



Sheep Producers Intentions Survey MAY 2026

June 2026

Table of contents

About the research	3
State of play: an overview of the industry analysis	4
Results scorecard	6
Observations and insights	7
Detailed results	
Producer sentiment	10
Estimates of the total flock size	14
<i>A focus on: Breeding ewes</i>	
Breeding ewe flock profile	19
Producer intentions: breeding ewe flock	26
<i>A focus on: Wethers</i>	
Wether flock profile	34
Producer intentions: wether flock	39
Summary of results: state & flock size	44
Additional analysis	47
Focus area: factors impacting on-farm decision making	52
Attachments	57

The survey, undertaken by MLA and AWI, is used to help industry determine wool and lamb production forecasts and to understand the breed composition of the Australian flock on a national, state and regional basis. It is used by processors for budgeting purposes and allows import markets to ascertain short-term supply estimates.

The research has three primary objectives, namely to:

- ✓ **Measure and report** on flock population, demographics, sheepmeat and wool supply information and producer production intentions.
- ✓ Ensure estimates are reliable and based on sufficiently large sample sizes to ensure the **robustness and accuracy** of estimates. The sample should be representative or weighted to be representative of the producer population structure.
- ✓ Provide capacity to **explore and investigate results** at a smaller area and segment level. This will include – among other things – across states and MLA reporting regions.

The following report provides an overview of results for the **MAY 2026** survey.

The May 2026 survey

Feedback was sought from producers over the period 11th May – 13th June 2026. Producers were initially invited to complete an online survey with the final sample complemented with a limited number of phone interviews.

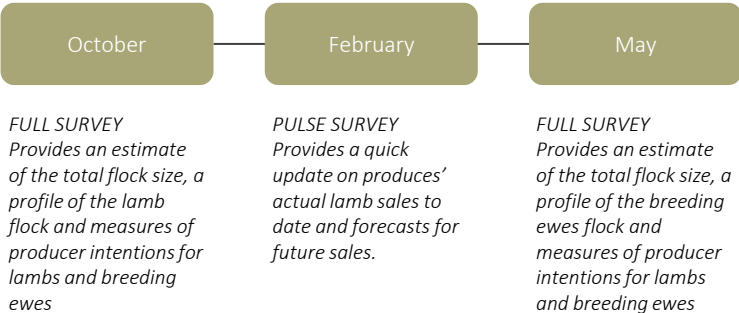
A total of 1,517 producers from across Australia respond to the survey invitation. The feedback was then weighted using the latest available information and data to produce industry estimates.

A full breakdown of the sample make up, plus a description of the information and data used to inform the weighting approach is included as an attachment to this report.

Please note that surveys undertaken from October 2022 onward are a significant departure from surveys before October 2022 in terms of design and questions asked. Care should be taken in comparing the results from this survey to surveys undertaken before October 2022.

An overview of the research design

Three separate but integrated surveys will be conducted across the calendar year. Each survey will have a specific focus and purpose and provide the required flock and producer intention estimates required.



More detail on the research design is included in the Attachments to this report.

A note on weighting and producer population estimates:

As detailed in the Appendices, the weighting structure was updated with the most recent available information and data on the estimated population of agricultural businesses with sheep and lambs across two factors: State and Total Flock Size. This change was required due to the cessation of the ABS Agricultural Census data.

With this update, the estimated population of businesses has declined from 41,994* to 40,549† (a 3.4% decline). Consideration of this decline in the estimated population of businesses should be taken when interpreting results in this report.

* Source: ABS Ag Census 2020-21 estimate adjusted upwards to account for EVAO under \$40k
† Source: Levy Payer Register for the most recent financial year (2024-25)

State of play...

Increasingly challenging operating conditions continue to present obstacles for producers, with dry seasonal conditions persisting across much of the south while parts of the north have seen improved rainfall through late May. Pressures on producers noted previously including increasing on-farm costs (input costs, particularly fuel and fertiliser) and ongoing market and supply chain pressures (domestic and global, including disruption linked to the conflict around the Strait of Hormuz) remain a significant feature of the operating environment.

In contrast to last year, both sheepmeat and wool are now reporting sustained price strength. Sheepmeat prices have remained historically high, supported by low and declining stock numbers, with lamb carcass weights reaching new records as strong prices encourage producers to grow lambs out longer. Wool prices also continue to rise in the face of declining supplies, with the benchmark Eastern Market Indicator up over the past month and further price gains possible as buying activity increases toward the end of the season.

The content opposite provides a brief overview of the wool and sheepmeat sectors by the agribusiness units within Rabobank and ANZ Agribusiness.

The background provides a useful context for interpreting the results in the May 2026 Sheep Producers Intentions Survey (SPIS).

RABOBANK Commentary

- ✓ Sheepmeat: Lamb and mutton prices recovered after price drops in late April, early May. Prices continue to remain strong in light of low and declining stock numbers. New production data shows lamb carcass weights reached new records as strong prices encourage producers to grow lambs out longer.
- ✓ Wool: Wool prices continue to rise in the face of declining supplies. The EMI rose 2% for the month with Coarser microns seeing a larger rise. Ongoing limited supplies are expected to keep prices strong, with the potential for increased buying activity towards the end of the season to push prices higher.

ANZ Agribusiness Commentary:

For sheepmeat:

- ✓ The market has tightened through early 2026, with yardings around 14 per cent lower and reduced slaughter reflecting a smaller flock.
- ✓ Lower supply is supporting prices, with heavy lamb above 1,000 c/kg and mutton around 770 c/kg.
- ✓ Improved seasonal conditions are driving restocking and reduced turnoff, tightening availability.
- ✓ Price signals are shifting, with restocker and lighter lambs at times trading above finished lambs.
- ✓ Export volumes are lower overall, though strong demand from the US is offsetting weaker flows to other markets.

For wool:

- ✓ Wool prices have stabilised through early to mid 2026, with the benchmark Eastern Market Indicator (EMI) near 1,900 c/kg, well above year earlier levels.
- ✓ Market outcomes are more variable, with currency and weekly offering mix driving price movements.
- ✓ Supply remains relatively tight, with low auction volumes supporting price levels.
- ✓ Strong premiums persist for quality, with fine Merino wool trading well above broader micron categories.
- ✓ The outlook is for firm but volatile prices, increasingly influenced by currency and clip quality



Observations and insights

Sheep Producers Intentions Survey

May 2026

We spoke to 1,517 producers about their industry sentiment and the profile and intentions for their flock...

Sentiment

Nett Sentiment
(% positive - % negative)

+45

Wool industry

Up 80 points
on May-25

+84

Sheepmeat industry

Up 32 points
on May-25

Breeding Ewe Flock Profile



51.06 million

Estimate of total breeding ewes
(73% of total flock size)

Dominant breeds on hand in the
breeding ewe flock estimate:

63%

Merino

16%

Prime lamb

10%

First cross

Wether Flock Profile



5.85 million

Estimate of total wethers
(8% of total flock size)

Dominant breeds on hand
in the wether flock estimate:

87%

Merino

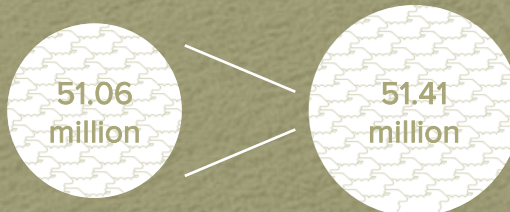
5%

Shedding

4%

Prime lamb

Breeding Ewe Flock Intentions



Reported breeding
ewe flock size for 2026

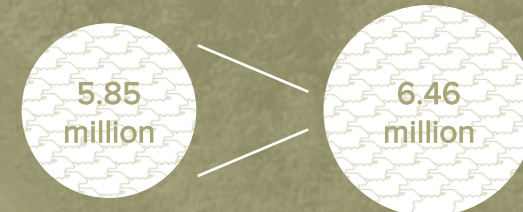
Forecast breeding ewe
flock size for 2027



+ 1%

Forecasted change in total breeding ewe flock

Wether Flock Intentions



Reported wether
flock size for 2026

Forecast wether
flock size for 2027



+ 10%

Forecasted change in total wether flock

While the purpose of the research did not include the presentation of an interpretation of the survey results, we provide some initial observations and insights on the feedback and estimates from the May 2026 SPIS.

Producer sentiment

SPIS measures producers outlook over the upcoming 12 months of the wool and sheepmeat sectors.

The outlook for wool

The May 2026 results reflect a dramatic turnaround in producer sentiment for the wool sector (Nett Sentiment: +45, up 26 points since October 2025 and 80 points since May 2025). More than half (52%) of producers had a positive outlook for wool, against just 7% reporting a negative outlook.

The improved outlook is consistent across all states, with NSW (+45), VIC (+40) and WA (+54) tracking close to the national figure, while SA (+60) is notably more optimistic and TAS (+22) lags slightly behind, though still firmly positive. Sentiment also improves with flock size, ranging from +30 among the smallest flocks (under 500 head) to +94 among the largest operations (20,000+ head).

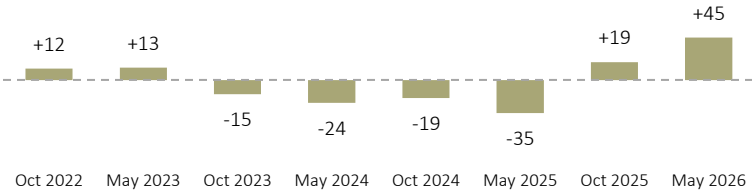
The outlook for sheepmeat

Producers' outlook for the sheepmeat sector continues to strengthen further (Nett Sentiment: +84, up 6 points since October 2025 and 32 points since May 2025), a result likely attributable to continued strength in lamb and mutton prices. The vast majority of producers (86%) reported a positive outlook, with only 2% negative.

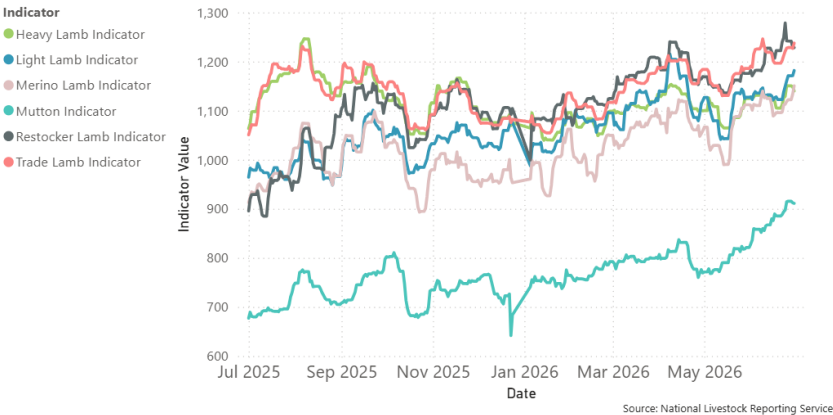
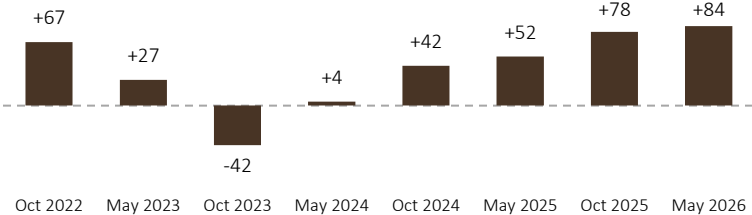
Sentiment for sheepmeat remains strong and consistent across all states (ranging from +60 in QLD to +89 in NSW) and across all flock sizes (ranging from +76 among the smallest flocks to +94 among the largest), reflecting a more uniform and confident outlook than seen for wool.

It is evident from the feedback provided and analysis that the historic divide between producers' outlook for the wool and sheepmeat sectors has narrowed considerably this year. With both sectors now reporting strongly positive sentiment, this is likely to translate to renewed confidence in flock retention and investment intentions, a marked shift from the increasingly cautious wool outlook reported in prior surveys.

Trend of Nett Sentiment of the wool industry



Trend of Nett Sentiment of the sheepmeat industry



A profile of the breeding ewes flock

Consistent with previous years, the May 2026 survey had a specific focus on understanding the profile of Australia's breeding ewes and wether flocks. Of the estimated 51M+ breeding ewes on hand:

- Merinos (63% of total breeding ewe flock), prime lambs (16%) and first cross (10%) are the dominant breed types on hand (accounting for 89% of the total breeding ewe flock).
- The breed mix continues to vary across farm businesses with different flock sizes, with the larger farms typically having a greater proportion of Merinos in their flock. Producers in Western Australia and Queensland also have a larger proportion of Merinos, with Tasmania and Victoria reporting lower proportions.

Producer intentions

Analysis of the feedback provided shows a shift in planning posture compared to last year.

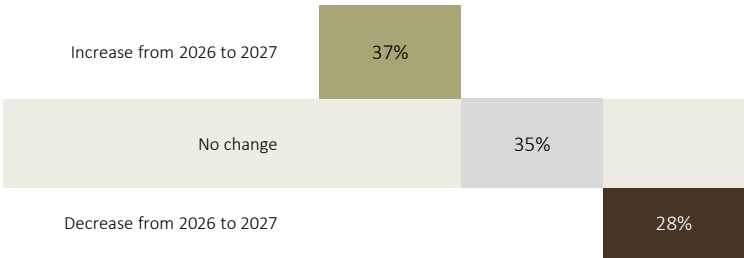
- At the producer level (that is, considering each producer equal):
 - 37% indicated they would increase their breeding ewe flock size (up from 23% in May 2025);
 - 35% indicated it would remain unchanged; and
 - 28% indicated they would decrease their breeding ewe flock size (down from 41% in May 2025).

This represents a reversal from the more conservative, contraction-focused posture reported in May 2025.

- Analysis of the forecast intentions suggests a modest increase of approximately 350,000 breeding ewes (a 1% rise) over the estimated 2026 flock size, in contrast to the 9% fall forecast in last year's survey. This reflects the combined effect of producers forecasting an increase (adding approximately 2.94M ewes) and those forecasting a decrease (removing approximately 2.59M ewes), highlighting the importance of considering the reported changes in flock size rather than just producers' disposition to change.

Details on the forecast change estimate – showing the impact from producers who have reported an increase as well as producers who were forecasting a decrease in their breeding ewe flock – is shown opposite.

Western Australia, which reported the strongest intention to decrease flock numbers in the previous two years, now shows a more typical pattern, with 38% of WA producers forecasting an increase and 28% a decrease – broadly in line with the national average. All states are now reporting more balanced intentions, a notable change from the consistent downward skew seen in the May 2025 survey.



2027 BREEDING EWE FLOCK FORECAST	
Total reported flock size for 2026:	51,063,635
Total expected flock size for 2027:	51,413,492

Difference of:	+ 349,856

% forecast change on 2026:	+ 1%

A profile of the wether flock

The May 2026 survey has estimated there are 5.85M wethers on hand, with Merinos (87% of total flock) continuing to be the dominant breed type on hand.

Producer intentions

Analysis of the feedback provided shows a reversal from last year's net intention to decrease wether flocks.

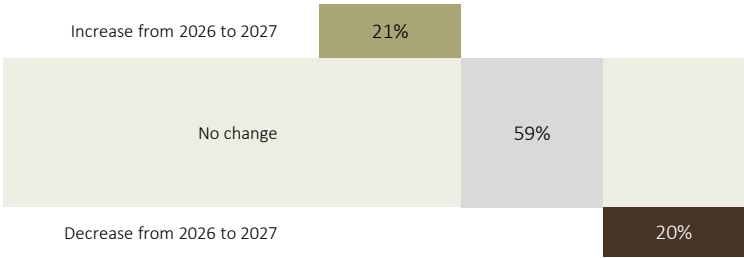
- At the producer level (that is, considering each producer equal):
 - 21% indicated they would increase their wether flock size (up from 16% in May 2025);
 - 59% indicated it would remain unchanged; and
 - 20% indicated they would decrease their wether flock size (down from 26% in May 2025).

Queensland producers stand out as most likely to forecast an increase over the next 12 months (35% reporting an increase), whereas Western Australia reported the highest intention to decrease among the states (23%), though this was not dramatically out of step with the other states.

- Analysis of the forecast intentions suggests an increase of approximately 611,500 wethers (a 10% rise) over the estimated 2026 flock size, a turnaround from the 11% decrease forecast in last year's survey. This result highlights the importance of considering the reported changes in flock size rather than just producers' disposition to change.

Details on the forecast change estimate – showing the impact from producers who have reported an increase as well as producers who were forecasting a decrease in their wether flock – is shown opposite.

At the state level, QLD (+54%), South Australia (+42%) and NSW (+13%) are forecasting the strongest growth in their wether flocks, with QLD's result driven by a smaller base (n = 52) and therefore worth treating with some caution. Victoria is the only state forecasting a decline (down 6%), a notable change from last year when four of the six states were all reporting double-digit forecast falls.



2027 WETHER FLOCK FORECAST	
Total reported flock size for 2026:	5,851,637
Total expected flock size for 2027:	6,463,158

Difference of:	611,521

% forecast change on 2026:	+ 10%

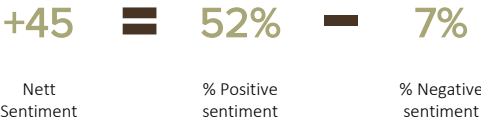
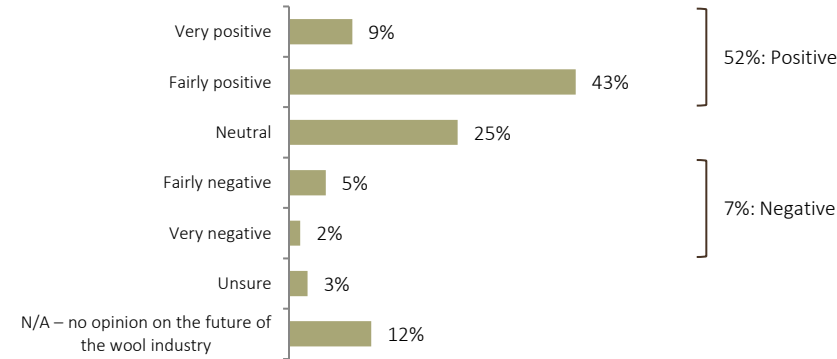


Producer sentiment

Q1. How do you feel about the future of the wool industry over the next 12 months? Would you say you feel...?

Base: All respondents, n = 1,517

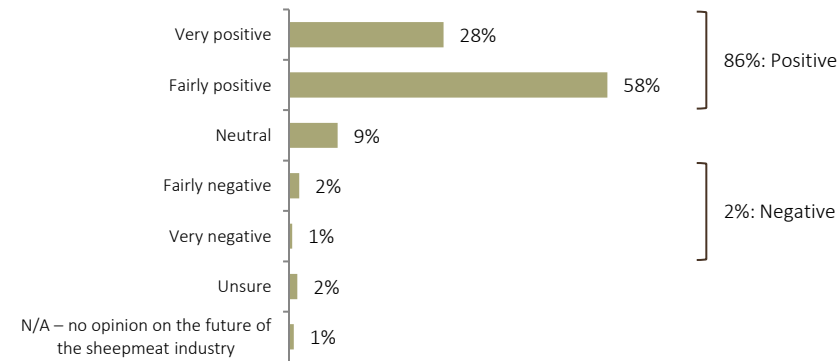
Nett Sentiment
(scale of -100 to +100)



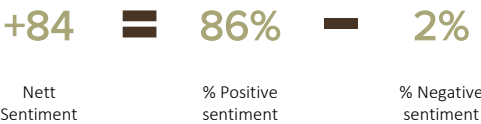
	State						Total Flock Size (sheep and lambs)							
	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Less than 500	500 – < 1,000	1,000 – < 2,000	2,000 – < 3,000	3,000 – < 5,000	5,000 – < 10,000	10,000 – < 20,000	20,000 or more
Base:	500	52	264	55	412	231	508	231	300	122	171	134	39	12
Nett Sentiment	+45	+32	+60	+22	+40	+54	+30	+50	+63	+55	+59	+62	+62	+94

Q2. And how do you feel about the future of the sheepmeat industry over the next 12 months? Would you say you feel...?

Base: All respondents, n = 1,517



Nett Sentiment
(scale of -100 to +100)



	State						Total Flock Size (sheep and lambs)							
	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Less than 500	500 – < 1,000	1,000 – < 2,000	2,000 – < 3,000	3,000 – < 5,000	5,000 – < 10,000	10,000 – < 20,000	20,000 or more
Base:	500	52	264	55	412	231	508	231	300	122	171	134	39	12
Nett Sentiment	+89	+60	+88	+73	+84	+71	+76	+90	+90	+90	+90	+93	+92	+94

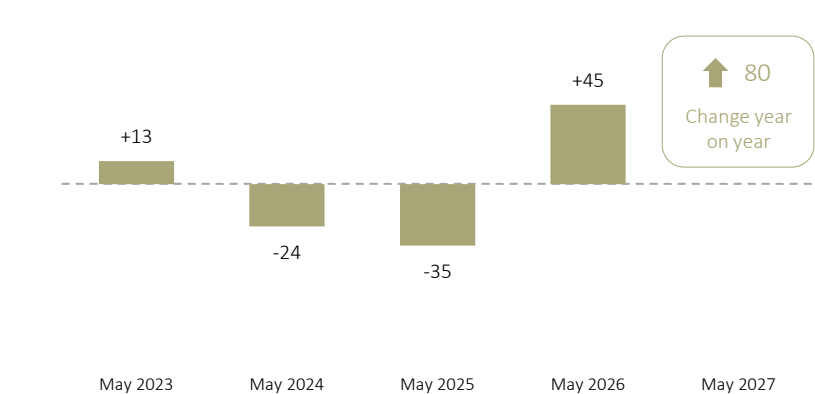
The comparative Rabobank measure. . . .

June 2026: Sheep producers remained the most optimistic commodity group, although confidence eased to net -27 per cent amid higher input costs and seasonal uncertainty.

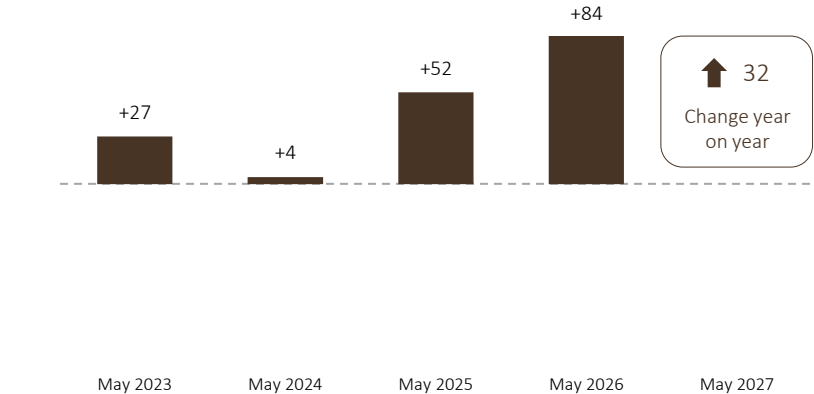
“Although we did see a dip in lamb and mutton prices at the end of April, they corrected and remain at historically high levels and RaboResearch forecasts this will continue as we head towards the traditionally lower slaughter months of July to August,” Mr van Doremaele said. “Wool prices are also performing well, underpinning the confidence of producers despite elevated production costs.”

Source of Rabobank commentary: [rabobank-rural-confidence-survey-june-26-media-release-national.pdf](#)

Trend of Nett Sentiment of the wool industry



Trend of Nett Sentiment of the sheepmeat industry



	State						Total Flock Size (sheep and lambs)							
	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Less than 500	500 – < 1,000	1,000 – < 2,000	2,000 – < 3,000	3,000 – < 5,000	5,000 – < 10,000	10,000 – < 20,000	20,000 or more
Nett Sentiment – Wool – May 2025	-34	-7	-21	-50	-42	-47	-28	-33	-41	-44	-45	-56	-34	-7
Nett Sentiment – Wool – May 2026	+45	+32	+60	+22	+40	+54	+30	+50	+63	+55	+59	+62	+62	+94
Change	↑ 79	↑ 39	↑ 81	↑ 72	↑ 82	↑ 101	↑ 58	↑ 83	↑ 104	↑ 99	↑ 104	↑ 118	↑ 96	↑ 101
Nett Sentiment – Sheepmeat – May 2025	+60	+53	+56	+55	+58	0	+44	+54	+59	+61	+55	+62	+65	+90
Nett Sentiment – Sheepmeat – May 2026	+89	+60	+88	+73	+84	+71	+76	+90	+90	+90	+90	+93	+92	+94
Change	↑ 29	↑ 7	↑ 32	↑ 18	↑ 26	↑ 71	↑ 32	↑ 36	↑ 31	↑ 29	↑ 35	↑ 31	↑ 27	↑ 4



Estimates of the total flock size

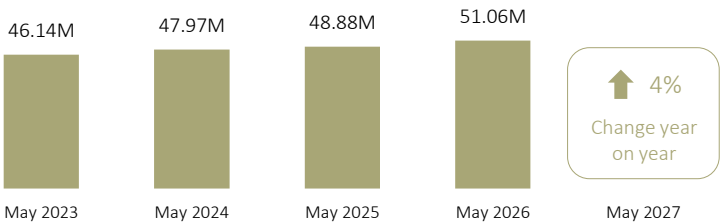
Estimates of the total flock size (breeding ewes + wethers + lambs)

Q3-Q5. What were the total number of breeding ewes (including ewe lambs and hoggets intended for breeding), wethers, and lambs (not including ewe lambs and hoggets intended for breeding) you had on hand at 30 April 2026?

Base: All respondents, n = 1,517

		% of producers with type of flock
Breeding ewes (including ewe lambs and hoggets intended for breeding) on hand at 30 April 2026:	51,063,635	97%
Wethers on hand at 30 April 2026:	5,851,637	49%
Lambs (not including ewe lambs and hoggets intended for breeding) on hand at 30 April 2026:	13,328,847	67%

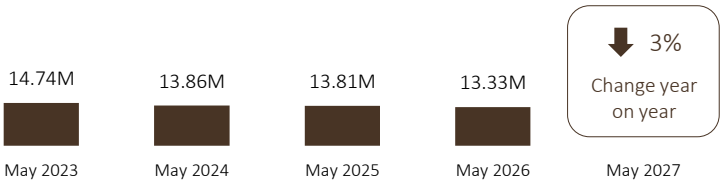
Trend of breeding ewe flock size estimates



Trend of wether flock size estimates

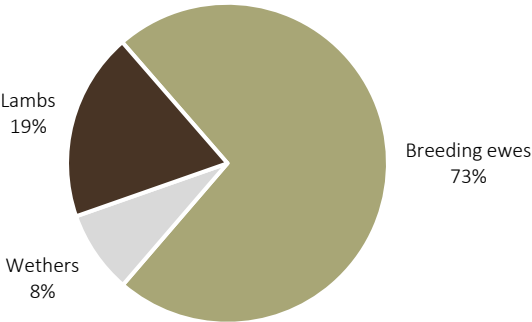


Trend lamb flock size estimates



Estimates of the total flock size (breeding ewes + wethers + lambs)

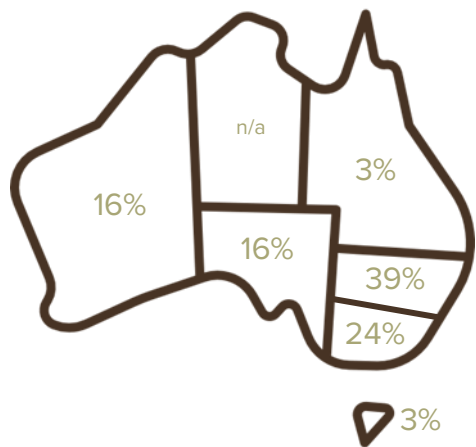
Proportion of breeding ewe, wether and lamb flock sizes



	State						Total Flock Size (sheep and lambs)							
	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Less than 500	500 – < 1,000	1,000 – < 2,000	2,000 – < 3,000	3,000 – < 5,000	5,000 – < 10,000	10,000 – < 20,000	20,000 or more
Base:	500	52	264	55	412	231	508	231	300	122	171	134	39	12
% of total flock size														
Breeding ewes	69%	67%	73%	75%	77%	76%	72%	72%	71%	74%	73%	74%	73%	68%
Wethers	9%	12%	4%	9%	9%	8%	9%	9%	8%	7%	8%	9%	8%	8%
Lambs	22%	22%	23%	16%	14%	16%	18%	19%	21%	18%	18%	18%	18%	24%

Estimates of the total flock size (breeding ewes + wethers + lambs)

Proportion of total flock size across states



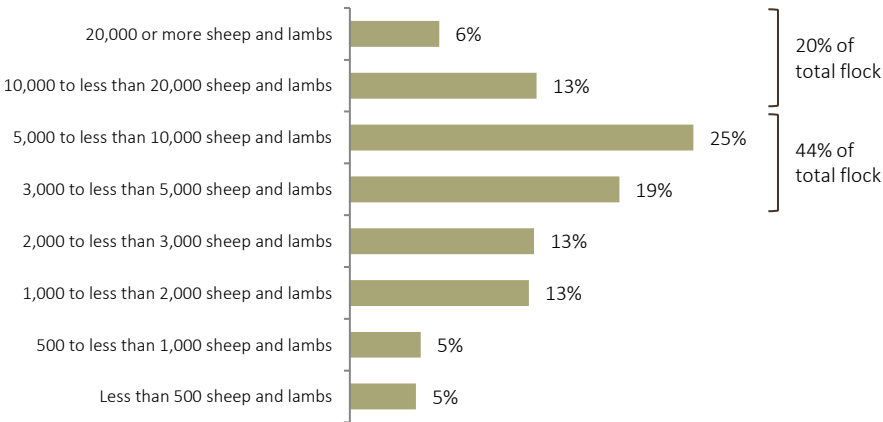
NSW and VIC account for an estimated 63% of the total flock size.

SA and WA account for 32% with QLD, TAS and the territories estimated to account for just a small proportion of the total national flock.

While there are many smaller producers (for example 36% of the estimated total flock is held by producers with less than 3,000 sheep), it is the larger producers which have a greater proportion of the national sheep flock (64% of the estimated total flock is held by producers with 3,000 or more sheep and 20% with producers who have 10,000 or more sheep).

It will inevitably be then the decisions made by these larger producer cohorts that will shape and influence national trends.

Proportion of total flock size across total flock size categories





A focus on: Breeding ewes

This section of the report includes estimates of:

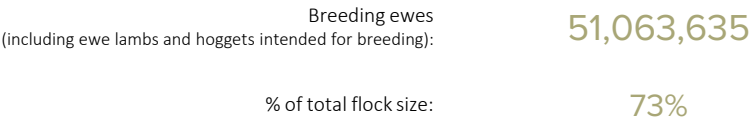
1. Breeding ewe flock profiles, a profile of the breeds on hand, a summary of the Merinos for lamb production and an estimate of the breeding ewes joining rate.
2. Producer intentions over the next 12 months: breeding ewe flock increases or decreases and the number of breeding ewes forecast for 2027.



Breeding ewe flock profile

Q3. What were the total number of breeding ewes (including ewe lambs and hoggets intended for breeding) you had on hand at 30 April 2026?

Base: All respondents, n = 1,517



	State						Total Flock Size (sheep and lambs)							
	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Less than 500	500 – < 1,000	1,000 – < 2,000	2,000 – < 3,000	3,000 – < 5,000	5,000 – < 10,000	10,000 – < 20,000	20,000 or more
Base:	500	52	264	55	412	231	508	231	300	122	171	134	39	12
Breeding ewe flock size	18,644,442	1,289,565	8,165,678	1,369,981	13,157,584	8,410,369	2,410,884	2,576,885	6,404,101	6,909,824	9,989,636	12,773,254	6,917,930	3,081,121
% of total flock size	69%	67%	73%	75%	77%	76%	72%	72%	71%	74%	73%	74%	73%	68%

Breeding ewe flock – breeds on hand

Q7 and Q8. Of these [Q3 ANSWER] breeding ewes you mentioned earlier, please tell us which of the following types of breeding ewe breeds you have across your properties:

Base: All respondents with breeding ewes, n = 1,476

Total breeding ewe flock size reported:		51,063,635					
		% of total breeding ewe flock	% of producers with breed			<i>Definitions of breeds presented to producers:</i>	
Merino	32,246,488	63%	51%	-----	Merino	Main breed of sheep for wool production.	
Prime lamb	8,036,802	16%	19%	-----	Prime lamb	Animal entirely focused on meat (lamb) production e.g. Composite, Terminal, Suffolk or Dorset.	
First cross	5,132,253	10%	23%	-----	First cross	Merino crossed with a long-haired sheep of a different breed.	
Shedding	3,771,335	7%	21%	-----	Shedding	Breeds of sheep that shed their wool without shearing e.g. Australian White or Dorper. Could also be referred to as hair sheep.	
Dual purpose	1,414,974	3%	5%	-----	Dual purpose	Animal with no more than 50% Merino content geared towards both meat and wool production equally.	
Other	461,783	1%	3%	-----	Other	Any breeds that do not fit into the definitions above.	

Breeding ewe flock – breeds on hand

Q7 and Q8. Of these [Q3 ANSWER] breeding ewes you mentioned earlier, please tell us which of the following types of breeding ewe breeds you have across your properties:
Base: All respondents with breeding ewes, n = 1,476

Total breeding ewe flock size reported:	51,063,635				
		% of total breeding ewe flock	May 2025	% of producers with breed	May 2025
Merino	32,246,488	63%	64%	51%	49%
Prime lamb	8,036,802	16%	13%	19%	20%
First cross	5,132,253	10%	12%	23%	23%
Shedding	3,771,335	7%	7%	21%	23%
Dual purpose	1,414,974	3%	4%	5%	6%
Other	461,783	1%	1%	3%	3%

Breeding ewe flock – breeds on hand

Q7 and Q8. Of these [Q3 ANSWER] breeding ewes you mentioned earlier, please tell us which of the following types of breeding ewe breeds you have across your properties:
Base: All respondents with breeding ewes, n = 1,476

	State						Total Flock Size (sheep and lambs)							
	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Less than 500	500 – < 1,000	1,000 – < 2,000	2,000 – < 3,000	3,000 – < 5,000	5,000 – < 10,000	10,000 – < 20,000	20,000 or more
Base:	484	52	259	55	400	223	488	221	293	118	171	134	39	12
Total breeding ewe flock size	18,644,442	1,289,565	8,165,678	1,369,981	13,157,584	8,410,369	2,410,884	2,576,885	6,404,101	6,909,824	9,989,636	12,773,254	6,917,930	3,081,121
% of total breeding ewe flock														
Merino	68%	72%	62%	54%	41%	89%	34%	49%	65%	63%	62%	69%	65%	69%
Prime lamb	7%	1%	16%	26%	38%	2%	14%	11%	10%	15%	14%	16%	22%	24%
First cross	12%	3%	12%	8%	12%	3%	22%	23%	12%	13%	7%	8%	5%	5%
Shedding	9%	24%	8%	3%	5%	6%	24%	12%	7%	7%	11%	4%	5%	1%
Dual purpose	3%	<1%	2%	3%	4%	1%	3%	3%	6%	2%	4%	2%	2%	1%
Other	1%	<1%	<1%	5%	1%	<1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	0%	0%

Breeding ewe flock – Merinos for lamb production

Q9. Of the [Q8 ANSWER] Merino breeding ewes on hand, how many were for pure bred Merino lamb production and how many were for crossbred lamb production?

Base: All respondents with Merino breeding ewes, n = 844

Total Merino breeding ewe flock size:	32,246,488		
		% of Merino breeding ewe flock	May 2025
Merino ewes for pure bred Merino lamb production	21,584,204	67%	69%
Merino ewes for crossbred lamb production	9,558,726	30%	27%
Merino ewes - other	1,103,558	3%	3%

	State						Total Flock Size (sheep and lambs)							
	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Less than 500	500 – < 1,000	1,000 – < 2,000	2,000 – < 3,000	3,000 – < 5,000	5,000 – < 10,000	10,000 – < 20,000	20,000 or more
Base:	280	29	178	21	171	163	154	125	206	87	121	110	30	11
Total Merino breeding ewe flock size	12,721,680	925,001	5,056,641	741,486	5,334,302	7,455,148	828,545	1,257,512	4,171,415	4,349,225	6,181,122	8,839,535	4,508,027	2,111,108
% of total Merino breeding ewe flock														
Merino ewes for pure bred Merino lamb production	70%	91%	63%	59%	63%	65%	53%	64%	65%	67%	70%	67%	66%	72%
Merino ewes for crossbred lamb production	26%	1%	34%	36%	35%	32%	44%	33%	31%	29%	28%	29%	29%	28%
Merino ewes - other	4%	8%	3%	5%	2%	4%	3%	3%	4%	4%	2%	4%	5%	0%

Q10. Of the [Q3 ANSWER] total breeding ewes, how many do you expect to join to produce lambs for the upcoming season? Please tell us the breakdown by the following type of breeding ewe breeds across your properties:

Base: All respondents with breeding ewes, n = 1,476

Total breeding ewes expected to join:	45,211,318		
		Expected joining rate	May 2025
Merino ewes for pure bred Merino lamb production expected to join	19,075,865	88%	87%
Merino ewes for crossbred lamb production expected to join	9,525,139	99%	98%
Non-Merino ewes for lamb production expected to join	16,610,315	88%	85%

Calculation of joining rate (example: Merino ewes for pure bred Merino lamb production):

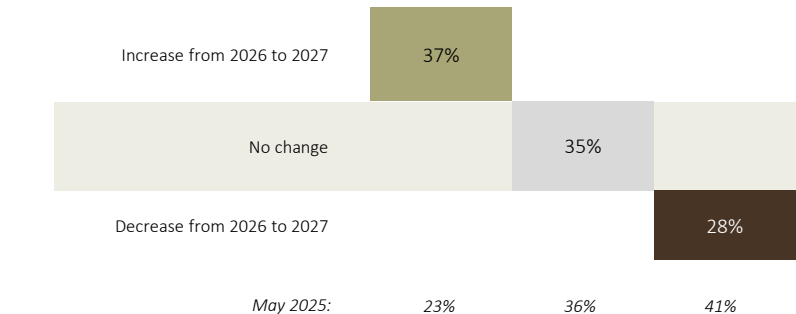
Estimate of total number of breeding ewes expected to join:	19,075,865
	÷
Estimated total number of breeding ewes:	21,584,204
	=
Expected joining rate:	88%



Producer intentions: breeding ewe flock

Producer intentions over the next 12 months: breeding ewe flock

Q12. And how many breeding ewes are you expecting to have on hand at the same time next year, in 2027 (30 April 2027)?
Base: All respondents, n = 1,517



Producers provided an indication of their intention for their breeding ewe flock over the next 12 months.

Among the producers responding to the May 2026 survey, just under four in ten producers (37%) reported they intended to increase their breeding ewe flock over the upcoming 12 months. Just over one in four (28%) were intending to downsize their ewe flock and about one in three (35%) were reporting no expected change.

This provides a useful producer sentiment, with the following analysis exploring the impact of this stated intention on the forecast breeding ewe flock sizes (remembering producers have different flock sizes).

	State						Total Flock Size (sheep and lambs)							
	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Less than 500	500 – < 1,000	1,000 – < 2,000	2,000 – < 3,000	3,000 – < 5,000	5,000 – < 10,000	10,000 – < 20,000	20,000 or more
Base:	500	52	264	55	412	231	508	231	300	122	171	134	39	12
Increase from 2026 to 2027	35%	38%	37%	44%	39%	38%	35%	32%	40%	44%	37%	42%	44%	28%
No change	36%	38%	36%	30%	35%	34%	36%	36%	32%	29%	44%	35%	38%	25%
Decrease from 2026 to 2027	29%	24%	28%	26%	26%	28%	29%	32%	29%	27%	19%	23%	17%	47%

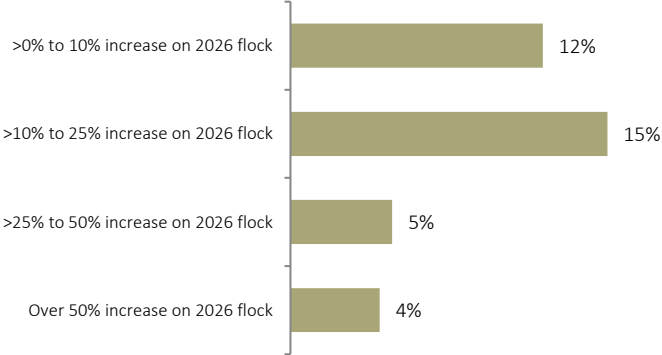
How the forecast increase translates to breeding ewe flock numbers

37% of producers reported they are likely to have MORE breeding ewes next year

We asked these producers what they forecast the increase in breeding ewe flock numbers would be...



Of those who forecast an increase in breeding ewes...	
Total reported flock size for 2026:	20,833,214
Total forecast flock size for 2027:	23,773,026
Difference of:	+ 2,939,812

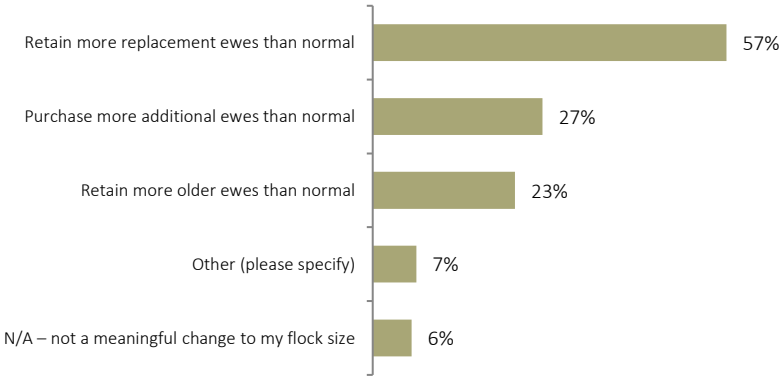


How producers intend to achieve this expected increase in breeding ewes in 2027

Q13. You mentioned that you expect to have more breeding ewes on hand as of 30 April 2027. How do you intend to achieve this change?
Base: All respondents who expect an increase in breeding ewe flock size in 2027, n = 562

37% of producers reported they are likely to have MORE breeding ewes next year

We asked these producers how they intend to achieve this expected increase in their breeding ewe flock numbers...

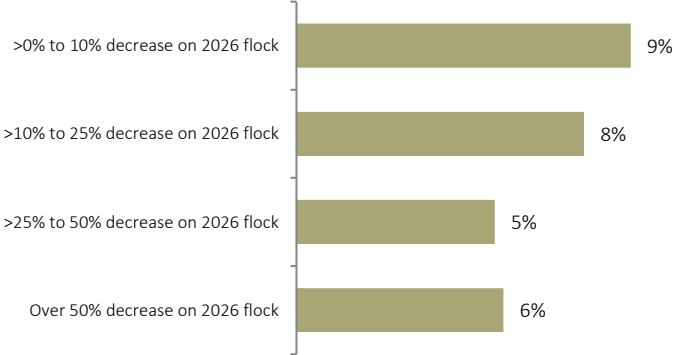


	State						Total Flock Size (sheep and lambs)							
	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Less than 500	500 – < 1,000	1,000 – < 2,000	2,000 – < 3,000	3,000 – < 5,000	5,000 – < 10,000	10,000 – < 20,000	20,000 or more
Base:	173	19	98	23	160	88	180	75	119	52	64	55	14	3
Retain more replacement ewes	50%	50%	57%	83%	62%	60%	55%	65%	42%	63%	65%	69%	70%	39%
Purchase more additional ewes	32%	25%	23%	28%	27%	16%	32%	23%	34%	21%	17%	20%	0%	0%
Retain more older ewes	20%	5%	30%	8%	22%	36%	19%	15%	27%	24%	23%	37%	42%	61%
Other (please specify)	8%	12%	5%	6%	5%	8%	6%	7%	7%	10%	9%	5%	15%	23%

How the forecast decrease translates to breeding ewe flock numbers

28% of producers reported they are likely to have FEWER breeding ewes next year

We asked these producers what they forecast the decrease in breeding ewe flock numbers would be...



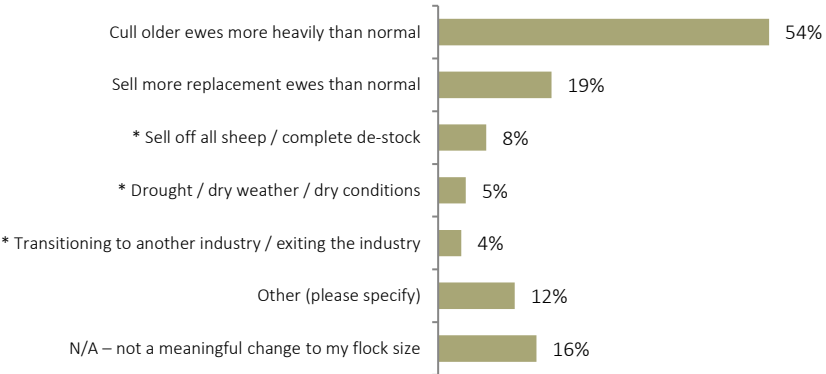
Of those who forecast a decrease in breeding ewes...	
Total reported flock size for 2026:	13,089,078
Total forecast flock size for 2027:	10,499,122
Difference of:	- 2,589,955

How producers intend to achieve this expected decrease in breeding ewes in 2027

Q14. You mentioned that you expect to have less breeding ewes on hand as of 30 April 2027.
How do you intend to achieve this change?
Base: All respondents who expect a decrease in breeding ewe flock size in 2027, n = 418

28% of producers reported they are likely to have FEWER breeding ewes next year

We asked these producers how they intend to achieve this expected decrease in their breeding ewe flock numbers...



	State						Total Flock Size (sheep and lambs)							
	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Less than 500	500 – < 1,000	1,000 – < 2,000	2,000 – < 3,000	3,000 – < 5,000	5,000 – < 10,000	10,000 – < 20,000	20,000 or more
Base:	143	13	70	14	111	67	145	75	88	34	29	33	8	6
Cull older ewes more heavily than normal	54%	61%	52%	71%	52%	55%	49%	48%	62%	65%	65%	63%	44%	37%
Sell more replacement ewes than normal	21%	49%	18%	8%	12%	19%	13%	23%	22%	14%	42%	26%	10%	58%
* Sell off all sheep / complete de-stock	10%	2%	6%	0%	8%	4%	12%	8%	5%	0%	0%	0%	7%	14%
* Drought / dry weather / dry conditions	9%	5%	3%	0%	1%	0%	4%	6%	8%	0%	7%	3%	0%	14%
* Transitioning to another industry / exiting the industry	3%	0%	3%	0%	6%	4%	6%	4%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other (please specify)	10%	9%	13%	16%	14%	17%	12%	19%	10%	10%	14%	9%	10%	35%

* Response has been coded from open-ended feedback via “Other (please specify)”.

Taking into account the forecast size of the breeding ewe flock for those producers who indicated they would be increasing their flock size as well as those producers who indicated they would decrease their flock size, an estimation of the forecast breeding ewe flock for 2027 is shown below...

	2027 BREEDING EWE FLOCK FORECAST		Of those who expect an increase in breeding ewes		Of those who expect no change in breeding ewes		Of those who expect a decrease in breeding ewes
Total reported flock size for 2026:	51,063,635	=	13,089,078	+	17,141,343	+	20,833,214
Total expected flock size for 2027:	51,413,492	=	10,499,122	+	17,141,343	+	23,773,026
Difference of:	+ 349,856	=	- 2,589,955	+	0	+	+ 2,939,812
% forecast change on 2026:	+ 1%						

	State						Total Flock Size (sheep and lambs)							
	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Less than 500	500 – < 1,000	1,000 – < 2,000	2,000 – < 3,000	3,000 – < 5,000	5,000 – < 10,000	10,000 – < 20,000	20,000 or more
Base:	500	52	264	55	412	231	508	231	300	122	171	134	39	12
Total reported flock size for 2026:	18,644,442	1,289,565	8,165,678	1,369,981	13,157,584	8,410,369	2,410,884	2,576,885	6,404,101	6,909,824	9,989,636	12,773,254	6,917,930	3,081,121
Total expected flock size for 2027:	18,785,329	1,271,516	8,070,295	1,348,760	13,502,038	8,406,321	2,447,021	2,456,636	6,263,043	7,123,778	10,188,207	12,965,249	7,243,126	2,726,431
Difference of:	+ 140,887	- 18,049	- 95,382	- 21,221	+ 344,454	- 4,048	+ 36,137	- 120,249	- 141,057	+ 213,954	+ 198,571	+ 191,995	+ 325,195	- 354,689
% forecast change on 2026:	+ 1%	- 1%	- 1%	- 2%	+ 3%	- <1%	+ 1%	- 5%	- 2%	+ 3%	+ 2%	+ 2%	+ 5%	- 12%



A focus on: Wethers

This section of the report includes estimates of:

1. Wether flock profiles and a profile of the breeds on hand.
2. Producer intentions over the next 12 months: wether flock increases or decreases and the number of wethers forecast for 2027.



Wether flock profile

Q4. What were the total number of wethers you had on hand at 30 April 2026?
Base: All respondents, n = 1,517

Wethers:

5,851,637

% of total flock size:

8%

	State						Total Flock Size (sheep and lambs)							
	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Less than 500	500 – < 1,000	1,000 – < 2,000	2,000 – < 3,000	3,000 – < 5,000	5,000 – < 10,000	10,000 – < 20,000	20,000 or more
Base:	500	52	264	55	412	231	508	231	300	122	171	134	39	12
Wether flock size	2,543,667	226,302	457,835	165,450	1,603,933	852,074	316,255	325,771	717,212	685,482	1,157,230	1,489,359	797,583	362,745
% of total flock size	9%	12%	4%	9%	9%	8%	9%	9%	8%	7%	8%	9%	8%	8%

Q15 and Q16. Of these [Q4 ANSWER] wethers you mentioned earlier, please tell us which of the following types of wether breeds you have across your properties:
Base: All respondents with wethers, n = 752

Total wether flock size reported:	5,851,637					
		% of total wether flock	% of producers with breed		Definitions of breeds presented to producers:	
Merino	5,061,870	87%	55%	-----	Merino	Main breed of sheep for wool production.
Shedding	282,166	5%	21%	-----	Shedding	Breeds of sheep that shed their wool without shearing e.g. Australian White or Dorper. Could also be referred to as hair sheep.
Prime lamb	222,255	4%	17%	-----	Prime lamb	Animal entirely focused on meat (lamb) production e.g. Composite, Terminal, Suffolk or Dorset.
First cross	221,197	4%	11%	-----	First cross	Merino crossed with a long-haired sheep of a different breed.
Dual purpose	45,527	1%	3%	-----	Dual purpose	Animal with no more than 50% Merino content geared towards both meat and wool production equally.
Other	18,621	0%	3%	-----	Other	Any breeds that do not fit into the definitions above.

Wether flock – breeds on hand

Q15 and Q16. Of these [Q4 ANSWER] wethers you mentioned earlier, please tell us which of the following types of wether breeds you have across your properties:
Base: All respondents with wethers, n = 752

Total wether flock size reported:	5,851,637				
		% of total wether flock	May 2025	% of producers with breed	May 2025
Merino	5,061,870	87%	88%	55%	54%
Shedding	282,166	5%	5%	21%	23%
Prime lamb	222,255	4%	2%	17%	13%
First cross	221,197	4%	2%	11%	10%
Dual purpose	45,527	1%	2%	3%	4%
Other	18,621	0%	1%	3%	3%

Q15 and Q16. Of these [Q4 ANSWER] wethers you mentioned earlier, please tell us which of the following types of wether breeds you have across your properties:

Base: All respondents with wethers, n = 752

	State						Total Flock Size (sheep and lambs)							
	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Less than 500	500 – < 1,000	1,000 – < 2,000	2,000 – < 3,000	3,000 – < 5,000	5,000 – < 10,000	10,000 – < 20,000	20,000 or more
Base:	250	38	121	21	198	123	265	100	130	52	92	80	26	7
Total wether flock size	2,543,667	226,302	457,835	165,450	1,603,933	852,074	316,255	325,771	717,212	685,482	1,157,230	1,489,359	797,583	362,745
% of total wether flock														
Merino	85%	90%	85%	94%	85%	93%	54%	71%	88%	79%	87%	92%	96%	99%
Shedding	6%	9%	7%	3%	3%	3%	21%	12%	4%	4%	6%	4%	<1%	0%
Prime lamb	5%	1%	6%	1%	3%	2%	12%	9%	4%	2%	3%	3%	4%	<1%
First cross	4%	0%	1%	<1%	7%	2%	9%	2%	3%	14%	3%	1%	0%	1%
Dual purpose	<1%	<1%	1%	2%	2%	<1%	2%	6%	2%	<1%	<1%	0%	0%	0%
Other	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	1%	<1%	2%	<1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%

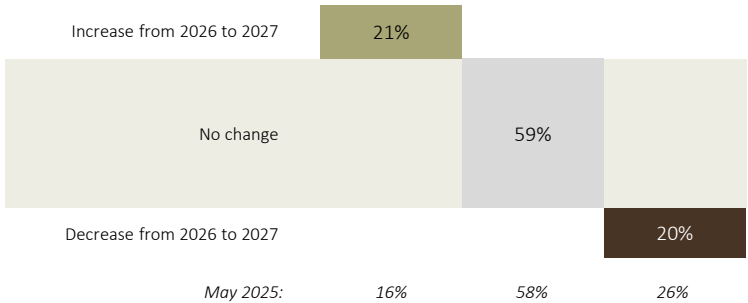


Producer intentions: wether flock

Producer intentions over the next 12 months: wether flock

Q18. And how many wethers are you expecting to have on hand at the same time next year, in 2027 (30 April 2027)?

Base: All respondents, n = 1,517



Producers provided an indication of their intention for their wether flock over the next 12 months.

Among the producers responding to the May 2026 survey, just over half (59%) expect no change to the size of their wether flock in 2027, with a further 21% expecting more wethers and 20% expecting fewer wethers in 2027.

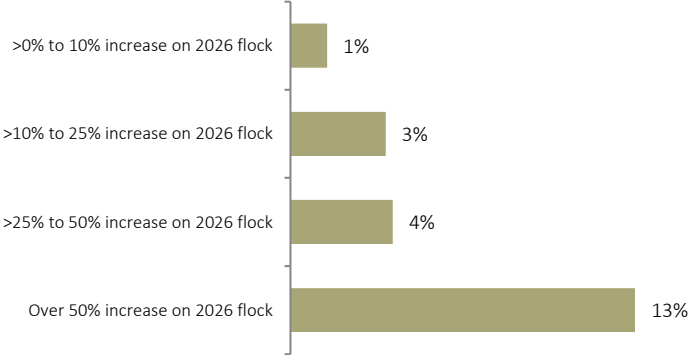
This provides a useful producer sentiment, with the following analysis exploring the impact of this stated intention on the forecast wether flock sizes (remembering producers have different flock sizes).

	State						Total Flock Size (sheep and lambs)							
	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Less than 500	500 – < 1,000	1,000 – < 2,000	2,000 – < 3,000	3,000 – < 5,000	5,000 – < 10,000	10,000 – < 20,000	20,000 or more
Base:	500	52	264	55	412	231	508	231	300	122	171	134	39	12
Increase from 2026 to 2027	21%	35%	23%	20%	18%	24%	22%	20%	19%	20%	21%	26%	26%	4%
No change	59%	56%	59%	63%	62%	53%	56%	61%	67%	63%	62%	53%	45%	72%
Decrease from 2026 to 2027	20%	10%	19%	17%	20%	23%	22%	19%	14%	17%	17%	21%	29%	24%

How the forecast increase translates to wether flock numbers

21% of producers reported they are likely to have MORE wethers next year

We asked these producers what they forecast the increase in wether flock numbers would be...



Of those who forecast an increase in wethers...	
Total reported flock size for 2026:	2,081,157
Total forecast flock size for 2027:	3,759,928
Difference of:	+ 1,678,771

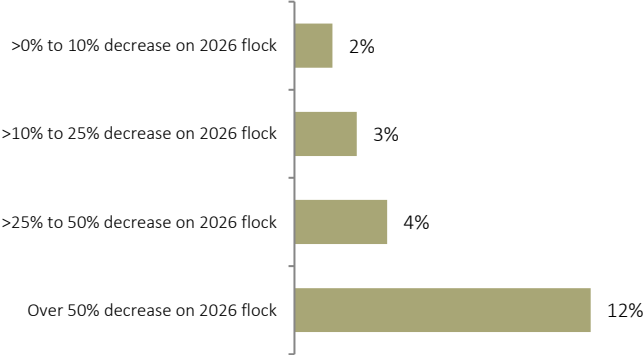
How the forecast decrease translates to wether flock numbers

20% of producers reported they are likely to have FEWER wethers next year

We asked these producers what they forecast the decrease in wether flock numbers would be...



Of those who forecast a decrease in wethers...	
Total reported flock size for 2026:	2,280,476
Total forecast flock size for 2027:	1,213,226
Difference of:	- 1,067,250



Taking into account the forecast size of the wether flock for those producers who indicated they would be increasing their flock size as well as those producers who indicated they would decrease their flock size, an estimation of the forecast wether flock for 2027 is shown below...

	2027 WETHER FLOCK FORECAST		Of those who expect an increase in wethers		Of those who expect no change in wethers		Of those who expect a decrease in wethers
Total reported flock size for 2026:	5,851,637	=	2,280,476	+	1,490,004	+	2,081,157
Total expected flock size for 2027:	6,463,158	=	1,213,226	+	1,490,004	+	3,759,928
Difference of:	611,521	=	- 1,067,250	+	0	+	+ 1,678,771
% forecast change on 2026:	+ 10%						

	State						Total Flock Size (sheep and lambs)							
	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Less than 500	500 – < 1,000	1,000 – < 2,000	2,000 – < 3,000	3,000 – < 5,000	5,000 – < 10,000	10,000 – < 20,000	20,000 or more
Base:	500	52	264	55	412	231	508	231	300	122	171	134	39	12
Total reported flock size for 2026:	2,543,667	226,302	457,835	165,450	1,603,933	852,074	316,255	325,771	717,212	685,482	1,157,230	1,489,359	797,583	362,745
Total expected flock size for 2027:	2,867,053	348,512	649,987	172,274	1,510,218	913,419	375,789	377,624	772,539	622,681	1,274,516	1,862,183	836,403	341,423
Difference of:	+ 323,386	+ 122,210	+ 192,151	+ 6,824	- 93,716	+ 61,344	+ 59,534	+ 51,852	+ 55,327	- 62,800	+ 117,286	+ 372,824	+ 38,820	- 21,322
% forecast change on 2026:	+ 13%	+ 54%	+ 42%	+ 4%	- 6%	+ 7%	+ 19%	+ 16%	+ 8%	- 9%	+ 10%	+ 25%	+ 5%	- 6%



Summary of results: state & flock size

Summary of results by state

		State					
	OVERALL	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA
<i>Base:</i>	1,517	500	52	264	55	412	231
SENTIMENT							
Nett sentiment – wool industry	+45	+45	+32	+60	+22	+40	+54
Nett sentiment – sheepmeat industry	+84	+89	+60	+88	+73	+84	+71
BREEDING EWE flock profile							
Estimate of total breeding ewe flock	51.06M	18.64M	1.29M	8.17M	1.37M	13.16M	8.41M
Dominant breeds on hand:							
Merino	63%	68%	72%	62%	54%	41%	89%
Prime lamb	16%	7%	1%	16%	26%	38%	2%
First cross	10%	12%	3%	12%	8%	12%	3%
BREEDING EWE producer intentions							
Reported breeding ewe flock size for 2026	51.06M	18.64M	1.29M	8.17M	1.37M	13.16M	8.41M
Forecast breeding ewe flock size for 2027	51.41M	18.79M	1.27M	8.07M	1.35M	13.50M	8.41M
Forecast change in total breeding ewe flock	+ 1%	+ 1%	- 1%	- 1%	- 2%	+ 3%	- <1%
Producer-level intentions (ignoring size):							
Increase from 2026 to 2027	37%	35%	38%	37%	44%	39%	38%
No change	35%	36%	38%	36%	30%	35%	34%
Decrease from 2026 to 2027	28%	29%	24%	28%	26%	26%	28%
WETHER flock profile							
Estimate of total wether flock	5.85M	2.54M	0.23M	0.46M	0.17M	1.60M	0.85M
Dominant breeds on hand:							
Merino	87%	85%	90%	85%	94%	85%	93%
Shedding	5%	6%	9%	7%	3%	3%	3%
Prime lamb	4%	5%	1%	6%	1%	3%	2%
WETHER producer intentions							
Reported wether flock size for 2026	5.85M	2.54M	0.23M	0.46M	0.17M	1.60M	0.85M
Forecast wether flock size for 2027	6.46M	2.87M	0.35M	0.65M	0.17M	1.51M	0.91M
Forecast change in total wether flock	+ 10%	+ 13%	+ 54%	+ 42%	+ 4%	- 6%	+ 7%
Producer-level intentions (ignoring size):							
Increase from 2026 to 2027	21%	21%	35%	23%	20%	18%	24%
No change	59%	59%	56%	59%	63%	62%	53%
Decrease from 2026 to 2027	20%	20%	10%	19%	17%	20%	23%

Summary of results by total flock size

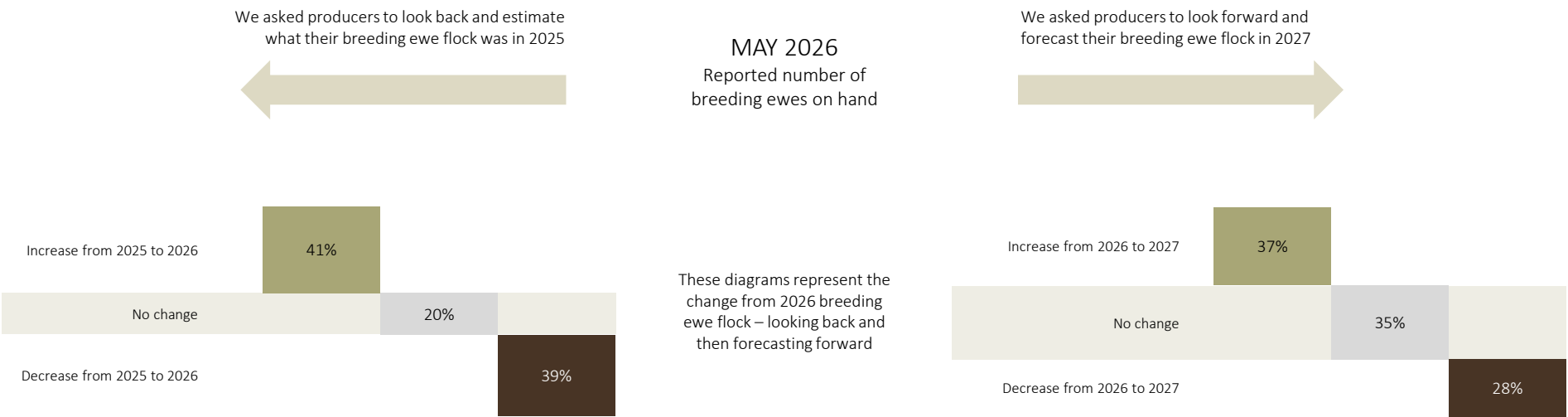
	OVERALL	Total Flock Size (sheep and lambs)							
		Less than 500	500 – < 1,000	1,000 – < 2,000	2,000 – < 3,000	3,000 – < 5,000	5,000 – < 10,000	10,000 – < 20,000	20,000 or more
<i>Base:</i>	1,517	508	231	300	122	171	134	39	12
SENTIMENT									
Nett sentiment – wool industry	+45	+30	+50	+63	+55	+59	+62	+62	+94
Nett sentiment – sheepmeat industry	+84	+76	+90	+90	+90	+90	+93	+92	+94
BREEDING EWE flock profile									
Estimate of total breeding ewe flock	51.06M	2.41M	2.58M	6.40M	6.91M	9.99M	12.77M	6.92M	3.08M
Dominant breeds on hand:									
Merino	63%	34%	49%	65%	63%	62%	69%	65%	69%
Prime lamb	16%	14%	11%	10%	15%	14%	16%	22%	24%
First cross	10%	22%	23%	12%	13%	7%	8%	5%	5%
BREEDING EWE producer intentions									
Reported breeding ewe flock size for 2026	51.06M	2.41M	2.58M	6.40M	6.91M	9.99M	12.77M	6.92M	3.08M
Forecast breeding ewe flock size for 2027	51.41M	2.45M	2.46M	6.26M	7.12M	10.19M	12.97M	7.24M	2.73M
Forecast change in total breeding ewe flock	+ 1%	+ 1%	- 5%	- 2%	+ 3%	+ 2%	+ 2%	+ 5%	- 12%
Producer-level intentions (ignoring size):									
Increase from 2026 to 2027	37%	35%	32%	40%	44%	37%	42%	44%	28%
No change	35%	36%	36%	32%	29%	44%	35%	38%	25%
Decrease from 2026 to 2027	28%	29%	32%	29%	27%	19%	23%	17%	47%
WETHER flock profile									
Estimate of total wether flock	5.85M	0.32M	0.33M	0.72M	0.69M	1.16M	1.49M	0.80M	0.36M
Dominant breeds on hand:									
Merino	87%	54%	71%	88%	79%	87%	92%	96%	99%
Shedding	5%	21%	12%	4%	4%	6%	4%	<1%	0%
Prime lamb	4%	12%	9%	4%	2%	3%	3%	4%	<1%
WETHER producer intentions									
Reported wether flock size for 2026	5.85M	0.32M	0.33M	0.72M	0.69M	1.16M	1.49M	0.80M	0.36M
Forecast wether flock size for 2027	6.46M	0.38M	0.38M	0.77M	0.62M	1.27M	1.86M	0.84M	0.34M
Forecast change in total wether flock	+ 10%	+ 19%	+ 16%	+ 8%	- 9%	+ 10%	+ 25%	+ 5%	- 6%
Producer-level intentions (ignoring size):									
Increase from 2026 to 2027	21%	22%	20%	19%	20%	21%	26%	26%	4%
No change	59%	56%	61%	67%	63%	62%	53%	45%	72%
Decrease from 2026 to 2027	20%	22%	19%	14%	17%	17%	21%	29%	24%



Additional analysis

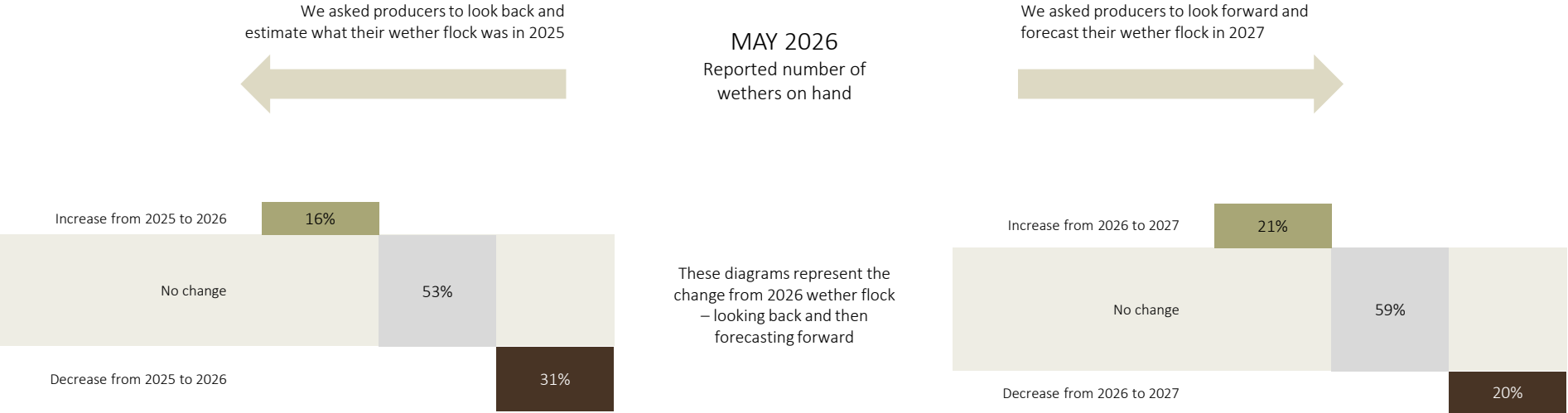
Breeding ewe flock size: a 3-year perspective

As part of the May 2026 Sheep Producers Intentions Survey, producers were asked to look back and estimate what their breeding ewe flock was in 2025 as well as to look forward and forecast their breeding ewe flock size for 2027. This then provided 3 points in time – the 2025 flock size, the current 2026 flock size and the forecast flock size for 2027. An analysis of this data is shown below.



	State						Total Flock Size (sheep and lambs)							
	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Less than 500	500 – < 1,000	1,000 – < 2,000	2,000 – < 3,000	3,000 – < 5,000	5,000 – < 10,000	10,000 – < 20,000	20,000 or more
Base:	500	52	264	55	412	231	508	231	300	122	171	134	39	12
Increase from 2026 to 2027	35%	38%	37%	44%	39%	38%	35%	32%	40%	44%	37%	42%	44%	28%
2025 -> Increase 2026 -> Increase 2027	15%	9%	22%	16%	20%	21%	13%	16%	20%	23%	25%	30%	31%	22%
2025 -> Same 2026 -> Increase 2027	3%	5%	3%	9%	6%	1%	6%	2%	4%	3%	3%	1%	2%	0%
2025 -> Decrease 2026 -> Increase 2027	16%	23%	12%	19%	14%	17%	17%	14%	16%	18%	9%	11%	12%	6%
No change	36%	38%	36%	30%	35%	34%	36%	36%	32%	29%	44%	35%	38%	25%
2025 -> Increase 2026 -> Same 2027	13%	5%	15%	12%	11%	12%	12%	9%	10%	14%	20%	15%	5%	12%
2025 -> Same 2026 -> Same 2027	13%	12%	13%	13%	15%	13%	11%	17%	11%	14%	18%	13%	29%	6%
2025 -> Decrease 2026 -> Same 2027	11%	22%	8%	5%	9%	8%	13%	10%	10%	2%	7%	8%	5%	6%
Decrease from 2026 to 2027	29%	24%	28%	26%	26%	28%	29%	32%	29%	27%	19%	23%	17%	47%
2025 -> Increase 2026 -> Decrease 2027	12%	7%	13%	11%	10%	11%	8%	11%	17%	14%	9%	18%	8%	34%
2025 -> Same 2026 -> Decrease 2027	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	5%	2%	5%	1%	1%	6%	0%
2025 -> Decrease 2026 -> Decrease 2027	15%	14%	11%	12%	13%	14%	17%	16%	10%	8%	10%	4%	3%	13%

As part of the May 2026 Sheep Producers Intentions Survey, producers were asked to look back and estimate what their wether flock was in 2025 as well as to look forward and forecast their wether flock size for 2027. This then provided 3 points in time – the 2025 flock size, the current 2026 flock size and the forecast flock size for 2027. An analysis of this data is shown below.



Wether flock size: a 3-year perspective

	State						Total Flock Size (sheep and lambs)							
	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Less than 500	500 – < 1,000	1,000 – < 2,000	2,000 – < 3,000	3,000 – < 5,000	5,000 – < 10,000	10,000 – < 20,000	20,000 or more
Base:	500	52	264	55	412	231	508	231	300	122	171	134	39	12
Increase from 2026 to 2027	21%	35%	23%	20%	18%	24%	22%	20%	19%	20%	21%	26%	26%	4%
2025 -> Increase 2026 -> Increase 2027	4%	2%	6%	4%	4%	6%	4%	3%	3%	6%	6%	10%	11%	4%
2025 -> Same 2026 -> Increase 2027	3%	2%	2%	2%	3%	2%	3%	3%	1%	2%	2%	2%	2%	0%
2025 -> Decrease 2026 -> Increase 2027	14%	31%	15%	13%	12%	17%	15%	14%	16%	13%	13%	14%	13%	0%
No change	59%	56%	59%	63%	62%	53%	56%	61%	67%	63%	62%	53%	45%	72%
2025 -> Increase 2026 -> Same 2027	2%	<1%	3%	3%	2%	1%	2%	1%	4%	2%	4%	4%	2%	0%
2025 -> Same 2026 -> Same 2027	47%	33%	50%	54%	52%	43%	44%	52%	55%	58%	51%	40%	35%	54%
2025 -> Decrease 2026 -> Same 2027	9%	22%	5%	5%	7%	8%	10%	8%	8%	3%	6%	9%	8%	17%
Decrease from 2026 to 2027	20%	10%	19%	17%	20%	23%	22%	19%	14%	17%	17%	21%	29%	24%
2025 -> Increase 2026 -> Decrease 2027	7%	7%	10%	7%	10%	12%	8%	8%	8%	12%	10%	12%	18%	11%
2025 -> Same 2026 -> Decrease 2027	3%	1%	3%	6%	3%	1%	3%	4%	1%	2%	1%	1%	0%	6%
2025 -> Decrease 2026 -> Decrease 2027	10%	1%	6%	5%	7%	10%	11%	7%	5%	3%	6%	8%	11%	6%



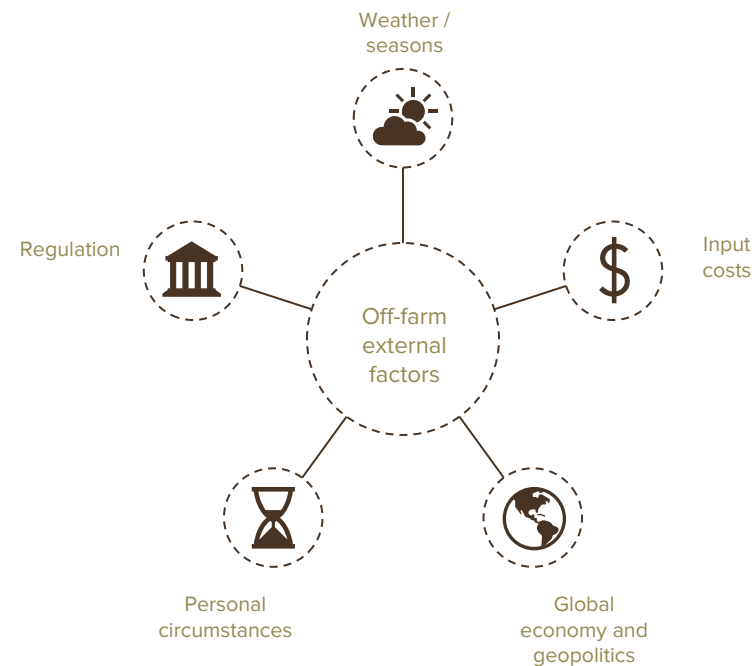
Focus area: factors impacting
on-farm decision making

Factors impacting on-farm decision making: an overview of the feedback

A special focus topic included in the May Sheep Producer Intentions Survey were two open ended questions asking producers to identify and describe the factors that would impact their on-farm decisions.

The survey sought to understand two different factors sets – firstly the off farm external factors and secondly the on-farm factors (see actual questions opposite). A summary of these two questions follows.

From the feedback we would note that:



Q22. What off-farm external factors, other than prices (for wool, lambs and sheep meat), are likely to have the most impact on your on-farm decision making over the next 6 months?

Base: All respondents who provided a response, n = 1,364

Q23. What on-farm factors are likely to have the most impact on your on-farm decision making over the next 6 months?

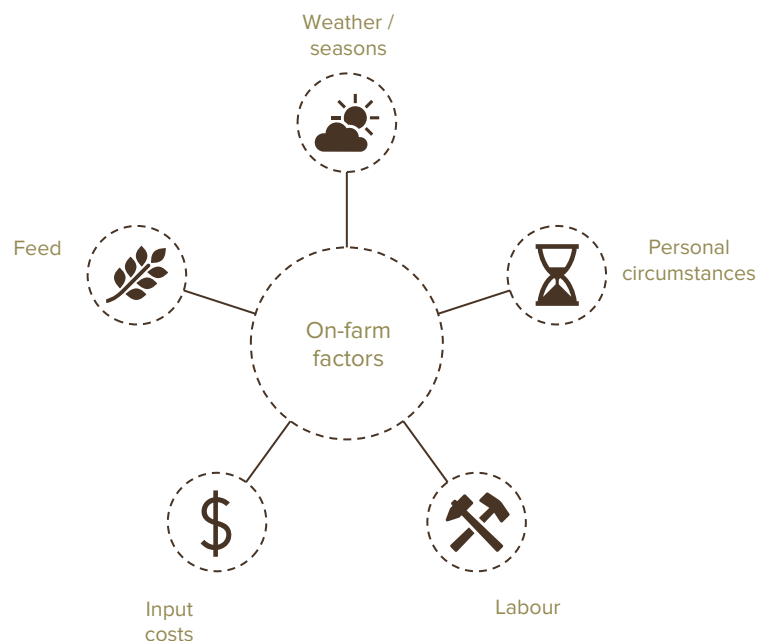
Base: All respondents who provided a response, n = 1,404

We note that there was no single off-farm external factor that dominated the response from producers. The range and diversity of feedback from producers suggests that there are likely to be a range of off-farm external influences that will shape the decision making on-farm. This is likely to vary by region and by farm size.

That said, there were five off-farm external factors that producers identified as likely to have a significant influence on their on-farm decisions:

- *Weather – the most prominently cited factor overall, articulated in various forms including drought/dry conditions, the amount of rainfall and water access, and broader seasonal conditions. Weather conditions obviously play on to impact feed availability, cost and access to feed, and in some cases damage or loss of stock.*
- *Input costs – the second most prominent theme, raised broadly across the board but with particular emphasis on fuel and fertiliser costs. This theme has grown in prominence compared to last year, reflecting continued cost pressure on producers.*
- *Regulation and other government-related factors – continued mention of government policy, regulations, taxes and levies, alongside ongoing references to the live export ban and broader government decision-making. As with last year, the tone around these issues was notably more direct than other comments.*
- *Personal circumstances – a recognition from some producers that their age, health, ambition to achieve work/life balance, family factors and decisions on the future of the farm were all active influences on their forward planning.*
- *Global economy and geopolitics – some concern around the war in the Middle East (particularly Iran), broader global conflict and instability, and the flow-on effects of US political developments and tariffs on trade and input costs (especially fuel and fertiliser).*

Factors impacting on-farm decision making: an overview of the feedback



Regarding on-farm factors, again we note that there was no single factor that dominated the response from producers.

That said, there were five on-farm factors that producers identified as likely to have a significant influence on their on-farm decisions:

- *Weather/seasons – by far the most dominant on-farm factor this year, articulated primarily through the amount of rainfall as well as broader seasonal conditions and drought/dry conditions. It clearly signals a top-of-mind focus and was the number one mentioned on-farm factor overall.*
- *Feed – the clear second-ranked theme, with producers identifying the access/availability of feed, the availability of water, and pasture growth as key influences on their on-farm decision making in the next six months. Feed and water access were frequently raised together with weather and rainfall, reflecting how closely these factors are linked in producers' minds.*
- *Input costs – raised generally across the board, with particular mentions of fuel/energy costs and fertiliser costs/access alongside feed costs.*
- *Personal circumstances – there was a recognition from some producers that their age, health, ambition to achieve more balance, family factors and decisions on the future of the farm were all active influences on their forward planning.*
- *Labour – mentioned both generally and specifically in terms of the shortage of/access to/availability of labour and staff, reflecting ongoing workforce pressures on-farm.*

Base: All respondents who provided a response, n = 1,364

7% - Markets

- 5% - Australia / Global instability/economy (inc. wars)
- 1% - Market (NFI)
- 1% - Geopolitics / tariff-related market instability / uncertainty
- 1% - Cost of living

7% - Business factors

5% - Interest rates
1% - Cash flow / finance
1% - Access to more land / land prices

7% - Sheep sales & prices

- 2% - Sheep prices
- 1% - Wool prices
- 1% - Demand (domestic and global)
- 1% - Availability/cost of replacements / stores
- 1% - Lamb prices
- 1% - Commodity prices

5% - Labour

2% - Shortage of / access to / availability of labour
1% - Shortage / availability of shearers
1% - Labour costs
1% - Cost of shearers

- 2% - Amount of feed available
- 1% - Cropping success
- 1% - Feed (NFI)



On-farm factors impacting on-farm decision making

Q23. What on-farm factors are likely to have the most impact on your on-farm decision making over the next 6 months?

Base: All respondents who provided a response, n = 1,404

56% - Weather / seasonal conditions

- 25% - Amount of rainfall
- 15% - Weather (NFI)
- 9% - Seasonal conditions (NFI)
- 8% - Drought / dry conditions
- 2% - Climate / climate change (NFI)

31% - Feed

- 10% - Access/availability of feed
- 7% - Availability of water
- 7% - Pasture growth
- 6% - Feed NFI
- 4% - Amount of feed / production
- 2% - Cropping (NFI)

10% - Input costs

- 4% - Input costs (NFI)
- 2% - Fertiliser costs / access
- 2% - Feed costs
- 1% - Cost of farm supplies
- 1% - Cost of production

8% - Personal circumstances

- 3% - Age / Retirement
- 2% - Health
- 2% - Workload / scaling back
- 1% - Time
- 1% - Family factors
- 1% - Change in direction
- 1% - Leasing

5% - Labour

- 3% - Shortage of / access to / availability of labour
2% - Labour (NFI)

5% - Sheep sales & prices

- 2% - Price (NFI)
- 1% - Lamb prices
- 1% - Sheep prices
- 1% - Wool prices

4% - Other factors

- 2% - Feral animals
- 1% - Government policy / regulations / taxes / levies / election
- 1% - Insects / pests / parasites / diseases

3% - Fertility

- 3% - Lambing %
1% - Herd health

3% - Business factors

- 1% - Cash flow / finance
- 1% - Margins / profitability
- 1% - Access to more land / land prices





Attachments

There were several definitions and specifications provided to producers in the survey. An outline of the key definitions used in the survey are provided below.

Flock Categories

Breeding ewes	Breeding ewes (including ewe lambs and hoggets intended for breeding).
Lambs	Lambs (not including ewe lambs and hoggets intended for breeding).

Sheep Breeds (breeding ewes and wethers)

Merino	Main breed of sheep for wool production.
First cross	Merino crossed with a long-haired sheep of a different breed.
Shedding	Breeds of sheep that shed their wool without shearing e.g. Australian White or Dorper. Could also be referred to as hair sheep.
Prime lamb	Animal entirely focused on meat (lamb) production e.g. Composite, Terminal, Suffolk or Dorset.
Dual purpose	Animal with no more than 50% Merino content geared towards both meat and wool production equally.
Other	Any breeds that do not fit into the definitions above.

Sheep Breeds (rams)

Merino	Main breed of sheep for wool production. Mainly used to provide pure-bred Merino lambs.
Poll Dorset	Short wool, meat producing sheep and is Australia's No.1 terminal sire in the prime lamb industry.
Maternal composite	Examples are Prime Line maternals, White Suffolk, East Friesian, etc.
Shedding	Examples are Dorpers, Ultrawhites, Aussie Whites and other derivatives of shedding type breeds.
Other	Any breeds that do not fit into the definitions above.

Survey Program The Sheep Producers Intentions Survey, undertaken by MLA and AWI, is used to help industry determine wool and lamb production forecasts, and to understand the breed composition of the Australian flock on a national, state and regional basis. The results are used by processors for budgeting purposes and allows import markets to ascertain short-term supply estimates.

Methodology The May 2026 survey used a mixed-method approach. Producers with email contact details were provided with the opportunity to respond to an online survey invitation. Up to four invitations (one initial and three reminders) were sent to producers.

Sample lists Approval was sought and received to use the MLA Levy Payer Register as the sample. This data was cleaned for any duplicates by email and phone number before use in the research.

Questionnaire A 15-minute questionnaire was used to collected the required information. The survey questionnaire covered, amongst others, the following topic areas:

- Producer sentiment – on the wool sector and on the sheepmeat sector;
- Flock size estimates (flock estimates included breeding ewes, wethers and lambs)
- Breeding ewe, wether and ram flock profiles
- Producer intentions (for their breeding ewe flock and wether flock)

Sample size A total of n = 1,517 responses were provided by producers as follows:

	Overall	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA
# of surveys	n = 1,517	n = 3	n = 500	n = 0	n = 52	n = 264	n = 55	n = 412	n = 231

Timing The interviewing was undertaken between the 11th May – 13th June 2026.

Weighting The survey results were weighted. A description of the weighting process used for the May 2026 Sheep Producers Intentions Survey follows next.

Survey data is often weighted to ensure estimates provide a representative match of the population being estimated and the estimates deliver statistical reliable measures.

For the Sheep Producers Intentions Survey, data has been weighted to ensure the sample provides a strong representation of the population of producers as possible. For this survey, it was considered important to weight the survey data to ensure we have:

- Coverage across the various regions as producers will have different operating conditions. For our purposes, a region is a state – so we need to weight so that our final sample is representative of the distribution of producers across states.
- Coverage across farm businesses of different sizes – obviously, the larger businesses have larger flocks so ensuring we have an appropriate mix of small, medium, large and very large producers is vital for the estimation process.

There may be other variables that help describe the possible differences across producers, but these two variables (state and flock size) will more than likely account for the likely differences that exist in the population of all producers.

For this survey, an updated weighting approach was utilised using the most recent available information. The weighting approach involved two factors:

- **State:** the estimate of the total number of agricultural businesses with sheep and lambs in each state from the Levy Payer Register for the most recent financial year (2024-25), totalling around 42.7k producers.
- **Total Flock Size:** With no recent data available to adjust or inform this factor, the proportional breakdown of the total flock size categories across each state from the previous weighting matrix was used (based on the most recent ABS Ag Census data available, 2020-21).

A further step was undertaken to take into account the proportion of producers who answered the survey and stated they no longer have a flock – these producers were contacted as they paid a levy in the 2024-25 financial year, but are clearly no longer sheep producers. This reduction of around 4% resulted in a final estimate of total number of agricultural businesses with sheep and lambs of 40.5k (down from the estimate in October 2024 of just under 42k, a 3.4% decline). This final weighting matrix was then used to weight the May 2026 Sheep Producers Intentions survey data.

Estimated total number of agricultural businesses with sheep and lambs

	ALL FLOCK SIZES	Less than 500	500 – < 1,000	1,000 – < 2,000	2,000 – < 3,000	3,000 – < 5,000	5,000 – < 10,000	10,000 – < 20,000	20,000 or more
AUSTRALIA	40,549	18,371	4,962	6,283	3,917	3,597	2,545	713	162
NSW	15,826	6,964	2,045	2,563	1,582	1,411	928	265	68
VIC	11,541	5,845	1,456	1,638	1,038	826	568	137	33
SA	5,888	2,216	807	1,185	637	565	351	103	24
WA	4,235	1,308	421	662	522	635	526	143	18
QLD	1,609	1,139	83	110	75	85	85	25	6
TAS	1,318	803	133	121	63	68	81	36	13
ACT	129	92	17	5	0	6	6	4	0
NT	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Reliability of the estimates

The estimates in this report are based on information obtained from a sample survey. Any data collection may encounter factors, known as non-sampling error, which can impact on the reliability of the resulting statistics. In addition, the reliability of estimates based on sample surveys are also subject to sampling variability. That is, the estimates may differ from those that would have been produced had all persons in the population been included in the survey.

Non-sampling error

Non-sampling error may occur in any collection, whether it is based on a sample or a full count such as a census. Sources of non-sampling error include non-response, errors in reporting by respondents or recording of answers by interviewers and errors in coding and processing data. Every effort is made to reduce non-sampling error by careful design of survey questionnaires and quality control procedures at all stages of data processing.

Sampling error

One measure of the likely difference is given by the standard error (SE), which indicates the extent to which an estimate might have varied by chance because only a sample of persons was included. There are about two chances in three (67%) that a sample estimate will differ by less than one SE from the number that would have been obtained if all persons had been surveyed, and about 19 chances in 20 (95%) that the difference will be less than two SEs.

Calculation of confidence interval

If 50% of all the people in a population of 20,000 people drink coffee in the morning, and if you were repeat the survey of 377 people ("Did you drink coffee this morning?") many times, then 95% of the time, your survey would find that between 45% and 55% of the people in your sample answered "Yes".

The remaining 5% of the time, or for 1 in 20 survey questions, you would expect the survey response to more than the margin of error away from the true answer.

When you survey a sample of the population, you don't know that you've found the correct answer, but you do know that there's a 95% chance that you're within the margin of error of the correct answer.

In terms of the numbers selected above, the margin of error *MoE* is given by:

$$MoE = z * \sqrt{\frac{\hat{p}(1 - \hat{p})}{n}}$$

where *n* is the sample size, $\hat{p}$ is the fraction of responses that you are interested in, and *z* is the [critical value](#) for the 95% confidence level (in this case, 1.96).

This calculation is based on the [Normal distribution](#) and assumes you have more than about 30 samples.

Survey Estimate	Margin of Error for a given sample size and survey estimate	Sample Size
		1,517 (total surveys completed)
	10%	± 1.51%
	20%	± 2.01%
	30%	± 2.31%
	40%	± 2.47%
	50%	± 2.52%
	60%	± 2.47%
	70%	± 2.31%
	80%	± 2.01%
	90%	± 1.51%

	Estimated Population	Sample Size	Margin of Error (assuming max survey estimate of 50%)
Australia	40,549	1,517	± 2.52%
NSW	15,826	500	± 4.38%
VIC	11,541	412	± 4.83%
SA	5,888	264	± 6.03%
WA	4,235	231	± 6.27%
QLD	1,609	52	± 13.59%
TAS	1,318	55	± 13.21%
ACT	129	3	n/a
NT	4	0	n/a



Sheep Producers Intentions Survey MAY 2026

Sheep Producers Intentions Survey May 2026

This research was conducted by Intuitive Solutions on behalf of MLA and AWI. For more information, please contact:



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