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MEAT & LIVESTOCK AUSTRALIA

meatup FORUM

Northam, Western Australia

12 August 2026

Hear about the latest red meat R&D and adoption programs

Access tools and insights tailored to your business

Take next steps to grow your red meat enterprise

About MLA

Meat & Livestock Australia Limited (MLA) delivers research, development and marketing services to Australia's cattle, sheep and goat producers. MLA has approximately 50,000 livestock producer members who have stakeholder entitlements in the company.

Program

12 August 2026	
8:00am	**Arrival and registrations, tea and coffee**
Session 1	
9:00am	**Event welcome, housekeeping and forum schedule – 10 minutes** **Elizabeth Thelander** – Meat & Livestock Australia
9:10am	**MLA welcome and update – 40 minutes** **Michael Crowley** – Meat & Livestock Australia
9:50am	**WA market update – 30 minutes** **Brent Dancer** – V&V Walsh
10:20am	**The SMARTBEEF project: Turning production decisions into profit – 10 minutes** **Lucy Anderton** – LA.ONE Economics and Consulting
10:30am	**Morning tea**
Session 2	
11:00am	**Producer Demonstration Sites program – Productive pastures – Bridging the Summer-Autumn feed gap – 20 minutes** **Hilary Watterson** – Gillamii Centre Inc., **Sam Lehmann** – RH Lehmann & Co
11:20am	**Producer Demonstration Sites program – Liver biopsies to assess micromineral levels in cattle – 20 minutes** **Dr Enoch Bergman** – Swans Veterinary Services
11:40am	**From fences to algorithms: Virtual fencing in a mixed farming system – 20 minutes** **Stuart McAlpine** – McAlpine Farms
12:00pm	**Made to measure: eID *meats* sheep genetics – 20 minutes** **Marcus Sounness – Paper Collar Grazing Co., Brianna Wightman** – AgPro Management
12:20pm	**Fifteen minutes of question time – panel of speakers from Session 2**
12:35pm	**Lunch**
Session 3	
1:35pm	**The agronomy of mixed enterprise: Opportunities in practice – 35 minutes** **Nick Eyres –** Greenough Specialty Ag
2:10pm	**Animal health update – 25 minutes** **Jack McKie** – Zoetis
2:35pm	**Virtual farm tour – 'Hillcrest', Gunning – 30 minutes** **Jen Medway** – Penrose Pastoral
3:05pm	**Afternoon tea**
Session 4	
3:35pm	**Australian Merino production trial – Benchmarking Merino genetics for improved flock performance and profitability – 30 minutes** **Craig Wilson –** Convenor of the Australian Merino Production Trial
4:05pm	**Enhanced Feedback – it's getting closer! – 30 minutes** **Graham Gardner –** Murdoch University
4:35pm	**Turning reproductive potential into reality – 40 minutes** **Jason Trompf** – J.T. Agri-source Pty Ltd
Session 5	
5:15pm	**Event wrap-up – 5 minutes** **Elizabeth Thelander** – Meat & Livestock Australia
5:20pm	**Networking drinks and canapes**

Welcome

MLA's MeatUp Forums are held throughout southern Australia to give you the latest in red meat R&D. They are developed by regional producer working groups that include members from the Western Australia Livestock Research Council, in collaboration with MLA staff.

MLA's MeatUp Forums have been developed to keep you informed about:

- what MLA can offer your red meat business,
- new and completed R&D that is relevant to your region and enterprise,
- the role and responsibilities of the livestock research councils,
- opportunities to get involved in regional R&D and priority-setting,
- practical tools and programs available to you,
- opportunities to enhance your productivity and profitability.

Today you will be presented with clear and practical ideas, information, and tools that you can take home and put into practice on-farm. We thank all presenters for their involvement in MeatUp and encourage you to make the most of your time with them today.

Thank you

MLA would like to thank our 2026 gold sponsor **Zoetis** for their ongoing support of producer awareness adoption events.

Event location

Northam Country Club | 15 Wood Drive, Northam, WA, 6401

Forum Coordinator

Elizabeth Thelander
Meat & Livestock Australia
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Regional Working Group

Jim McMahon

Director/Veterinarian

WESTBREED Pty Ltd

About Jim

Dr Jim McMahon is the Director of WESTBREED Pty Ltd. WESTBREED provides an artificial breeding service to the sheep production industry.

Jim graduated in 2001 with a Bachelor of Agribusiness from the Muresk Institute and in 2010 completed a Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine and Surgery at Murdoch University.

Jim provides services throughout Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

Jim's accreditations include: Australian Quarantine and Inspection Services (AQIS) as an Embryo Transfer Veterinarian (ETV). Jim also has a membership with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (UK).

Alan Peggs

Director

Alan Peggs Rural Pty Ltd

About Alan

Alan Peggs is an agricultural economist by training and works as an agricultural and pastoral consultant with particular interest in cattle, pastures and profitable production systems. He is currently involved in two MLA based extension programs – the *Smart Beef Project* and *Graze Expectations.*

David Roe

Owner/Operator

Benalong Grazing Co

About David

David manages a 2,826-ha property with his three sons at Beermullah, Northwest of Gingin.

It is a 900 head angus cow herd, producing feeder weaners for the local feeder market and 1,200 crossbred ewes producing sucker lambs for the local trade – all on improved pastures.

David is a WALRC committee member.

Brianna Wightman

Project Management Coordinator

AgPro Management

About Brianna

Brianna is a Project Management Coordinator with AgPro Management, coordinating producer-led research, development and extension (RD&E) projects across WA.

Raised on a mixed farming property, she developed a passion for profitable and sustainable sheep and mixed farming systems, with a particular interest in pasture management strategies.

Brianna enjoys working alongside producers to translate research into practical, on-farm outcomes through workshops, demonstration sites and collaborative industry projects.

MLA representatives

Michael Crowley

Managing Director

About Michael

Michael was raised on a beef cattle property at Barraba in northern New South Wales, where his family run a stud and commercial beef cattle operation. He holds a Bachelor of Rural Science degree from UNE and also has a Post Graduate Certificate in Business Administration from QUT. He has had a long association with ICMJ going to back to 1997 where he competed as a student before becoming the Australian coach for 6 years and president of the association until 2012.

Michael has held a range of commercial positions in the meat & livestock industry including livestock procurement, processing, plant quality assurance, supply chain management, sales and marketing. Michael ran his own business marketing livestock, running beef processing for branded beef exporters and he held his own meat export license.

Michael worked for MLA for 14 years. He joined MLA in 2009 where he managed the Meat Standards Australia program. In 2012, he moved with his family to Brussels – taking on the role of International Business Manager for EU and Russia with MLA. He returned from Brussels in 2015 as the Program Manager – Meat Standards Australia and joined MLA's Executive Team in 2016 where he was the General Manager Research, Development and Adoption. This business unit was responsible for investments in RD&A across the supply chain including livestock genetics, on-farm productivity, eating quality, sustainability innovation, automation, objective measurement, market access science and product innovation.

Michael was the CEO of Herefords Australia where he worked with the seedstock sector to drive commercial outcomes for all customers along the beef supply chain.

He has been the Managing Director of MLA since 2024.

Elizabeth Thelander

Project Manager– Producer Led Adoption

About Elizabeth

Elizabeth is the Project Manager – Producer Led Adoption at Meat & Livestock Australia, working within the Producer Adoption team. She manages the delivery of MeatUp forums across southern Australia and the Profitable Grazing

Systems program nationally – supporting red meat producers to adopt proven practices that improve productivity and profitability.

Elizabeth has experience in agricultural extension, program delivery, stakeholder engagement, and adult learning. She also has a broad background in extension delivery across the red meat and dairy industries in Australia.

Elizabeth studied a Bachelor in Agricultural Business Management at Charles Sturt University and enjoys the practical, collaborative, and outcomes-focused approach to driving adoption and industry impact.

Sarah Hassall

Project Manager – Northern Beef Adoption

About Sarah

Sarah joined MLA in August 2021 as the Genetics Project Officer, supporting the investment of research and development across the genetics portfolio.

In May 2024, she began in her role as the Project Manager for Northern Beef Adoption, which focuses on supporting on-farm adoption of new research, technologies and practices.

Sarah works closely with industry partners across WA, NT and Queensland to deliver programs including BeefUp forums, EDGEnetwork workshops and FutureBeef.

Keely Kovacevic

Project Manager – Adoption Capability Building

About Keely

Keely Kovacevic has been with MLA for over seven years in roles across Research, Development and Adoption.

Prior to starting with MLA, Keely worked in the music industry as a journalist and digital producer for almost a decade before studying Animal Veterinary Bioscience at Sydney University and discovering her true passion.

She is currently the Project Manager – Adoption capability building. In her role, she oversees the Livestock Advisor capability building portfolio, which includes Livestock Advisor Updates, Livestock Advisor Essentials and Pasture Pathways.

Keely is looking forward to expanding the advisor portfolio over the next few years to continue to drive investment into this crucial sector.

Madeleine Donkin

Events Coordinator

About Madeleine

With more than two decades of experience across events, communications, and business development, Madeleine has built a career delivering impactful stakeholder engagement and strategic growth initiatives.

She currently works as Event Coordinator at Meat & Livestock Australia, following a maternity leave contract as Communications Manager.

Madeleine has held senior leadership roles at Northcott Innovation and Northcott, driving national business development, innovation projects, and communication strategies.

Her background also includes key management positions at UnitingCare NSW.ACT, where she led communication and relationship development portfolios, including strategic fundraising.

MLA welcome and update

Michael Crowley

Managing Director

Meat & Livestock Australia

Session Rating		
Content:	/	10
Value:	/	10
Presenter:	/	10

Session abstract

Delivering world leading outcomes is central to Meat & Livestock Australia's purpose. MLA is achieving this through the 2030 Strategic Plan and its five bold ambitions: Contributing to Australia's net-zero ambitions; Delivering value-based marketing; Establishing multibreed genetic evaluation and livestock credentials; Driving demand through marketing, market access and social capital; and Investing in our industry's People.

Those ambitions and reaching the potential that exists under each of them are becoming increasingly significant and important, when considering the dynamic operating environment that we exist in. It's no longer good enough to only think about Australia, or Western Australia or the community that we live in as our marketplace. Our meat and livestock sector is part of a global ecosystem – a marketplace where every part is interconnected with those around it.

When an issue develops it one region, the ripple effects are felt everywhere. Whether you're thinking about China Safeguards limiting our exports, Tariffs imposed onto products in the US, increasing oil prices due to the Middle East conflict, the EU Deforestation Regulation creating potential barriers to market access, biosecurity and disease concerns and more – trade is becoming more dynamic.

But it's not all doom and gloom. In fact, in some ways it's quite the opposite. Notwithstanding the challenges, Australia's beef exports go from strength to strength.

In FY26, Australia's beef exports rose sharply, reaching 1.65 million tonnes out of a total of 2.37 million tonnes of red meat exported to 103 markets globally. And 682,294 live cattle were exported in the same period.

While population growth is often cited as a driver of demand, MLA's market insights show that real opportunity lies with consumers who can 'afford to choose' red meat. Rising middle-income households, particularly in North America, North Asia and parts of South-East Asia, value quality eating as well as trust, nutrition and integrity. When surveying Australian consumers, health and nutrition, especially protein and iron, are the leading reasons people increase red meat consumption, while cost remains the primary reason for reducing intake. Trust in the red meat industry strongly correlates with higher consumption, reinforcing the importance of credible on-farm practices, transparency and community communications.

Closer to home, WALRC producer identified priorities are helping guide MLA's research activities, and align to overarching industry objectives based around profitability, productivity and sustainability.

Whether it's improving feedbase systems and developing tools to address grazing pressure, virtual fencing in WA Rangelands, or examining the benefits of buffel grass, MLA's efforts to maximise opportunities and outcomes for WA producers will help grow the industry.

The presentation will provide big picture context, examining our global operating environment, then share how MLA R&D combined with our bold ambitions is setting a strong foundation for the future.

Key Messages

Challenge and opportunity are often found in the same place. Dynamic market conditions can create uncertainty, but there are now more tools and resources than ever to help producers pivot, become more productive, more sustainable, find new markets, change on farm practices, build new relationships and create new opportunities. MLA's team is on the ground in key markets around the world and can help open doors. Our market research can also inform decision making and R&D programs can help you deliver on farm.

You can lift productivity and meet future market expectations at the same time. Producers do not need to choose between productivity, eating quality and lower emissions. MLA research shows there is wide variation between animals, meaning you can select cattle that perform well for growth, carcase traits and eating quality while also having lower methane emissions. New tools such as methane breeding values and multibreed genetic evaluation will allow more informed sire and replacement decisions across breeds.

Nature-based sustainability may help us unlock more than we realise. *MLA's project, Rangelands regeneration in northern Western Australia – proof of concept trial* found that building natural capital directly underpins more reliable productivity, increased drought resilience, and potential access to emerging environmental markets. So, not only do nature-based sustainability practices improve soil function, and result in stronger pasture growth, they can also unlock new income streams through mechanisms such as the Nature Repair Market.

Notes

Relevant tools and resources

- **Market update trends and analysis**

  MLA's Market Information analysts examine and interpret developments in, and prospects for, the Australian domestic market, key export markets and major competitors, producing a wide range of publications.

- **MLA's 2024–25 *Producer Adoption Outcomes* Report**

  The 2024–25 Producer Adoption Outcomes Report outlines the depth and breadth of adoption projects and programs that Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) delivered for the 2024–25 financial year and how red meat producers benefited from their involvement in them.

- **MLA membership application**

  MLA membership is free to levy-paying producers of grass or grain fed cattle, sheep, lambs and/or goats. Benefits of membership include:

  - participation and voting rights at the MLA Annual General Meeting (AGM)
  - discounts for a range of MLA products and services, ordered via the myMLA catalogue
  - invitations to local MLA events
  - free subscription to MLA's regular member magazine *Feedback*
  - free subscriptions to MLA suite of e-newsletters
  - free access to up-to-date publications and information tools

- **MLA Producer Demonstration Sites**

  Producer Demonstration Sites (PDS) are on-farm projects run by producer groups who want to validate the benefits of incorporating research findings into their businesses. MLA calls for preliminary applications for PDS projects that will help to improve the profitability, productivity and sustainability of beef and sheep meat enterprises on an annual basis.

- **MLA Profitable Grazing Systems program**

  Profitable Grazing Systems is a group-based delivery program designed to deliver training and coaching over several months and up to a year to improve producer skills and knowledge. The aim is to achieve practice change on-farm in the areas of people, business, reproduction and genetics, value chain and feedbase.

- **MLA BredWell FedWell**

  BredWell FedWell is a practical, one-day workshop highlighting the key production benefits of superior genetics, plus feed management for improved reproductive performance and livestock productivity. New workshops are coming soon, follow the QR code to express interest.

- **MLA EDGE Network**

  EDGE Network workshops offer practical knowledge and skills on topics such as breeding and genetics, business management, nutrition, grazing and land management. Workshops range from one to three days.

- **BulkUp**

  BulkUp is MLA's long-term peer-supported learning program designed to help red meat producers improve production efficiency, lift profitability and build more resilient farm businesses. BulkUp addresses the national feedbase adoption initiative, referenced in the *'Drive profitable, productive and sustainable growth'* strategic priority in MLA's *Strategic Plan 2030.* It is being delivered under the Natural Capital and Land Productivity Focus 9 theme.

WA Market Update

Brent Dancer

General Manager

V&V Walsh

Session Rating		
Content:	/	10
Value:	/	10
Presenter:	/	10

About Brent

Brent is the General Manager of V&V Walsh with 10 years of experience in the Ag sector leading one of WA's leading meat processors.

Session abstract

Update on WA livestock supply and Export Sales Markets:

- Livestock state of play with supply and price
- Domestic demand update
- Export Market overview and what we see in the coming months

Key messages

- Winter supply remains tight – WA supply needed for WA
- Domestic demand for WA produce feeling resistance to price
- Export market in a volatile state due to government policy and intervention

Notes

The SMARTBEEF Project:
Turning production decisions into profit

Lucy Anderton

Director

LA.ONE Economics and Consulting

	Session Rating	
Content:	/	10
Value:	/	10
Presenter:	/	10

About Lucy

Lucy Anderton is an agricultural economist and Director of LA.ONE Economics and Consulting, with more than 35 years' experience working with farmers, industry and government.

She specialises in farm business analysis, strategic decision-making and the economics of production systems.

Lucy is the Project Lead for the MLA SMARTBEEF Project, which is working with beef producers across Western Australia to improve productivity and profitability. She also represents Australia in the International Agri-Benchmark Network, comparing beef and sheep production systems with leading producers from around the world.

Session abstract

What if you could test a management decision before making the investment or taking the risk? Every day, beef producers make decisions that influence the productivity and profitability of their business. Decisions about pasture management, stocking rate, calving time, supplementary feeding and marketing all affect production, but their impact on whole-farm profitability is often less obvious. In an increasingly variable climate, where seasonal conditions, input costs and market prices continue to fluctuate, making informed management decisions has never been more important.

Traditionally, many farm decisions have been based on experience, intuition and local knowledge. While these remain invaluable, today's farming businesses also have access to more information than ever before. The challenge is not a lack of data – it is knowing how to combine that information with experience to make better business decisions.

The MLA-funded SMARTBEEF Project is helping Western Australian beef producers bridge the gap between production and profitability. The project focuses on understanding how different management decisions interact across the whole farm business. Increasing production does not automatically increase profit. The most profitable decision is often the one that delivers the greatest return on investment while managing risk and building business resilience.

A key strength of the SMARTBEEF project is its producer-led learning approach. Through workshops, on-farm discussions and peer-to-peer learning, producers share experiences, challenge ideas and learn from one another while exploring alternative management strategies. This collaborative approach is complemented by farm business

analysis and scenario planning, enabling participants to evaluate the likely impact of changes such as altering calving time, improving pasture utilisation, adjusting stocking rate or modifying supplementary feeding before implementing them.

By combining producer experience, peer-to-peer learning and farm business analysis, the SMARTBEEF project helps producers build confidence in their decision-making. Testing alternative scenarios allows opportunities and risks to be evaluated before valuable time, money and resources are committed.

It provides a framework for combining practical knowledge with objective analysis to improve decision-making. The SMARTBEEF project is helping producers make decisions with greater confidence.

Key messages

1. **Design the production system that is right for your farm business.**
   Align your production system with your resources, environment, business goals and appetite for risk to build a productive, profitable and resilient business.

2. **Test management decisions before making the investment or taking the risk.**
   Evaluate the production and financial impacts of different management options before implementation to build confidence and reduce cost of risky decisions.

3. **Learn together. Build decision confidence.**
   Combine producer experience, peer-to-peer learning and whole-farm business analysis to make more informed decisions that improve profitability and

Next steps

To register access the MLA webpage: www.smartbeefproject.com

SBP Webpage

Notes

MEAT & LIVESTOCK AUSTRALIA

BulkUp
PASTURE • PRODUCTION • PROFIT

BulkUp is MLA's long term learning program helping red meat producers improve production efficiency, lift profitability and build more resilient farm businesses.

Participants will receive:

- A guided whole-farm systems approach
- Peer-to-peer support
- Business benchmarking
- Access to in-depth extension/ adoption programs

To find out more or register your interest, visit: **mla.com.au/bulkup**

Producer Demonstration Sites Program – Productive pastures: Bridging the Summer-Autumn feed gap

Session Rating		
Content:	/	10
Value:	/	10
Presenter:	/	10

Hilary Watterson

Executive Officer

Gillamii Centre Inc.

About Hilary

Hilary Watterson is the Executive Officer of Gillamii Centre, bringing a strong blend of agricultural experience, financial expertise, and community leadership.

Raised on a sheep and cattle property near Mount Barker, she built her career in rural accounting before becoming actively involved in her family's farming enterprise and local community organisations.

Passionate about sustainable agriculture and healthy landscapes, Hilary is committed to supporting landholders through practical, collaborative solutions that strengthen both farm businesses and the natural environment for future generations.

Sam Lehmann

Owner/Operator

RM Lehmann & Co.

About Sam

Sam Lehmann is a third-generation mixed farmer from Cranbrook in Western Australia's Great Southern, where he farms alongside his wife, Lauren, and parents, Ian and Sandy.

He is passionate about sustainable agriculture and has spent decades developing saltbush-based grazing systems that transform saline land into productive, profitable country while improving landscape health.

Sam is a committee member and former Chair of the Gillamii Centre. He is a strong advocate for practical, science-backed farming solutions and shares his experience in saltland grazing, mixed farming systems, and producing premium saltbush-raised lamb through WA Premium Lamb.

Session abstract

Salt-affected land remains one of the greatest constraints to livestock productivity across the Great Southern of Western Australia – reducing pasture production, carrying capacity and whole-farm profitability. Despite these challenges, saline valley floors also present an opportunity to increase feed production if appropriate pasture species and management systems are matched to the landscape.

The Productive Saltland Pastures for Southern WA project, funded through the Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) Producer Demonstration Sites (PDS) Program and coordinated by Gillamii Centre, was established to demonstrate practical, profitable saltland grazing systems under commercial farming conditions. Between 2022 and 2027, approximately 150 hectares of salt-tolerant forage systems were established across six demonstration sites on four Great Southern farming enterprises. The project aims to improve producer knowledge of saltland pasture establishment and management while evaluating the productivity, profitability and long-term sustainability of different forage systems.

Each demonstration site was designed to suit local soil conditions, salinity levels and producer objectives. Pasture systems included combinations of productive perennial species such as lucerne, chicory, cocksfoot and tall fescue, alongside salt-tolerant grasses including tall wheat grass and puccinellia. Several sites also incorporated old man, river and wavy saltbush within alley farming systems to provide resilient year-round forage and improve utilisation of highly saline areas.

The project monitors a range of production and environmental indicators, including pasture biomass, feed quality, soil condition, livestock productivity and economic performance. Monitoring has highlighted that there is no single pasture system suited to all salt-affected landscapes. Instead, successful establishment and long-term productivity depend on matching species selection to salinity, waterlogging risk, soil type and grazing objectives. Producer involvement throughout the planning, establishment and monitoring phases reinforced the importance of practical management decisions, seasonal conditions and flexible site design in achieving successful outcomes.

This presentation will share key findings from across the six demonstration sites, compare the performance of different saltland pasture systems and discuss the practical lessons learnt throughout the project. Producers will gain an understanding of the opportunities, challenges and economic considerations associated with developing productive saltland pastures and how these systems can contribute to improved feed availability, increased grazing capacity and more resilient livestock enterprises across the Great Southern.

Key messages

1. **There is no one-size-fits-all solution for salt-affected land.** Matching pasture species and management to salinity, soil type and landscape position is critical to successful establishment and long-term productivity.
2. **Productive saltland pastures can improve feed availability and grazing opportunities.** Integrating salt-tolerant grasses, productive perennial species and, where appropriate, saltbush can increase the value of previously underutilised saline areas within a livestock enterprise.
3. **Successful saltland development requires careful planning and ongoing management.** Good site preparation, appropriate species selection, seasonal timing and monitoring are key factors influencing pasture persistence, livestock performance and the economic return on investment.

Next steps

Producers interested in improving the productivity of salt-affected land are encouraged to assess their own saline areas and consider pasture systems that are suited to their landscape, soil type and enterprise objectives. The results from the Productive Saltland Pastures for Southern WA project demonstrate that successful outcomes rely on careful planning, appropriate species selection and ongoing management, rather than a single pasture solution.

To learn more about productive saltland systems:

Visit the **MLA Producer Demonstration Sites (PDS) program** to access project information and other producer-led demonstration projects.

- Explore MLA's resources on pasture management, feedbase improvement and livestock productivity.
- Contact **Gillamii Centre** to discuss the project findings, request copies of the final PDS reports or enquire about future field days and extension activities.
- Speak with your local agronomist, DPIRD office or natural resource management organisation to identify salt-tolerant pasture options suited to your property.

Contacts

- **Gillamii Centre**: admin@gillamii.org.au | (08) 9827 5002
  www.gillamii.org.au
- **MLA Producer Demonstration Sites (PDS):**
  www.mla.com.au/extension-training-and-tools/pds-producer-demonstration-sites/
- **Saltland Genie** – practical tools and resources for managing salt-affected land:
  www.saltlandgenie.com/#/home

Notes

Producer Demonstration Sites Program – Liver biopsy to assess micromineral levels in cattle

Session Rating		
Content:	/	10
Value:	/	10
Presenter:	/	10

Dr Enoch Bergman

Veterinarian

Swans Veterinary Services

ASHEEP and BEEF

About Enoch

Dr. Enoch Bergman DVM is a practicing veterinarian and part owner of Swans Veterinary Services in Esperance, Western Australia. He is also a committee member of ASHEEP and BEEF within which he has been involved in a number of MLA Producer Demonstration Sites over the years.

He is well known as a speaker across Australia from topics ranging from Bovine Pestivirus, Improving Bovine Reproductive Efficiency, The Ethics of Producing Beef, or any other topic relating to improving the profitability of beef producers without sacrificing animal welfare.

If you can't find him speaking somewhere, check him out on YouTube under the handle "Enoch the Cow Vet".

Session abstract

The 'Liver Biopsy to Assess Micromineral Levels in Cattle' Meat & Livestock Australia Producer Demonstration Site project is being delivered by ASHEEP & BEEF, in collaboration with Swans Veterinary Services. The project aims to demonstrate, in the Esperance region of Western Australia, the safety, utility and interpretive value of liver biopsy, to measure the micromineral status of Copper, Cobalt and Selenium within groups of heifers prior to mating. While liver biopsy is a well-established diagnostic tool in other cattle production regions and veterinary contexts, it has not been widely demonstrated or adopted within the Esperance region. This project seeks to address that gap by evaluating its application under local commercial production conditions.

The sand plain soils of the Esperance farming area are widely recognised as being depleted in key microminerals, a challenge shared across large areas of Western Australia, South Australia and parts of Victoria. Most producers in the region currently use some form of micromineral supplementation; however, a wide range of products and delivery methods are employed, often without a clear understanding of need or effectiveness. Blood testing is used to assess mineral status but can be limited in reflecting longer-term mineral reserves. By demonstrating liver biopsy alongside blood testing, the project aims to provide producers with more reliable information to support targeted supplementation decisions at a herd level.

The project has currently established 10 demonstration sites, all of which have successfully been tested this year. Demonstration and extension activities will be conducted between 2026 – 2028 with the first round of demonstration results expected late 2026.

Key messages

1. Liver biopsy samples can be collected safely and relatively easily from live cattle.

2. Liver biopsy samples have excellent utility for the measurement of some microminerals within individual animals.
3. Liver biopsy results from groups of individual cows can be used to identify the need for or to evaluate the effectiveness of micromineral supplementation practices.

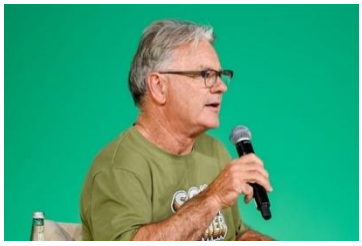
Next steps

Resources can be found at: https://www.asheepbeef.org.au/liver-biopsy-cattle

Notes

From fences to algorithms: Virtual fencing in a mixed farming system

	Session Rating	
Content:	/	10
Value:	/	10
Presenter:	/	10



Stuart McAlpine

Owner/Manager

McAlpine Farms

About Stuart

Stuart McAlpine is a fourth-generation farmer who, with his wife Leanne, manages a 5,000-hectare mixed cropping and beef enterprise at Buntine in Western Australia.

He co-founded the Liebe Group and led the Regional Repopulation Plan, contributing to a 15 per cent population increase in the Shire of Dalwallinu.

Recognised for his expertise in soil health and regenerative agriculture, Stuart was named a Soil Champion in 2015, inducted into the Regional NRM Leadership Honour Roll in 2016 and was a finalist in the 2026 Bob Hawke Landcare Award.

He chairs RegenWA and is a non-executive director of Perth NRM.

Session abstract

McAlpine Farms is a mixed cropping and cattle breeding enterprise near Buntine in Western Australia, operating in a low rainfall environment averaging 320 mm of annual rainfall. The business is comprised of approximately 70% cropping and 30% cattle breeding.

For many years, Stuart had been interested in virtual fencing because conventional strip grazing across large paddocks was difficult to implement, labour intensive and often impractical in dry seasons. At the same time, McAlpine Farms was facing a substantial fencing replacement program, presenting an opportunity to rethink how livestock were managed across our farm.

In 2025, a connectivity grant enabled the business to commence its virtual fencing journey with a 50% co-investment. The technology quickly proved its value and today McAlpine Farms has more than 400 collars deployed across the business.

Virtual fencing has fundamentally changed the McAlpine's manage cattle. They now have complete control over where stock can and cannot graze and use the system for strip grazing winter pastures and crop stubbles, managing weeds, reducing fire loads around infrastructure and biodiversity plantings, excluding stock from sensitive areas and improving manure distribution. They can also align grazing with cropping tramlines and create virtually unlimited paddock configurations from a desktop or mobile device.

The labour savings and operational flexibility have been immense. Large paddocks can be subdivided into smaller grazing cells and moved as frequently as required. The McAlpine's estimate labour savings alone justify the investment and suspect that grazing efficiency and carrying capacity have increased significantly, although this is still being quantified.

The technology has also enabled outcomes that would have been difficult or uneconomic using conventional fencing. They can graze around tree plantings and remnant vegetation, integrate livestock into more diverse farming systems and use data to better understand the interaction between grazing, soil health and landscape function.

One of the biggest surprises has been how quickly cattle adapt to the technology. Animals are calm and settled, and management has become easier rather than more complicated. Future developments, including automated weighing and spatial feed monitoring, will further improve decision making and animal performance.

While good boundary fencing and some holding areas remain necessary, I believe virtual fencing is a genuine disruptor for Australian agriculture. It reduces infrastructure costs, improves management precision, enhances animal welfare and creates opportunities to integrate livestock back into broadacre farming systems.

The McAlpine's started looking at virtual fencing as a better way to manage cattle. They now see it as a technology that can help redesign their entire farming system. The greatest opportunity may not be replacing fences at all – it may be reimagining how livestock fit within farming businesses and using digital technologies to create enterprises that are more resilient, regenerative and profitable for future generations.

Key messages

Virtual fencing is transforming cattle management.
McAlpine Farms has gained precise control over grazing, enabling more flexible, efficient and targeted livestock management across large broadacre paddocks.

The technology is delivering real productivity gains.
With more than 400 collars deployed, virtual fencing has reduced labour requirements, increased operational flexibility and created opportunities to improve grazing efficiency and carrying capacity.

Virtual fencing is helping reimagine farming systems.
Beyond replacing physical fences, the technology is supporting more resilient, regenerative and profitable mixed farming by better integrating livestock, cropping and environmental management.

Notes

Made to measure: eID *meats* sheep genetics

Session Rating		
Content:	/	10
Value:	/	10
Presenter:	/	10

Marcus Sounness

Owner/Operator

Paper Collar Grazing Co.

About Marcus

Marcus is a mixed crop and specialised sheep farmer. He operates a ram breeding operation to supercharge genetics and manages a modern Merino sheep flock on predominantly lucerne-based pasture.

Brianna Wightman

Project Management Coordinator

AgPro Management

Session abstract

This session will give an overview of how to use eID and sheep genetics to breed great Merino rams.

eID is the key to unlocking a whole shed full of tools to supercharge your sheep genetics. Making the most of the facilities can lead to great genetic outcomes.

This is one producer's journey and ambition which shows what is achievable with eID.

Key messages

1. Anyone can use EID to improve their genetics.
2. If you measure it, you can manage it.
3. If you can manage it, you can supercharge it.

Notes

The agronomy of Mixed Enterprise: Opportunities in practice

Session Rating		
Content:	/	10
Value:	/	10
Presenter:	/	10

Nick Eyres

Agronomist/Research and Development Coordinator

Greenough Specialty Agricultural

About Nick

Nick Eyres is a self-employed Agronomist based just out of Geraldton, WA (Greenough), focusing on broadacre farming systems in which his Research and Development (R&D) is focused.

Nick is passionate about developing highly productive output farming systems that leverage as many system synergies as possible, both within the context of mixed enterprise and in broadacre cropping systems.

It is through a desire for data that GSA is heavily involved with R&D across the industry, both in coordinating research projects and undertaking trials to produce impactful research outputs that better prepare industry for making profitable on-farm decisions.

It is through the ability to generate sound data that we, as an industry, are able to challenge status quo and progress in our scientific, practical and outcome driven endeavours.

Session abstract

Mixed Enterprise has long been the backbone of agricultural production systems, for the history of agriculture. The last century of global mechanisation has allowed huge advances in the technology used in cropping and livestock systems, allowing for huge gains in productivity and time efficiency. However, this has driven cropping system intensification and Western Australia has been a great example of how to improve cropping outputs over and above that of livestock outputs – which has steadily driven the industry out of livestock, one drought at a time.

While many are driven out of the industry, a dramatic land-use change is and will drive systemic input reliance to continue to build production.

Nick Eyres is passionate about understanding the key production drivers of farming systems and the application of research outcomes on-farm. More importantly, Nick finds value in developing research outcomes that allow for farming practices that promote the investment in and retention of livestock systems to contribute to overall business productivity. While there is industry-wide support and development for cropping intensification, the intensification of livestock systems is hugely reliant on feed security – which, without intrinsic on-farm value, becomes harder to retain every time there is a drought.

The future of intensification of livestock systems will be embedded in our whole-of-business ability to realise and leverage the true synergies of a mixed system, as frequently as possible.

Key messages

1. Crop Grazing; is it the next frontier of grass growing?
2. High-performance pastures for your feed gap – agronomy is feed
3. NUE – Nitrogen drives production, but efficiency drives ROI.

Notes

Animal health update

Jack McKie

Area Manager

Zoetis

Session Rating		
Content:	/	10
Value:	/	10
Presenter:	/	10

About Jack

Jack has been an Area Manager for Northern Western Australia (WA) for the last 7 years with Zoetis.

He has also worked in the agricultural and pastoral industry since 1989.

He has experience in sheep and cattle and dairy production systems, along with pasture and nutrition in WA and the Northern Territory.

When not travelling around the Kimberley, Pilbara, and southern rangelands, he can be found on the farm at home in Cuballing.

Session abstract

Maximise the productivity and profitability of your livestock enterprise with practical insights into animal health and management.

This session will explore how GlanEry vaccination can protect your bottom line, the latest approaches to managing drench resistance in sheep and cattle, and key strategies to prepare calves for a smooth, successful weaning period.

Notes

Virtual farm tour – ‘Hillcrest’, Gunning

Session Rating		
Content:	/	10
Value:	/	10
Presenter:	/	10

Jen Medway

Owner Operator

Penrose Pastoral

About Jen

Jen is a fifth-generation farmer from Gunning, NSW where she helps run a successful commercial merino sheep enterprise in partnership with her husband and three children. Jen sees a strong future for quality food and fibre production and is introducing new technologies and management practices to ensure they continue to grow their fine wool and first cross lamb operation.

She has over 20 years’ experience working in the agriculture industry and holds a Bachelor of Agricultural Economics (Hons) from the University of Sydney and a Diploma of Government. Now at the National Farmers’ Federation, she is General Manager of NFF’s partnerships, projects and events. While at the NFF, Jen previously ran a large Australian Government program focused on addressing gaps in regional telecommunications.

Jen is also a leader in industry and community roles, including as an active executive member on numerous industry and community-based boards and expert advisory groups. She is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and the Australian Rural Leadership Program. Jen is also actively involved in ag-tech and is a technology and commercialisation advisor to agricultural startups.

In 2023, Jen was awarded the Lambition Award for Industry Leadership, was named Upper Lachlan Citizen of the Year in 2024 and was awarded the Local Woman of the Year for the Goulburn Electorate in 2026.

Notes

Australian Merino production trial: Benchmarking Merino genetics for improved flock performance and profitability

Session Rating		
Content:	/	10
Value:	/	10
Presenter:	/	10

Craig Wilson

Director

Redgum River Pastoral Co.

About Craig

Craig Wilson is a sheep genetics consultant with more than 25 years' experience improving the profitability and productivity of Australian sheep enterprises.

Based near Wagga Wagga, NSW, he is the owner of Redgum River Pastoral Co.**,** co-owner of Kentish Downs Poll Dorset Stud and Convenor of the Australian Merino Production Trial (AMPT) – Australia's largest independent commercial evaluation of Merino genetics.

Craig combines objective measurement, genomics and practical commercial experience to help producers make informed breeding decisions. Through research, benchmarking and innovation, he is committed to advancing genetic improvement and delivering practical outcomes that strengthen the productivity, sustainability and profitability of Australia's sheep industry.

Session abstract

The Australian Merino Production Trial (AMPT) is Australia's largest and longest-running independent evaluation of commercial Merino genetics. Established in 2004, the trial provides an objective framework for benchmarking the genetic performance of Merino bloodlines under standardised management conditions, enabling producers to make informed breeding decisions based on measurable productivity and profitability outcomes. Over the past two decades, the AMPT has benchmarked more than 12,000 sheep across a range of production environments throughout New South Wales, generating one of the industry's most comprehensive datasets linking genetics with commercial performance.

This presentation examines the principles underpinning genetic benchmarking and demonstrates why objective evaluation remains essential for improving the profitability and sustainability of the Australian Merino industry. While environmental factors such as nutrition, seasonal conditions and management practices have a profound influence on production outcomes, the AMPT minimises these variables by evaluating sheep under common management systems. This approach enables the true genetic contribution to economically important traits to be measured and compared across bloodlines. Research presented within the trial indicates that genetic variation can account for more than 60% of the differences in net profitability observed between Merino enterprises.

Drawing on long-term trial data, the presentation highlights the considerable variation that exists between bloodlines for key production traits, including fibre diameter, clean wool production, body weight, wool value and meat value. Case studies from commercial trial sites, including Murtee Station (Wilcannia, NSW), demonstrate how identical

genetics respond to differing production environments while reinforcing the value of benchmarking as a tool for separating environmental effects from genetic merit. Historical analyses also illustrate the substantial financial variation that exists between high- and low-performing bloodlines, emphasising the cumulative impact of genetic selection on enterprise profitability.

The presentation concludes that objective benchmarking is fundamental to accelerating genetic improvement within the Australian Merino industry. By combining superior genetics with sound nutritional and management practices, producers can enhance wool quality, increase meat production, improve whole-farm profitability and build more resilient enterprises capable of responding to changing environmental and market conditions. The AMPT continues to provide an independent, commercially relevant benchmarking platform that supports evidence-based genetic selection and contributes to the long-term competitiveness of the Australian sheep industry

Key messages

1. Benchmarking reveals true genetic performance.
2. Standardising nutrition and management allows producers to accurately identify the genetic merit of Merino bloodlines and make informed breeding decisions.
3. Genetics drive long-term profitability.
4. Significant variation exists between Merino bloodlines for wool quality, meat production and whole-animal value, with genetic differences contributing substantially to enterprise profitability.
5. Better genetics, better businesses.
6. Combining high-performing Merino genetics with sound nutrition and management improves productivity, resilience and the long-term sustainability of Australian sheep enterprises.

Next steps

www.australianmerinoproductiontrial.com

A new initiative, the Western Australian Lamb Trial, is currently being scoped as a new trial for merino producers.

Notes

Enhanced feedback – it's getting closer!

Session Rating		
Content:	/	10
Value:	/	10
Presenter:	/	10

Dr Graham Gardner

Director of the Centre for Animal Production and Health/Professor

Murdoch University

About Graham

Professor Graham Gardner is a leading researcher in livestock measurement technologies and the Chief Investigator of the Industry Calibration Working Group Project which has introduces new traits such as IMF% into the industries trading language.

In recent years, Graham has led projects that have pioneered the development and implementation of technologies that measure lean meat yield and eating quality in the sheep, pork, and cattle industries across Australia. This includes DXA and microwave technologies within the lamb and beef industries.

With a background in biochemistry, and nutrition, Professor Gardner's work at Murdoch University also focuses on understanding the physiological responses in livestock selected for traits such as growth, leanness and eating quality.

Session abstract

This session will cover recent changes in the development of technologies that measure carcass fatness and eating quality and how they are being implemented in beef and lamb. This includes an array of camera, reflectance, and x-ray technologies that are currently being deployed in abattoirs across Australia. It will also describe changes to the industry trading language, evolving new price signals for producers to respond to. A recent example of this has been the introduction of the IMF% trait in both beef and lamb.

Key messages

1. Enhanced feedback is coming.

2. Marketing of red meat will become more sophisticated.

Notes

Turning reproductive potential into reality

Session Rating		
Content:	/	10
Value:	/	10
Presenter:	/	10

Dr Jason Trompf

Director

J.T. Agri-source Pty Ltd

About Jason

Jason Trompf from Lambs Alive has been working as Agricultural Consultant for over 25 years.

Jason has a strong background in understanding the drivers and motivators of producers and designing programs that support and enable practice change.

Programs Jason has had significant input into the design, delivery and evaluation of include the Lifetime Ewe Management (LTEM) and Bred Well Fed Well (BWFW). Each of these programs has engaged over 5,000 producers and are widely recognized for the industry leading impact they have had on changing attitude and practice, as well as lifting productivity, profitability and resilience.

Jason also founded the innovative Lambs Alive program that coaches many sheep businesses. He also manages his family's 1,600 composite ewe and 1600 Angus and Shorthorn cow enterprise. These self-replacing high productivity enterprises provide Jason with a strong practical background and a constant reality check of the challenges that producers face on a day-to-day basis.

Session abstract

Consistently achieving above district average weaning rates per hectare is not something that occurs by chance but instead by design – driven by a productive pasture system, modern genotypes and proactive management that allocates resources (feed, animal health and labour) to the class of stock that warrants it most. Market signals can often create confusion for which stock class that is, however, proactive management of breeding ewe nutrition and condition throughout the reproduction cycle is critical for improving scanning rates, lamb survival rates and lamb growth rates – the aggregate of which gives rise to kg of lamb weaned per ewe or more importantly kg lamb weaned per hectare. The latter also being heavily influenced by the productivity of the feed base (quantity and quality) and the timing of lambing to most effectively utilise feed grown.

Astute resource managers make sure the desire to chase extra return from last year's crop of lambs doesn't trade-off focus on the next crop – typically the longer the saleable progeny are retained, the longer the trade-off for resources allocated to replacements and breeders.

A critical tool in resource allocation is pregnancy scanning ewes for empty, single and twin (0, 1, 2), following which there two distinct phases – late pregnancy management and paddock allocation for lambing. Scanning itself delivers little benefit, the gold is in the differential management post-scanning so that multiple bearing ewes lamb in one-third to a half a condition score heavier than singles. This lifts ewe survival and helps optimise lamb birthweights for singles and twins.

A low birthweight lamb has a similar surface area to lose and expel heat but has less body tissue, in particular

thermogenic fat, to metabolise to keep itself warm and get up, survive and thrive. Setting up the ewe for lambing means she has adequate energy for the birth process and an early onset of colostrum and milk production leading to improved lamb survival. There is also a genetic component to this and selection for genes with high 'ewe rearing ability' (ERA) is a worthwhile inclusion in today's breeding objectives.

Finally, paddock allocation for lambing is a critical driver of success – based on feed available, shelter/aspect, and in particular paddock size/mob size. Smaller mobs at lambing improve lamb survival, however, the response varies significantly between single, twin and triples and also by ewe age.

Key messages

From mid-pregnancy feed resources should be allocated so that multiple bearers lamb at least one-third of a condition score higher than singles.

Key drivers of lamb survival are:

- birth weight
- body composition
- shelter
- privacy and
- bonding.

Lamb survival is driven by attention to detail, skill development and tailoring solutions with your sheep in your environment.

Next steps

- More lambs from ewe lambs – (follow follow the Producer Demonstration Site (PDS) progress and outcomes through the project sites on the PDS search tool: www.mla.com.au/extesnion-training-and-tools/search-pds) or watch a recording of the webinar).
- Lifetime Maternals – review management guidelines on MLA website
- Attend a BredWell FedWell Workshop

Notes

My take-home messages and actions

Reflect on the presentations delivered at the MeatUp Forum. For those of relevance to you, note the session title, your key messages, and actions you can take to implement ideas.

Session	Action – things I could do to implement ideas

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