

Sheep Producers Intentions Survey OCTOBER 2026

MEAT & LIVESTOCK AUSTRALIA

Australian Wool Innovation Limited

November 2026

intuitive rural

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About the research

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 OCTOBER 2026 survey.

The October 2026 survey

Feedback was sought from producers over the period 6th October – 4th November 2026. Producers were initially invited to complete an online survey with the final sample complemented with a smaller number of phone interviews.

A total of 1,733 producers from across Australia responded 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.



October	February	May
FULL SURVEY *Provides an estimate of the total flock size, a profile of the lamb flock and measures of producer intentions for lambs and breeding ewes*	*PULSE SURVEY* *Provides a quick update on producers' actual lamb sales to date and forecasts for future sales.*	*FULL SURVEY* *Provides an estimate of the total flock size, a profile of the breeding ewes flock and measures of producer intentions for lambs and breeding ewes*

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 40,549* to 39,124† (a 3.5% decline). Consideration of this decline in the estimated population of businesses should be taken when interpreting results in this report.

* Source: Estimated via the Levy Payer Register for the financial year 2024-25.
† Source: Estimated via the Levy Payer Register for the financial year 2025-26.

State of play: an overview of the industry analysis

State of play…

The Australian wool and sheepmeat sectors continue to remain dynamic sectors with different factors impacting each sector in different ways.

The Australian Wool Production Forecasting Committee's (AWPFC) estimate of shorn wool production for the 2025/26 season was 253.9 Mkg greasy (reported in August 2026), 9.4% lower than 2024/25's estimate. A further 1.8% decline, to 249.3 Mkg greasy, is forecast for 2026/27.

In saying this, wool prices reached their highest levels in several years during 2026. The Eastern Market Indicator (EMI) has since eased for four consecutive weeks to 1,698ac/kg (week ending 6th November), although it remains almost 20% higher than a year earlier.

For the sheepmeat sector, several years of elevated turn-off have left the national flock close to record lows (according to Rabobank). Lamb and mutton slaughter are forecast to fall in 2026 as producers retain breeding stock, keeping supply tight and prices at or near record highs. The flock is expected to begin a gradual rebuild in 2027.

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

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

RABOBANK Commentary

- ✓ Sheepmeat: Lamb prices rose as competition for new-season lambs intensifies, but slaughter numbers are starting to plateau. Seasonal conditions and prices are encouraging producers to hold lambs to heavier weights and delay slaughter, which may cause prices to level out.
- ✓ Wool: October saw further declines in Australian wool prices, with broader merino and crossbred types under the most pressure as improved seasonal conditions increased supply. Finer wool proved more resilient amid tighter availability, while subdued downstream demand continues to limit broader market support.

ANZ Agribusiness Commentary:

Sheepmeat

- ✓ Supply squeeze intensifies: Lamb slaughter is down more than 13% year-on-year and mutton throughput has fallen 38%, highlighting just how tight sheep supply has become.
- ✓ Rain could reshape flock dynamics: Widespread winter rainfall may encourage producers to retain more breeding ewes or add weight to lambs, potentially challenging forecasts for further flock decline and delaying peaks in new season lamb supply.
- ✓ Middle East export volumes slump: Ongoing instability in the region has driven a sharp contraction in sheepmeat exports, making it the biggest contributor to Australia's export slowdown.
- ✓ China and North Asia provide a bright spot for lamb: Strong demand from China, South Korea and other Asian markets is helping offset reductions elsewhere in lamb exports.
- ✓ US demand remains remarkably resilient: Despite global volatility and limited supply, the US continues to underpin lamb exports, supported by tight domestic beef supplies and growing consumer exposure to lamb.
- ✓ Trade uncertainty looms: A new US investigation into lamb imports could have significant implications for Australia's largest export market at a time when global sheepmeat prices remain at or near record highs.

Wool

- ✓ Tighter supply continues to underpin the market: Australian wool production is forecast to decline further in 2026/27, reinforcing the supportive supply conditions that helped drive stronger prices last season.
- ✓ A smaller flock is reshaping the outlook: With the national sheep flock at a five-year low, any meaningful increase in wool production is likely to be gradual and influenced by producer rebuilding decisions.
- ✓ Natural fibre demand remains a key opportunity: Growing consumer interest in sustainable and natural products continues to support wool's long-term outlook, particularly in premium markets.
- ✓ Supply and demand may be moving into balance: As global economic growth slows, Australia's lower wool production could help maintain healthy buyer competition and support market resilience in the year ahead.

1. Rabobank. Australia Agribusiness Monthly – November 2026. Source: Rabobank
2. ANZ Agri InFocus: Commodity Insights – Spring 2026. Source: ANZ Agribusiness



Observations and insights

Sheep Producers Intentions Survey

October 2026

We spoke to 1,733 producers about their industry sentiment and the profile and intentions for their lamb flock...

Sentiment

Nett Sentiment
(% positive - % negative)

+47
Wool industry

+84
Sheepmeat industry

Producers are most likely to expect the following changes...

- Increase to input costs
- No change to wool prices
- Increase to lamb prices
- No change to mutton / cull ewe prices

50% Believe it will become more difficult to access skilled labour in their local region over the next 12 months

Lamb Flock Profile

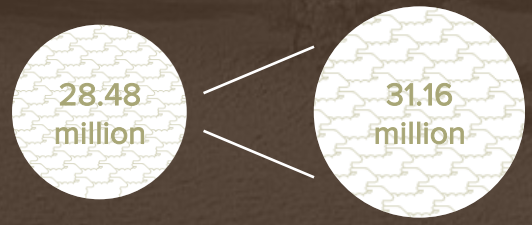
28.48 million Estimate of total lambs after lambing but before sales (39% of total flock size)

Dominant breeds on hand in the total lamb flock estimate:

30%	24%	17%
Prime lamb	Merino (dual purpose)	First cross

Actual sales already made this spring	Expected sales to be made in the remaining spring flush (up to 31 December 2026)	Expected sales of lambs in the first half of 2027 (January to June)
22%	30%	48%

Lamb Flock Intentions

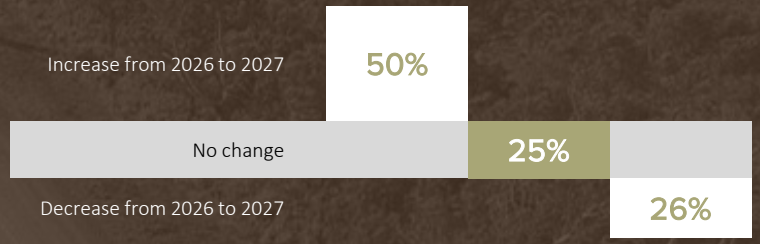


Reported lamb flock size for 2026

Forecast lamb flock size for 2027

+ 9% Forecasted change in total lamb flock

The estimates above indicate the forecast change in lamb flock numbers. Producer-level intentions for increases, decreases or maintaining flock levels (ignoring the size of the flock) were:



Producers who forecast an increase in their lamb flock report three major factors influencing their plans for the next 12 months:

46%	36%	34%
Retaining more ewes	Looking to expand our sheep operations	Expect better lambing results next year

Observations and insights

While the purpose of the research did not include an interpretation of the survey results, we provide some initial observations and insights in the following discussion.

Producer sentiment

Producers' outlook for the *wool sector* has seen another increase (up 28 points from October 2025 to a Nett Sentiment of +47), with over half (53%) of producers reporting a positive outlook and just 6% reporting a negative one. In saying this, there still remains just over one in four producers who are hesitant in their outlook for the wool sector (28% reported a Neutral outlook).

The outlook for the *sheepmeat sector* remains strong (Nett Sentiment: +84, up 6 points from October 2025). Over five in six (86%) producers reported having a positive outlook - by comparison, just 2% of producers reported a negative outlook. It seems that producers continue to benefit from solid market conditions, and their confidence is underpinned by generally favourable seasonal conditions across most production regions*. The positive outlook is consistent across all producer segments, including all states/territories where Nett Sentiment is at +71 or higher.

A watching brief on these sentiment results is warranted to see if the current improved levels can be sustained over the mid-term.

Profile of the lamb flock

The October 2026 survey had a specific focus on understanding the profile of Australia's lamb flocks. Of the estimated 28M lambs on hand:

- Prime lambs (30% of total lamb flock), Merinos for dual purpose (24%) and First Cross breeds (17%) look to be the dominant breed types on hand – it's estimated that these three breed types account for 71% of the total lamb flock.

- The indication that producers are progressively shifting to a shedding breed has softened. In October 2022, 15% of producers reported holding shedding lambs – this proportion increased to 24% in October 2025, but now sits at 22% of producers in the October 2026 estimates.

- The survey has estimated that:

  - An estimated 52% of the lambs to be sold are forecast to be sold in the 2026 calendar year, with an estimated 22% of this forecast volume already sold (up from 19% for the same period in 2025).

  - Around one in six producers (16%) reported that their lambs scheduled to be sold in 2026 will have spent at least 35 days with grain as their primary food source. Of this 16%, on average just over half (55%) of these lambs are fed (or will be fed) in the paddock using self-feeders or lick feeders.

* Source: Rabobank Rural Confidence Survey, Quarter 3 2026

Observations and insights

Intentions – lamb flock

Analysis of the feedback provided shows that:

- At the producer level (that is considering each producer equal), there is a net intention to increase their lamb flocks in the next 12 months:

  - 50% (52% in 2025) indicated they would increase their lamb flock size;
  - 25% (20% in 2025) indicated it would remain unchanged; and
  - 26% (28% in 2025) indicated they would decrease their lamb flock size.

  This net positive posture was largely consistent across most states/territories and producers of varying flock sizes.

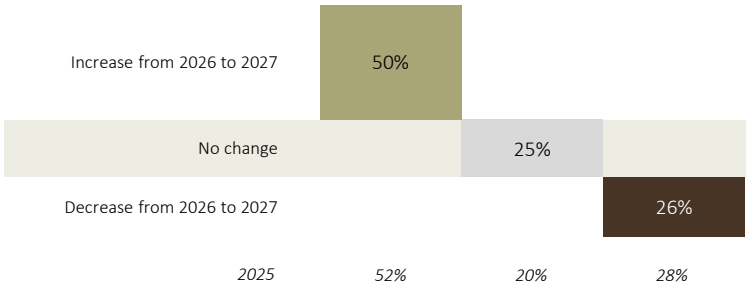
- Analysis of the forecast change in the number of lambs suggests an expected increase of approximately 2.68M lambs over the estimated 2026 flock size (equating to a forecast increase of 9% on 2026). This result highlights the importance of considering the reported changes in flock size rather than just 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 lamb flock – is shown opposite.

  Most states/territories have been estimated to increase their lamb flock size outside of TAS and VIC, where it is estimated to remain stable (1% and 2% increases forecasted respectively).

  Producers were asked what factors are influencing their plans to have more lambs next year:

  - The top three factors were retaining more ewes, looking to expand their sheep operations, and the expectation of better lambing results – these three factors were the same top three reported in October 2024 and also October 2025 (for those indicating an increase)
  - The largest reported change in factors influencing their decision was two-fold:
    - Retaining more ewes (46% reported this, 34% in October 2025); and conversely
    - Expect better lambing results next year (34% reported this, 48% in October 2025).



2027 LAMB FLOCK FORECAST

Total reported flock size for 2026:	28,476,098
Total expected flock size for 2027:	31,156,893
Difference of:	+ 2,680,795
% forecast change on 2026:	+ 9%

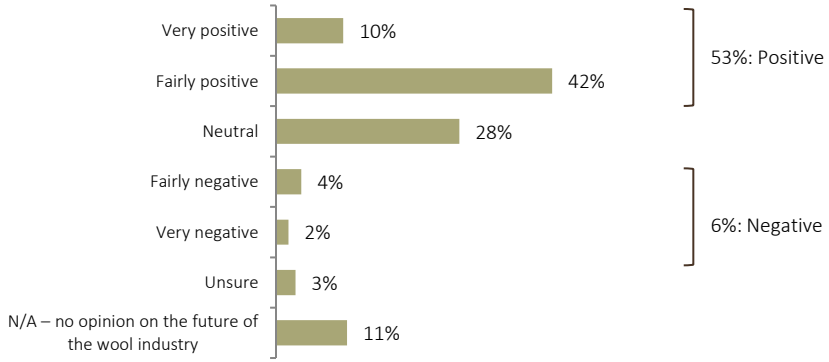
The detailed results from the October 2026 Sheep Producers Intentions Survey now follow.



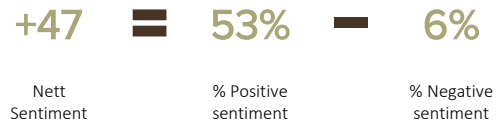
Producer sentiment

Sentiment: outlook for the wool sector

Q1. Firstly, 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 = 1,733



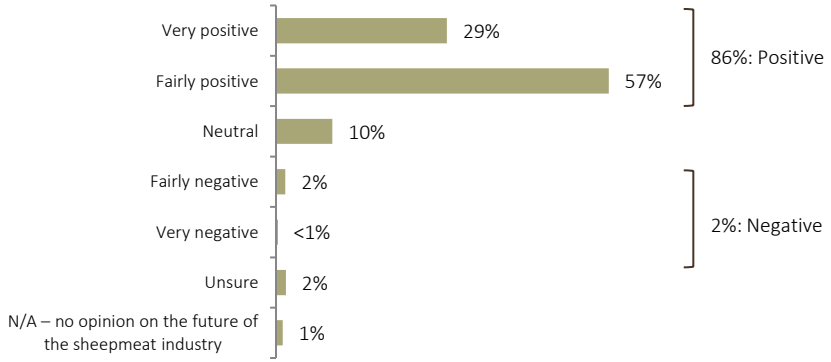
Nett Sentiment
(scale of -100 to +100)



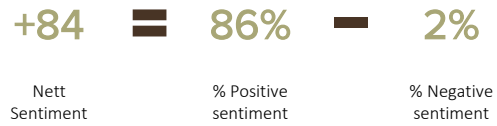
	State						Total Flock Size (sheep and lambs)							
	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Less than 500	500 – < 1,000	1,000 – < 2,000	2,000 – < 3,000	3,000 – < 5,000	5,000 – < 10,000	10,000 – < 20,000	20,000 or more
Base:	*584*	*67*	*262*	*58*	*453*	*307*	*546*	*211*	*250*	*186*	*208*	*222*	*75*	*35*
Nett Sentiment – Wool	+47	+37	+64	+27	+43	+45	+34	+52	+49	+66	+58	+64	+62	+59

Sentiment: outlook for the sheepmeat sector

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 = 1,733



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:	*584*	*67*	*262*	*58*	*453*	*307*	*546*	*211*	*250*	*186*	*208*	*222*	*75*	*35*
Nett Sentiment – Sheepmeat	+87	+82	+88	+82	+83	+71	+78	+86	+88	+88	+91	+89	+93	+85

The comparative Rabobank measure. . . . .

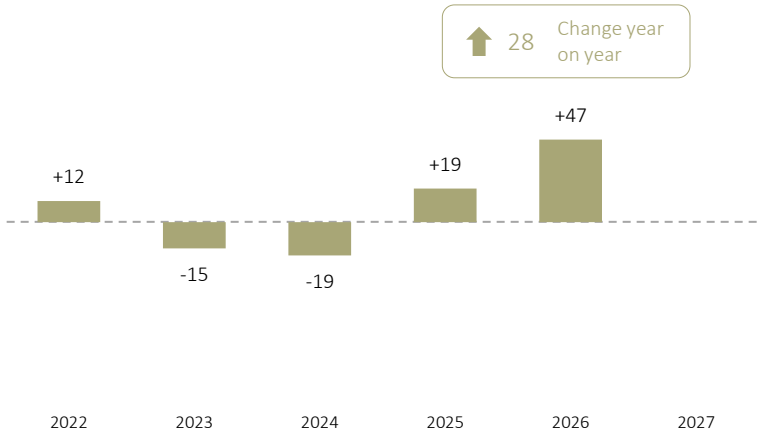
Sheep producers were the most optimistic sector in the nation this quarter, with net confidence rising from -27 per cent to -6 per cent, supported by price stability.

"Sheep producers continue to benefit from solid market conditions for both sheepmeat and wool, and their 'bullish' confidence is underpinned by generally favourable seasonal conditions across most production regions", Mr van Doremaele said.

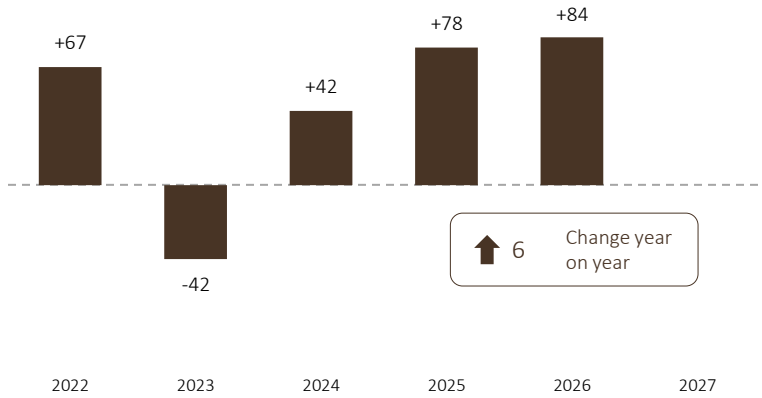
Source of Rabobank commentary: Rabobank Rural Confidence Survey, Quarter 3 2026

Sentiment trend of the wool and sheepmeat sectors

Trend of Nett Sentiment of the wool industry



Trend of Nett Sentiment of the sheepmeat industry

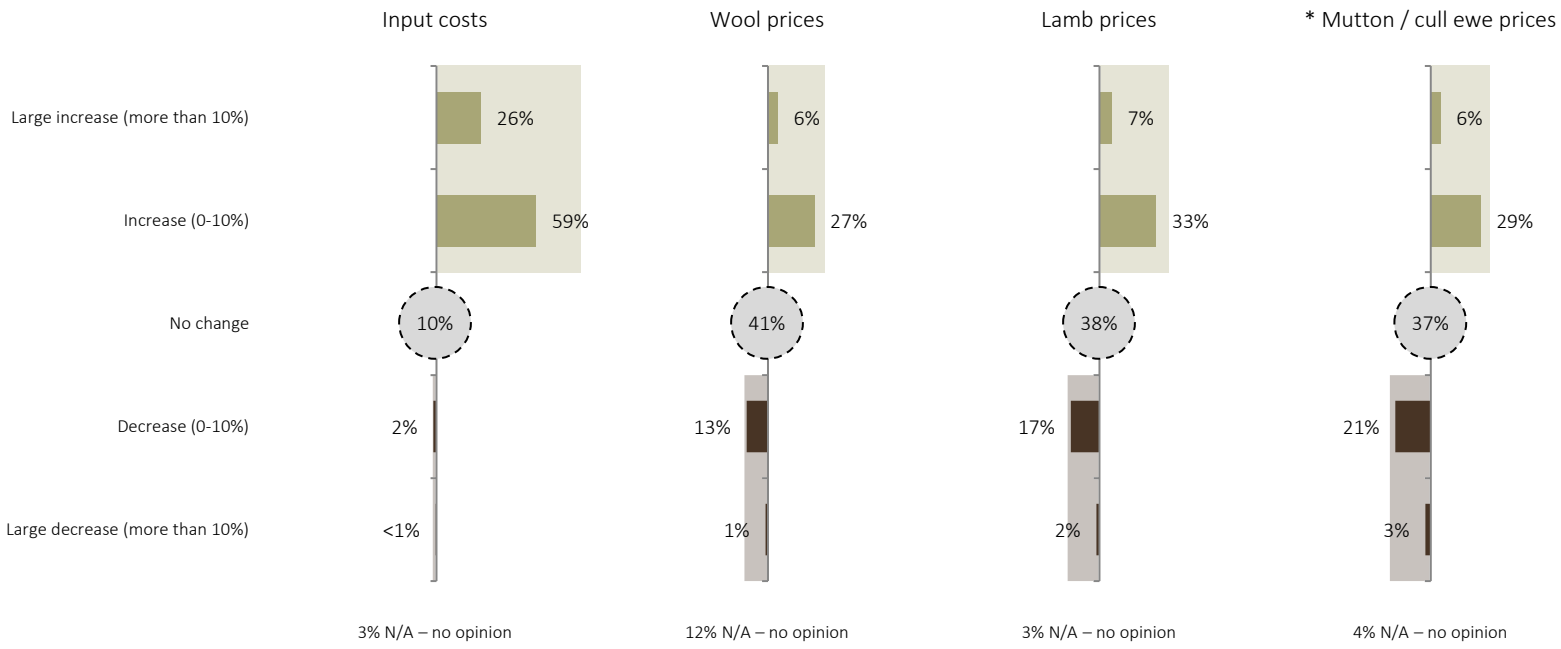


	State						Total Flock Size (sheep and lambs)							
	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Less than 500	500 – < 1,000	1,000 – < 2,000	2,000 – < 3,000	3,000 – < 5,000	5,000 – < 10,000	10,000 – < 20,000	20,000 or more
Nett Sentiment – Wool – 2025	+20	+20	+38	+3	+12	+14	+9	+27	+30	+16	+34	+26	+39	+16
Nett Sentiment – Wool – 2026	+47	+37	+64	+27	+43	+45	+34	+52	+49	+66	+58	+64	+62	+59
Change	Up 27	Up 17	Up 26	Up 24	Up 31	Up 31	Up 25	Up 25	Up 19	Up 50	Up 24	Up 38	Up 23	Up 43
Nett Sentiment – Sheepmeat – 2025	+83	+80	+81	+84	+78	+53	+75	+79	+81	+79	+82	+90	+85	+94
Nett Sentiment – Sheepmeat – 2026	+87	+82	+88	+82	+83	+71	+78	+86	+88	+88	+91	+89	+93	+85
Change	Up 4	Up 2	Up 7	Down 2	Up 5	Up 18	Up 3	Up 7	Up 7	Up 9	Up 9	Down 1	Up 8	Down 9

Expected changes in costs and prices

Q3. In your opinion, what changes do you expect to occur across input costs, wool prices and lamb prices over the next 12 months?

Base: All respondents, n = 1,733. * Denotes new category to the 2026 research.



*Most producers continue to report that **input costs** are likely to **increase** over the next 12 months. The result is largely consistent with last year and paints a somewhat pessimistic outlook for input prices. This view is consistent across states and farm businesses of various flock sizes.*

*While most producers are expecting wool, lamb and mutton / cull ewe prices to **hold steady or increase**, this trend has declined year on year – 33% of producers believe wool prices will increase (down from 51% reported in October 2025) and 41% believe lamb prices will increase (down from 48% reported in October 2025).*

Expected changes in costs and prices

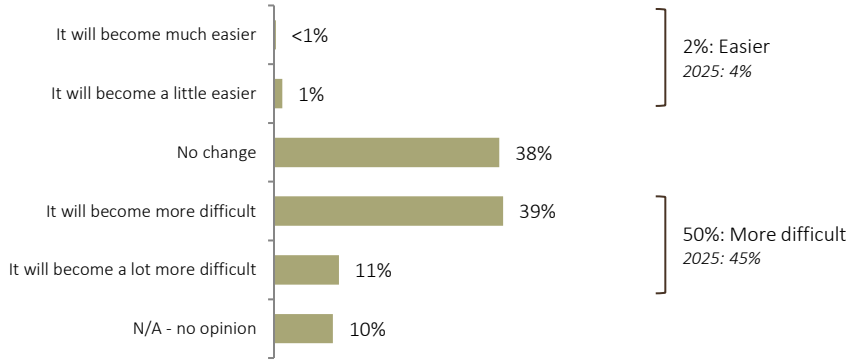
Q3. In your opinion, what changes do you expect to occur across input costs, wool prices and lamb prices over the next 12 months?

Base: All respondents, n = 1,733. * Denotes new category to the 2026 research.

	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:	*584*	*67*	*262*	*58*	*453*	*307*	*546*	*211*	*250*	*186*	*208*	*222*	*75*	*35*
INPUT COSTS														
Increase	83%	90%	87%	98%	84%	86%	80%	86%	91%	88%	90%	86%	90%	87%
No change	12%	4%	9%	2%	9%	11%	10%	11%	8%	8%	9%	10%	8%	12%
Decrease	2%	<1%	2%	<1%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%	4%	<1%	4%	2%	2%
WOOL PRICES														
Increase	35%	39%	33%	35%	31%	32%	33%	32%	32%	32%	31%	37%	42%	45%
No change	41%	23%	46%	45%	40%	39%	35%	40%	46%	50%	47%	44%	40%	36%
Decrease	13%	8%	16%	15%	14%	17%	10%	16%	18%	17%	17%	18%	19%	20%
LAMB PRICES														
Increase	42%	50%	32%	53%	42%	37%	49%	37%	35%	33%	35%	26%	38%	29%
No change	37%	27%	43%	33%	38%	36%	31%	43%	40%	41%	42%	53%	40%	41%
Decrease	18%	12%	24%	14%	16%	24%	13%	19%	25%	26%	21%	21%	22%	30%
*** MUTTON / CULL EWE PRICES**														
Increase	35%	40%	27%	38%	38%	34%	39%	35%	30%	32%	33%	27%	36%	23%
No change	35%	24%	43%	34%	37%	37%	33%	35%	41%	38%	39%	46%	41%	46%
Decrease	24%	23%	27%	28%	22%	26%	20%	27%	28%	30%	26%	26%	23%	31%

Expected changes on accessing skilled labour

Q4. Over the next 12 months, how easy will it be to access skilled labour in your local region?
Base: All respondents, n = 1,733



Since the revised research began in October 2022, producers have consistently reported that ***accessing skilled labour*** *will continue to become more difficult.*

Despite all the other changes that are impacting producers, accessing skilled labour remains a challenge for most producers.

	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:	*584*	*67*	*262*	*58*	*453*	*307*	*546*	*211*	*250*	*186*	*208*	*222*	*75*	*35*
% more difficult + % a lot more difficult	48%	41%	54%	48%	47%	62%	45%	50%	55%	59%	54%	51%	47%	47%



Lamb flock profiles

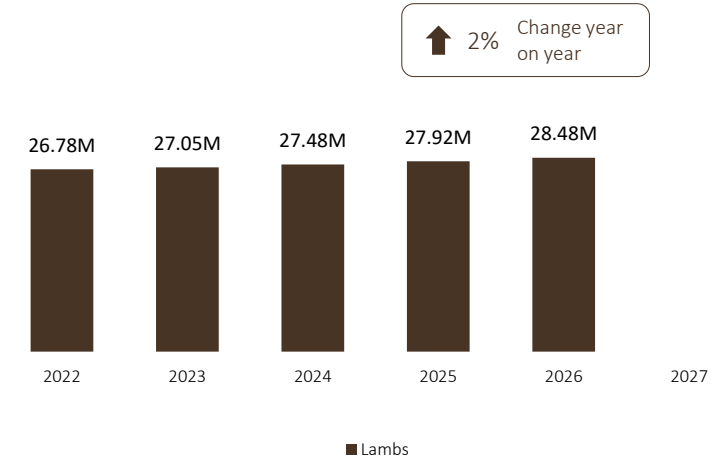
Estimates of the lamb and breeding ewe flock sizes

Q5-Q7. What were the total number of breeding ewes you had on hand at 30 September 2026 and lambs you had after lambing but before sales (not including ewe lambs and hoggets intended for breeding)?

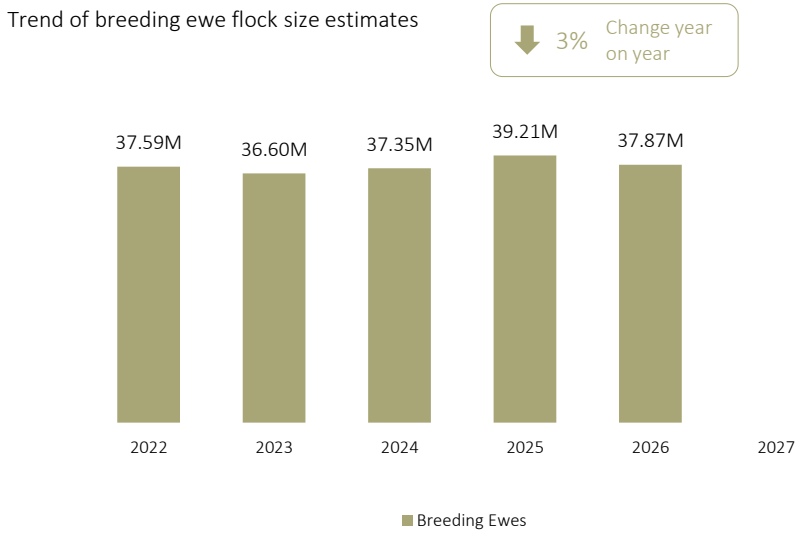
Base: All respondents, n = 1,733

		% of producers with type
Breeding ewes (including ewe lambs and hoggets intended for breeding) on hand at 30 September 2026:	37,865,056	96%
Lambs after lambing but before sales (not including ewe lambs and hoggets intended for breeding):	28,476,098	91%

Trend of lamb flock size estimates

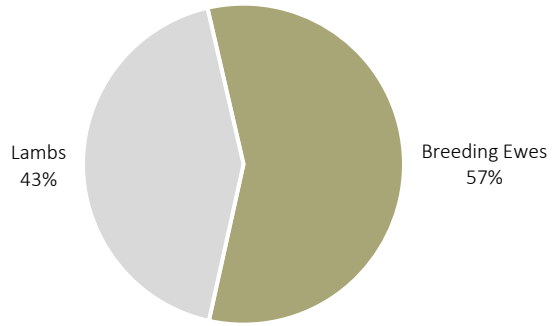


Trend of breeding ewe flock size estimates



Estimates of the lamb and breeding ewe flock sizes

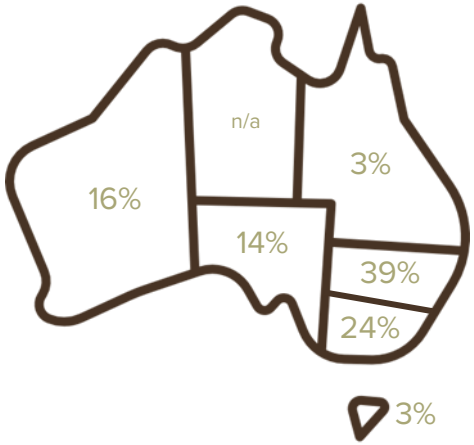
Proportion of breeding ewe and lamb flock sizes



	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:	*584*	*67*	*262*	*58*	*453*	*307*	*546*	*211*	*250*	*186*	*208*	*222*	*75*	*35*
% of total flock size														
Breeding ewes	59%	65%	55%	59%	54%	58%	56%	57%	58%	58%	59%	59%	54%	52%
Lambs	41%	35%	45%	41%	46%	42%	44%	43%	42%	42%	41%	41%	46%	48%

Estimates of the lamb and breeding ewe flock sizes

Estimated proportion of total flock size across states



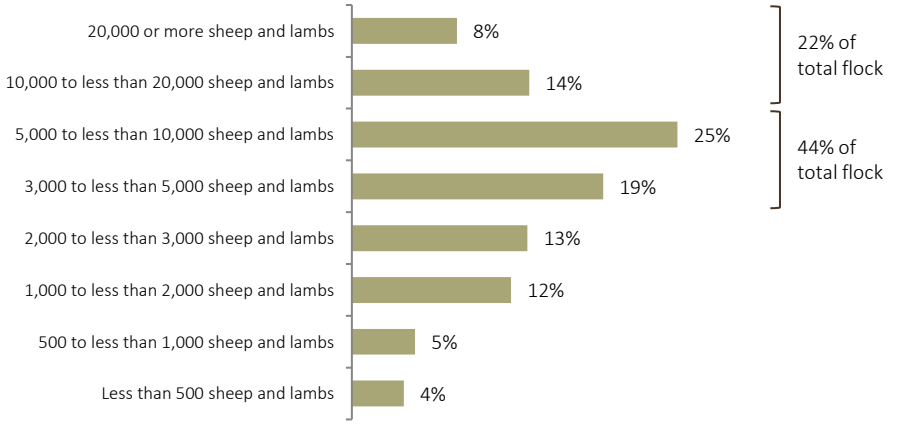
NSW and VIC account for an estimated 64% of the total flock size.

SA and WA account for 30% 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 34% of the estimated total flock is held by producers with fewer than 3,000 sheep) it is the larger producers which have a greater estimated proportion of the national sheep flock (66% of the estimated total flock held by producers with 3,000 or more sheep and 22% 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.

Estimated proportion of total flock size across total flock size categories



Lamb flock profiles

Q7. What were the total number of lambs you had after lambing but before sales (not including ewe lambs and hoggets intended for breeding)?
Base: All respondents, n = 1,733

Lambs after lambing but before sales (not including ewe lambs and hoggets intended for breeding): **28,476,098**

% of total flock size (ewes, wethers, lambs): **39%**

	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:	*584*	*67*	*262*	*58*	*453*	*307*	*546*	*211*	*250*	*186*	*208*	*222*	*75*	*35*
Lamb flock size	10,503,711	610,550	4,441,280	825,883	7,517,022	4,567,144	1,136,261	1,361,006	3,444,986	3,821,157	5,282,676	6,739,690	4,154,928	2,535,395
% of total flock size (ewes/wethers/ lambs)	37%	28%	43%	37%	43%	39%	40%	39%	39%	39%	38%	37%	42%	44%

Lamb flock – breeds on hand

Q15 and Q16. Of these [Q7 ANSWER] lambs you mentioned earlier, please tell us which of the following types of lamb breeds you have across your properties (after lambing but before sales, not including ewe lambs and hoggets intended for breeding). *

Base: All respondents with lambs, n = 1,605

Total lamb flock size reported: 28,476,098

		% of total lamb flock	% of producers with breed			*Definitions of breeds presented to producers:*
Prime lamb	8,549,169	30%	33%	---------	Prime lamb	Animal entirely focused on meat (lamb) production e.g. Composite, Terminal, Suffolk or Dorset.
Merino – dual purpose	6,936,454	24%	23%	---------	Merino – dual purpose	100% Merino, run for both meat (lamb) and wool production.
First cross	4,719,519	17%	24%	---------	First cross	Merino crossed with a terminal sire.
Merino – wool focus	4,458,986	16%	18%	---------	Merino – wool focus	100% Merino, run mainly for wool production.
Shedding	2,259,571	8%	22%	---------	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 (crossbred)	1,295,901	5%	8%	---------	Dual purpose (crossbred)	Animal (**not** 100% Merino) geared towards both meat and wool production equally.
Other	256,497	1%	3%	---------	Other	Any breeds that do not fit into the definitions above.

** In October 2026, the survey was adjusted to split out "Merino" into "Merino – wool focus" and "Merino – dual purpose", as well as reword "Dual purpose" to "Dual purpose (crossbred)". Given the change in classifications presented, the 2025 trend is not provided for comparison.*

Lamb flock – breeds on hand

Q15 and Q16. Of these [Q7 ANSWER] lambs you mentioned earlier, please tell us which of the following types of lamb breeds you have across your properties (after lambing but before sales, not including ewe lambs and hoggets intended for breeding).
Base: All respondents with lambs, n = 1,605

	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:	*525*	*54*	*249*	*52*	*424*	*299*	*468*	*198*	*237*	*180*	*201*	*212*	*74*	*35*
Total lamb flock size	**10,503,711**	**610,550**	**4,441,280**	**825,883**	**7,517,022**	**4,567,144**	**1,136,261**	**1,361,006**	**3,444,986**	**3,821,157**	**5,282,676**	**6,739,690**	**4,154,928**	**2,535,395**
% of total lamb flock														
Prime lamb	24%	6%	31%	49%	47%	14%	33%	38%	35%	34%	23%	28%	24%	41%
Merino – dual purpose	26%	30%	25%	9%	12%	42%	9%	13%	24%	26%	31%	27%	24%	16%
First cross	19%	2%	24%	12%	13%	13%	17%	18%	17%	16%	14%	17%	20%	15%
Merino – wool focus	20%	34%	8%	24%	12%	17%	6%	10%	14%	15%	17%	16%	20%	18%
Shedding	7%	28%	10%	2%	6%	8%	28%	18%	7%	6%	10%	6%	8%	<1%
Dual purpose (crossbred)	3%	<1%	2%	4%	9%	4%	6%	3%	3%	3%	5%	6%	2%	9%
Other	1%	0%	<1%	<1%	1%	2%	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%	<1%	2%	<1%

Lamb flock – lambs marked

Q17. Of these [Q7 ANSWER] lambs across each breed type, how many have been marked up to this point?

Base: All respondents with lambs, n = 1,605

Total lambs marked: 26,117,838

		% of lamb breed marked	*2025*
Prime lamb	8,272,144	97%	*95%*
Merino – dual purpose	6,232,132	90%	*n/a **
First cross	4,258,881	90%	*92%*
Merino – wool focus	3,881,905	87%	*n/a **
Shedding	2,030,759	90%	*91%*
Dual purpose (crossbred)	1,206,469	93%	*87% †*
Other	235,550	92%	*82%*

Calculation of % of lamb breed marked (example: Prime lamb):

Estimated total number of marked up breed: 8,272,144

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Estimate of total number of breed in flock: 8,549,169

=

% of lamb breed marked: 97%

** In October 2026, the survey was adjusted to split out "Merino" into "Merino – wool focus" and "Merino – dual purpose". No trend is provided for comparison.*

† In October 2026, "Dual purpose" was reworded to now read "Dual purpose (crossbred)".

Lamb flock – breeding ewes joined and marking rates

Q18. Of the [Q17 BREED ANSWER] lambs that have been marked to this point, how many breeding ewes were joined to produce these lambs?

Base: All respondents with lambs and breeding ewes joined to produce lambs, n = 1,477

Total breeding ewes joined to produce lambs: 26,016,057

		Marking rate	*2025*
Prime lamb	6,755,278	117%	*115%*
Merino – dual purpose	6,887,599	87%	*n/a **
First cross	4,001,104	101%	*91%*
Merino – wool focus	4,982,856	78%	*n/a **
Shedding	2,057,553	98%	*101%*
Dual purpose (crossbred)	1,090,068	110%	*90% †*
Other	241,600	96%	*94%*

Calculation of marking rate (example: Prime lamb):

Please note: *This analysis has been undertaken only on respondents who could provide an answer to both Q17 (number of lambs marked) and Q18 (number of breeding ewes joined to produce marked lambs)*

Estimated total number of marked up breed: 7,901,291

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Estimate of total number of breeding ewes joined to produce these lambs: 6,755,278

=

Marking rate: 117%

** In October 2026, the survey was adjusted to split out "Merino" into "Merino – wool focus" and "Merino – dual purpose". No trend is provided for comparison.*

† In October 2026, "Dual purpose" was reworded to now read "Dual purpose (crossbred)".

Lamb flock – sales

Q19. Now we would like you to think about the lamb sales already made and those expected to be made. Could you please provide the number of lamb sales across the following time periods, both actual and expected:

Base: All respondents with lambs, n = 1,594 (n = 8 identified as lot feeders*, n = 3 could not provide an answer)

Total actual and expected sales

22,382,967

2025: 23,870,449

	Actual sales already made this spring (from 1 July 2026 to now)	Expected sales to be made in the remaining spring flush and the period up to 31 December 2026	Expected sales of lambs in the first half of 2027 (January to June)
	4,880,487	6,779,839	10,722,641
% of total sales	22%	30%	48%
	2025: 19%	*2025: 37%*	*2025: 44%*

	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:	*523*	*54*	*245*	*52*	*422*	*296*	*467*	*198*	*236*	*180*	*200*	*209*	*72*	*32*
Total actual and expected sales	**8,458,860**	**394,535**	**3,329,833**	**618,510**	**6,246,607**	**3,325,244**	**1,237,423**	**1,333,392**	**2,941,797**	**3,114,456**	**4,178,655**	**5,495,199**	**2,703,848**	**1,378,197**
% of total sales														
Actual sales already made	29%	46%	18%	8%	15%	20%	23%	22%	23%	21%	19%	25%	20%	18%
Expected sales to be made up to Dec-26	23%	17%	37%	28%	39%	28%	30%	33%	29%	28%	28%	31%	31%	40%
Expected sales from Jan-27 to Jun-27	48%	37%	44%	64%	47%	52%	47%	45%	48%	51%	53%	44%	49%	43%

* Lot feeders identified via survey responses are removed from the sales question so as to not double-count lamb sales (i.e. producer and lot feeder).

Lamb flock – expected sales with 35 days of grain

Q20. Of the expected lamb sales to be made in the second half of 2026, what proportion will have spent at least 35 days with grain as their primary food source (continual access to supplement grain, excluding trail feeding or grazing on stubble)?
Base: All respondents with lambs sold or expected to sell in 2026, n = 1,118

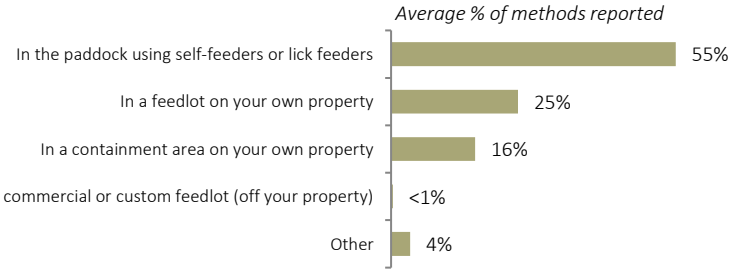
16%
Proportion of producers with **at least 1%** expected sales in 2026 with 35+ days with grain as primary food source

2025: 23%

Of the 16% who had at least some proportion of lambs fed on 35+ days of grain

Q21. Of these lambs that will have spent at least 35 days with grain as their primary food source, what proportion were or will be fed in each of the following?
Base: All respondents who had at least some proportion of lambs fed on 35+ days of grain, n = 200.
New question to the 2026 research.

1.2 - Mean number of methods used



	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:	*360*	*31*	*191*	*36*	*283*	*216*	*289*	*142*	*161*	*133*	*137*	*167*	*59*	*30*
Proportion of producers with **at least 1%** expected sales in 2026 with 35+ days with grain as primary food source	20%	15%	10%	2%	10%	29%	11%	17%	17%	15%	25%	25%	17%	38%

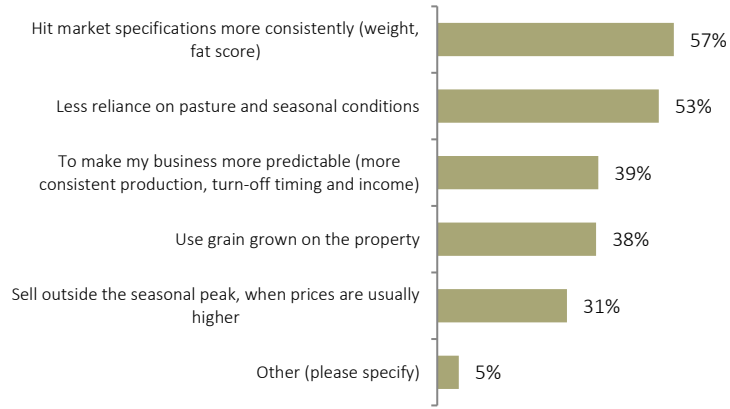
Lamb flock – intention to increase number of lambs fed on grain

Q22. Do you intend to increase the number of lambs fed on grain (either on your property or externally) in the next 12 months?
Base: All respondents, n = 1,733. New question to the 2026 research.

10%
Proportion of producers who intend to increase the number of lambs fed on grain in the next 12 months

Of the 10% who intend to increase the number of lambs fed on grain in the next 12 months

Q23. What are the reasons behind your intention to increase the number of lambs fed on grain? Please select all that apply.
Base: All respondents who intend to increase the number of lambs fed on grain in the next 12 months n = 205. New question to the 2026 research.



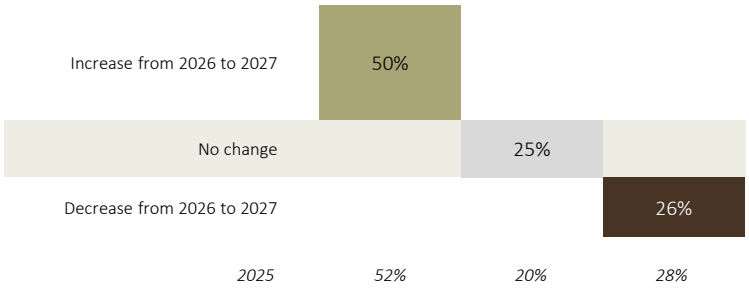
	State						Total Flock Size (sheep and lambs)							
	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Less than 500	500 – < 1,000	1,000 – < 2,000	2,000 – < 3,000	3,000 – < 5,000	5,000 – < 10,000	10,000 – < 20,000	20,000 or more
Base:	*584*	*67*	*262*	*58*	*453*	*307*	*546*	*211*	*250*	*186*	*208*	*222*	*75*	*35*
% intend to increase the number of lambs fed on grain in the next 12 months	11%	4%	12%	2%	9%	14%	6%	14%	13%	7%	15%	17%	26%	20%



Producer intentions

Producer intentions over the next 12 months
Lamb flock

Q25. And how many lambs (as defined earlier) are you expecting to have at the same time next year, in 2027 (30 September 2027)?
Base: All respondents, n = 1,733



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

Among the producers responding to the October 2026 survey, around half (50%, down from 52% in 2025) reported they would be increasing their flock, with 26% (down from 28% in 2025) indicating some level of downsizing of their flock.

This provides a useful producer sentiment, with the following analysis exploring the impact of this stated intention on the forecast lamb 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:	*584*	*67*	*262*	*58*	*453*	*307*	*546*	*211*	*250*	*186*	*208*	*222*	*75*	*35*
Increase from 2026 to 2027	53%	41%	51%	34%	47%	49%	49%	47%	49%	52%	48%	57%	62%	38%
No change	23%	27%	24%	26%	27%	26%	25%	29%	22%	24%	26%	23%	23%	33%
Decrease from 2026 to 2027	24%	32%	25%	40%	26%	25%	26%	24%	29%	24%	26%	20%	15%	29%

Lamb flock size intentions by producer outlook

	Of those who expect an increase in lambs	Of those who expect no change in lambs	Of those who expect a decrease in lambs
Q1. Firstly, how do you feel about the future of the wool industry over the next 12 months? Would you say you feel…?			
Base:	*873*	*426*	*434*
Nett Sentiment	+50	+48	+39
Q2. And how do you feel about the future of the sheepmeat industry over the next 12 months? Would you say you feel…?			
Base:	*873*	*426*	*434*
Nett Sentiment	+86	+80	+83
Input costs – Q3. In your opinion, what changes do you expect to occur across input costs, wool prices and lamb prices over the next 12 months?			
Base:	*873*	*426*	*434*
Increase	86%	83%	86%
No change	9%	11%	10%
Decrease	3%	2%	2%
Wool prices – Q3. In your opinion, what changes do you expect to occur across input costs, wool prices and lamb prices over the next 12 months?			
Base:	*873*	*426*	*434*
Increase	34%	34%	32%
No change	40%	40%	43%
Decrease	12%	15%	16%
Lamb prices – Q3. In your opinion, what changes do you expect to occur across input costs, wool prices and lamb prices over the next 12 months?			
Base:	*873*	*426*	*434*
Increase	43%	37%	40%
No change	37%	40%	36%
Decrease	17%	18%	21%
Mutton / cull ewe prices – Q3. In your opinion, what changes do you expect to occur across input costs, wool prices and lamb prices over the next 12 months?			
Base:	*873*	*426*	*434*
Increase	36%	33%	34%
No change	37%	36%	36%
Decrease	22%	25%	26%

Producers planning to reduce their lamb flock are slightly less positive about the wool sector, while sheepmeat sentiment is strongly positive regardless of lamb flock intentions.

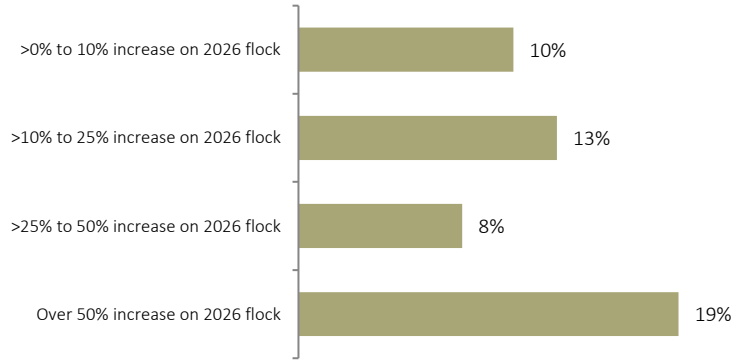
Input costs are front of mind for most producers, but this does not appear to be a significant influence on their decisions about the lamb flock over the next 12 months. The upward trend of input costs may well have been 'baked into' producers' budgets and considerations.

Regardless of their lamb flock size intentions, the majority of producers expect that wool and lamb prices will increase, if not remain steady, over the next 12 months.

How the forecast increase translates to lamb flock numbers

50% of producers reported they are likely to have MORE lambs next year

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



Of those who forecast an **increase** in lambs...

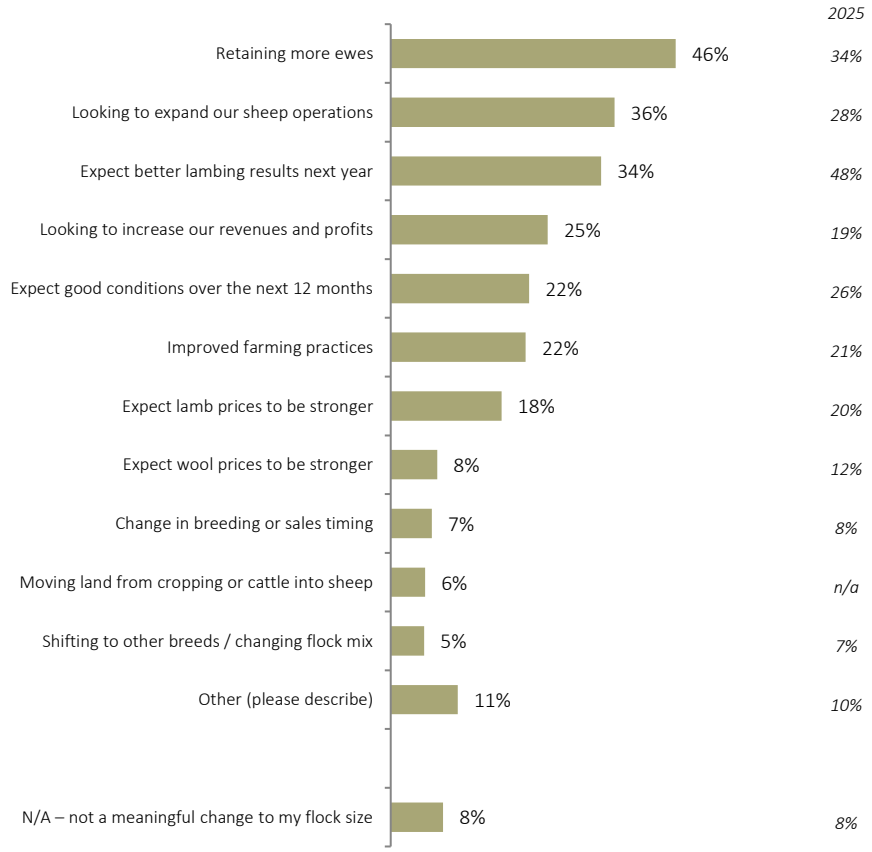
Total reported flock size for 2026:	14,228,871
Total forecast flock size for 2027:	18,973,690
Difference of:	+ 4,744,819

Factors influencing the expected increase in lambs in 2027

50% of producers reported they are likely to have MORE lambs next year

We asked these producers what factors were influencing their plans to increase the number of lambs…

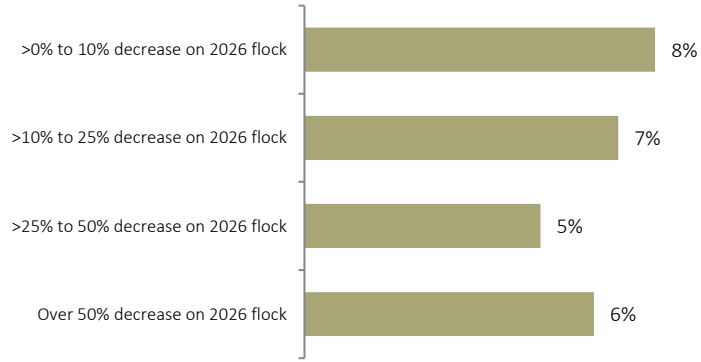
Q26. You've indicated that you are likely to have more lambs next year compared to this year. What factors are influencing your plans for the next 12 months?
Please select all the factors that are influencing your plans.
Base: All respondents who expect an increase in lamb flock size in 2027, n = 873



How the forecast decrease translates to lamb flock numbers

26% of producers reported they are likely to have FEWER lambs next year

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



Of those who forecast a **decrease** in lambs...

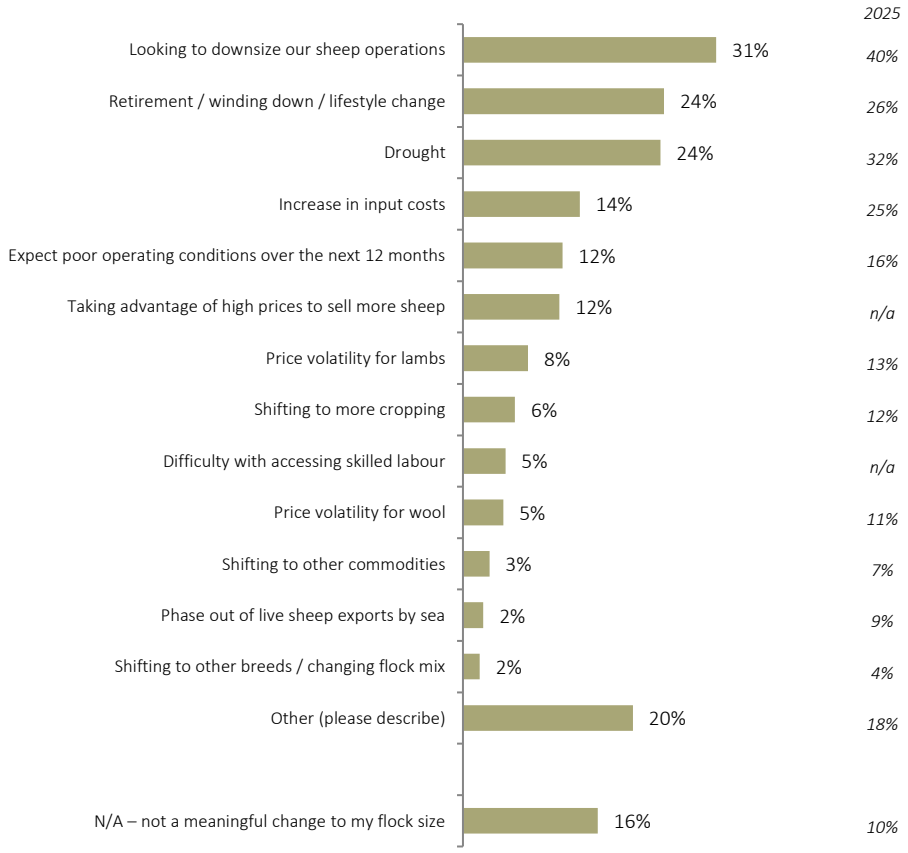
Total reported flock size for 2026:	7,391,972
Total forecast flock size for 2027:	5,327,948
Difference of:	- 2,064,024

Factors influencing the expected decrease in lambs in 2027

26% of producers reported they are likely to have FEWER lambs next year

We asked these producers what factors were influencing their plans to decrease the number of lambs…

Q27. You've indicated that you are likely to have fewer lambs next year compared to this year. What factors are influencing your plans for the next 12 months?
Please select all the factors that are influencing your plans.
Base: All respondents who expect a decrease in lamb flock size in 2027, n = 434



Lambs forecast for 2027

Taking into account the forecast size of the lamb 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 lamb flock for 2027 is shown below. . .

Note: These figures reflect producers' intentions at the time of the survey. Whether they are achieved depends on factor such as seasonal conditions, feed and water availability, prices and input costs.

	2027 LAMB FLOCK FORECAST		Of those who expect an increase in lambs		Of those who expect no change in lambs		Of those who expect a decrease in lambs
Total reported flock size for 2026:	28,476,098	=	14,228,871	+	6,855,255	+	7,391,972
Total expected flock size for 2027:	31,156,893	=	18,973,690	+	6,855,255	+	5,327,948
Difference of:	+ 2,680,795	=	+ 4,744,819	+	0	+	- 2,064,024
% forecast change on 2026:	+ 9%						

	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:	*584*	*67*	*262*	*58*	*453*	*307*	*546*	*211*	*250*	*186*	*208*	*222*	*75*	*35*
Total reported flock size for 2026:	10,503,711	610,550	4,441,280	825,883	7,517,022	4,567,144	1,136,261	1,361,006	3,444,986	3,821,157	5,282,676	6,739,690	4,154,928	2,535,395
Total expected flock size for 2027:	12,051,281	817,204	4,792,535	836,346	7,688,641	4,959,394	1,536,242	1,555,208	3,898,795	4,153,176	5,593,573	7,321,832	4,609,285	2,488,781
Difference of:	+ 1,547,570	+ 206,654	+ 351,255	+ 10,463	+ 171,619	+ 392,250	+ 399,982	+ 194,202	+ 453,809	+ 332,019	+ 310,897	+ 582,142	+ 454,358	- 46,614
% forecast change on 2026:	+ 15%	+ 34%	+ 8%	+ 1%	+ 2%	+ 9%	+ 35%	+ 14%	+ 13%	+ 9%	+ 6%	+ 9%	+ 11%	- 2%



Ewe containment

Held ewes in containment feeding or a feedlot

Q12. Have you held any breeding ewes (including replacement ewe lambs and hoggets) in containment feeding or a feedlot in the last 12 months, or expect to in the next 6 months?
*Please **do not include** lambs being finished for sale.*
Base: All respondents, n = 1,733. New question to the 2026 research.

Last 12 months

11%

Reported they have held breeding ewes (including replacement ewe lambs and hoggets) in containment feeding or a feedlot in the last 12 months

Next 6 months

10%

Reported they expect to hold breeding ewes (including replacement ewe lambs and hoggets) in containment feeding or a feedlot over the next 6 months

	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:	*584*	*67*	*262*	*58*	*453*	*307*	*546*	*211*	*250*	*186*	*208*	*222*	*75*	*35*
% who have held breeding ewes in containment feeding or a feedlot in the last 12 months	10%	10%	15%	8%	10%	14%	4%	12%	11%	20%	16%	23%	28%	58%
% who expect to hold breeding ewes in containment feeding or a feedlot in the next 6 months	9%	11%	11%	12%	10%	17%	5%	12%	8%	13%	15%	27%	34%	41%

Held ewes in containment feeding or a feedlot

Of the 11% who reported they have held breeding ewes in containment feeding or a feedlot in the last 12 months...

Q13. Approximately what proportion of ewes did you have in containment at the busiest time in the last 12 months, and for how many weeks in total?
Base: All respondents who have contained ewes in the last 12 months, n = 238.
New question to the 2026 research.

64%

Average proportion of ewes in containment at the busiest time

Median: 70%

1% - 25%	20%
26% - 50%	21%
51% - 99%	25%
100%	33%

11.7 weeks

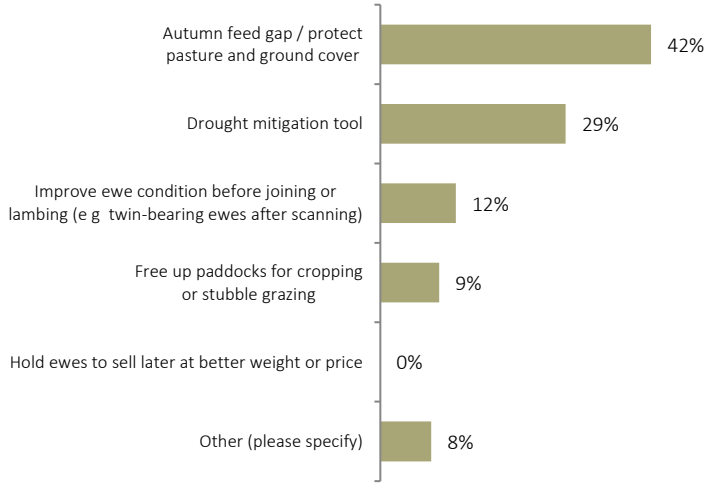
Average number of total weeks in containment over the last 12 months

Median: 10 weeks

1 to 4 weeks	14%
5 to 6 weeks	17%
7 to 8 weeks	14%
9 to 10 weeks	12%
11 to 12 weeks	19%
13 to 16 weeks	10%
17+ weeks	15%

Of the 14% who reported they have held breeding ewes in containment feeding or a feedlot in the last 12 months OR they expect to hold breeding ewes in containment feeding or a feedlot over the next 6 months...

Q14. What is the main reason you use, or expect to use, containment feeding for your ewes?
Base: All respondents who have contained ewes in the last 12 months or expect to contain ewes in the next 6 months, n = 300. New question to the 2026 research.





Summary of results: state & flock size

Summary of results by state

		State					
	OVERALL	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA
Base:	***1,733***	*584*	*67*	*262*	*58*	*453*	*307*
SENTIMENT							
Nett sentiment – wool industry	**+47**	+47	+37	+64	+27	+43	+45
Nett sentiment – sheepmeat industry	**+84**	+87	+82	+88	+82	+83	+71
Producers most likely to expect change:							
Input costs	**Increase**	Increase	Increase	Increase	Increase	Increase	Increase
Wool prices	**No change**	No change	Increase	No change	No change	No change	No change
Lamb prices	**Increase**	Increase	Increase	No change	Increase	Increase	Increase
Mutton / cull ewe prices	**No change**	No change	Increase	No change	Increase	Increase	No change
% more difficult to access skilled labour	**50%**	48%	41%	54%	48%	47%	62%
LAMB FLOCK PROFILE							
Estimate of total lamb flock	**28.48M**	10.50M	0.61M	4.44M	0.83M	7.52M	4.57M
Dominant breeds on hand:							
Prime lamb	**30%**	24%	6%	31%	49%	47%	14%
Merino – dual purpose	**24%**	26%	30%	25%	9%	12%	42%
First cross	**17%**	19%	2%	24%	12%	13%	13%
Proportion of lamb sales:							
Actual sales already made this spring	**22%**	29%	46%	18%	8%	15%	20%
Expected sales – spring flush to 31 Dec	**30%**	23%	17%	37%	28%	39%	28%
Expected sales – Jan-Jun 2027	**48%**	48%	37%	44%	64%	47%	52%
LAMB FLOCK INTENTIONS							
Reported lamb flock size for 2026	**28.48M**	10.50M	0.61M	4.44M	0.83M	7.52M	4.57M
Forecast lamb flock size for 2027	**31.16M**	12.05M	0.82M	4.79M	0.84M	7.69M	4.96M
Forecasted change in total lamb flock	**+ 9%**	+ 15%	+ 34%	+ 8%	+ 1%	+ 2%	+ 9%
Producer-level intentions (ignoring size):							
Increase from 2026 to 2027	**50%**	53%	41%	51%	34%	47%	49%
No change	**25%**	23%	27%	24%	26%	27%	26%
Decrease from 2026 to 2027	**26%**	24%	32%	25%	40%	26%	25%
Major factors influencing increase in 2027:							
Retaining more ewes	**46%**	42%	33%	55%	51%	46%	56%
Looking to expand our sheep operations	**36%**	33%	38%	33%	42%	41%	38%
Expect better lambing results next year	**34%**	34%	33%	34%	12%	37%	32%

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
Base:	***1,733***	*546*	*211*	*250*	*186*	*208*	*222*	*75*	*35*
SENTIMENT									
Nett sentiment – wool industry	**+47**	+34	+52	+49	+66	+58	+64	+62	+59
Nett sentiment – sheepmeat industry	**+84**	+78	+86	+88	+88	+91	+89	+93	+85
Producers most likely to expect change:									
Input costs	**Increase**	Increase	Increase	Increase	Increase	Increase	Increase	Increase	Increase
Wool prices	**No change**	No change	No change	No change	No change	No change	No change	Increase	Increase
Lamb prices	**Increase**	Increase	No change	No change	No change	No change	No change	No change	No change
Mutton / cull ewe prices	**No change**	Increase	Increase	No change	No change	No change	No change	No change	No change
% more difficult to access skilled labour	**50%**	45%	50%	55%	59%	54%	51%	47%	47%
LAMB FLOCK PROFILE									
Estimate of total lamb flock	**28.48M**	1.14M	1.36M	3.44M	3.82M	5.28M	6.74M	4.15M	2.54M
Dominant breeds on hand:									
Prime lamb	**30%**	33%	38%	35%	34%	23%	28%	24%	41%
Merino – dual purpose	**24%**	9%	13%	24%	26%	31%	27%	24%	16%
First cross	**17%**	17%	18%	17%	16%	14%	17%	20%	15%
Proportion of lamb sales:									
Actual sales already made this spring	**22%**	23%	22%	23%	21%	19%	25%	20%	18%
Expected sales – spring flush to 31 Dec	**30%**	30%	33%	29%	28%	28%	31%	31%	40%
Expected sales – Jan-Jun 2027	**48%**	47%	45%	48%	51%	53%	44%	49%	43%
LAMB FLOCK INTENTIONS									
Reported lamb flock size for 2026	**28.48M**	1.14M	1.36M	3.44M	3.82M	5.28M	6.74M	4.15M	2.54M
Forecast lamb flock size for 2027	**31.16M**	1.54M	1.56M	3.90M	4.15M	5.59M	7.32M	4.61M	2.49M
Forecasted change in total lamb flock	**+ 9%**	+ 35%	+ 14%	+ 13%	+ 9%	+ 6%	+ 9%	+ 11%	- 2%
Producer-level intentions (ignoring size):									
Increase from 2026 to 2027	**50%**	49%	47%	49%	52%	48%	57%	62%	38%
No change	**25%**	25%	29%	22%	24%	26%	23%	23%	33%
Decrease from 2026 to 2027	**26%**	26%	24%	29%	24%	26%	20%	15%	29%
Major factors influencing increase in 2027:									
Retaining more ewes	**46%**	41%	52%	47%	56%	44%	51%	55%	35%
Looking to expand our sheep operations	**36%**	31%	38%	33%	44%	40%	46%	61%	52%
Expect better lambing results next year	**34%**	32%	41%	25%	40%	39%	35%	43%	28%

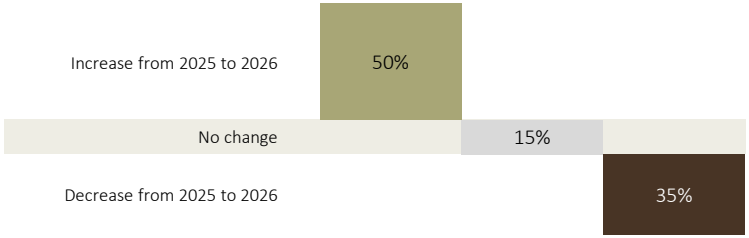


Additional analysis

Lamb flock size: a 3-year perspective

As part of the October 2026 Sheep Producers Intentions Survey, producers were asked to look back and estimate what their lamb flock was in 2025 as well as to look forward and forecast their lamb 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.

We asked producers to look back and estimate what their lamb flock was in 2025

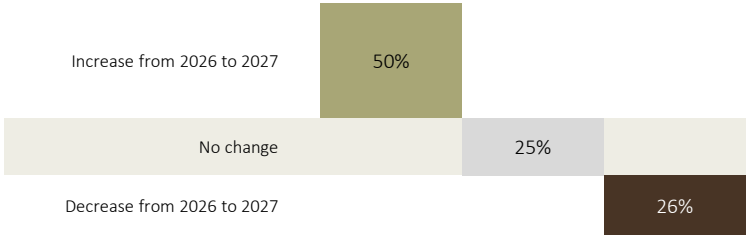


OCTOBER 2026

Reported number of lambs on hand

These diagrams represent the change from 2026 lamb flock – looking back and then forecasting forward

We asked producers to look forward and forecast their lamb flock in 2027



Lamb 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:	*584*	*67*	*262*	*58*	*453*	*307*	*546*	*211*	*250*	*186*	*208*	*222*	*75*	*35*
Increase from 2026 to 2027	**53%**	**41%**	**51%**	**34%**	**47%**	**49%**	**49%**	**47%**	**49%**	**52%**	**48%**	**57%**	**62%**	**38%**
2025 -> Increase 2026 -> Increase 2027	19%	17%	33%	17%	26%	25%	18%	23%	24%	31%	28%	36%	43%	28%
2025 -> Same 2026 -> Increase 2027	5%	6%	6%	7%	4%	5%	5%	5%	5%	4%	5%	4%	5%	2%
2025 -> Decrease 2026 -> Increase 2027	28%	18%	12%	10%	18%	19%	26%	18%	19%	17%	15%	17%	14%	8%
No change	**23%**	**27%**	**24%**	**26%**	**27%**	**26%**	**25%**	**29%**	**22%**	**24%**	**26%**	**23%**	**23%**	**33%**
2025 -> Increase 2026 -> Same 2027	8%	1%	13%	9%	12%	13%	7%	12%	9%	15%	14%	11%	14%	18%
2025 -> Same 2026 -> Same 2027	9%	15%	7%	17%	8%	8%	8%	11%	9%	7%	7%	10%	7%	15%
2025 -> Decrease 2026 -> Same 2027	7%	11%	4%	0%	7%	4%	9%	5%	5%	2%	4%	2%	2%	0%
Decrease from 2026 to 2027	**24%**	**32%**	**25%**	**40%**	**26%**	**25%**	**26%**	**24%**	**29%**	**24%**	**26%**	**20%**	**15%**	**29%**
2025 -> Increase 2026 -> Decrease 2027	16%	21%	17%	17%	16%	17%	13%	15%	21%	18%	22%	15%	14%	23%
2025 -> Same 2026 -> Decrease 2027	1%	4%	1%	<1%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%	1%	<1%	1%	1%	6%
2025 -> Decrease 2026 -> Decrease 2027	7%	7%	8%	22%	9%	7%	11%	7%	7%	5%	4%	4%	0%	0%

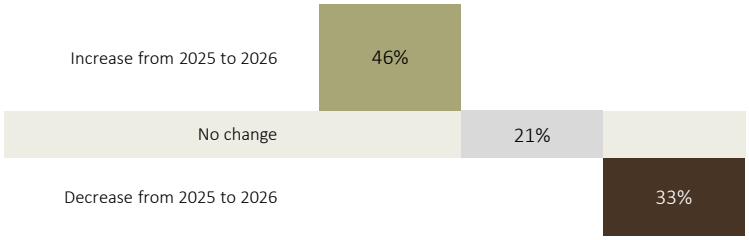
Breeding ewe flock size: a 3-year perspective

As part of the October 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.

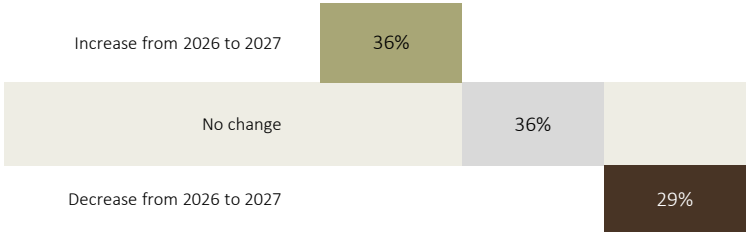
We asked producers to look back and estimate what their breeding ewe flock was in 2025

OCTOBER 2026
Reported number of breeding ewes on hand

We asked producers to look forward and forecast their breeding ewe flock in 2027



These diagrams represent the change from 2026 breeding ewe flock – looking back and then forecasting forward



Breeding ewe 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:	*584*	*67*	*262*	*58*	*453*	*307*	*546*	*211*	*250*	*186*	*208*	*222*	*75*	*35*
Increase from 2026 to 2027	**38%**	**26%**	**32%**	**20%**	**37%**	**33%**	**33%**	**39%**	**32%**	**44%**	**36%**	**38%**	**52%**	**15%**
2025 -> Increase 2026 -> Increase 2027	16%	11%	20%	13%	21%	21%	15%	18%	18%	22%	25%	25%	37%	9%
2025 -> Same 2026 -> Increase 2027	3%	4%	4%	3%	5%	5%	4%	5%	3%	3%	3%	5%	11%	0%
2025 -> Decrease 2026 -> Increase 2027	19%	11%	8%	4%	11%	7%	14%	15%	11%	18%	9%	8%	4%	6%
No change	**36%**	**37%**	**35%**	**41%**	**35%**	**39%**	**39%**	**32%**	**36%**	**27%**	**35%**	**36%**	**37%**	**50%**
2025 -> Increase 2026 -> Same 2027	12%	14%	13%	12%	13%	16%	11%	13%	14%	14%	18%	16%	14%	21%
2025 -> Same 2026 -> Same 2027	13%	14%	16%	21%	14%	15%	15%	12%	15%	10%	13%	16%	22%	27%
2025 -> Decrease 2026 -> Same 2027	11%	9%	7%	8%	8%	9%	14%	7%	8%	3%	4%	4%	2%	2%
Decrease from 2026 to 2027	**26%**	**37%**	**32%**	**39%**	**28%**	**28%**	**28%**	**29%**	**32%**	**29%**	**29%**	**26%**	**11%**	**35%**
2025 -> Increase 2026 -> Decrease 2027	13%	25%	17%	16%	14%	16%	10%	13%	21%	18%	21%	21%	10%	25%
2025 -> Same 2026 -> Decrease 2027	2%	3%	2%	1%	3%	4%	4%	4%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	4%
2025 -> Decrease 2026 -> Decrease 2027	11%	10%	13%	22%	11%	8%	14%	13%	10%	11%	7%	4%	0%	6%



Attachments

Survey definitions

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

Flock Categories

Breeding ewes	Breeding ewes (including ewe lambs and hoggets intended for breeding).
Lambs	Lambs producers had after lambing but before sales (not including ewe lambs and hoggets intended for breeding).

Lamb Sales Periods

Sales completed	Actual sales made by producers this spring up to the point of interview (from 1 July 2026 to now).
EOY Sales	Expected sales to be made in the remaining spring flush and the period up to 31 December 2026.
Sales next year	Expected sales of lambs in the first half of 2027 (January to June).

Sheep Breeds

Merino – wool focus	100% Merino, run mainly for wool production.
Merino – dual purpose	100% Merino, run for both meat (lamb) and wool production.
First cross	Merino crossed with a terminal sire.
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 (crossbred)	Animal (**not** 100% Merino) geared towards both meat and wool production equally.
Other	Any breeds that do not fit into the definitions above.

Grain and Ewe Containment

35+ days on grain	At least 35 days with grain as the primary food source (continual access to supplement grain, excluding trail feeding or grazing on stubble).
Feedlot	Permanent, purpose-built pens where sheep or lambs are fed a high-energy ration (mainly grain or pellets) to finish them for sale.
Containment feeding	A temporary or semi-permanent area where sheep are fully hand-fed to maintain condition and protect pasture and ground cover, usually during dry periods or the autumn feed gap.

Research design

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 October 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 collect the required information. The survey questionnaire covered the following topic areas:

- Producer sentiment and outlook – on the wool sector, on the sheepmeat sector, on input prices, wool/lamb/mutton/cull ewe prices and access to skilled labour;
- Flock size estimates (flock estimates included breeding ewes and lambs)
- Lamb flock profiles
- Producer intentions (for their lamb flock and breeding ewe flock)

Sample size

A total of n = 1,733 responses were provided by producers as follows:

	Overall	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA
# of surveys	**n = 1,733**	n = 2	n = 584	n = 0	n = 67	n = 262	n = 58	n = 453	n = 307

Timing

The interviewing was undertaken between the 6th October – 4th November 2026.

Weighting

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

Weighting of survey data

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 (2025-26), totalling around 41.3k 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 2025-26 financial year, but are clearly no longer sheep producers. This reduction of around 5% resulted in a final estimate of total number of agricultural businesses with sheep and lambs of 39.1k (down from the estimate in October 2025 of just over 40.5k, a 3.5% decline). This final weighting matrix was then used to weight the October 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	**39,124**	**16,980**	**4,868**	**6,169**	**3,953**	**3,662**	**2,599**	**729**	**165**
NSW	**15,651**	6,672	2,004	2,592	1,615	1,462	961	274	70
VIC	**10,973**	5,347	1,437	1,587	1,038	826	568	137	33
SA	**5,207**	1,780	761	1,081	600	533	331	97	23
WA	**4,219**	1,202	417	657	550	670	554	151	19
QLD	**1,624**	1,111	90	120	82	93	93	28	7
TAS	**1,325**	778	141	129	67	73	86	38	14
ACT	**123**	88	16	5	0	5	5	4	0
NT	**3**	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Confidence intervals for survey estimates

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.

Margin of Error for a given sample size and survey estimate	Sample Size: 1,733 (total surveys completed)
10%	± 1.41%
20%	± 1.88%
30%	± 2.16%
40%	± 2.31%
50%	± 2.35%
60%	± 2.31%
70%	± 2.16%
80%	± 1.88%
90%	± 1.41%

Survey Estimate

	Sample Size	Estimated Population	Margin of Error (assuming max survey estimate of 50%)
Australia	**1,733**	**39,124**	**± 2.35%**
NSW	584	15,651	± 4.06%
VIC	453	10,973	± 4.60%
SA	262	5,207	± 5.90%
WA	307	4,219	± 5.39%
QLD	67	1,624	± 11.97%
TAS	58	1,325	± 12.87%
ACT	2	123	n/a
NT	0	3	n/a

Note. Margin of Errors are provided at the 95% confidence level on the assumption of a large population size (non-finite) and normally distributed.
Results labelled "n/a" are due to the assumption of the normal distribution not being upheld ($n\hat{p} < 10$ or $n(1-\hat{p}) < 10$).<



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