MEAT & LIVESTOCK AUSTRALIA

meatup FORUM

For the latest in red meat R&D

Dubbo, 1 March 2022

Hear about locally relevant on-farm R&D

•

Hear from and network with leading producers

•

Gain insights into tools and programs to improve your business

•

Increase your productivity and profitability

MEAT & LIVESTOCK AUSTRALIA

About MLA

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

Program – Dubbo, 1 March 2022

Time	Session	
8.00am	Registration desk opens, tea and coffee available	
9:00am	Proceedings commence	
	Session 1: Welcome (Auditorium)	
	MeatUp Forum welcome Natasha Searle, MeatUp Forum National Project Manager, Pinion Advisory, Dubbo, NSW Christine White, MeatUp Forum NSW Working Group, Coolah NSW	
	MLA welcome and market update Sarah Strachan, Group Manager – Adoption and Commercialisation, Meat & Livestock Australia, Sydney NSW	
9:35am	**Session 2: Setting the scene** (Auditorium)	
	Running a resilient red meat business in today's environment Catherine Marriott, CEO, Riverine Plains Inc., Mulwala NSW	
	Recovering from drought and lifting ewe numbers via confinement feeding Jack Brennan, Paraway Pastoral, Warren NSW	
10.40am	Morning Tea	
	Concurrent sessions	
11:10am	**Session 3A - Sheep Updates** (Auditorium)	**Session 3B - Beef Updates** (Theatrette)
11:15am	**Scoring and scanning – what are you missing out on?** Elise Bowen, Sheep Data Management, Griffith NSW	**Building better breeders** Alistair Rayner, Rayner Ag, Wollongong NSW
	Technology adoption and utilisation for increased on-farm productivity Nathan Simpson, Binginbar Farms, Gollan NSW	**Improving productivity with genetics (producer panel)** Tim Bowman, Gundy, Tooraweenah NSW Garry Hall, The Mole, Warren NSW *Interviewed by Jillian Kelly, District Veterinarian - LLS, Coonamble NSW*
	Putting the precision into lambing Tim Leeming, Paradoo Prime, Pigeon Ponds VIC	
12:35pm	**Session 4: Feedbase Updates** (Auditorium)	
	Tropical perennial grasses: A profitable and beneficial fit for most of NSW Bob Freebairn, Consultant, Coonabarabran NSW	
	Pasture recovery and management post-drought Richard Avendano, Avendano Agronomics, Boggabri NSW	
1:35pm	Lunch	
2:35pm	**Session 4 continued: Feedbase Updates** (Auditorium)	
	Management and profitability of dual-purpose crops Ed Blackburn, Wongaboori Station, Mendooran NSW	
3:15pm	**Session 5: Carbon Update** (Auditorium)	
	Carbon neutral by 2030 (CN30) and opportunities for red meat producers Margaret Jewell, Meat & Livestock Australia, Brisbane QLD	
3:55pm	**Session 6: Virtual Farm Tour** (Auditorium)	
	Spicers Run – a virtual farm tour and Q & A Joe Mason and family, Spicers Run, Spicers Creek NSW	
4.35pm	**Wrap up** Georgia McCarthy, MeatUp Forum NSW Event Coordinator, Pinion Advisory, Hobart, Tasmania	
5:00pm	Networking and drinks	
6.00pm	Event concludes	

Poll Everywhere

For audience participation, including submission of questions during MeatUp Forums, we will use Poll Everywhere.

Join via the QR code below. You may choose to download the app 'Poll Everywhere' when prompted.

PollEv.com/pinion

1. To join a presentation, type the username: **pinion** (or via a web browser, type PollEv.com/pinion)
2. Click join
3. Insert your screen name that you would like to appear alongside your question/response
4. Throughout the event, you can return to your app, the site PollEv.com/pinion or the QR code to participate.

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Welcome

MLA's MeatUp Forums are held throughout southern Australia to give you the latest in red meat R&D. They are developed by Regional Producer Working Groups that include members from the Southern Australian and Western Australia Livestock Research Councils, in collaboration with the MeatUp Coordinator (Pinion Advisory) and MLA staff.

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

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

Today you will be presented with clear and practical ideas, information, and tools that you can take home and put into practice on-farm immediately.

Regional producer working group

We thank MeatUp Forum regional producer working group members from New South Wales for their contribution to MeatUp. The current working group includes:

- Lisa Anderson, Wagga Wagga
- Tom Amey, Casino
- Roger Knight, Mendooran
- Kellie Penfold, Henty
- Emma Thomas, Forbes
- Christine White, Coolah

If you are interested in joining our regional producer working group, please chat to a working group member, a member of the MeatUp Forum team or contact the MeatUp Forum Project Manager.

Contact

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meatup FORUM

mla MEAT & LIVESTOCK AUSTRALIA

Launched in March 2021, MeatUp Forums are an opportunity for beef, sheep and goat producers to learn something new, stay up-to-date with the latest on-farm research and technologies and meet others working in the red meat industry.

Each forum is designed by producers from the local region through producer working groups to ensure topics, content and presenters are regionally relevant. MeatUp Forums demonstrate the value of implementing new practices or technologies on-farm. They also create awareness around other MLA activities, programs and projects that producers can get involved in to enable them to further build knowledge and skills.

Held predominantly throughout southern Australia, these forums introduce producers to the outcomes of MLA research and development projects and the next steps to drive profitability and productivity on-farm.

2021 at a glance

196 producers engaged

6 EVENTS

190,286 cattle impacted by MeatUp

517,856 sheep impacted by MeatUp

3,890 goats impacted by MeatUp

7,816,219 hectares of Australian agricultural land impacted by MeatUp

86% SATISFACTION RATING

90% knowledge and skills acquisition increase

86% VALUE RATING

"[MeatUp] is an opportunity to reassess and realign our business and say 'are we heading in the right direction? Let's get some good information and make some good decisions'."
– Producer Gus Whyte, Broken Hill MeatUp

2 OUT OF 3 ATTENDEES PLANNED TO MAKE CHANGES FOLLOWING MEATUP

To find out more about Meatup:
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Welcome

MLA welcome and update

Sarah Strachan

Group Manager, Adoption and Commercialisation, Meat & Livestock Australia, Sydney NSW

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About Sarah

Sarah oversees the delivery and development of the Meat Standards Australia (MSA), Livestock Genetics and Producer Adoption programs within MLA. These programs are responsible for converting research into commercial services for businesses along the entire supply chain. This includes providing a diverse range of options for producers to engage with and apply research outcomes into their production systems such as the well-known EDGE Network, Producer Demonstration Sites and Profitable Grazing Systems programs. Sarah has a bachelor of Rural Science qualification from the University of New England and has worked with MLA for 20 years, spending 18 of these working in the MSA program.

Session abstract

MLA Group Manager Adoption & Commercialisation, Sarah Strachan will provide the welcome address for the MeatUp Forum, where red meat producers can hear the latest regionally relevant insights from research, development and adoption (RD&A) programs funded by MLA. Sarah will also discuss MLA's strategic priorities, provide a market update and discuss the program, which has been designed for producers, by the New South Wales producer working group.

Relevant tools and resources

- **MLA membership application**

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

- **MLA market trends and analysis**

Notes

Setting the scene

Building a resilient red meat business in today's environment

Catherine Marriott

CEO, Riverine Plains Inc., Mulwala NSW

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About Catherine

Over the last 18 years, Catherine has worked in management, strategic and leadership roles in the agricultural, research and regional development sectors in Australia and internationally. During this time, she has become a proven business leader, communicator and entrepreneur, focused mostly on leadership development, advocacy and delivering innovative solutions for the industries in which she works.

Catherine has always worked in rural and regional Australia and is inspired by the potential of our regions. She is passionate about the people side of agriculture, learning from and sharing with others. Mentoring is a role she plays with enthusiasm as she believes to have vibrant rural communities, you need confident, supported people and prosperous businesses.

She uses her Rural Science degree to understand the technical aspects of agriculture, while her experience in business and governance helps maximise efficiency and outcomes for the organisations for whom she works. Catherine has worked as a beef industry consultant, an entrepreneur, a farmer member based, organisational CEO and has sat on a number of private and public boards both in Australia and internationally.

She is UNE's 2019 Distinguished Alumni Award winner, a graduate of the Australian Rural Leadership Program, a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and was the 2012 WA Rural Woman of the Year.

In her spare time, Catherine loves cycling, horse riding, travel and exploring the outback. She is also passionate about finding a cure for cancer and has raised over $100,000 to put towards research, education programs and patient support.

Session abstract

Business is challenging at the best of times, however, during a pandemic, even more so. This presentation will cover some lessons learned in business and share some tips and structure to ensure resilience.

Resilience. It's a word that gets thrown around a lot, but what does it actually mean? Resilience means to be enduring, to withstand seasons, markets, workforce challenges, pandemics, biosecurity challenges, the legal system, succession.

To be successful at business, to create “resilience” you need to be nimble. Building and maintaining a business that is resilient begins with the management of the three major facets of a business - people, processes and product. To create an intergenerational business, you must have solid foundations of all three, as if one of them falters, the business quickly loses pace and may fail.

People

People are the centre of any business and if you don’t provide an enjoyable, safe and satisfying work environment people will leave, regardless of renumeration. Set a framework where people are the basis of the business, where people feel heard and can see a vision for where they are going or what they will learn in the short term. Retaining staff is helped by running an authentic business and sharing a vision so everyone has a buy in.

Process

Getting process right in a business will ultimately save you time and money, it may also save you people. People will leave because of inefficient processes. Inefficient processes will also leave you with wasted time and end up costing you money. Whether it is managing stock numbers, paddock information, finances, or getting ready for marking calves, a process will help ensure the job is done efficiently, safely and in as enjoyable a way as possible. Process around succession planning is also key.

Product

To ensure business resilience, it is critical to understand your product and where it sits in the market. Also, look ahead - where is your market going? what are the trends? how can you leverage where the trends might go? It is often said that red meat producers grow food, but you can’t eat what leaves the property, there is a process that happens afterwards. It’s important if maximising the value of what you produce on your farm, you understand at least a little about how your animal ends up as a product. This information can then be fed back into the process to continuously improve efficiency.

The world around us is changing rapidly and if we stand still, we are indeed going backwards. Bringing innovation into your business and managing it astutely across the three facets of your business; people, process and product, will ensure your business remains a part of not only our industry, but rural communities and indeed the Australian economy for many generations to come.

Key take home messages

- Focus on people, processes and the product for a successful, long-standing business
- If one of these pillars becomes too weak or too strong, your business will lose strength
- Innovation and change management is required in today’s world. If not managed well, with consideration to people, process and product, conflict (or resentment), safety issues and resulting costs will occur.

Notes

Recovering from drought and lifting ewe numbers via confinement feeding

Jack Brennan

Manager, Paraway Pastoral, Warren NSW

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About Jack

Jack Brennan was born and raised in Warren and has been in a farm management role with Paraway Pastoral since 2012. Currently Jack runs three Paraway properties (Merrimba, Butterbone and Old Bundemar) in the central west region of New South Wales which consist of wool production, grain production and trade cattle. Jack has a young family and enjoys spending time with his four children and a spot of fishing when he gets the chance!

Session abstract

At Paraway, drought recovery begins with drought management. Animals in the system are classed as 'wet DSE' or 'dry DSE' and this provides the basis for Paraway's destocking process during dry times. Destocking is done in stages. The first animals to leave the system when drought looks imminent are the cattle (primarily steers). The second stage is the destocking of all dry DSE animals. This is primarily all finishing lambs and wethers. This then leaves the core breeding flock remaining on-farm (wet DSE).

If the drought has continued and the property is down to the core breeding flock, individual animal data is used to further destock. Each animal is ranked within the flock with several production parameters which helps Jack and his team make the destocking decisions. Lowest ranking animals are sold first and destocking continues until only the highest ranking ewes remain. A decision is made to determine the number of animals the business is willing to hold over the drought and supplementary feed based on how long it would take for the enterprise to get return to full carrying capacity.

Another tactic used to mitigate the effects of drought is confinement feeding. The decision to confinement feed is made with pre-determined trigger points. The first trigger point is body condition score of the ewes. The target condition score is 3 and if the average body condition score is dropping below 2.7 supplementary feeding commences. The second trigger point for animals entering confinement feeding is groundcover. The minimum target for groundcover at the properties Jack manages is 1200kg DM/ha. If groundcover is measuring below this target, all remaining animals will enter confinement.

To maintain production during the recent drought ewes were joined in confinement feeding. By keeping the highest ranked, most productive ewes in the core breeding flock, joining in confinement became more efficient. Ewes were joined for a five-week period (usually six weeks out in paddock) at a 1% ram:ewe ratio.

For animals to exit confinement feeding Jack determined that ground cover had to be measured at above 1200kg

DM/ha with soil moisture present and pastures actively growing.
Management strategies over the recent drought were full of learning curves for Jack and his team at Paraway but by starting with a plan it allowed for the system to be fine-tuned where necessary.

Key take home messages

- Make a plan for managing dry times – even if you don't stick to it! Don't be afraid to adapt and change the plan as you work through it.
- Use real and timely data to help inform your decision making
- Don't fall into the trap of trying to save money when it cost you money to implement
- Have your finger on the pulse – keep an eye on the influences to your business.
- Ask for advice when you need it. Consultants, veterinarians and animal nutritionists are all valuable resources.

Relevant tools and resources

- **Lifetime Ewe Management**

  A twelve-month course designed for producers to improve skills in managing ewes across their reproductive lifetimes.

- **Lifting Lamb Survival – PGS package**

  A six-month training program for producers to gain greater control over lambing and reproduction outcomes.

Notes

Sheep updates

Scoring and scanning, what are you missing out on?

Elise Bowen

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About Elise

Elise grew up on a family sheep farm in York WA and graduated from Murdoch University with a Bachelor of Animal Science (Hons) in 2012. She worked with the Murdoch/DAFWA sheep team following graduation on national sheep research projects, before establishing her business, Sheep Data Management in 2014. Elise is now based in Griffith in the Riverina region of NSW, however her business services sheep producers around the country.

Sheep Data Management provides varied services to both stud and commercial sheep producers, including data collection, collation and basic analysis, both on an individual and flock basis. On-farm data collection services including livestock weighing and condition scoring, DNA sampling and fleece weighing, all services are fully EID-compatible

Session abstract

Condition scoring and pregnancy scanning are two tools that commercial sheep producers should utilise to increase the productivity in their sheep flocks.

The key productivity increases that can be achieved by consistent condition scoring and pregnancy scanning include:

- Higher scanning rates – less dry ewes and more multiple-bearing ewes when ewes are in better condition score (CS) at joining.
- Targeted nutritional allocation based on pregnancy status – ensure that supplementary feeding costs are prioritised towards ewes that have more lambs on board to cater for the higher energy requirements of these animals.
- Higher lamb survival – increased twin lamb birth weights and decreased single lamb birth weights through targeted nutrition in late-pregnancy and early lactation.
- Lower ewe mortality rates – targeted nutrition based on energy demands in late pregnancy and lactation can reduce incidence of metabolic disorders such as pregnancy toxaemia which commonly arises in heavily pregnant, twin-bearing ewes with inadequate energy intake.
- Increased weaning percentages – this is achieved in three ways: through increased scanning rates, lower ewe mortality and increased lamb survival.

- Higher lamb weaning weights – ewes in better condition produce more milk and this results in higher lamb growth rates.
- Higher reproductive rates in the following year – ewes which are carried through the lambing season at the correct condition score have higher reproduction rates the next year (this is particularly influential in merino ewes).

Condition scoring at key times in the reproductive cycle enables you to more effectively manage the nutrition of your ewes to achieve higher reproductive rates and reduce ewe mortality.

The optimum condition score targets for merinos and maternals at joining and lambing are as follows:

Table 1: Condition score targets for merino's and maternals at joining and lambing

	Merino		Maternal	
Joining		3		3.2
Lambing	Single-bearing	3	Single-bearing	2.7-3
	Twin-bearing	3.3	Twin-bearing	3.2-3.5

Key times of the year for condition scoring ewes:

1. Post-weaning – separate off the lighter condition ewes and prioritise available paddock feed to those ewes to assist them to achieve their condition score target for joining.
2. Pre-joining – condition scoring before the rams go out provides a final opportunity to intervene and supplementary feed ewes in lighter condition to achieve their joining condition score targets.
3. Mid-pregnancy – after pregnancy scanning you have the option to separately manage heavier and lighter ewes to achieve their lambing condition score targets.

Pregnancy scanning for multiple foetuses rather than just wet and dry offers several benefits and opportunities to improve flock productivity. These benefits are outlined below:

- Targeted nutritional management of single and twin-bearing ewes to meet condition score targets for lambing.
- Prioritise paddocks with more feed on offer (FOO)/supplementary feed costs to the ewes carrying multiple lambs.
- Improved lambing management for twin-bearing ewes – appropriate lambing paddock allocation and mob size to improve privacy and shelter, reduce lambing density and increase pasture availability (FOO).
- Improved marketing opportunities – selling known dry or single-bearing ewes on AuctionsPlus will often attract a premium price compared with ewes of unknown pregnancy status.
- Selection opportunities – keep the ewes that consistently scan/raise multiple lambs.
- Classing benefits – don't cull the skinny ewes without knowing how many lambs they raised. They are sometimes your most productive ewes!

Key take home messages

- Condition scoring and pregnancy scanning are two key tools that enable you to “measure to manage”. Without knowing where your animals sit, you cannot improve the outcome
- Managing ewes to achieve target condition scores for joining will drive a higher reproductive rate in your flock.
- Pregnancy scanning for multiple foetuses enables refined nutritional and lambing management to improve lamb survival and achieve high weaning percentages.

Relevant tools and resources

- **Lifetime Ewe Management**

  A twelve month course designed for producers to improve skills in managing ewes across their reproductive lifetimes.

- **Lifting Lamb Survival – PGS package**

  A six month training program for producers to gain greater control over lambing and reproduction outcomes.

- **Lifetime Wool**

  Resources for condition score targets for merinos.

- **Lifetime Maternals**

  Improved guidelines for managing non-merino ewes.

- **MLA Final Report: Maximising the value of eID technology for sheep producers**

  Results of a report modelling the cost-benefit of investing in eID to aid management and selection decisions across a range of commercial Merino and Maternal production systems.

  Average cost-benefit of implementing eID was $4.12 return per dollar invested.

- **Improving lamb marking rate by reducing mob size**
  Reproductive efficiency is important to the profitability of all sheep flocks and this booklet brings together a complete set of best practice management strategies to improve sheep reproduction.

- **Making More From Sheep**

  This module provides the framework and guidelines to set in place all the important management steps to improve flock reproduction rates and lamb survival to weaning

Notes

Technology adoption and utilisation of increased on-farm production

Nathan Simpson

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About Nathan

Nathan is the Chief Executive Officer for Binginbar Farms and his position sees him manage all aspects of cropping and pasture enterprises, as well as human resources, budgeting and technology adoption. Nathan completed a Bachelor of Farm Management at Charles Sturt University in 2009 and has been working in and on the family business since graduation. In that time Binginbar Farms has significantly changed many aspects of business management and technology adoption.

Nathan is married and has four young children who all love caravanning off the beaten track, fishing and all things outdoors!

Session abstract

Binginbar Farms is a 3850ha family owned and operated mixed sheep and cropping operation situated at Gollan, in central New South Wales. Dual purpose wheat, canola and barley is produced in addition to perennial pastures which finish up to 70,000 lambs each year and produce hay/silage fodder.

Since 2016, Binginbar Farms has made significant investment into on-farm technology with the primary objective to increase the efficiency of its enterprises in day-to-day operations. Technology that is currently used in daily operations at Binginbar include remote sensors for water tanks, troughs and pumps, soil moisture and weather sensors, eID tags and readers.

Incorporating these technologies into their prime lamb enterprise has given Binginbar the ability to identify poor performing animals and remove them from the system as well as identify high performing animals and replicate these in the system.

Remote sensing technology has provided Binginbar the ability to know what is happening in each corner of the farm in real time, while also reducing labour requirements and increasing animal and crop performance.

The presentation will go through Binginbar's background and all aspects of managing a successful agricultural business, specifically focusing on technology adoption and utilisation. We also look at the decision-making processes involved when considering investing in these technologies.

Key take home messages

- Explore all options available to suit your specific issue/goal and enterprise.
- Trial new technologies before fully integrating them into your farm system.
- Develop a business case before investing.

Notes

Putting the precision into lambing

Tim Leeming

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About Tim

Tim and his wife Georgie run a self-replacing prime lamb flock, a seed stock business (Paradoo Prime) and background cattle at Pigeon Ponds in western Victoria. They have substantially expanded the business over the past decade and have a strong focus on productivity and land development.

Currently they wean over 11,000 lambs annually, with their major focus being animal welfare and sustainable land management. Their Paradoo Prime operation also markets over 500 maternal sires into the sheep industry annually. The business has been industry benchmarked for over two decades.

Tim has been involved with and still delivers extension activities within the sheep industry such as Lifetime Ewe Management, Lifting Lamb Survival and Bred Well Fed Well. Tim has coordinated the Glenelg Best Wool, Best Lamb group for 13 years from 2006 to 2020

Tim is a former chair of Western Victorian SALRC committee and a former committee member of the Best Wool, Best Lamb Advisory. Tim and Georgie's operation has participated in many industry trials such as the MLA Lifetime Maternals Project and a number of participatory and producer demonstration projects involving feed base and animal production.

Tim is currently involved with the LAMBEX organising committee for the next event which is planned for July 2022 in Melbourne. Tim is also on the project team for 'Towards 90', an exciting new project focused on improving sheep reproduction outcomes.

Recently Tim and his team have developed www.precisionlambing.com which is a system that brings together the key targets and ewe management practices which help deliver some of the most profitable and efficient paddock lamb survival results in Australia.

Session abstract

Lamb survival is a major animal welfare issue for the Australian sheep industry.

Tim's presentation will explain all the challenges and improvements in their 'precision lambing' system and how using a different approach to joining and management of ewes over the lambing period, in conjunction with careful data collection and analysis over the last six years has given Tim and Georgie the percentage gains they consistently achieve.

Over 12 years ago, Tim identified that reduced mob size for multiples is a key influencer on increased lamb survival rates. Tim and his wife Georgie have been pregnancy scanning for multiples lambs for 27 years and are currently working on strategies to achieve success with triplet ewes.

Tim believes that the basis to improving animal welfare and production in sheep enterprises is to identify key targets which are achievable over the course of each lambing season. The precision lambing method combines all aspects of best practice lamb survival to help achieve these targets.

Key take home messages

- Understand the key targets to maximise sheep reproduction within your flock and the key focus areas in order to achieve this:
  - Paddock selection
  - Mob size
  - Feed on offer
  - Feed quality
  - Condition score
- Collect useful data over the joining/lambing period and use it to refine your management.

Consistency is key – score and scan - and use these numbers to assist managing your ewes appropriately over the lambing period.

Relevant tools and resources

- **Paradoo Precision Lambing**

  Tim offers a range of lambing management resources and precision lambing consultancy packages

- **Lifetime Ewe Management**

  A twelve-month course designed for producers to improve skills in managing ewes across their reproductive lifetimes.

- **MLA Lifting Lamb Survival – PGS package**

  A six-month training program for producers to gain greater control over lambing and reproduction outcomes.

- **Lifetime Maternals**

  Improved guidelines for managing non-merino ewes.

Notes

Beef updates

Building better breeders

Alastair Rayner

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About Alastair

Alastair operates RaynerAg, an agricultural consultancy business in NSW that services the red meat sector with a focus on beef production. Alastair established RaynerAg in 2013, following a 17 ½ year career with NSW DPI as a District Livestock Officer (Beef Products). Since commencing operations as an independent advisor, Alastair has established a strong client base in NSW, QLD and South Australia.

RaynerAg offers a full range of on farm services including livestock management and selection, nutrition and drought management, breeding herd performance and as of 2020, clients can also use Alastair as a licensed Stock & Station Agent. Alastair is well known for his skills in training and delivery, and works closely with a number of organisations to deliver practical and tailored on-farm training courses and workshops. He also contributes to Beef Central in weekly columns as the Genetics Editor.

Session abstract

Herd fertility is arguably the key driver of production & profit within beef herds. The influence of herd fertility on critical measures of profit such as kilograms of beef produced per hectare is well documented. Setting clear goals for the selection and management of breeding animals within herds can have a demonstrable increase on business profitability and long-term sustainability.

Industry data suggests longevity within southern herds is lower than many producers may appreciate. Across many southern herds, it is suggested between 60 – 70% of the breeding herd are 6 years of age or younger. The maximum age remains between 8 – 10 years. This data suggests a significant number of animals leave the breeding herd at around medium age (4 -6 years). Major factors contributing to early herd exit are associated with fertility levels.

Building Better Breeders (BBB) is a supported learning program for beef producers, delivered under MLA's flagship extension program, Profitable Grazing Systems. Developed by Alison Hamilton of AJM Livestock & Alastair Rayner of RaynerAg Building Better Breeders has been established to help producers construct a framework for their breeding herds through clear production targets in addition to using electronic identification (eID) to effectively monitor and manage progress over the breeding calendar.

Building Better Breeders is structured around six key themes:

- Setting breeding objectives
- Pastures for performance
- Joining readiness
- Pregnancy testing
- Pre-calving readiness
- Successful re-joining

Delivered in six sessions, over the course of 12 months, Building Better Breeders is designed to be taught on-farm with theory, group discussion and practical demonstrations, in a peer learning environment facilitated by a qualified coach. Each of these sessions are further underpinned with specific eID measurement suggestions, relevant to the key themes of the program.

As a part of the program, participants are asked to identify a group of replacement breeders that can be followed from selection as replacement heifers through to their second joining. This group serves to demonstrate the effectiveness of setting production targets and provides a focal point for group discussion.

The BBB program offers producers who may have attended MLA's Bred Well Fed Well Beef the opportunity s to build knowledge and skills in in the concepts introduced at these workshops. The structure of the program's modules enhances key concepts such as setting breeding objectives and managing target liveweight at critical points.

The eID component of each session focusses on specific targets for the varying classes of stock that comprise the breeding herd. These targets include recommendations on what to record; when that data should be collected and how to analyse and plan future strategies based on these records. The focus on eID does provide product recommendations, instead the focus is on how best to use equipment that participants already possess as well as offering practical suggestions for each individual within the group.

BBB has been designed to give producers of all experience levels a clear structure for the management and monitoring of their breeding herd using a combination of theory, practical demonstration and group discussion. Producers who are interested in participating in the Building Better Breeders program can visit the MLA website for more information.

Key take home messages

- Increased profits in beef breeding – focus on areas that don't require increased spending (in the first instance)
- Have clear goals and objectives
- Refine management decisions
- Have critical points to measure and review

Relevant tools and resources

- **Building Better Breeders – PGS package**

  Building Better Breeders covers the A-Z of beef breeding in southern and temperate zones while supporting producers to introduce and utilise eID in their operation, which takes producers through every step to improve the performance of their cattle enterprise.

- **MLA's More Beef from Pastures**

  More beef from pastures (MBfP) program aims to achieve a sustainable (economic and environmental) increase in kilograms of beef produced per hectare through optimal management of the feedbase. An online producers manual is available online. Each module provides tools and information to enable southern beef producers to increase productivity and profit while minimising risk.

- **Future Beef**

  An ally for the north Australian beef industry, sharing the latest practical tools, scientific insights, and relevant, timely advice.

Notes

Improving productivity with genetics

Panelist

Tim Bowman

WM & TE Bowman, Tooraweenah NSW

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About Tim

Tim runs a mixed farming operation with his brother in central west NSW. Their operation at 'Gundy' consists of a self-replacing shorthorn beef herd, self-replacing merino flock and cereal cropping. Before returning to the family farm, Tim studied Agricultural Economics and worked in the agribusiness banking industry.

As part of the beef production enterprise, the Bowman Partnership at Gundy runs a self-replacing shorthorn herd which currently consists of 280 cows, with the aim to increase to a breeding herd of between 400 and 450. All steers which are produced are grown out to 450-500kg and sent to a local feedlot at 12 to 15 months of age to finish. Heifers are classed and put through a fixed time, heat detection AI program at 15 months. Cows are joined for 12 weeks, scanned for the first 6 weeks with dry cows removed at this point. The dry cows can then be re-scanned to rebuild herd numbers or sold pregnancy tested in calf (PTIC).

Genetics plays a major impact in the productivity and profitability of the Bowman Partnership's beef production enterprise. Improving the growth rates of calves has allowed the business to offload steers at an earlier age, which then in turn has increased stocking rate with additional cattle being run. Using bulls in the heifer AI program which are specifically identified for their low birth weights has led to a reduction in birthing difficulties. When selecting bulls to cover cows, focussing on strong maternal and fertility traits has condensed the calving period while also maintaining high pregnancy testing rates.

Tim also selects bulls with eating quality traits in mind. Selecting for eye muscle area and marbling is important for producing high quality end-product.

There are multiple tools and resources which Tim uses to identify and select the genetics that they wish to use in their herd however the first step is to understand how the herd is currently performing. Any calves which are born are tagged and their pedigree can be identified through both dam and sire. Any data which is collected can then flow back through to their dam and sire to impact expected progeny difference (EPD) data. When steers are killed after going to the feedlot, the carcass data contributes to the EPD and provides an insight into how the businesses' cattle perform against other shorthorns, as well as other breeds. Additionally, the Bowman Partnership also genomic test their steers, which provides insight into how phenotype and genotype interact. All of this information gives a detailed understanding of the current herd performance and allows for breeding objectives to be created.

Key take home messages

- Identify where your herd is currently and what aspects of the herd you are looking to improve.
- Focus on a handful of genetic traits. Finding the perfect all-round beast is near impossible.
- Use all information provided during the bull buying process (e.g., estimated breeding values, physical appearance and stud owner knowledge).

Panelist

Garry Hall

Partner, Garry and Leanne Hall, Warren/Carina NSW

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About Garry

Garry and Leanne Hall run a beef breeding business on the western edge of the Macquarie Marshes in central west NSW. They run around 800 breeding cows on and adjacent to the marshes, and part of the property is Ramsar listed (grazed under 'wise use' principles of the Ramsar convention). They have just under 100ha developed for flood irrigation that is currently sown to lucerne and grow a small area of forage crop to finish sale stock. Garry is the local Landholder's Representative on the Environmental Water Advisory Group in the Macquarie and Chair of the Local Landholders Association.

Drought is part of the landscape and producers are either in the midst of it, recovering from it or preparing for it. The key profit drivers for the Hall's business are fertility, kilograms of product walking up the loading ramp, rainfall and water availability.

The Halls take their environmental responsibilities seriously and attempt to juggle the balance between the health and sustainability of the marshes and their business. The management of a sensitive ecosystem that's directly dependent on river flows and water availability, and the ability to push their genetic gain and building a business reputation as consistent beef producers to the market.

The Halls have been part of the Team Te Mania coalition for 15 years, including leasing their bulls and using industry leading sires in their AI program over the last decade. They currently turn off high marbling steers with high growth rates to the long-fed feedlot market at around 420kg. In addition, the feedback data received from processed cattle is used to benchmark against other Angus producers.

The Halls are continuing to shorten their joining period but as they currently work to rebuild their breeding herd after the recent drought, they are challenged with selecting for females that are suitable to the environment, in addition to producing progeny to satisfy the feeder steer market.

As part of Garry and Leanne's breeding objective, they select for short gestation length as in their environment they find it is often difficult to achieve high conception rates with a second joining. All dry cows are culled and the non-rearing cows (cows that have been pregnancy tested in calf but failed to come in at branding) are also culled.

The Halls are excited about the opportunities that are fast approaching the Australian beef industry with the use of genomics and are watching closely for the development of a multi breed EBV system.

Key take home messages

- Develop a breeding objective and understand what selection traits will help you achieve this objective.
- Look for opportunities to increase your enterprise productivity through genetic progress.
- Balance the health and sustainability of your environment and your business.

Relevant tools and resources

- **MLA Bred Well, Fed Well Beef workshop**

  Bred Well Fed Well is a practical, one-day workshop highlighting the key production benefits of superior genetics, plus feed management for improved reproductive performance and livestock productivity.

- **MLA Building Better Breeders**

  A 12-month program for producers wanting to improve their management skills of cow and heifer reproduction while utilising electronic identification and

Interviewer

Jillian Kelly

District Veterinarian, Central West Local Land Services

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About Jillian

Jillian is the District Veterinarian for Local Land Services based at Coonamble. She graduated from vet school at the University of Sydney in 2005 and after six years in private practice, moved into government veterinary work in 2011. She provides herd health and diagnostic services to sheep and cattle producers in central west NSW and enjoys working on-farm with producers to achieve better animal health, welfare and productivity outcomes. She achieved her Memberships in Ruminant Nutrition in 2015 and used these skills to run the successful Drought Smoko initiatives across the region during the drought. In her spare time, Jillian loves living at Coonamble, watching her cattle get fat and shiny, riding horses and painting.

Notes

Feedbase Updates

Tropical perennial grasses: a profitable, beneficial fit for most of NSW

Robert (Bob) Freebairn

Independent agricultural consultant

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About Bob

Bob Freebairn is an agricultural consultant, specialising in pastures and soils, as well as a beef producer east of Coonabarabran, with his wife Sue. Previously, he was district agronomist with NSW DPI and played a leading role in the release of pasture species such as serradella and biserrula, especially suited to acidic soils, including those with acidic sub soils. He also played a leading role in assessing the potential of tropical grasses throughout NSW and promoting their release. 50% of Bob and Sue's property is now established with tropical grasses. Serradella and biserrula are the main winter legumes in their tropical pastures, as well as native grass pastures. Their farm business centres around a steer fattening operation which requires high quality feedbase to be successful.

In the 2003 Queens Birthday awards, Bob was awarded an OAM, for contribution to agriculture, including development of more productive and sustainable pastures and for fostering the development of dual-purpose winter crops.

Bob's qualifications include a Diploma Agriculture (Wagga Wagga Agriculture College (WDA) 1964) and a Diploma in Rural Extension (Hawkesbury Agricultural College (HDRE) 1971). Positions include or have included being a GRDC Panel member, Trustee of the Narrabri Wheat Research Foundation, board member for Local Land Services, and positions on various community groups.

For nearly 40 years Bob Freebairn has written a weekly column in the state's main rural newspaper The Land. Bob enjoys delivering talks and having discussions with farmer audiences around the state. Perhaps one of the most significant was a talk on tropical grasses delivered to an MLA conference in Dubbo 15 years ago. From that conference a new collection of farmers, from as far afield as south of Cowra, west of Parkes, including Condobolin, north west of Nyngan, and many areas in between, successfully established tropical grasses with most of them continuing to perform well.

During his years of sub-tropical pasture research, Bob has found that species like serradella, and tropical grasses like Premier digit thrived in acid soils. Sue and Bob's own property consists of these acid soils and feel it has been productive and profitable and has performed well particularly over the recent drought. Bob's research has also

covered economical and sound fertiliser programs to address sulphur and phosphorus deficiency prevalent across New South Wales.

Session abstract

Totally new approaches to many aspects of farming, such as tropical grasses in central and southern NSW (and not that long ago for many northern areas) nearly always meet strong barriers, including from researchers, administrators and, farmers. With research from NSW DPI and funding from Research and Development Corporations such as MLA and government, the awareness and adoption of tropical pasture species across New South Wales has been increasing significantly over the last 10 years.

Sub-tropical pasture systems can play a role in diversifying and reducing seasonal feed gaps in southern and central NSW. For most areas a large portion of the average annual rain falls between September and April, where tropical pastures respond quickly and efficiently to any amount of rain.

Key aspects to consider:

1. Tropical grasses, combined with winter legumes, offer greater dry matter production across the year than temperate perennial species, in addition to long term persistence, given sensible management. Their main growth stage is spring through to autumn and are capable of producing a large quantity of biomass and quality feed options over the summer months if high soil fertility and careful grazing management is followed. Tropical grasses have also been successfully adopted by tableland producers; their growing season is shorter but their ability to combine with winter legumes compensates. Another redeeming feature of tropical grasses is their ability to outcompete troublesome weeds such as blue heliotrope, wire grass, African lovegrass and Coolatai grass.

2. In many respects tropical perennial grasses like Premier digit grass, mirror summer-growing native grasses such as Red grass (Bothriochloa macra and B. decipiens), but they tend to be far more productive in most environments.

3. Grass quality is dependent on high soil fertility. High soil fertility requires soil deficiency correction, companion legumes for nitrogen build-up, and/or appropriate nitrogen fertiliser use.

4. Species and variety choice is very important. Tropical grasses offer long-term persistent and productive pastures only if appropriate species and varieties are chosen for a given environment.

5. Tropical grasses are capable of rapid growth up to 140kg DM/ha/day.

6. Tropical grasses cover many growth periods that annual winter legumes and temperate perennials fail to. For example, a late start to autumn and a dry spring commonly means an early shut down of annual legumes and temperate perennials with little production. Tropical species respond to rain that falls during these periods where temperate species and winter legumes have ceased their main production.

7. Establishment is a key factor for productive tropical pastures. If establishment is poor the full potential of these species will not be achieved. Weeds are the biggest threat to successful establishment. Seedlings are vulnerable to competition until first flowering stage but well-established pastures, sown with a persistent variety are not as susceptible to weed invasion. To maintain persistence of the sown varieties and to maximise the productivity of legumes such as sub clover, biserrula, medics and serradella, a weed control plan should be implemented. This could include cropping/fallow combinations and herbicide applications in-crop and after significant fallow rain

8. Provided weeds have been dealt with, sowing time can be earlier and this maximises the probability of receiving establishing rain events. For many central west slopes environments, early sowing is around end October early November. In a sandy or sandy loam soil, around 15mm of rain post sowing will generally ensure good germination. Provided there is reasonable sub-soil moisture establishment will commence. The probability of receiving this rain event, from a late October sow date with a good germination response possible until mid-March is 97% (based on long term rainfall records available on the CliMate app).

In drier western areas, or on a clay or clay loam soil, to ensure good sub soil moisture for the new tropical grass stand, it is often better to sacrifice the last winter crop.
While most temperate pastures are sown into moisture, for tropical species dry sowing is generally more feasible and practical because the sowing period occurs in the warmer part of the year.

9. Sowing depth is also critical for pasture establishment. While literature generally advises sowing at a depth of 1-2cm, where seed is press wheeled and/or sown into a groove, a heavy rain event can wash soil from the top of the furrow over the seed. Seed then needs to emerge from a depth of 3-4cm which is often too deep. To avoid this risk, aim to sow almost at a depth of 0-1cm.

10. Sow varieties which are suited for persistence and productivity. For example, long term research in central and northern slopes environments has shown that Premier digit and Consol lovegrass are most persistent for lighter soils and Premier digit and Bambatsi panic are best suited for heavier soils. In outer western areas Buffel grass can be included in the species mix. Be wary of seed mixtures that contain varieties that don't suit your area, as this dilutes the varieties which are going to be most productive.

11. Seed quality is also important. Be aware also that pelleted seed generally has no better germination rate than clean seed and has far fewer seeds per kg.

12. Dr Rob Banks, Gunnedah soil scientist (Soil Futures Pty. Ltd), for his PhD thesis noted in a Boggabri study on duplex soils, soil organic carbon increased from 58 t/ha on native unimproved pasture to 84 t/ha on pastures with tropical grass, winter legumes and a maintenance application of phosphorus. The improved pasture also had deeper, more robust roots and the soil retained more moisture.

13. Tamworth Agricultural Research Institute recorded Premier digit grass to have a crude protein content above 17% (with the protein content of new leaves up to 25%) combined with good energy levels (9.1 MJ/kg-matter when 17% protein and up to 11 Mj/kg in young leaves). While not in the same category as lucerne, these figures also indicate excellent feed quality that is good for animal growth and well above maintenance requirements.

14. Soil fertility is an important part of a strong productive tropical pasture system. Plants are responsive to correction of phosphorus deficiency. Nitrogen is critical for pasture production and feed quality.

15. Grazing management is important for pasture productivity, recovery after droughts and dry periods and for pasture persistence. Grazing to the one leaf stage and offering pastures rest and recovery periods to regrow and replenish root reserves is the key to maintaining pasture persistence and maximising pasture growth.

Bob recognises that it's second nature and common sense to be careful of someone promoting something out of the ordinary. However, if the concept is well researched and thought out then it's worth considering and learning more about how it may suit your existing farm business to help improve sustainability, productivity and profitability.

16. Profitability. I use our property as an example. It is light, once called near useless country. We have improved it from around 2 DSE/ha in predevelopment days (no to little fertiliser, native grasses) to currently 8 DSE/ha. Gross

margin/ha in the last eight years has ranged from $200 to - $500/ha, with drought years included. Our strategy is high soil fertility, winter legumes like serradella, 50% tropical grass pastures, 30% improved native pastures (with serradella and sub clover) and 20% winter dual purpose crop.

Key take home messages

- Tropical grasses have a fit for most environments of NSW, including southern, higher altitude and western areas.
- Planning for establishment is very important for reliable results. Elimination of weed issues is especially critical.
- Choose varieties carefully.
- Like all pastures good soil fertility is important for good productivity and animal performance

Relevant tools and resources

- **Tropical perennial grasses for northern inland NSW – NSW DPI**

  This book aims to increase the understanding, integration and management of tropical perennial grasses for use on-farm.

- **Down to Earth – weekly column in The Land**

- **How do I improve my sub-tropical grass-based pastures?**

  Sub-tropical perennial grasses make a valuable contribution and are the feed gap in summer/autumn, resulting in increased stocking rates and reduced reliance on supplementary feeding.

Notes

Pasture recovery and management post-drought

Richard Avendano

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About Richard

Richard is an independent agronomist based around the Boggabri and Gunnedah areas, working in both broadacre cropping and sub-tropical pasture based grazing systems.

Prior to this, Richard worked as an agronomist in Moree, studied in Armidale and grew up on his parent's property west of Boggabri. As well as working as an agronomist, Richard also works on the family farm where they run a self-replacing Angus herd using sub-tropical species as the base of the grazing rotation and a cropping enterprise.

Richard also farms himself, running a cropping operation also located in the Boggabri district.

Session abstract

Richard and his family run a 4000ha family operation, 'Towri' located west of Boggabri. Towri turns off approximately 800-1000 steers and heifers into the feedlot market each year along with grain production which is primarily used to supplement during dry times.

The feedbase at Towri consists mostly of sub-tropical pastures such as Premier digit, Bambatsi panic, Consol lovegrass accompanied by summer and winter legumes including Progardes Desmanthus, Yellow serradella, Hykon Rose clover, Arrowleaf clover, Casbah Biserrula and Dalkeith sub-clover.

Richard has found that persistence is the key with sub-tropical pastures and some pasture stands at Towri have been productive for over thirty years. Legumes are allowed to grow to seed head and set seed. Nutrition and grazing management are equal parts responsible for sub-tropical pasture persistence. Fertiliser is applied consistently at Towri and applications of urea, phosphorus and chicken manure are applied every 18 months - two years depending on the season.

Grazing management is also critical to maintaining the productivity and persistence of sub-tropical pastures. Richard is careful to never overgraze pastures and the management strategy at Towri is to graze pastures with heavy stocking rates for short amounts of time.

Over the recent drought, management of the existing pastures was a priority. Over the three years of the recent drought, Towri received 600mm of rain which is the equivalent of annual rainfall for one year. Calves were weaned early at three months of age and were moved into a feedlot for the course of the drought where they were supplementary fed until they reached feedlot weight.

Management of pastures post drought has consisted of fertiliser application to replenish soil nutrients and boost productivity along with management of weeds such as Galvanised burr and Prickly saltwort (Roly poly weed) which became prevalent in the heavier soil types over the drought. Pastures in lighter soils bounced back quickly after rainfall with very little loss in the pasture stands. Heavier soils took longer to recover with approximately 20% of the pasture stands lost. Two years on from drought all pastures have completely recovered.

Key take home messages

- The better you look after your pasture base the quicker they will recover from drought.
- Don’t be afraid to supplementary feed or confinement feed to prioritise pastures and reduce damage.
- Nutrient application and grazing management are equal parts responsible for persistence. Fertiliser is a great tool coming out of drought to give tropical pasture stands a lift in health.

Relevant tools and resources

- **Tropical perennial grasses for northern inland NSW – NSW DPI**

  This book aims to increase the understanding, integration and management of tropical perennial grasses for use on-farm.

Notes

Management and profitability of dual-purpose crops

Ed Blackburn

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About Ed

Ed took on the management role of 'Wongaboori Station' at Mendooran in April 2021. Ed is responsible for the management of the 22,500 acre 'Wongaboori Station' aggregation which spans across 13 properties and is located 30km north of Mendooran.

Ed is also heavily involved in his families mixed farming operation which is also located just north of Mendooran. After finishing his Ag Agricultural Science and Business degrees at UNE in Armidale, Ed spent 9 years as an agronomist for Haynes Farm and Hardware.

Session abstract

The key drivers of successful dual-purpose crops include the management practices and decisions involved in getting the crop to a grazeable state and then the management of the crop through the grazing period until lockup and grain harvest.

'Dual-purpose' or 'graze and grain' crops allow potential increases in productivity, profitability and diversity of a farm's enterprises and can also arguably reduce overall risk. Management of dual-purpose crops is intensive and certainly not 'set and forget'. A well-managed dual-purpose crop has the potential to return greater gross margins than both grain only and grazing only crops, however, if management is poor this productivity can be significantly reduced.

At 'Wongaboori', the vast majority of crops sown are dual-purpose and are primarily utilised to grow weaner cattle to feedlot entry weights. In good seasons when feed allows, a percentage of cattle may be kept and grown out to heavier weights for processors. We find that having dual-purpose crops provides high quality feed for the young (10-month-old) weaners through a time of year when other feedbases would be very limited. The timing of weaner sale to feedlots generally coincides with a suitable time for the crops to be shut up for grain recovery. This generates some significant grain harvest yields, if and when, the season allows. If well managed, the dual-purpose cropping phase also leaves paddocks clean of weeds and ready to be sown to improved perennial pastures at the end of the crop rotation.

Key take home messages

- Timing is key
- Every year is different
- Dual-purpose crops increase profitability and reduce risk

Relevant tools and resources

- **Dual purpose crops – GRDC Update paper**

- **Grazing crops and stubble – Grain and Graze**

- **Dual-purpose cropping – MLA Feedbase Symposium presentation**

  Dual-purpose cropping is a tool for mixed enterprise producers. It provides livestock grazing opportunities when there are feed deficits in addition to grain income.

Notes

Carbon Update

Carbon neutral by 2030

Margaret Jewell

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About Margaret

Margaret is MLA's Carbon Neutral by 2030 (CN30) Manager and works with stakeholders to invest in technologies and products that will enable the red meat industry to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and store more carbon in the landscape.

Margaret is an Agricultural Scientist with a PhD in plant genetics and experience working as an agricultural consultant within the red meat industry in Queensland. She began her role with MLA in December, 2019.

Session abstract

The Australian red meat industry has set a target to be carbon neutral by 2030 (CN30). This means that by 2030, Australian beef, lamb and goat production, including lot-feeding and meat processing, aim to make no net release of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions into the atmosphere.

With a commitment from all of industry, the right policy settings and ongoing research investment, the Australian red meat industry can be at the forefront of carbon neutrality.

MLA’s investment into CN30 research, development (R&D) and adoption aims to enable and empower the red meat industry to achieve the CN30 target, with a focus on reducing emissions while maintaining productivity gains.

The CN30 update for the Dubbo MeatUp Forum will provide an introduction to CN30, an update on progress and current research that is relevant to the Dubbo region, and a look at the pipeline of activities for the next 5 years.

Relevant tools and resources

- **Carbon Neutral 2030**

  An overview of the Carbon Neutral 2030 target, including core activities and associated R&D reports

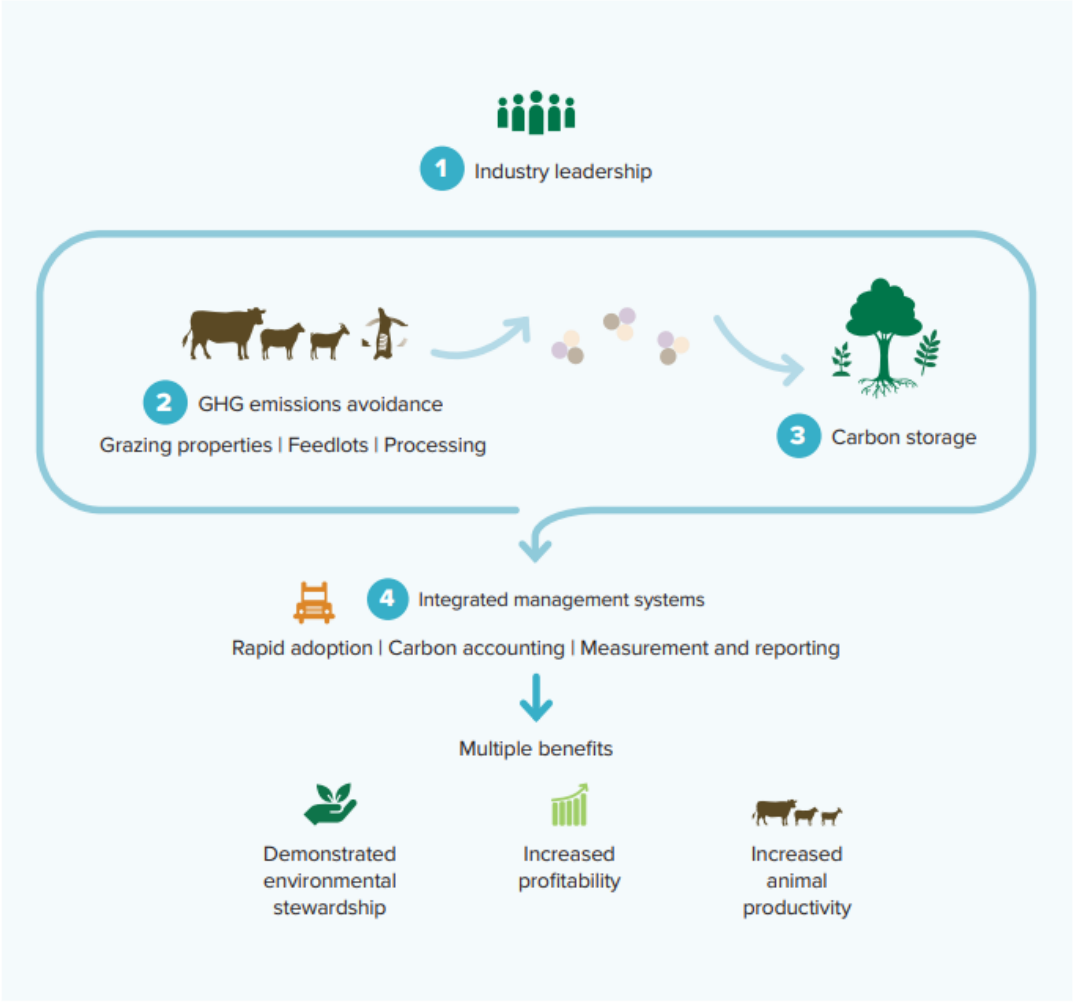
- **MLA CN30 roadmap**

- **Making Australia's red meat industry carbon neutral by 2030 (video)**

- **Supporting carbon neutral red meat production**

  A catalogue of products and services

The catalogue reflects the four work areas under the Australian red meat industry's Carbon Neutral by 2030 Roadmap (available at mla.com.au/cn30). These areas are illustrated below:



Notes

Virtual Farm Tour

Joe Mason

Co-owner / Manager, Spicers Run, Spicers Creek NSW

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About Spicers Run

Spicers Run is a 3,800ha property at Spicers Creek, 30 kilometers north of Wellington. Spicers Run is owned and managed by the Mason family. Brothers Joe and Sam Mason manage Spicers Run together where they produce first cross ewes and prime lambs along with cereal and oilseed grain production.

First cross ewe production is the major sheep enterprise for Spicer's Run with the enterprise consisting of approximately 9,000 cast-for-age merino ewes (bought as 5 year old classed breeding ewes from a regular circuit of producers around the Gulargambone and Walgett areas). These ewes are kept for two lambing seasons and two wool clips and are then sold as mutton. First cross ewes are then sold to a regular circuit of buyers (predominantly local producers) while male lambs are finished and sold as first cross fat lambs. Spicers Run finishes approximately 11,000 each year.

Ewes split lamb with half of the ewes lambing in autumn (March/April) and the other half lambing in late winter/early spring (July/August). Joe and Sam both feel that split lambing works well for their business model and grazing system. The rams are used twice over the year and the finished lambs provide a good spread of income across the year. Additionally, the split lambing works well to spread ewes and lambs over the farm, ensuring there is enough feed on offer to meet ewe nutritional requirements during pregnancy and lactation and turn off weights for fat lambs. Shearing occurs in January and the wool cheque makes up a large part of the sheep production income. The merino ewes are large framed, averaging 65-70kg and cut an average fleece of 21 micron.

40% (approximately 1,500ha) of the arable land at Spicers Run is cropped for cereals and oilseed (canola) and a large percentage of this dual-purpose. Cropping integrates with the sheep production enterprise well and the cropping cycle is usually four years, followed by improved pasture for six years. Lambs are often marked or weaned on to dual-purpose crops, with stubbles providing a good source of maintenance nutrition for dry ewes.

The Mason family have farmed at Spicers Creek for a long time. Joe and Sam work closely with their cousin Matt Mason and have developed a separate business venture leasing land on the southern side of Wellington where they join first cross ewes produced at Spicers Run to Dorset rams to produce prime lambs.

Notes

My take home messages and actions

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

Session	Action - Things I could do to implement ideas

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Business EDGE

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A two-day workshop to enhance your financial management and improve business efficiency and profitability. You will also develop strategies to determine if your business can fund future growth, how to reduce debt and how to plan for retirement and succession.

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BusinessEDGE Dubbo: 5 - 6 April, 2022

To register contact Prue Francis **M:** 0435 052 255 **E:** prue@agrista.com.au

For more information about EDGE: **mla.com.au/edge-network**

Business EDGE has been developed by Meat & Livestock Australia

HEIFERS for PROFIT

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For more information or to register contact your local deliverer in the Dubbo region:
Emily Pitt 0475 824 661 or Luke Harrison 0439 427 146

HEIFERS for PROFIT

COURSE OVERVIEW

Being involved in a Heifers for Profit course gives you the skills and confidence to manage your heifers' nutrition to improve animal welfare, increase future reproductive success, optimise stocking rates, and increase whole farm profitability.

Working with groups of 5-7 farmers who meet six times in 15 months, your trainer will work with you on:

- The principles and practices of Heifers for Profit
- Getting heifers in-calf efficiently
- Managing pregnancy and achieving critical weights
- Transitioning the heifer into a cow – preparation for calving and re-breeding
- Managing calving 'The fruits of your labour'
- Pre-joining management and calf marking

COURSE INVESTMENT

The cost of Heifers for Profit is valued at $2,200 plus GST per participant, Heifers for Profit will be open to producers for $1,540 plus GST thanks to the support of Meat & Livestock Australia through the Profitable Grazing Systems initiative.

HOW DO I JOIN A HEIFERS FOR PROFIT COURSE?

Heifers for Profit is delivered on farm and is ideally suited to a small group of 5-7 participants. It is anticipated that the Heifers for Profit program should commence when heifers have been weaned.

We encourage you to contact like-minded neighbours and farmers in your local area to form a group, and a trainer will come to you to deliver the Heifers for Profit course.

Better your business

MEAT & LIVESTOCK AUSTRALIA

MLA offers red meat producers a range of training opportunities, resources and publications.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

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

Profitable Grazing Systems
mla.com.au/pgs

Producer Demonstration Sites are on-farm projects run by producer groups who want to demonstrate findings from known research into their local farming system. MLA calls for Producer Demonstration Site applications that will help to improve the profitability, productivity and sustainability of red meat enterprises every April.

Producer Demonstration Site
mla.com.au/pds

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

mla MEAT & LIVESTOCK AUSTRALIA EDGE NETWORK
mla.com.au/edgenetwork

BredWell FedWell are practical one-day workshops designed to teach producers the key benefits of superior genetics and feed management for improved flock and herd performance.

bredwell fedwell
mla.com.au/bredwellfedwell

RESOURCES

The toolbox, MLA's free eLearning platform, builds knowledge in the areas of animal welfare, husbandry, feedbase and genetics. Packages take between 15 to 20 minutes to complete online, allowing users to learn at their own pace.

The toolbox
elearning.mla.com.au

myMLA is a customised online dashboard that provides news, weather, events and R&D tools relevant to you, as well as a single sign-on feature for integrity systems.

my mla MEAT & LIVESTOCK AUSTRALIA
mla.com.au/aboutmymla

Seasonal hubs provide resources, tips and tools organised by season to make it easy to find relevant information to support your business decisions.

mla.com.au/seasonal-hubs

Feedbase hubs provide tips and tools on soils, pastures, legumes and weed management alongside the latest R&D to increase pasture production, quality and persistence.

mla.com.au/feedbase-hub

PUBLICATIONS

MLA's *Feedback magazine* signposts producers to practical on-farm information and showcases how MLA is investing levies in research, development and marketing activities.

mla.com.au/feedback

Keep informed about the latest red meat and livestock industry news, market information, events, research and marketing with MLA's suite of e-newsletters. Mastheads include:
The Weekly • Integrity Matters • Goats on the Move • The Quarterly Feed • Global Markets Update • The Advisor.

mla.com.au/enews

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MLA membership is **free** to levy-paying producers of grass or grainfed cattle, sheep, lambs or goats

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