

Terms of reference

GIRDAC Investment Call FY26

KIDStart – Optimising kid weaning success

Summary

Optimal kid weaning is integral to enhancing animal welfare, productivity and profitability in the Australian goat industry. However, there is limited scientifically backed knowledge on key weaning strategies that contribute to weaning success. As a dynamic and rapidly developing industry, the Australian goat industry is well-placed to focus efforts on pre-weaning and weaning interventions that are currently in place on-farm to help increase this rate and maximise productivity. This project will identify and evaluate key pre-weaning and weaning interventions implemented on managed goat enterprises. It is anticipated that project activities will also determine the return on investment for each intervention.

Purpose and Background

Meat & Livestock Australia has invested in several research activities to establish baseline understanding of reproductive performance in the Australian goat industry. The project [B.GOA.1905 Reducing kid loss – select and protect](#) sought to establish a baseline understanding and determine the cause and costs of kid loss in the Australian goat industry. Further, the current 5-year MLA Donor Company investment, [KIDS+ project](#) (P.PSH.1373 *Quantifying and improving goat reproductive performance and reducing kid loss*), co-funded by MLA and The University of Queensland, seeks to collect baseline goat reproductive performance data across a range of production systems. While both projects have targeted the collection of baseline data, they have highlighted the need for further investment into weaning strategies and interventions currently being implemented across all sectors of the goat industry (e.g. paddock segregation, differential management by sex, crossbred weaning and supplementary feeding). With increasing diversification of goat-producing businesses producers need clear messaging around weaning strategies that offer a return on investment.

Given the limited data in kid weaning, the Goat Industry Research, Development and Adoption Committee (GIRDAC) have prioritised this project for investment. As a result, this project seeks to identify key pre-weaning and weaning interventions implemented on-farm across managed goat businesses.

Expected outcome

Proposed RD&A activities will meet agreed milestones identifying progress in achieving one or more of the objectives and outcomes identified in this TOR which align with identified priorities by GIRDAC.

Scope

MLA is calling for applications for levy or hybrid-funded projects that will consider the following objectives:

- i) Undertake a systematic review of Australian and international literature to understand pre-weaning and weaning strategies that are utilised in managed goat businesses
- ii) In consultation with goatmeat producers and leveraging learnings from other goat sectors (e.g. fibre and dairy), determine the cost-benefit of each identified kid weaning intervention across managed goatmeat systems
- iii) Demonstrate these strategies on a range of goat production systems through integrated Producer Demonstration Sites (number to be determined by systematic review and producer consultation)
- iv) Develop a suite of practical adoption resources (including use of multimedia) for best practice kid weaning strategies. These should include but are not limited to developing findings into a module for Going into Goats and spotlight producer case studies to highlight successful businesses pursuing innovations in kid weaning.

Project proposals which outline activities that engage goat producers across Australia will be favourably assessed.

Proposed activities

The prospective service provider will be required to consult with other goat sectors (e.g. fibre and dairy) to identify and evaluate key weaning strategies that are suitable for adoption in goatmeat systems. Dissemination of resources generated in this project should also include material targeted toward determining a value creation pathway for underweight goats (defined as animals with < 9kg carcase weight; [Understanding dressing percentage when marketing goats](#)).

Other requirements

All projects will be required to implement a comprehensive monitoring, evaluation and reporting (MER) plan aligned to the MLA framework to demonstrate producer engagement, practice change and the benefit to the production businesses and broader industry. A copy of the MER plan guidelines is available on the MLA website. The MER plan will be a requirement of milestone one if the project is successful. Please budget for MER in this proposal.

Project duration and timing

The project is anticipated to be contracted in **FY26**, with a maximum duration of three (3) years.

Resources Required

The proposal should include all resources, personnel and budget required to complete the project.

Important information and selection criteria

This proposal will encompass research, development and adoption (RD&A) activities in the Goat Productivity sub-program that achieve outcomes in line with the priorities of the Goat Industry Research, Development and Adoption Committee (GIRDAC).

MLA is seeking **full RD&A proposals** to design, develop and deliver a webinar series for the Australian goat industry. Proposals will be reviewed by GIRDAC to assess alignment with key RD&A priorities. Project proposals which detail extensive producer and stakeholder consultation will be favourably assessed.

Funding mechanisms

The successful project will be funded via a levy, hybrid (combined goat levy and MLA Donor Company) or MLA Donor Company funding streams. Applications that utilise the MLA Donor Company funding pathway will be favourably received. For projects to be funded, they must be recommended for funding by GIRDAC prior to progressing through the MLA governance process. For more information on the goat levy funding system please see [here](#).

Confidentiality and intellectual property

The successful applicant will be required to enter into an Umbrella Research Agreement with MLA. A link to the template is provided in section four of the request for tender document.

Applicants must identify any background intellectual property (BIP) brought to the project and bring any background IP required that is not owned by MLA. All data and cited references must be acknowledged in the final report and it is the sole responsibility of the applicant to ensure copyright laws are not breached.

Where further information is available which may assist the successful applicant in meeting the requirements of the project, MLA will provide such information to the successful applicant.

Deadline for submissions

Full proposals must be received by MLA before 11.59pm (AEDT) Friday 5 December 2025. Late proposals will not be accepted.

Use the [full application template](#) to submit proposals electronically to MLA at: projectcall@mla.com.au

Full proposals will be acknowledged and recorded on the MLA project information system.

Application outcomes will be advised in writing by 19 December 2025.

Further Information

If you have questions about these terms of reference, contact:

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