**Northern Breeding Business (NB2) Monitoring Evaluation and Reporting (MER) plan**

The NB2 RDE&A partnership will address three key issues that threaten the long-term viability and sustainability of the northern beef industry. These have been identified as; 1) the level of calf wastage in northern breeding herds, 2) the low level of profitability of many northern beef enterprises, and 3) the low level of adoption of proven management practices and technologies. The NB2 program aims to engage with up to 250 northern beef businesses in collecting and using objective data to inform business decisions that target:

• 5% increase in weaning rate,

• 1% decrease in herd mortality rate,

• 10 kg increase in sale weight of cattle at the same age, while operating at a level of production and profit that is sustainable in the long-term

The producer engagement component of NB2 targets practice change that can be demonstrated by participating northern beef producers. Practice change elements are; independently collecting standard data, understanding the value of data collection and the resulting situation analysis, identifying new interventions/innovations on farm to increase breeder herd efficiency and how they may affect the productivity, demonstrated improvements in profitability and sustainability of their breeding herd. This will be supported by having completed two years of data collection for each participant.

Pilot group(s) objectives, provided as background to the MER targets that follow:

Establish and maintain six peer to peer learning groups, between 2021 and 2023 and in the process:

1. Assist participating producers to confidently collect standardised data and complete annual livestock schedules, feed budgets and financial budgets. Producers will collate baseline data to identify gaps and understand how to read/interpret the situation analysis report (ie. the analysed data) as the first step to objective management decisions resulting in practice change.
2. Facilitate group discussion on baseline data to highlight key areas of focus over the course of the 2-year pilot.
3. Assist participating producers to confidently evaluate potential interventions or management practice change for implementation. This will include discussions with the appropriate specialist
4. Each producer completing a minimum of 1 training event per year.
5. Facilitate group discussion to identify the training/skills building needs and organise appropriate training.
6. Provide feedback to Meat and Livestock Australia regarding the peer-to-peer learning process, the templates used for data collection, R&D priorities, and the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting (MER) framework via annual milestone reports. This feedback will be used to enhance the program for a full roll-out beyond the pilot period.

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| **Table 1: MLA Path2Impact Evaluation Framework Summary for Northern Breeding Business (NB2) pilot group program** |
| **Primary Output (Overall Product)** | **Secondary Output (practice change area)** | **Outcome (adoption) measures (indicators)** | **Outcome (adoption) targets** | **Impact indicators** | **Impact targets** |
| NB2 two-year producer program | NB2 - increasing business understanding and analysis skills | For each business understand and collect livestock, feedbase and financial data to develop an annual management report. Each business can describe their current business situation for: **Herd** **KPI’s** (kg produced and increase weaning rate %), **Feedbase KPI’s** – kg of pasture available, **Finance KPI’s** – income per kg and costs per kg of live weight produced | Practice change in 30 businesses (>800 AE/business) via delivery of 6 producer peer-learning groups with at least 5 businesses per group over a 2 year period. Livestock, financial, and feedbase templates completed first year. Annual business analysis report completed second year, building on knowledge of livestock, finances and feed developed in first year. 70% of core producers and 50% of observer producers demonstrate an increase in knowledge and skills of implementing, intent to change and have documented plans to enact change. Livestock, financial, and feedbase management practices are improved over baseline position.Produce 6 producer case studies on implementing Livestock, financial, and feedbase methods on-farm. | Pilot producers are able demonstrate the ability to assess their own data, prioritise and formulate plans leading to practice changeIncrease number of weaners as a result of more effective herd and feedbase management.Improved producer profitability due to decreased calf mortality and increased productivity (daily weight gain) | 30 businesses able to provide the required input for a basic business analysis each year, including livestock, feedbase, and financial indicators. 30 businesses able to assess a potential innovation or practice change (cost benefit analysis showing impacts from practice change e.g., $ value of decreased mortality rate compared to baseline).Increase weaning rate of 5% and calf mortality decrease of 1% |

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| **Table 2: Data Collection Action Plan** |
| **Data Required** |
| **At commencement of joining NB2 producer group** |
| Complete registration form\* and 'pre' program KASA |
| Initial collection of baseline data guides future KASA change  |
| **At end of year 1 (2022 financial year)** |
| Completed Business skills training |
| Completed livestock schedule |
| Completed chart of accounts and basic cashflow budget |
| Completed pasture assessment training |
| **At end of year 2 (2023 financial year)** |
| Completed livestock schedule, pasture assessment and financial templates |
| Captured adequate data for annual situation analysis report and understanding of how to use it |
| Considered practice changes/interventions for implementation, documents intent to change, linking to increased saleable liveweight and weaning rate, and decreased mortality rate |
| Complete 'post' program KASA, including assessment of intention to change as well as summary of any changes already made |
| MER specialist to assess success of the program imparting to producers the value in data collection, analysis and formulating business/management plans on the basis of informed decisions |
| **1-2 years post producer group engagement**  |
| MER specialist to interview participating producers and facilitators post producer group involvement to determine practice changes made that relate back to the objectives of NB2 for increasing saleable liveweight and weaning rate, and decreasing mortality rate |

\*Producer demographic data to be captured includes, business name, ABN, number of participants attending from that business, business address, property size, land area used for beef, permission to contact participants for follow-up program evaluation and impact assessment. Facilitator demographic data to be captured includes, business name/organisation represented, nature of service provided to industry, number of producers work with annually, geographical area serviced, permission to contact for program follow-up or supply of appropriate data from participating producers to allow for program evaluation and impact assessment.