

final report

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Prepared by: Peter Schuster
Schuster Consulting Group

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Meat & Livestock Australia Limited
Locked Bag 991
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More Beef from Pastures eNewsletter 2011

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Abstract

The More Beef from Pastures (MBfP) program was developed in 2004 as a delivery framework for outputs from research and development (R&D) activities in southern beef production systems.

The goal of More Beef from Pastures program is to achieve a sustainable (economic and environmental) increase in kilograms of beef produced per hectare through optimal management of the feedbase. The program seeks to achieve its goals through the provision of principle and procedure-based information (detailed in the program manual) and tools extended through partnerships with contracted MBfP State Coordinators.

The More Beef from Pastures eNewsletter is a key communication activity delivering seasonally timely management messages and providing ongoing engagement with MBfP activity attendees. Four issues of the eNewsletter were sent between March 2011 and February 2012. Due to technical issues, detailed statistics are missing for the July 2011 issue.

Latest research into email marketing response rates indicate that average Open Rates for Government and Non-profit Organisations (closest fit for MLA) is 20% and the average CTR is 35%. With an average Open Rate of 23% and a CTR of 59%, the More Beef from Pastures eNewsletter performs well above these averages.

Method of calculations

Reference to subscribers in this report relates to **active subscribers** - those that have not had a bounced or inactive status recorded against them in Campaign Monitor. As a result, actual subscriber numbers in Campaign Monitor are significantly higher than those shown in this report; however, only active subscribers should be reported on as others are irrelevant to usage.

MLA's current preference for the handling of bounced addresses is to leave them in the database, meaning that the database becomes "unhygienic" overtime. Unhygienic databases can result in blacklisting, poor campaign results and inconsistent statistics.

Results in this report focus on deliverability. **Open Rates** indicate the number of emails opened based on the number of emails *delivered* to active subscribers. This again removes bounced and unsubscribed emails as these are not delivered.

Open Rates in this report are also unique (**Unique Opens**), that is, only one open is recorded for that link against each active subscriber. Active subscribers may open the email multiple times (for example to re-read or as a result of forwarding on); however, for the sake of accuracy and to avoid ambiguity, only unique opens are measured. This way the results cannot be easily skewed by individuals opening or forwarding an email multiple times.

Open Rates measured in this manner provide an indicator of interest among active subscribers in the eNewsletter in general.

Click Throughs are based on the number of times a specific link was clicked on by each unique subscriber. Click Throughs can relate to the overall number of clicks per eNewsletter and the overall number of clicks per article.

The **Click Through Rate for the eNewsletter** is the Click Throughs over Unique Opens and the **Click Through Rate for the individual articles** are the Click Throughs for the article over the Click Throughs for the eNewsletter. These are traditional methods for discerning Click Through Rates within the email marketing industry.

Click Through Rates measured in this manner provide an indicator of interest among active subscribers in specific articles and therefore topics.

Very low importance is placed on **Unsubscribe Rates**. Unsubscribes are not a measure of recipient interest or disinterest. It is generally accepted that many email recipients use the "this is spam" or "this is junk" button to ban an email from their inbox. These actions are impossible to measure. As a result, open rates and click through rates are a better indicator of interest.

The methods of calculation outlined above are generally accepted in the email marketing industry.

Campaign Monitor statistics are unsophisticated and the scope for analysis under the current system is, therefore, limited. It should be noted that email system providers often record results differently to each other, this is due to the number of variables that impact deliverability and other statistics. As a result, email statistics are not an exact science but rather, should be used to identify trends.

Subscriber statistics

Subscriber numbers have increased, largely due to sign-ups from More Beef from Pastures events. July experienced a drop in subscriber numbers, due mainly to an increase in email addresses that were inactive, blocked or unsubscribed.

This is not unexpected given the April issue was the first for more than 12 months and would have identified defunct email addresses and disinterested subscribers.

Table 1: Subscriber Numbers and Unique Opens

	Apr-11	Jul-11	Nov-11	Feb-12*
Subscribers	3,074	2,991	3,547	3,694
Unique Opens	757	645	941	761
Open Rate	25%	22%	27%	21%

*Totals for February are expected to increase as the period since dispatch increases (the eNewsletter was sent 12 days prior to the analysis of results and past results show that subscribers read the eNewsletter up to a month after receiving it).

Graph 1: Subscriber Numbers

November and February show a steady increase in subscribers.

Subscriber growth

Since the introduction of the eNewsletter in 2007, the database has experienced steady growth. This is due mainly to the promotion of the eNewsletter offline, for example at the numerous program-related events that occur each year. Given the delay between Issue 10 and the April 2011 issue, subscriber numbers have fluctuated but are now showing signs of stabilising into a pattern of sustained growth.

Table 2: Subscriber Growth Since 2007

Issue	Subscribers
Issue 1 - May 2007	205
Issue 2 - Sep 2007	534
Issue 3 - Dec 2007	751
Issue 4 - Mar 2008	1,115
Issue 5 - Aug 2008	1,490
Issue 6 – Oct 2008	1,698
Issue 7 – Jan 2009	1,874
Issue 8 – May 2009	2,055
Issue 9 – Aug 2009	2,291
Issue 10 – Dec 2009	2,459
April 2011	3,074
July 2011	2,991
November 2011	3,547
February 2012	3,694

Continued promotion of the eNewsletter at program events has and will further increase subscriber numbers and readership.

Very few subscribers forward the eNewsletter on using the Forward to a Friend link in the email (2%) and it is impossible to track forwards sent using the email client's forward button; which is the usual way of forwarding an email.

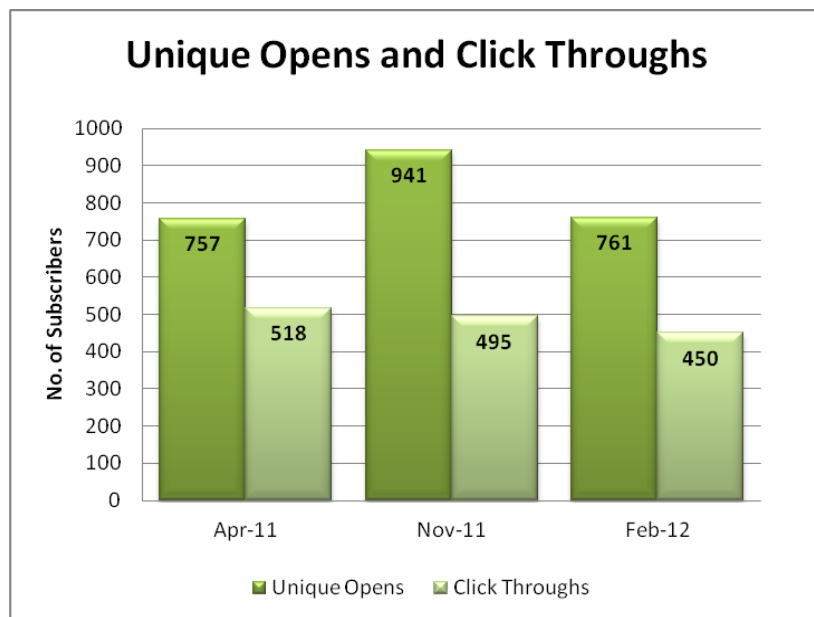
Unique Opens and Click Throughs

On average, the eNewsletter experiences a 23% Open Rate and a 59% Click Through Rate (CTR) which is excellent when compared to most other email communications within any industry. As a comparison, fridayfeedback receives a 38% CTR.

Table 3: Unique Opens, Click Throughs and CTRs

	Apr-11	Nov-11	Feb-12
Unique Opens	757	941	761
Click Throughs	518	495	450
CTR	68%	53%	59%

Graph 2: Unique Opens and Click Throughs



Popularity of articles

Based on CTR, the five most popular articles related were: *Rotation rules* (49% CTR), *More Beef from Pastures - "Phase 2"* (41% CTR), *Pasture management for profit* (39% CTR), *The cost of trace element deficiency* (36% CTR) and *The need for speed* (33% CTR).

Table 4: Popularity of Articles based on CTR

Article	Issue	CT	CTR %
Rotation rules	Nov-11	245	49%
More Beef from Pastures - "Phase 2"	Apr-11	210	41%
Pasture management for profit	Feb-12	191	39%
The cost of trace element deficiency	Feb-12	178	36%
The need for speed (rotational grazing)	Apr-11	172	33%
Case Study: Breeding profit	Nov-11	152	31%
Opening the door on drench resistance	Nov-11	141	28%
Case Study: A profitable producer's success story	Apr-11	136	26%
Watch out for worms	Apr-11	129	25%
Interesting end to 2011 (Market report)	Nov-11	121	24%
The new faces of MBfP	Apr-11	106	20%
Unlocking the secrets of productivity (Beef CRC)	Nov-11	84	17%
Case study: Complement to manage risk	Feb-12	81	16%
Bright outlook for Aussie beef in 2011 (Market report)	Apr-11	72	14%
Increasing the rate of genetic gain	Feb-12	48	10%
A\$ and rain balance early 2012 markets (Market report)	Feb-12	37	7%

Based on results it can be surmised that More Beef from Pastures eNewsletter subscribers are interested in articles that relate to:

- Feed, feedbase and feeding strategies
- Animal husbandry and welfare

While in earlier editions of the More Beef from Pastures eNewsletter case studies in general were popular, it now appears that subscribers are seeking case studies on specific topics. This is not unexpected given case studies were a new concept to MLA's email marketing activities when the More Beef from Pastures eNewsletter was first launched and subscribers have become more used to them and are therefore more discerning in what they read.

Subscribers do not appear to be particularly interested in articles or case studies that relate to:

- Beef CRC
- Market information, risk management or business management
- Genetics

The disinterest in market news is likely due to subscribers receiving market information from other sources and not looking to More Beef from Pastures eNewsletter for this information.

Similarly, subscribers with an express interest in genetics and the Beef CRC are likely to access alternative, more specific and higher level information than that provided in the More Beef from Pastures eNewsletter.

The BetterBeef Phone Seminar promoted in the February 2012 issue received twice as much interest as other events promoted in the same and earlier issues of the eNewsletter. While the overall number of CTRs was low (16) compared to CTRs for articles, it was twice as high as the CTR for other events.

This may indicate interest among subscribers for alternative delivery methods such as phone seminars and webinars.

Summary

Latest research into email marketing response rates indicate that average Open Rates for Government and Non-profit Organisations (closet fit for MLA) is 20% and the average CTR is 35%.

With an average Open Rate of 23% and a CTR of 59%, the More Beef from Pastures eNewsletter performs well above these averages.

Subscriber numbers, Open Rates and CTRs indicate that the eNewsletter is providing value as the primary online communication vehicle for MLA's More Beef from Pastures program.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- MLA continue the More Beef from Pastures eNewsletter. As such, the next eNewsletter should be scheduled for May 2012 and then every three months after that.
- The mix of articles should continue as it has over the last 12 months although priority should be placed on articles and case studies that relate to:
 - Feed, feedbase and feeding strategies
 - Animal husbandry and welfare
- Less popular areas such as the Beef CRC and genetics should continue to be covered as these may provide an important introduction to these issues. Articles on such topics should be designed to move readers through to further information.
- Further opportunities to increase the subscriber base among producers should be explored and MLA should continue to collate and enter into the email database subscribers from events.
- MLA should consider a data cleansing program for the email database.