd that fetches a premium price," Debbie said.

"We want to make sure every one of our cows has a calf and sell those calves as young bulls or cull heifers, and cull old or

non-productive cows every year to keep the herd as efficient as possible."

Putting figures behind the farm

The Dowdens have always focused on running a sustainable beef operation and Debbie said the modelling undertaken in the project validated the work they've been doing for years. It also provided direction on where to go next.

The data revealed that the Dowdens' emissions intensity (the kilograms of carbon produced per kilogram of liveweight) was -42kg with sequestration, making their beef production carbon negative.

The emissions intensity excluding sequestration was 13.6 kg CO₂e/kg of liveweight.

"We knew we would be carbon negative because we only have 1,000 cattle on 200,000ha, but it's useful to know the figure and have confirmation that what we're doing works," Debbie said.

Data-backed decisions

Going forward, the Dowdens will use the data they received from the project – including ecological condition, net station emissions, habitat condition and biodiversity modelling – as a baseline to introduce natural capital improvements.

"This is the most robust baseline data we've ever had," Debbie said.

"Quite often the southern rangelands are overlooked because their variability and unpredictability mean they're quite difficult to study and model. It's some really important research for the region to move forward sustainably." ■



The **International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP 2026)** celebrates Australia's iconic outback and the people who live there. For further information, including resources, visit iyrp.info

» The low rainfall of rangelands regions makes emissions reductions a unique challenge. Image: Debbie Dowden

Debbie.Dowden@bigpond.com



» WA Southern Rangeland producers Debbie and Ashley Dowden.

SNAPSHOT

DEBBIE AND ASHLEY DOWDEN – East Murchison, WA



AREA

200,000ha

ENTERPRISE

1,000 breeders

PASTURES

Native pastures – mulga forest and saltbush/bluebush flats

SOILS

Red sandy clay/loam, calcrete soil, stony flats

RAINFALL

220mm

TOOLBOX

🔍 Explore MLA's sustainability hub: mla.com.au/sustainability-hub

🔍 Get more beef from your pastures: mbfp.mla.com.au

🔍 Scan or click the QR code to learn about the MLA-supported Rangelands Living Skin project:



🔍 Scan or click the QR code to learn about carbon storage opportunities:



🔍 Rangelands resources: mla.com.au/southern-rangelands

Tasmania's toast for best beef

O riginally known for their ability to produce some of Tasmania's finest whisky and gin, Ross and Mary Mace have added the title of producing the state's best beef to the mix after their recent Meat Standards Australia (MSA) win.

The pair took home the best Larger Non-Grainfed Producer Award for Tasmania in the MSA 2023–25 Excellence in Eating Quality Awards.

Over the two-year period, the Mace family consigned 234 head and had an average MSA Index of 63.41 and compliance of 99%.

Farming on old cattle country

Nestled in the Upper Derwent Valley at Ouse is the historic 'Lawrenny Estate', home to the Mace family's whisky and gin distillery and beef cattle enterprise.

Originally from Queensland, the couple purchased the 80ha homestead block when they moved to Tasmania in 1992. They doubled the property 10 years later when they purchased a neighbouring 80ha block.

According to Ross, beef production on the estate dates back to 1813, when the land was allocated to Lieutenant Edward Lord, who was in the first contingent which sailed to establish the 'Van Diemen's Land' settlement on the Derwent in February 1804.

"Lawrenny Estate originally comprised more than 16,200ha and became renowned for its cattle, sheep and abundant fields of wheat, barley and hops," Ross said.

"It was at the end of World War II when its then owners, the Brock family (who lost their two sons in the war) sold Lawrenny Estate to the Tasmanian Government to be split up into returned soldier settlement blocks."

A strongly connected supply chain

Today, the property grows barley to produce the Maces' single malt whisky and Angus steers.

"We buy in predominantly Angus weaners at a liveweight of 330–350kg," Ross said.

"We then rear them for about 15 months until they reach our desired weight, which is a minimum dressed weight of 380kg and a top of 420kg.

"Our business is very entwined with JBS Swift, who not only processes our cattle, but commissions our cattle buyer who makes our weaner purchases directly from breeders."

Ross's target market is the JBS premium grassfed brand, Little Joe, which has a range of specifications including that cattle must achieve MSA grading and have a marble score of 4+.

Any of their cattle that don't fit the Little Joe brand, go into JBS's Great Southern Pinnacle Grass Fed Beef brand, which also requires MSA grading and a marble score of 2+.

Quality nutrition year round

With an annual average rainfall of 400mm and access to irrigation from the River Derwent, Lawrenny Estate's clover and ryegrass pastures remain green and productive year round – regardless of seasonal conditions.

"When cattle first arrive on the property, we settle them in the yards for 10–14 days, feed them hay and get them used to electric fencing," Ross said.

"We have permanent fences to carry electricity around the farm and temporary electric fences are used to subdivide paddocks, so we can easily move our herd onto fresh pasture every three days."

If they have to feed out in May, the Maces use hay for roughage and during the height of winter they feed high quality silage which is produced on-farm. They also feed hay again in August and September, if necessary.

Using the data

When reviewing carcase grading results, the Maces pay particular attention to eye muscle, fat cover and rump.



» Ross and Mary Mace with their MSA Excellence in Eating Quality Award for best Larger Non-Grainfed Producer.

SNAPSHOT

ROSS AND MARY MACE, 'LAWRENNY ESTATE' –
Ouse, Tasmania

AREA

160ha

ENTERPRISE

150–200 Angus and some Hereford cattle for fattening

PASTURES

Clover and ryegrass

SOILS

Loams and heavy black clay soil

RAINFALL

400mm

"We use the carcase feedback we receive to help make informed decisions that will enable us to keep meeting the required grades for those beef brands we are targeting," Ross said.

"It feels terrific to see it's paid off – more so to say, 'we produce some of Tasmania's best whisky, gin and beef.'" ■



Commitment to quality pays off

For Victorian beef producers Greg and Lynn Walsh, keeping consistency in best practice herd and land management on-farm has been the key to being recognised for their Meat Standards Australia (MSA) results.

Over the 2023–25 MSA reporting period, Greg and Lynn consigned 132 head and had an average MSA Index of 63.48 and compliance of 99%. This earned them the title of Victoria's best Smaller Non-Grainfed MSA Producer in the recent MSA Excellence in Eating Quality awards.

Two decades of data

The couple's property at Yinnar in South Gippsland has been in the family for more than 120 years.

Greg – who is a fourth-generation producer and the third generation to manage their property – and Lynn were early adopters of the MSA program in 2004.

Greg credits their stock agent of 45 years for initially bringing the program to their attention.

“He knows our property and its carrying capacity. He recognised that, as a smaller operation, we had more incentive to focus on quality over quantity,” Greg said.

“MSA could give us benchmarks for quality we could strive for and enable us to guarantee a standard for our consumers.”

Around the same time the Walshes became MSA registered, they made the switch from breeding for the domestic veal market to finishing steers.

They later became accredited with the Greenham NEVER EVER Beef Program and JBS Farm Assurance program.

Today, their stock agent helps the pair source young steers – ideally in the 280–350kg

weight range – from the Gippsland region for backgrounding.

“We prefer Black Angus cattle but have stocked Hereford and Hereford-cross at various times,” Greg said.

“Our cattle are 100% grassfed to a target liveweight of 650–720kg. We track this process by recording weights every time cattle are yarded.

“We consistently review our MSA carcass data to benchmark performance and help inform future buying decisions.”

A focus on wellbeing

Where possible, Greg said they closely adhere to MSA stock management guidelines.

“We've incorporated guidelines heavily into our standard routine,” he said.

“From the moment they arrive (usually late summer/early autumn), cattle are vaccinated, drenched, tagged, weighed and given a B12 selenium supplement due to high risk of deficiency in our region.

“We like to keep a proactive approach to managing the health and wellbeing of our cattle.

“We've been in the area long enough to know what poses risk and we've been in the industry long enough to know the value and importance of well cared for animals.”

A lot of Greg's animal wellbeing practices were inherited from his father, who ran the property as a dairy farm.

SNAPSHOT



GREG AND LYNN WALSH – Yinnar, Victoria



AREA
64ha

ENTERPRISE
100 head of predominately Angus and some Hereford and Hereford-cross cattle for agistment feeding

PASTURES
Non-irrigated ryegrass and clover

SOILS
Loam to light clay loam

RAINFALL
730–770mm

“There's a lot of crossover between the two industries with regards to caring for and educating stock,” he said.

“This includes getting livestock accustomed to people earlier on and prioritising routine when it comes to yarding and paddock procedures.

“We also aim to keep the people who interact with them during husbandry procedures familiar and have modified our stockyards for smoother operations – really doing our best to ensure a low-stress environment.”

Nutrition needs met

Well-planned feedbase management strategies are integral to ensuring good nutritional supply for their stock.

“We consistently review our MSA carcass data to benchmark performance and help inform future buying decisions.”

➤ continued next page

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« Lynn and Greg with their award at the 2023-25 MSA Awards Dinner hosted at the Adelaide Oval in South Australia.

As they run a 100% grassfed operation, Greg and Lynn pay close attention to their pastures and soils.

“Avoiding overstocking is incredibly important to maintaining our feedbase,” Greg said.

“We utilise data collected from soil testing, consult with local fertiliser suppliers (often getting them on-farm) and separate cattle based on weight in order to maintain pasture quality.”

They also produce their own silage and hay to utilise as supplementary feed and ensure any changes to diet are introduced gradually.

“When we’ve made changes to their diet in the past, we’ve done so gradually to keep stress levels down.”

To further ensure adequate feed supply and high quality pastures year round, Greg and Lynn carry out tree planting for shelter belts and recently completed a reinstatement of a bio-diverse corridor on a natural watercourse – which is reducing erosion and providing shelter.

“We are very fortunate to have town water connection to our troughs, but we still need to rely on rainfall for our feedbase,” Greg said.

“The biggest constraint is soil run-off during higher periods of rainfall, which impacts the quality of our pastures.

“By increasing our biodiversity and improving land contouring, we’ve grown a great feed foundation that turns off a quality product for our consumers.” ■

📍 mla.com.au/msa

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HerdFlow keeps producers ahead of the game

For Queensland cattle producer John Syme, who manages his family’s property ‘Woodlands’ south of Mitchell, fast and accurate herd data is a fundamental part of running a modern beef operation.

With growing expectations around financial reporting, business performance and the likelihood of future environmental requirements, John is one of many producers turning to HerdFlow – a livestock inventory management system developed by Bush AgriBusiness and cofunded by MLA Donor Company.

Since his early adoption of HerdFlow, John has seen the platform quickly cement itself into his daily workflow and the way he makes operational decisions.

Speed and efficiency

Before moving to HerdFlow, livestock reporting at Woodlands was a time-consuming end-of-year scramble which required a mix of paddock books, Excel spreadsheets and handwritten notes.

“Previous managers could spend eight to 10 hours at the end of the year just pulling the numbers together,” John said.

“It was a huge job, and it only told you where you’d been, never where you were right now.

“With HerdFlow, I enter things as they happen – a sale, movement, a group of dry cows pulled out. Whatever it is, the system stays live and current, and the visibility is something we just didn’t have before.”

Woodlands has been part of a Bush AgriBusiness benchmarking group for nearly a decade, so when John returned to the family operation 18 months ago, he was encouraged to adopt Herdflow straight away – a shift he said paid off.

« ‘Woodlands’ manager, John Syme, keeps on top of his herd numbers, sales and stock movements by regularly imputing data into HerdFlow.



SNAPSHOT

**JOHN SYME,
RICKY VAN ZWIETEN
KEN SYME AND
DEE CHAMBERS –**

‘Woodlands’, Mitchell, Queensland



AREA

35,000ha

ENTERPRISE

1,400 breeders plus progeny (sold as feeders) predominately Simmental/Brahman-cross

PASTURES

Buffel, blue grasses, Mitchell grasses and winter herbage

SOILS

Black soil, loamy red soil, sandy soils, claypans

RAINFALL

457–508mm



« From fertility rates to kilograms produced – HerdFlow centralises key herd performance metrics for better year-on-year decisions.



🔗 Herdflow helps inform cattle buying and selling decisions at the Queensland beef property 'Woodlands'.

Simplicity

It's a system he finds easy to use, even with the reality of patchy rural connectivity.

"For daily management, it's very easy," he said.

"Having two screens helps – stock numbers on one, transactions on the other. That makes things very efficient."

While the end-of-year reclassification step takes a little more concentration, he expects it will become simpler with practice.

"Because you only do it once a year, it's the part that can trip you up – but overall, the system is really straightforward."

Real-time performance

HerdFlow doesn't just store data, it visualises it. For John, that's where the platform becomes powerful.

"Being able to compare budgets to actuals halfway through the year is incredibly valuable," he said.

"This year, prices were so strong that we hit 60–70% of our forecast turnover only six months in.

"Before HerdFlow, I wouldn't have realised that until long after the fact."

He said tool is also useful for more than month-to-month oversight. John has begun using HerdFlow to examine patterns across years, which has strengthened his confidence when making selling decisions.

He tracks natural increase, transfers, purchases, deaths and sales in real time, gaining a clearer understanding of growth and decline through the year.

One major benefit is using HerdFlow's historical data to guide selling decisions.

"I went back through my records – especially July versus December sales – and could see what the market was doing then, what weight differences meant and what I'd achieved in previous years."

In December, John needed to decide whether or not to sell steers that were 30–40kg lighter than ideal.

HerdFlow allowed him to compare those cattle with similar mobs sold earlier in the year.

"I went back through my records – especially July versus December sales – and could see what the market was doing then, what weight differences meant and what I'd achieved in previous years," he said.

"Even though these steers were lighter, the price-per-kilo premium made it worthwhile to sell now. Having that history gives you confidence."

He also likes the ability to benchmark against national feeder steer and cow indicators.

"You can see how your sales compare to the national average," John said.

"And if something falls short, you can drill into it and investigate the 'why'."

Budgeting with confidence

HerdFlow is also reshaping how John approaches budgeting.

With reliable historical data and up-to-date herd numbers, he can forecast earlier and with more clarity.

"I already had a rough draft of my 2027 budget done back in August 2025," he said.

"I like working that far ahead because it gives me a sense of where the business is heading, whether we'll have surplus capital or whether we need to hold some back."

Although he's mindful that markets, weather and seasonal conditions can shift, he says having a baseline plan gives him confidence.

"You can't predict everything – markets correct, droughts happen – but at least you have a starting point. You know roughly where you stand, and you tweak from there."

The next steps

Looking ahead, John is excited about HerdFlow's potential as additional features roll out.

"I genuinely think HerdFlow will become a one-stop shop – not just financial performance, but reproductive metrics, emissions, everything in one place.

"The direction it's heading is really promising, and I like being part of that growth." ■

TOOLBOX



🔗 A free 12-month trial of HerdFlow is available to MLA members via myMLA: mla.com.au/herdflow

🔗 MLA's saleyard reports and price indicators: mla.com.au/prices-markets



bushagri.com.au/herdflow



John Syme manager.woodlands4465@gmail.com



Tony Parker tparker@mla.com.au

Early weaning helps tackle tough seasons

Remaining viable and profitable as they adjusted their enterprise was a key goal for Tim and Stacey Morton.

The couple are part of a large family-run operation in Victoria's Western District – their 'Toorong Partnership' includes Tim's brother and sister-in-law, Brian and Natalie.

Historically, their business was 70% Corriedale sheep/30% Angus cattle but recently, the family made significant changes to their business model due to wool market challenges, increasing costs of production and lower lambing percentages.

Tim and Stacey decided to switch from 70% sheep to a 70% beef cattle operation to improve profitability but also reduce labour requirements.

One of their main goals is to hand a financially viable farm operation to their children, should the next generation decide to pursue a career in farming.

To support the changes, the Mortons participated in an MLA Producer Demonstration Site (PDS) project run by the MacKillop Farm Management Group, to improve their post-weaning management strategies.

Weaning strategies

The Mortons previously calved in May/June, but found it limited their flexibility to sell cattle when seasonal conditions are unfavourable, leading to high supplementary feed requirements throughout calving.

So, they switched to a mid-July/August calving. They plan to wean in February,

with flexibility to bring it forward to January or even December based on seasonal conditions.

In the past, the Mortons would hold weaner calves in the cattle yards overnight before letting them into a holding yard with ad lib hay for one week. Calves were then processed through the yards to be weighed and receive a 7-in-1 booster vaccination and drench. They then went out on any paddock feed available, before being supplemented with hay until adequate feed was available after the autumn break.

Weaners typically weighed an average of 330kg for steers and 300kg for heifers. They gained around 300g/day between February and April. Performance could stagnate for up to six weeks through May as the autumn flush came through before slowly increasing growth rates up to 2kg/day with compensatory growth in September.

Although the Mortons were weighing calves and feed testing hay and pasture, they weren't using this data to inform management decisions.

Refining weaning

Throughout the course of the PDS, the Mortons refined their weaning process.

Calves are now held in yards for a minimum of three nights, with ad lib silage or vetch hay available, as well as pellets. They are handled twice daily during this period, using low-stress handling techniques.

SNAPSHOT



MORTON FAMILY –
Penshurst, Victoria



AREA
1,551ha

ENTERPRISE
Corriedale sheep and Angus cattle

PASTURES
Unimproved pasture, phalaris,
improved ryegrasses, Victorian
perennial ryegrass

SOILS
Rocky outcrops and volcanic loams

RAINFALL
700mm (pre-drought average)

Tim and Stacey have been trialling different post-weaning management strategies, including silage and pellets, summer crop, sorghum and early weaning onto clover and ad lib pellets.

Results have been varied, with growth rates of around 650g/day on summer crop (Pillar) yet closer to 1kg/day on silage and pellets.

Calves are now held in yards for a minimum of three nights, with ad lib silage or vetch hay available, as well as pellets. They are handled twice daily during this period, using low-stress handling techniques.



» Tim and Stacey Morton with cattle at their Penshurst, Victoria, farm. Image Tim Morton

Early weaning as a management tool

The PDS looked at how early weaning can be a management tool in tough seasons. Determining the most appropriate time for weaning depends on a variety of factors, including:

- time of calving
- seasonal variations
- feed availability (pasture and supplementary)
- options for sale
- labour availability.

Weaning early can minimise supplementary feed requirements, which in a tough season can be a significantly beneficial management tool.

A cow-calf unit will drink about 50L per day more than if the pair is separated, which becomes an important factor to consider in tough seasons when water is less plentiful.

Weaning early can also increase marketing flexibility, allowing the sale of non-productive or cull cows earlier and in better condition.

Removing these cows early allows better pasture allocation for calves, or cash flow may facilitate the purchase of higher quality supplementary feed to maximise growth potential of weaners.

Maintaining weaning timing flexibility can also help sustain a more optimal body condition in breeding cows.

Navigating the dry

True early weaning is typically considered a minimum of three months of age and 130kg liveweight. In many southern farming systems, it is not unusual for calves to be weaned at nine months of age or older. Based on this, the Mortons did not necessarily practise true 'early' weaning but rather used earlier weaning as a tool to help get through a tough season.

In 2024, the Western District of Victoria experienced extraordinarily dry conditions throughout autumn and winter.

With their late autumn calving system, Tim and Stacey found themselves calving onto minimal paddock feed.

Without an autumn flush of feed coming through, they were heading into winter with cattle in peak lactation and consequently extreme supplementary feed requirements to maintain the condition of their cows with spring forecasts also looking unfavourable.

With lush clover in early spring from the little rain they did get, the Mortons decided to wean earlier. This allowed them to prioritise the feed on the ground for calves and maintain condition on their cattle with lower supplementary feed requirements.

Tim and Stacey weaned half of their calves early, at four to five months of age and with an average weaning weight of 150kg.

After yard weaning, these calves went onto fresh clover pastures with between 2,000–3,000kg dry matter (DM) feed on offer (FOO).

The calves had access to vetch hay and ad lib pellets in feeders. However, they did not eat significant amounts of either supplementary feed until paddock feed was largely utilised. The calves gained around 500g/day throughout the entire period.

The Mortons were pleased with their decision to wean early given the seasonal conditions. Their cattle maintained excellent condition, joined well and were in great condition with body condition scores of 3.5–4.5 coming into calving in 2025.

They did not need to start supplementary feeding mature cattle until mid-April 2025, which is later than would have been expected given the continued dry conditions in the Western District.

The biggest challenge found with early weaning was increased calf losses, at 2.5% as opposed to their normal losses (below 1%). Because these losses were random, experienced over an eight-week period and of animals of varying weights, no post-mortem examination was undertaken.

Moving forward, Tim and Stacey plan to routinely wean at around six months of age, utilising earlier weaning as a seasonal condition management tool.

Benefits of PDS

Over the course of this PDS project, participants heard presentations from livestock nutrition advisors to improve knowledge around the nutritional requirements of weaners and the different options for meeting these requirements.

Interpreting and utilising feed test results was a key focus.

The Mortons have used this information to make informed decisions when planning different post-weaning management strategies.

One of the most valuable sessions for the Morton family was the stock handling session held with Dr Lachlan Strohfeldt of Protein Production Vets.

This session focused on minimising stress at weaning through handling and educating livestock during yard weaning.

Not only does this have significant animal health and production benefits, it allows for safer handling throughout an animal's life, resulting in notable work health and safety advantages. ■

LESSONS LEARNT

- ✓ You don't know what you don't measure. Collecting data, keeping good records and taking consistent measurements are crucial to inform decision making.
- ✓ Nutrition, nutrition, nutrition. Allocating feed to different classes of livestock minimises the need for supplementary feeding.
- ✓ Low-stress handling has significant benefits. The benefits of low-stress stock handling and weaner education were emphasised throughout this PDS, including animal health and production, and long-term ease and safety of handling.

TOOLBOX

- 🔍 Learn more about MLA's Producer Demonstration Sites (PDS), find a PDS near you using the search tool and sign-up to receive PDS Updates: mla.com.au/pds



Hopping mad about rabbits?

European rabbits are Australia's most widespread and destructive environmental and agricultural vertebrate pest, with their rate of spread believed to be the fastest of any colonising mammal anywhere in the world.

Feral rabbits, which are commonly found in all parts of Australia except the tropical north, cause significant environmental and financial harm.

The impact feral rabbits can have on livestock enterprises includes:

- reducing the carrying capacity of farms by competing with livestock for feed
- damaging emerging crops
- reducing plant biodiversity by eating seedlings and killing shrubs
- reducing animal biodiversity by competing with native animals for food and shelter
- contributing to soil erosion by removing plant cover.

Control methods

Australia has been investing in successful rabbit biocontrol programs for more than 70 years with benefits now estimated at \$70 billion.

MLA supports the National Rabbit Biocontrol Optimisation program at the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions (CISS) which involves strengthening the pipeline of new rabbit biocontrols both in Australia and internationally.

PestSmart (powered by CISS) provides extensive information about European rabbits relating to their biology, ecology, impacts and best practice management.

Biological control is by far the most cost-effective large-scale management option to stay on the front foot with rabbit control, but it can't be relied on in isolation.

The viruses and their hosts constantly co-evolve, so conventional control methods such as baiting, warren ripping, fumigation, shooting and trapping are also needed to provide long-term results.

The PestSmart website also contains detailed Standard Operating Procedures for control methods, including:

- ground shooting of rabbits
- baiting of rabbits with 1080
- baiting of rabbits with pindone
- trapping and euthanasing rabbits using padded-jaw traps
- rabbit warren destruction by ripping
- rabbit warren destruction by explosives
- rabbit bait delivery of RHDV1 K5.

Recording and mapping of activity

Producers are encouraged to use the RabbitScan app or website to map the activity of rabbits on their property as well as recording any on-farm or community control activities. This coordinated tracking approach will help inform and improve the effectiveness of future control programs.

RabbitScan can also be used to report evidence of potential rabbit disease in your area via the Rabbit Biocontrol Tracker. If you find a dead rabbit which you suspect has died from a virus, record the details on the app, request a sample kit and freeze the dead rabbit until the kit arrives.

Providing this valuable information will assist researchers with the development of future biocontrol agents, as they will understand how viruses are spreading and which ones are proving most effective in your area. ■

Five resources for your rabbit control toolkit

Biosecurity best practice

➤ Learn more about completing your Livestock Production Assurance (LPA) biosecurity plan and download the biosecurity plan template at integritysystems.com.au/biosecurity

➤ If you have any questions or require more information about completing your LPA Biosecurity Plan, email info@integritysystems.com.au

➤ Alternatively, you can speak with the Integrity Systems Company (ISC) Customer Service team on 1800 683 111, Monday to Friday between 8am and 7pm (AEST) or on weekends between 9am and 5pm (AEST). You can also access the ISC Chatbot seven days a week via our website or from your myMLA and LPA account pages.

Guide on the go

➤ Order a copy of PestSmart's *Glovebox guide for managing rabbits* to help plan your rabbit control strategy: pestsmart.org.au/glovebox-guides-order-form

Tips at your fingertips

Download RabbitScan from:

➤ App Store: apps.apple.com

➤ Google Play store: play.google.com

➤ Scan or click the QR code to watch a video explaining how to use RabbitScan to improve your rabbit control outcomes:



Map the pest

➤ Scan or click the QR code to use the Rabbit Biocontrol Tracker to record data about rabbits, including sightings, damage or control:



Managing other pests?

➤ Access more pest control resources from PestSmart: pestsmart.org.au



Ticking pests off the list

Cattle tick and buffalo fly have been identified as the two highest-cost endemic disease issues for the Australian red meat industry – combined, they’re a \$300 million problem, particularly in northern Australia.

With reports of the buffalo fly spreading further south and rising resistance to current controls, the cost is likely to grow without intervention.

MLA-supported research is underway to develop new pesticides to combat both pests, while minimising the risk for beneficial insects such as bees and dung beetles.

Professor Joel Mackay of The University of Sydney and his team are developing the pesticides using the same cutting-edge strategies applied in human pharmaceutical development.

“The principle behind human drug discovery is to identify the individual protein which is causing the issue and then inhibit its activity by developing a molecule with a shape that is sculpted to wedge into a cavity in the protein – a precisely shaped spanner in the works,” Joel said.

“A tick has thousands of different proteins that do many different jobs. We have chosen as our target a protein that is essential for the tick’s survival and we are now working on the design of a molecule to inhibit its activity.”

During the five-year project, around 200,000 molecules will be trialled and the most promising ones will be carefully honed to fit into this cattle tick protein.

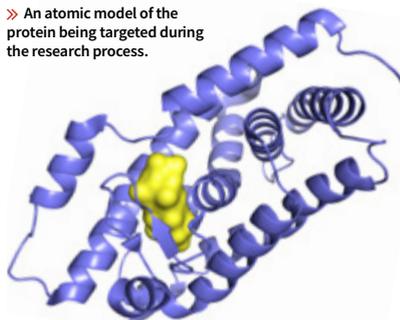
“At the same time, we will be assessing whether these candidate molecules also inhibit the activity of the corresponding protein in dung beetles and honeybees,” he said.

“We will be advancing with the molecules that selectively inhibit the cattle tick protein.”

The same process will be used to target the buffalo fly.

“The issue with most insecticides is that the protein that they target has a similar shape in the cattle tick and dung beetle, so it’s

» An atomic model of the protein being targeted during the research process.



difficult to find a molecule that will only impact the tick,” Joel said.

“That’s why a lot of insecticides are broad spectrum, rather than selective.

“Our protein target is subtly different between different types of insects, ticks and so on, meaning that we have the opportunity to find molecules that are selective for the bad guys.”

Bringing more control to market

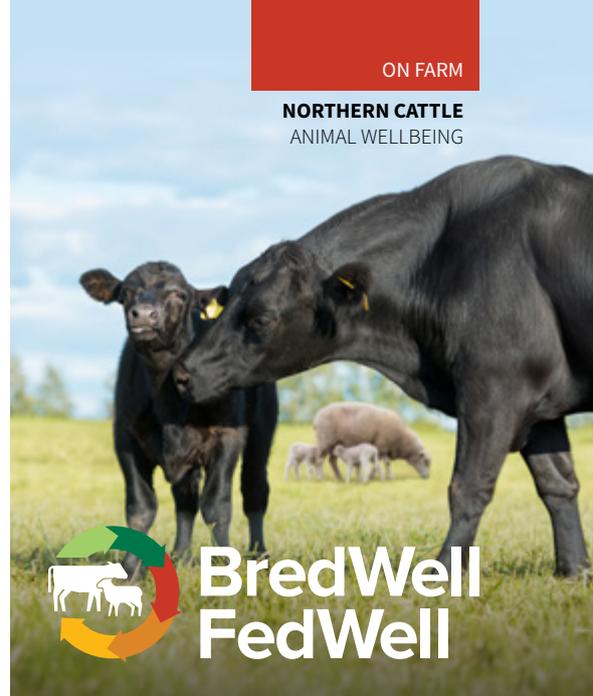
Pour-ons, dips, sprays and insecticidal ear tags are all commonly used to help combat the impact of cattle ticks and buffalo flies.

In September 2025, the widely-used insecticide Diazinon was phased out due to health and safety concerns, leaving a gap in insecticides for both pests.

Following the project’s conclusion, Joel and his team hope to provide a proof-of-concept for a generic approach to the development of safer and more environmentally friendly insecticides.

“We’re also trialling this approach to assist in other agricultural industries and in medicine, including suppressing Varroa mite and the malaria mosquito without harming other, beneficial insects,” Joel said.

“We’re really excited about the prospect of making a pesticide that is not only potent, but safe and selective.” ■



Keen to fine-tune breeding and feeding?

The BredWell FedWell (BFWF) program is one of MLA’s most valued producer education programs, supporting livestock enterprises to make improved breeding and feeding decisions that enhance productivity and profitability.

MLA recently appointed the Agricultural Business Research Institute (ABRI) as the new national coordinator for BFWF. This marks a significant milestone in the program, following successful redevelopment and delivery of workshop content from 2023, overseen by Schuster Consulting Group.

MLA’s Project Manager for Producer Adoption, Mitch Plumbe, thanked Schuster Consulting Group for their dedication and high-quality work to date, and welcomed ABRI to steward the program into the future.

He said the depth of expertise ABRI brings in genetics, data and herd improvement will help ensure high quality workshop delivery right across Australia.

Jake Phillips of Phillips Livestock Solutions will work alongside the ABRI team to support delivery of the BFWF program across Australia.

BFWF workshops focus on practical breeding objective development for both sheep and beef producers, strengthening the link between genetic selection and nutritional management.

Workshops include hands-on activities, real herd and flock data examples and guidance from accredited BFWF deliverers. ■

Producers, producer groups, agricultural advisors and organisations can register their interest in hosting, delivering or attending a BFWF workshop by contacting Jake Phillips on 0401 261 217 or visiting mla.com.au/bwfw

📍 mla.com.au/bwfw
✉️ Mitch Plumbe
✉️ mplumbe@mla.com.au

📍 mla.com.au/ticks 📍 mla.com.au/buffalo-fly
✉️ Joel Mackay joel.mackay@sydney.edu.au
✉️ Michael Lawrence mlawrence@mla.com.au
✉️ Sharon Dundon sdundon@mla.com.au

Powering up admin for profitability

Sally Turner, the MLA-supported recipient of a 2026 Nuffield Scholarship, wants to see a shift in how producers approach their farm admin. Her vision is for producers to no longer view the bookwork as a mundane but necessary task, but rather a strategic tool that can drive greater efficiency and business productivity.

She plans to use the international travel opportunities offered as part of her scholarship to gather examples of how businesses around the world are successfully harnessing optimised and scalable administration systems and tools.

Seeing the value in admin

Sally's research proposal stood out as a unique and timely topic due to its alignment with the National Farmers' Federation 2030 Roadmap goals around financial literacy, digital adoption and governance reform.

Her research topic, 'Reframing farm administration: mindset, skills and systems for resilient, profitable ag businesses' caught the eye of the judges.

"I was pleased MLA saw value in administration – I'm used to people thinking admin is a bit of a boring topic for agriculture," she said.

A change in mindset

Sally is an agricultural consultant and producer at Trundle, NSW, where she and her husband David run a self-replacing Merino flock, produce prime lambs and grow cereal crops. This means Sally has plenty of experience of farm management, both in the paddock and in the office.

Through her consultancy work at Ag Opti Systems, she helps farm businesses fine-tune their work health and safety, human resources, administration, data management and bookkeeping.

"A lot of people think that to be productive, you have to get stuck into jobs in the yards and that if you're in the office you're not really working," she said.

"I want to encourage people to see that efficient administrative systems are actually of high value to a business."

Skill building

Sally explained that by upskilling in areas like financial literacy, producers will have a better understanding of their numbers and what they are telling them.

"That's a huge step – even general admin skills are helpful. Many producers are running productive, multimillion dollar business and need to run them as such," Sally said.

"It can be wise to outsource or bring an employee in to help fill any knowledge or skill gaps in a business."

Scalable systems

Sally and her husband prioritise solid systems and procedures in their business to maximise efficiency and productivity.

"We plan our tasks rather than just doing them randomly. It could be scaling our revenue and profits and using systems to make our business more efficient, which helps us see where we might be missing opportunities," Sally said.

An example is their business communication processes, which include weekly meetings as well as dedicated strategic, quarterly meetings.

"This helps us build focus, so we're not just juggling 10,000 things at once. We have weekly, monthly but also a more overall, strategic focus at the various types of meeting we hold," Sally said.

Fixing inefficiencies

Sally has implemented accurate, streamlined inventories which have improved efficiencies in the yards in a practical way. This includes storing required equipment at the sheep yards so it's easily accessible and ensuring spare products are on-hand.

"Simple things like this reduce stress, save time and let you focus on getting the job done," she said.

Personal growth

While the Nuffield travel component will take her away from her business, Sally sees the opportunity to focus on her personal growth as something that will pay dividends in the long run.

"Being willing to step outside my comfort zone and go and talk to other people from around the world about their businesses and systems will equip me with so many skills that I can bring back home with me," she said.

"Our business is in a growth phase, so it will be challenging having me away overseas, but it's also forced me to think about how we can run the business more efficiently while I'm away."

An international perspective

Sally is keen to investigate international examples of good business administration and how governments support producers to upskill. For example, in the UK, producers get a tax rebate if they complete financial literacy training, while here in Australia, electronic National Vendor Declaration (eNVD) and Livestock Production Assurance (LPA) provide opportunities to improve business data collection.

"Rather than seeing them as just extra required paperwork, they can be an opportunity to improve livestock businesses." ■

» Turn to page 37 to meet another Nuffield scholar who is making beef grading technology accessible to small processors.



» Sally Turner received the 2026 MLA-supported Nuffield Australia Scholarship. Image: Essjay Photography



- 📍 mla.com.au/career-hub 📍 nuffield.com.au
- 📍 integritysystems.com.au/nvd
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Marbled lamb unlocks premium markets

The Australian sheep industry has long been defined by its ability to adapt. Amid persistent supply challenges and tightening margins, new premium markets are opening the door to untapped income sources that will bolster long-term viability.

One business leading this shift toward higher-value markets is Gundagai Lamb. The company is redefining what's possible through its GLQ5+ brand, a marbled lamb setting new benchmarks for consistency, eating quality and value.

Account Manager Molly Greentree said the goal was to consistently deliver an outstanding product that offers reliability and performance on the plate.

"Finding markets willing to pay a premium for a premium product means more money flowing back through the supply chain," Molly said.

"It doesn't remove all the volatility in livestock prices, but it smooths some of the peaks and troughs and allows us to pay more for stock."

Technology driving consistency

At Gundagai Lamb, objective measurement technologies are central to that consistency.

Every lamb processed is measured using an MEQ Probe, which determines intramuscular fat content at three points to calculate marbling percentage. They are also scanned using DEXA (dual-energy X-ray) to determine the proportion of muscle, fat and bone.

"These tools take the subjectivity out of grading. We can get a true picture of marbling and lean meat yield in every carcass, rather than a human assessment," Molly said.

The biggest risk for producers targeting marbling is overfeeding which, environmentally, is a poor use of feed. Then, the excess fat on the animal is also wasted when it's cut off in the processing plant or in a commercial kitchen.

By balancing marbling and fat coverage, Gundagai Lamb ensures consistency for chefs and consumers while maintaining environmental efficiency.

"Because we can calculate the fat percentage, we can ensure that the lambs coming through are neither over-fat nor under-fat. We aim to get the balance right for eating quality and sustainability."

Data fed back to producers

Each supplier receives detailed feedback on every lamb processed, including marbling score, lean meat yield and animal health data. This information is housed in a producer portal where suppliers

can benchmark their results and identify top-performing genetics and management practices.

"Some producers dive deep into the data,

others just like knowing how they're performing," Molly said.

"So even if you're not targeting marbling specifically, by selecting for these traits you're improving your overall flock performance. That ability to improve your operational performance is what makes it so attractive for producers."

Creating new markets

With premium marbled lamb now appearing on menus in high-end US restaurants, chefs are embracing it as the next luxury protein.

"The US understands marbling from beef, so they instantly recognise the quality of our product," Molly said.

Emerging markets such as Thailand are also showing promise as middle-class consumers develop a taste for lamb.

"The opportunity is enormous if we can match the right cuts to the right cooking styles and provide education along the way," she said.

For consumers at home, marbled lamb represents a new way of thinking about the product.

"Beef paved the way with Wagyu," Molly said.

"Now lamb is offering that same choice, whether you want an everyday cut or something truly special. It's about giving consumers options and lifting the perception of lamb as a luxury eating experience." ■



MEQ probes help to determine intramuscular fat content at three points to calculate marbling percentage. Image: Gundagai Lamb



At Gundagai Lamb, each supplier receives detailed feedback on every lamb processed. Image: Gundagai Lamb



SUPPLY CHAIN

delivering value



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Gulfood 2026: Aussie red meat on world stage

The Australian red meat sector has strengthened its Middle Eastern ties following the recent Gulfood 2026 – the world’s biggest food show.

MLA, through its global brand Aussie Beef, Lamb & Goat, along with 37 Australian red meat exporters exhibited at the event in January, at the Dubai World Trade Centre and Expo City Dubai.

Export growth

The event followed a year in which Australian red meat and livestock exports to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region achieved a record A\$2.2 billion in 2025, reaffirming strong demand for Australia’s premium, halal-certified beef and lamb.

The MENA region continued to emerge as a premium destination for Australian beef and lamb, with chilled beef representing 84% of all Australian beef exports to the UAE and total beef export value reaching A\$316 million, with total sheepmeat exports value reaching A\$394 million in 2025.

Global platform

According to MLA’s Regional Manager for Europe, Middle East and Africa, Darren Watson, Gulfood has always been one of the most important global platforms for the Australian red meat industry.

“Across the MENA region, demand is not only growing but becoming more discerning and premium led,” Darren said.

“Australian beef and lamb have remained well positioned to support this shift, offering trusted halal assurance, consistent quality and the reliability that partners in the region value.

“Australia’s trade position was further strengthened through the Australia–UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which removed tariffs on Australian red meat and boosted competitiveness.”

All Australian red meat remained 100% Halal certified under the Australian Government Authorised Halal Program (AGAHP).

Innovation on display

MLA’s Aussie Beef, Lamb & Goat stand at Gulfood served as both a commercial hub and an innovation precinct, bringing

together Australian exporters, global buyers, government partners and high-profile visitors across the five day event.

Dedicated zones highlighted Australia’s grassfed and grainfed beef, premium lamb, mutton and goat, Halal assurance and supply chain integrity, while live cooking demonstrations created a high-traffic focal point throughout the show.

A major highlight was MLA’s inaugural Gulfood Innovation Challenge, where five international innovators presented emerging solutions across sustainable packaging, ambient storage technologies and nutrient-dense wellness products.

The initiative brought next-generation technologies to the global stage, deepened engagement with Australian exporters and fostered direct conversations between innovators, buyers and technical specialists. It also signalled MLA’s commitment to advancing industry-led innovation in ways that support both commercial growth and customer expectations internationally.

MLA’s stand also welcomed the Hon Don Farrell, Minister for Trade and Tourism, who visited the pavilion to meet Australian exporters, speak with MLA’s leadership and observe first-hand the strong engagement between Australian industry and key trading partners.

Live export and regional engagement

The Livestock Export Program (LEP), delivered jointly by MLA and LiveCorp, played a supporting role in Australia’s presence at Gulfood 2026.

The LEP in-market team supported Australia’s engagement throughout the show, with strong interest in both live animals and boxed Australian red meat, including constructive discussions with stakeholders from Turkey, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Oman.

While boxed Australian red meat was the main commercial focus at Gulfood 2026, the LEP also received constructive enquiries for live animals from key regional commercial operators who visited the show.

Following Gulfood, MLA Chair John Lloyd undertook a series of supply chain visits to observe the live export system in operation.

His itinerary included public livestock pens, an abattoir and a wet market where he witnessed the full customer process, from selecting a sheep to receiving the processed meat from the butcher. He also conducted retail visits to gain further insight into consumer-facing market dynamics.

Meanwhile, MLA’s General Manager – International Markets, Andrew Cox, travelled to Jordan alongside Darren Watson and members of the LEP in-market team. The delegation visited a feedlot holding Australian cattle and an abattoir to directly assess supply chain conditions and operational standards. ■



» Aussie Beef Mate and chef Vanessa Bayma at MLA’s dining/kitchen area at Gulfood 2026. Vanessa and her team were responsible for catering for MLA’s guests the entire Gulfood week.



Eyes in the sky increase on-farm productivity

In an effort to explore how digital tools can enhance operational efficiency and animal welfare, JBS Australia is trialling autonomous drone technology at two of their feedlots and adjacent farm and processing sites in NSW and Queensland.

Backed by MLA and powered by Perth-based tech company Sensorem, the initiative is part of a broader push to bring cutting-edge remote sensing into the red meat supply chain.

“Supporting partners such as JBS to trial technologies like drones is an example of how we are exploring solutions that provide efficiencies as well as generate new sources of digital sensing data,” MLA’s Digital Agriculture Project Manager John McGuren said.

According to JBS’s Head of Innovation Sean Starling, JBS introduced drones to their Yambinya and Beef City feedlots with hopes of increasing site monitoring while giving time back to staff – enabling them to direct more focus towards animal care and site management.

“At Yambinya, it can take a staff member six hours to physically inspect water troughs, cattle and other infrastructure,” Sean said.

While drones seemed like a practical solution, introducing them came with its own set of challenges.

“Manual drone operation and reviewing the footage still required significant time investment each day,” Sean said.

“While monitoring is essential to our operations, our team’s core strengths lie in data analysis and decision making, not piloting drones.”

That’s where autonomous technology came in.

“By removing the need for manual piloting, we’ve reduced the time spent on property-wide monitoring from six hours to less than one – giving our staff more time to focus on what they do best, while allowing us to check on our cattle and infrastructure more frequently.”

How it works

Sensoreem’s ‘drone-in-a-box’ system is designed to operate independently.

Similar to the concept of the robot vacuum cleaner, the borders of the two feedlots are

mapped out as approved flight zones, with no-fly areas marked over homesteads to protect privacy.

Once flight paths are established, the drone flies autonomously, capturing high-resolution images and video across the site.

These visuals are reviewed by remote pilots from Sensorem, who provide feedback on infrastructure and livestock conditions for JBS staff to act on.

“Each drone launches from a weatherproof pod, flies a programmed route and returns to recharge – all without on-site piloting,” Sean said.

“The pod itself has an inbuilt camera, Starlink and weather station.

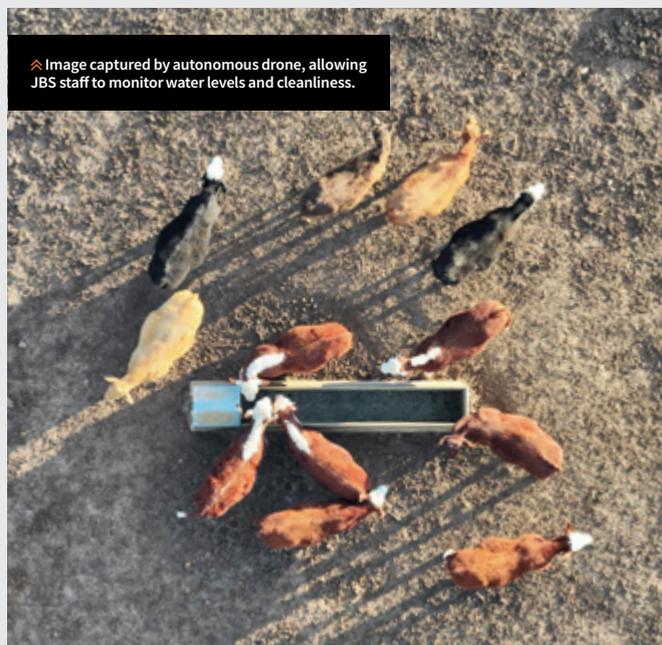
“If unsuitable flying conditions like high winds or rainfall are detected, the drone will automatically delay its routine journey.

“If required, staff will take on manual monitoring during longer periods where weather conditions prevent flying.”

To ensure data security and site privacy, Sensorem has undergone extensive cybersecurity assessments. Protocols are in place to protect the communication link between the drone and staff operators, as well as the visual data captured and stored.

Quicker reaction times

Since implementing the drones, JBS has experienced a marked improvement in site-wide visibility – enabling site teams to access timely, high-resolution imagery that supports faster and more informed decision making.



“The ability to receive near real-time visual data has enhanced our responsiveness and allowed us to prioritise resources more effectively,” Sean said. “This technology is helping us move from reactive to proactive management.”

New flight paths

As the trial evolves, so do the drone missions. Each feedlot has its own set of objectives, documented in detailed mission handbooks that outline flight schedules, target areas and operational constraints.

These handbooks are updated regularly as JBS and Sensorem learn what works and what doesn’t.

“We’re hoping to upgrade our drones’ capabilities from just automated flying, to identifying hazards or areas of potential concern,” Sean said.

“Instead of relying on humans to consistently review footage to identify things like a leaking water trough, we want to teach our drones to recognise what they’re recording and notify our staff.”

As part of this AI development goal, Sean said they are looking to begin using drones to monitor feed levels in bunks with additional hardware. ■



Transporter leaves paper trail in the dust

Martins Stock Haulage (MSH), one of Australia's largest and most respected livestock carriers, has taken a bold step toward digitising livestock movements by integrating electronic National Vendor Declarations (eNVD) into its operations.

With support from Integrity Systems Company (ISC) and the MLA Donor Company (MDC), MSH has demonstrated that paperless consignments aren't just possible – they're better for business, better for compliance and better for the entire red meat supply chain.

A smooth transition

MSH were among the first to adopt the eNVD, helping pave the way for paperless consignments to be adopted across the livestock transport industry.

MSH's Workplace Health and Safety, Compliance and Inductions Manager, Graeme Hoare, said the organisation saw an opportunity to lead the inevitable shift away from paper-based processes to digital systems.

"Partnering with ISC has allowed us to contribute valuable user feedback on both the web and mobile platforms, helping enhance functionality for drivers and head office alike," he said.

"We were early adopters, so the transition came with some initial challenges, but the move from paper to digital has been relatively smooth thanks to ISC's hands-on support and training"

Why eNVD matters to transporters

Many transporters still rely on handwritten NVDs supplied by the vendor. These can be prone to errors, carry the risk of being lost or damaged, or sometimes not even being available at the time of loading if producers aren't physically in attendance.

eNVDs offer a smarter, more reliable alternative by enabling:

- **Fewer errors:** With guided digital forms, missed questions (such as destination and incorrect head counts) are dramatically reduced.
- **Sharing capabilities:** Producers can share eNVDs with transporters via QR code, email, text message or direct access using the eNVD platform.

- **Real-time corrections:** Vendors can amend errors (such as head counts) instantly via the mobile app, which means no chasing paperwork or reissuing forms.
- **Improved traceability:** eNVDs carry critical data about livestock health, treatments and origin, as well as transporter details, all of which are essential for processors, exporters and regulators.
- **Market access:** Accurate eNVD data supports Australia's eligibility for premium international markets where transparency and compliance are non-negotiable.
- **eNVD comment function:** This function enables transport drivers to add comments on livestock consignments, enhancing accuracy and clarity. This might include the pen number livestock were left in when delivered to a saleyard or processing facility out of hours, or even information that the animals were inspected mid-journey.

Practical support at your fingertips

One of the key success factors in MSH's transition was the hands-on support from ISC, which included:

- **Initial driver training:** One-on-one and paired sessions to build confidence and capability.
- **Troubleshooting:** Help with connectivity, form amendments and updates and app navigation.

- **Client engagement:** Resources and communication strategies to help clients understand and adopt eNVD, including MSH co-branded collateral.
- **Operational integration:** Guidance on embedding eNVD into standard operating procedures and work plans.

This collaborative approach ensured that 95% of MSH drivers became proficient in using the eNVD app and digital consignments are now standard practice across the business.

Results

The project outcomes speak for themselves:

- 10 pilots successfully completed with industry stakeholders.
- Fewer errors and stronger compliance.
- Increased client trust and satisfaction due to the support offered.
- eNVD now embedded in daily operations within MSH.
- Significant time savings for drivers, who no longer need to manually fill out paperwork or chase down missing details.
- Instant access to consignment records, meaning drivers can show authorities exactly what they're carrying if pulled over en route. This not only improves transparency but also provides peace of mind, with drivers knowing they're backed by verified digital documentation.

eNVD help – 24/7

eNVDs are the faster – more secure – digital alternative to paper-based Livestock Production Assurance (LPA) National Vendor Declarations. Visit integritysystems.com.au/nvd to get started.

 Chat with us

Chatbot available 24/7 via the website, myMLA or LPA account dashboard

 1800 683 111

Mon–Fri/8am–7pm (AEST)
Sat–Sun/9am–5pm (AEST)



A message for transporters

Adopting the eNVD isn't just a tech upgrade. Instead, as the MSH journey demonstrates, it's a strategic move that helps strengthen the entire supply chain.

For other transporters looking to replicate MSH's success, ISC can provide support with tailored training, resources and integration planning.

Whether you're a small operator or a national fleet, the tools, guidance and support are available to help you make the switch.

✉ To learn more, email Demi Lollback, Project Manager – Adoption: dlollback@mla.com.au



🔗 Tailored ISC training helped MSH drivers leave paperwork behind – streamlining consignments, strengthening compliance and saving time on every load.

John Rogers, Livestock and Business Development Manager at MSH, said drivers appreciate the eNVD app.

"It's made pick-ups and drop-offs quicker and more streamlined," he said. "When leaving a feedlot, they can simply give the weighbridge attendant a wave, confident that all the necessary livestock documentation is readily available on their phone." ■

TOOLBOX

🔗 Access livestock transport guidelines, checklists for preparing livestock for transport and other resources and case studies at: mla.com.au/transport-hub

Tech is key to small business barriers

Cailan Byrnes' 2025 MLA-supported Nuffield Australia Scholarship journey has taken him around the world in search of a solution to break down the barriers for small businesses to implement the latest beef grading eating quality technology.

The cost and resourcing challenges required to meet accreditation standards mean the objective measurement (OM) technology currently being used by larger industry players is largely out of reach for many small businesses like his own, particularly in northern Australia.

Challenges for small businesses

Improving access to this game-changing technology will deliver positive flow-on effects to Cailan's third generation family business, Byrnes Meats, and the 50 local producers who supply their cattle into its Rocky Creek Abattoir.

Cailan hopes to work with industry to expand the use of OM technology by making it easier to use and less reliant on heavy staffing and training requirements.

"The main hurdle for smaller, family-run businesses like mine is to overcome the cost of not only buying the technology, but having the infrastructure and staffing to maintain it and keep your certification," Cailan said.

"If we can get to the point where an objective measurement camera alone can accurately assess the meat it will be more scalable and cost effective for smaller businesses.

"Currently the technology must be used by a trained grader and the staff training required to be an accredited grader is quite extensive.

"Each grader must be trained, approved and retrained to stay current," he said.

Cailan hopes that within three years the technology will advance to the point where accreditation will be more accessible.

"It will be game changing for the little plants like ourselves," he said.

International excellence

As part of his Nuffield Scholarship, Cailan wanted to find examples of businesses that had successfully implemented technology, without it slowing down production speed.

He visited Denmark and met with Frontmtec, a technology company that

developed the handheld Q-FOM™ meat grading camera. He also toured seed processing and blueberry packaging factories in Chile, where he was impressed by their top-notch organisation of systems and staff.

"It's all well and good to have the technology but it's no use if it slows down production speed," Cailan said.

"You also need to make sure the technology is certified and accurate – if it predicts the meat is going to be a certain colour, then it's going to need to actually be that colour."

Nuffield provides opportunities

A common sentiment expressed by Nuffield scholars is the role the scholarship plays in getting them to step out of their comfort zone.

"It enables people to have an idea, develop their passion and have the chance to go out there and explore how it might change industry – you can explore big picture thinking," Cailan said

"Nuffield gives an opportunity to people who would not normally have the chance to be involved in this sort of experience. It gives producers on-the-ground a voice and the chance to give back to industry." ■

➤ *Turn to page 32 to meet another Nuffield scholar who is turning farm admin from mundane to mighty.*



🔗 MLA's Objective Measurement and Data Adoption Manager, Dean Gutzke (left) and Cailan Byrnes holding the MEQ Probe at the AMPC Innovation Showcase in September 2025. Image: Cailan Byrnes



- 🌐 nuffield.com.au 🌐 mla.com.au/career-hub
- ✉ Cailan Byrnes cailan@rca4882.com.au
- ✉ Joshua Whelan jwhelan@mla.com.au

Indonesia partnership underpins northern profitability

From cattle stations in northern Australia to feedlots across Indonesia, the livestock export industry is delivering benefits that reach far beyond trade. It supports food security, creates jobs, improves animal welfare and builds strong partnerships that contribute to international development goals.

A report commissioned by the Livestock Export Program (LEP) – a research, development and extension collaboration between LiveCorp and MLA – highlights how Australian livestock exports align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs).

Indonesia is one of the focus markets in the report, highlighting the importance of the relationships developed through the trade.

The findings show that Australian livestock are not only feeding people but also strengthening communities and deepening relationships with key trading partners such as Indonesia.

Economic development

In Indonesia, the live cattle trade provides jobs and drives growth, generating an estimated A\$929 million in wholesale revenue each year.

About 8,500 people are employed to care for Australian cattle, which in turn supports livelihoods across the supply chain from feedlot workers and abattoir staff to smallholder farmers.

For Australian producers, particularly in the NT where the distance from major domestic markets can limit local selling options, Indonesia provides an essential outlet, offering good prices for Australian cattle and rewarding the quality and consistency of northern herds.

Maintaining this trade supports regional economies, enables herd management flexibility and reinforces the profitability and sustainability of pastoral enterprises.

Capacity building

Training and knowledge exchange are central to Australia's engagement with Indonesia. Since 2021, more than 14,000 people have received training in animal welfare, biosecurity and supply chain efficiency, largely driven and supported by the in-market LEP representatives. Programs such as the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association Indonesia–Australia Pastoral Program brought Indonesian students to Australian stations for many years, while Australia Awards Short Courses enhance professional development across the region. These initiatives build capability and trust within the supply chain, ensuring Australian cattle are managed to world-leading standards and maintaining market confidence that directly supports ongoing trade.

Food security and nutrition

Exported Australian-bred cattle contribute more than 83,000t of beef (excluding offal) to Indonesia each year, providing a reliable source of protein for nearly 28 million people. This helps fill nutritional gaps in a country where domestic supply cannot meet demand.

Australia breeds and raises the cattle, while Indonesia finishes them for local consumption. This complementary relationship supports Indonesia's food security and provides Australian producers with a valuable and consistent export destination. Reliable demand for Australian livestock strengthens herd planning and productivity at home while delivering nutritious, fresh meat to Indonesian consumers.

Animal health and welfare

The introduction of the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS), which ensures humane handling and slaughter of exported livestock, has provided many opportunities for discussions regarding animal welfare practices in our destination markets. In Indonesia, more than 90 per cent of abattoirs processing Australian cattle now use stunning.

The LEP-supported Forum Animal Welfare Officers (a collaboration between importers, GAPUSPINDO and exporters), has also played a key role in improving welfare standards through extensive training in animal welfare, traceability and slaughter techniques.

When foot-and-mouth disease and lumpy skin disease outbreaks occurred in 2022, Australian support helped vaccinate more than 400,000 animals in Indonesia. Workshops also provided smallholders with practical training in vaccination and biosecurity.

These efforts protect both Indonesian and Australian herds by slowing the spread of disease while maintaining continuity of trade and market confidence. ■

TOOLBOX

Learn more about the Livestock Export Program at livecorp.com.au

Click or scan the QR code to read MLA's latest Indonesia market snapshot:



Spencer Whitaker swhitaker@mla.com.au Rashelle Levonian rlevonian@mla.com.au

How Australia is winning in global markets

MLA has released its annual global market snapshots for 2026, for the latest understanding of Australia's competitive advantages and growth opportunities in key global markets.

Up-to-date insights into global trade

For the red meat industry, 2025 was a year of uncertainties and fast-evolving trade landscape, with import tariff and market access conditions of red meat affecting both Australian exports and other suppliers.

The 2026 snapshots provide the latest summary of Australia's and key suppliers' market access conditions and will be updated as new developments occur.

Miho Kondo, Manager of MLA's Global Market Insights, highlights the importance of market and consumer insights in providing the foundation for decision making that leverages opportunities.

"For our producers, brand owners and exporters, understanding what drives red meat demand in different

markets and consumer segments ensures that strategies, investment decisions and products align with real growth opportunities in global markets," she said.

Backed by strategic trade agreements, trusted production systems and a reputation for safety, quality, enjoyment and a uniquely diverse product mix, Australian red meat continues to demonstrate its competitive edge in diverse markets across the globe.

Global exports – how did Australia perform in 2025?

In 2025, beef export volume totalled more than 1.5 million tonnes shipped weight (swt) – up 15% on 2024 – with the US remaining the top destination, followed by Mainland China and Japan.

Export value (for the 12 months ending November) was also the highest on record, totalling A\$18.2 billion – up 34% year-on-year (YoY) – with a global average unit value of A\$11/kg.

Australian total lamb export volume was down slightly (-4% YoY) but with record-high value surpassing A\$4.2 billion. Mutton exports also achieved a record value of A\$1.7 billion.

The US was the largest export destination for lamb in 2025, although China surpassed the US as a total sheepmeat export market.

High-volume growth markets in 2025 included the UK, Canada, China and the US for beef, and the UK, Saudi Arabia, Canada and China for lamb.

Consolidating Australia's strategic advantage

Australia has a strong global reputation for red meat that is trusted to be safe, consistently high quality, delicious, natural and sustainable.

These are attributes that continue to be among our strongest assets and align closely with global consumer trends toward health, provenance and ethical consumption.

Maintaining Australia's global competitive advantage also requires continuous investment in brand storytelling, product innovation and market intelligence – which can all be optimised through being informed by consumer and market insights.

According to Miho, this is particularly critical with about 80% of Australian beef and lamb being exported into increasingly diverse markets.

"Today's consumer expectations and market dynamics are shifting faster than ever, making access to these market and consumer insights key to enabling confident decision making from our producers, brand owners and exporters and keeping the Australian red meat industry ahead of the curve."

➤ *continued next page*



IN MARKET

growing demand



continued from previous page

Global trends shaping demand

Healthification

The rising global consumer focus on health is driving demand for quality, nutritious and natural red meat protein. This has different expressions in different markets.

In the US, 67% of shoppers prioritise 'better for me/my family' claims and rising demand for grassfed beef.

Across Asia, consumers seek safe, natural proteins that offer superior nutritional benefits over competitor proteins.

In Europe, ethical sourcing and low-carbon credentials are increasingly influencing purchase decisions.



Foodservice and retail sector

According to Miho, each snapshot highlights insights into key foodservice and retail sector dynamics for the market and what they mean for Australia.

Foodservice remains a major channel for Australian red meat globally, with our wide product portfolio meeting operator needs across price points.

The growth and spread of Michelin Guides, luxury hotels and high-end restaurants – particularly across Asia and the Middle East – highlight strong growth opportunities for Australian beef and lamb in the fine dining segment.

In casual to mid-end restaurants within Japan and Korea, foodservice accounts for roughly half of beef consumption, with yakiniku, shabu-shabu and hotpot formats driving demand for secondary cuts. Tourism is often a key growth driver of red meat consumption in this sector across numerous markets.

In modern retail, Australian red meat's presence has continued to expand.

Online grocery is a key growth channel, particularly in some Asian markets. For example, online grocery sales are growing at a compound annual growth rate of 18.3% in the Philippines, while in the US 51% of meat shoppers purchase online regularly.

Convenience formats such as ready-to-cook packs, meal kits and premium chilled beef are expanding – particularly rapidly across Asia, where time-poor and health-conscious affluent urban consumers value pre-prepared items that provide access to both quality and taste.

Premiumisation

Australian Wagyu, grainfed and marbled beef are gaining traction globally. In Japan, Wagyu remains the pinnacle of prestige, while Australian grainfed beef is positioned as a versatile, high quality everyday affordable alternative.

Within the Middle East and across South-East Asia, highly marbled Australian beef is becoming a more sought-after product. Even in the UK, which is traditionally a lean beef market, one in five consumers has purchased highly marbled beef – signalling growing interest in indulgent experiences.

In China, foodservice operators are using Australian red meat across a range of price points to offer premium quality menu items for competitive advantage to entice diners.



Influence of younger generations

Millennials and Gen Z are having a major influence in shaping foodservice and retail trends in most markets, particularly in emerging markets where the generation gap in food preferences tends to be larger.

Younger diners are driving demand for variety and novelty in proteins, cuisines and flavours. They have fuelled the rise of Japanese and Korean cuisine restaurants across emerging markets such as Greater China, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and South-East Asia – increasing higher-end and marbled beef consumption and import demand.

Similarly, younger consumers are key to the global spread of Chinese hotpot, Japanese Genghis Khan barbecue sheepmeat chains and Middle East-style kebabs – which are shifting the dial on sheepmeat consumption.

Younger consumers are also key users of online retail and food delivery services, all opportunity areas for Australia.



Regional snapshots



Australia

While cost-of-living pressures are influencing dining-out frequency, Australian consumers continue to prioritise red meat at home. Retail demand is growing both affordable everyday options and accessible premium cuts as consumers recreate restaurant-style meals at home. Special occasions and social gatherings remain key moments for premium beef and lamb consumption. This dynamic and growing cultural diversity is creating opportunities for red meat usage across both retail and dining-out channels.

The US

The US foodservice industry is projected to reach US\$978.8 billion in total sales in 2026. US consumers eat an average of 36 burgers per year, many of which are made with

Australian beef. Grassfed beef retail sales have grown 50% compared to the previous five-year average – aligning with health and sustainability trends. Australia continues its leadership in the market by supplying 80% of US lamb import volume.



Asia

Japan: Among the world's top four beef importers, reduced beef spending due to cost-of-living pressures is being partly offset in Japan by a significant increase in inbound tourism.

Korea: With a uniquely high proportion of single and two-person households driving growth in convenience meal solutions, Korea ranks third globally for online food sales after Mainland China and the US.

Mainland China: The value of the premium chilled beef segment grew more than 20-fold over the past decade – surpassing A\$1billion every year since 2023 – with Australia the top supplier. Some 90% of lamb is consumed out of home, particularly in hotpot restaurants.



South-East Asia: Grainfed beef to the region has grown more than 18% this year, driven by foodservice and tourism demand for premium beef. Thailand and Indonesia are both among Australia's top 10 grainfed beef export markets, underpinned by their growing middle-class consumer population. Indonesia is also Australia's largest bovine offal export market by volume by quite some margin.



MENA

Australian beef exports to MENA command a 49% higher unit price than the global average – reflecting strong demand for premium grainfed cuts. Tourism growth is contributing to expansion of mid to high-end dining which, in turn, is driving demand at modern retail. Red meat exports to Saudi Arabia have been strong across a wider range of cuts, continuing their upward momentum, particularly for frozen products.

The UK

The Australia–United Kingdom Free Trade Agreement has already facilitated a doubling of Australian beef exports year-on-year, with Australia improving its ranking among beef suppliers from 15th to third. Meanwhile, Australian lamb exports are up 50% year-on-year, in part offsetting New Zealand's supply decline. ■



Latest snapshots by region

MLA's market snapshots provide an overview of key export markets, covering channel summaries, consumer sentiments and trading landscape.

Scan or click the QR code to read the 14 global market snapshots:



A cut above: the next generation of Aussie butchers

Butchers play a critical role in the success of Australia’s red meat industry – helping consumers connect with and love our product.

They’re not just meat cutters – they’re storytellers, innovators and trusted advisors who influence how Australians experience beef and lamb every day.

Recognising this, MLA created the Australian Butchers Guild (ABG) – a dedicated channel designed to engage butchers at every stage of their career, from apprentices to master butchers.

Managed by Doug Piper, MLA’s Retail Business Manager – Corporate Butcher, the ABG program delivers a range of industry resources, learning materials and inspiration to help butchers thrive.

“Like many industries, butchery is facing a real challenge to find the skilled workforce it needs for a sustainable future,” Doug said.

“If you’re an apprentice or an experienced tradesman looking for butchery tips, engagement opportunities, or inspiration for new beef and lamb value-added products, you’ll find what you need on the ABG website.”

Inspiring the next generation

By showcasing the skills and innovation happening across the industry, Doug said

the ABG is helping instill a sense of pride in butchers at every level and creating opportunities to connect, share ideas and learn new techniques to elevate the consumer’s experience.

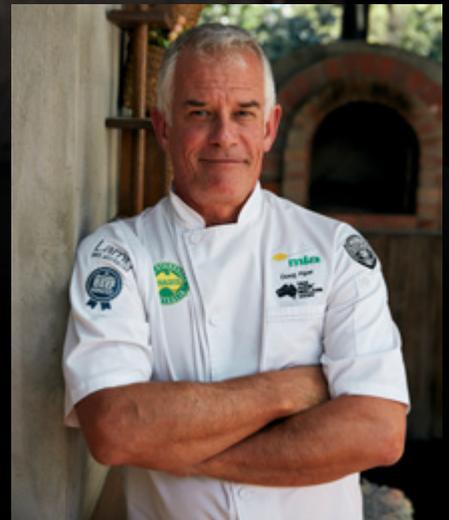
“It’s so much more than a resource hub. It’s a community that’s helping drive engagement and champion the innovation that will help secure a strong future for Australia’s butchers and the red meat industry.”

Building on this and inspired by MLA’s Red Meat Ambassadors, the ABG program appointed its first Butcher Ambassadors in 2024.

“We have six of Australia’s most recognised young butchers sharing their skills and knowledge to help fellow tradespeople build their own successful careers,” Doug said.

Each ABG Ambassador is an award-winning butcher with a passion for beef and lamb innovation.

“They’re inspiring a new generation to embrace creativity and value-adding by developing products that meet evolving consumer needs, while also increasing business profitability.”



▲ Doug Piper, MLA’s Retail Business Manager – Corporate Butcher leads the ABG, a national program supporting butchers at every career stage with industry resources, learning tools and inspiration.

Creating a community

Throughout 2025, MLA’s butcher ambassadors hosted small engagement events where apprentice butchers could chat with the ambassadors, ask questions and learn practical skills.

“These events have helped younger apprentices and butchers learn new techniques and explore value-adding ideas, as well as introduce them to MLA, MSA and the resources available through the ABG,” Doug said. ■



Want to prep like a butcher?

Scan or click the QR codes to learn how to:

Break down a whole beef rump



Break down a whole beef blade



Prepare a flat iron steak



Prepare and slice a beef striploin



Prepare a lamb pitmaster shoulder



Meet MLA's butcher ambassadors

Matt Tyquin

Butcher at
Ashburton Meats, VIC

📷 [matty_tyqs](#)



At 25, Matt is already a multiple award winner. He was named World Champion Butcher Apprentice at the 2022 World Butcher Challenge, before being awarded Australian Apprentice of the Year and Butchery's Brightest Star in 2024.

He loves creating new products with unwanted secondary cuts and trim and says his goal is to make cooking for friends and family an enjoyable experience for his customers.



👉 Scan or click the QR code to try Matt's Mediterranean lamb loin roast:



Sarah Wadland

Store Manager at
Farmgate to Plate and
Fred's Providore, NSW

📷 [meatwithsez](#)



With 10 years in the industry, Sarah is a fourth-generation butcher and winner of the Meatstock Sydney Young Butcher Award in 2024.

She loves getting to know her customers on Sydney's southern beaches and enjoying the freedom to create new products for them.



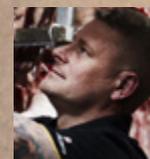
👉 Scan or click the QR code to try Sarah's coffee-rubbed flank steak:



Brett Laws

Butcher at
Pryde Meats, NSW

📷 [butcher_lawsy](#)



Starting as his father's apprentice 25 years ago, Brett Laws has gone on to become one of Australia's most skilled butchers. In 2025, 'Lawsy' was named one of six World All Stars at the 2025 World Butcher Challenge in Paris, where he was part of Australia's third-placing team.

Lawsy loves interacting with customers and using unusual cuts or ingredients to create products that are easy for the family to cook.

He also enjoys sharing his knowledge with young apprentices and hopes to one day have his own butchery where he can help young talent showcase their skills and passion for the industry.



👉 Scan or click the QR code to try Lawsy's sweet and savoury maple-infused lamb shoulder:



Julie and Rod Leaver

Butchery and
retail consultants, QLD



After starting their red meat careers with Coles four decades ago, Rod and Julie went on to own and operate their own butcheries, including the popular Edge Hill Butchery in Cairns which they sold in 2025. Rod's expert butchery skills saw him win multiple national and state Sausage King Awards, with the couple winning the AMIC Regional Retailer of The Year four times. That blend of product and retailing expertise was a hit with their day-to-day customers as well as some of the international super yachts stopping in Cairns.



👉 Scan or click the QR code to try Rod's Indian-spiced butterflied lamb leg:



Luke Leyson

Butcher at Goodwood
Quality Meats and
Smallgoods maker at
Schlink Smallgoods, SA

📷 [lukeleyson](#)



One of Australia's leading butchers, Luke went from cleaning butcher shops at the age of 13 to captaining Australia at the 2025 World Butcher Challenge in Paris, France, (for third place) and Sacramento, US, in 2022 (second place).

Luke loves the challenge of breaking down a whole carcass in-store and meeting like-minded people across the industry. He also enjoys creating new products for his customers and is passionate about mastering the in-house production of smallgoods, such as dry-cured and fermented meats.



👉 Scan or click the QR code to try Luke's Indian beef shin parcels:



TOOLBOX



👉 Listen to the ABG podcast:
[australianbutchersguild.com.au/
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👉 Read some of the top tips
butchers share with their customers:
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From niche to next big thing: four forces driving goatmeat demand

Australian goatmeat may be niche, but it sits squarely at the crossroads of four powerful forces reshaping what people eat and how they choose it.

A recent MLA-supported webinar series brought together global market insights and industry intelligence to help goatmeat producers better understand emerging trends across key markets.

Drawing on input from MLA's Global Market Insights team, the series explored themes of health and wellness, sustainability, convenience and global discovery, and the opportunities they present for Australian producers.

Here, MLA's Global Market Insights Manager, Miho Kondo, shares the highlights.



Health and wellness

Goatmeat is highly nutritious but lean – it's valued by consumers for being low in fat, high in protein and rich in vitamins and minerals such as B12, niacin, zinc and riboflavin.

These attributes place goatmeat firmly within the global shift toward health and wellness, where shoppers are seeking foods that deliver strong nutritional benefits without heavy processing or additives.

"Health is often the most effective entry point to goatmeat for new consumers," Miho said.

While health has been the biggest global consumer influence since 2001, it shows up in different ways. For example:

- In Korea, goatmeat is closely linked with stamina, immunity and restorative nutrition. It's enjoyed in soups, stews and health tonics (notably black goat extract) and increasingly accessed through ready-to-heat formats that fit busy lives.
- In Taiwan, skin-on cuts are prized in winter hotpots for their 'warming' qualities and perceived collagen benefits, reinforcing goatmeat's role as comfort food with function.
- Within Mainland China, more affluent, health-conscious urban consumers are drawn to goatmeat's leanness and nutrient density across foodservice and easy-to-cook retail products.
- In the US, goat's leanness and natural nutrition appeal to a small but growing group of wellness-focused consumers. Mainstream awareness continues to come from chef-led menus and the rising popularity of birria tacos.

Sustainability

Backed by health and wellness desires, many consumers are paying attention to how their food is produced.

"This is where the reputation of Australia's strong integrity and traceability systems comes into play," Miho said.

"While goatmeat remains a niche category in many regions, consumers who are familiar with it consistently associate the Australian product with good animal welfare, responsible land management and high standards of traceability."

By improving and maintaining our standards, Australia has a competitive advantage over other countries.

Practices such as whole-carcass utilisation and nose-to-tail eating further reinforce associations with sustainability.

Convenience

The desire for easy and affordable products plays a major role in shaping what people cook and eat.

"Consumers today are time-poor and convenience and familiarity play a major role in how they plan meals and choose proteins," Miho said.

"That's been one of goatmeat's biggest challenges – but it's also one of its biggest opportunities."

In markets like Korea and Mainland China, convenience is reshaping consumption patterns.

Ready-to-heat soups and stews, pre-cut cubes and tonic-style products sold through online retailers have made goatmeat far more accessible to busy households. These also make

goatmeat more appealing to those who may not feel confident cooking it from scratch but are motivated by its health benefits.

A similar shift is emerging in western markets, where goat is moving beyond whole cuts and into formats that fit seamlessly into everyday routines.

"Innovative retailers and processors are experimenting with marinated cubes, burgers, sausages and slow-cooked meals that require little preparation – helping remove uncertainty for first-time users," Miho said.

Global discovery

Another force accelerating goatmeat's rise is the growing appetite for global flavours and culinary exploration.

Although goat is an everyday staple for millions of people across Africa, Asia, the Middle East and the Caribbean, in western markets it's being rediscovered as something exciting and new – a dual identity which creates opportunity.

"Chef-led venues in cities such as New York, London and Sydney are experimenting with goat in

modern, cross-cultural dishes – helping introduce the protein to new audiences," Miho said.

"Together with growing retail availability and more user-friendly product formats, this cultural momentum can help goatmeat move from occasional curiosity to a credible, repeatable choice at home and out of home."



Did you know?

Korea increased its Australian goatmeat imports seven-fold from 2020–2024.



Spicy braised short ribs



Rich, spicy and deeply satisfying, these gochujang-braised short ribs are slow-cooked to perfection. Paired with noodles and black vinegar, this Korean-inspired recipe from Danielle Alvarez is all about big flavour and low effort. For more delicious beef recipes, visit australianbeef.com.au

Serves 4 Prep time 25 minutes Cooking time 3 hours

INGREDIENTS

Braise:

1kg short ribs, salted
1 tbsp neutral oil
4–5cm piece ginger, sliced
4 garlic cloves, peeled
4 spring onions, cut into 6cm lengths
2 tbsp gochujang
¼ cup Shaoxing wine
¼ cup rice wine vinegar
¼ cup mirin
¼ cup soy sauce
½ tsp Szechuan peppercorns

Fragrant chilli oil:

3 tbsp neutral oil
2 spring onions, thinly sliced
2 tsp finely minced ginger
½ tsp Szechuan peppercorns, crushed
1 tsp gochugaru
2 tbsp black vinegar
1 tsp sugar

To serve:

Boiled egg noodles
Toasted sesame seeds



METHOD

- Season short ribs well in advance for maximum flavour. Bring to room temperature before cooking.
- Heat oil in a cast iron pot over high heat. Brown ribs on all sides (five minutes per side), then remove and set aside.
- Add ginger, garlic and spring onions to the pot, cook for 1–2 minutes. Stir in gochujang, Shaoxing, vinegar, mirin, soy sauce and peppercorns.
- Braise: Return ribs to the pot, add 300–400ml water to almost cover. Bring to a simmer, cover and cook in the oven at 160°C (140°C fan) for three hours, until tender.
- Chilli oil: Heat oil until smoking. Pour over spring onion, ginger, Szechuan pepper and gochugaru in a bowl. Stir, then add vinegar and sugar.
- Divide noodles between bowls, top with beef and braising broth, then drizzle with chilli oil and sprinkle sesame seeds.

TIPS

- Season large cuts of meat well in advance – it makes a huge difference to flavour.
- Braising is all about layering flavour. Take the time to brown the beef properly.
- Use English-style bone-in short ribs for the best texture and richness.



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