

# Terms of reference

## Animal Wellbeing & Biosecurity Investment Call

### Strengthening adoption and awareness of biosecurity practices

#### Summary

The Australian red meat industry (encompassing cattle, sheep and goat) generated \$77.1 billion in turnover and \$14.3 billion in exports in 2023-2024, supporting over 460,000 jobs nationwide (Meat & Livestock Australia 2025). The industry's success is built on a well-integrated and effective biosecurity system. Understanding the evolving biosecurity challenges that the red meat industry faces, and the gaps and needs that must be addressed, is critical to informing strategic research, development, and adoption (RD&A) investment. This Terms of Reference (ToR) seeks to drive a step-change in the adoption of biosecurity practices across the red meat sector through targeted, measurable and scalable interventions.

#### Purpose and Background

These TOR have been developed in response to a recent gap analysis undertaken by MLA to identify RD&A biosecurity investment opportunities that have the potential to deliver the most impact for red meat industry.

Despite sustained investment, increased coordination, and heightened awareness of biosecurity risks, adoption of biosecurity related practices across the sector remains uneven and fragmented. Levels of understanding, ownership of responsibility, and implementation vary widely across commercial producers, small and medium enterprises, non-commercial producers, and hobby farmers. Financial pressures, competing productivity priorities, limited resourcing, and unclear shared responsibility arrangements continue to constrain uptake.

In parallel, a strong national emphasis on preparedness for exotic disease incursions, combined with extension approaches that are not always locally relevant or inclusive, has contributed to fatigue and disengagement among some producers and low levels of community awareness. This creates ongoing vulnerability, particularly where poor biosecurity practices outside the commercial sector pose risks to the broader production system.

Addressing these challenges requires a shift toward practical, locally relevant, and well-designed approaches that clearly articulate the value proposition of biosecurity and embed proactive and system wide behaviours across producers, supply chains, and communities.

#### Expected outcome

The outcome of this initiative is **measurable and sustained improvement in the adoption of effective biosecurity practices** across the red meat sector. This should be supported by increased understanding of biosecurity value, clearer ownership of responsibility, and stronger engagement from producers and the wider community.

Applications to these TOR should address some or all of the following:

- Increase producer and community understanding of the risks, and both financial and non-financial benefits, of biosecurity.
- Improve the consistency and depth of biosecurity implementation, among small, medium and large red meat-producing enterprises and measurable behaviour change that is integrated into routine business practices
- Improve the consistency and depth of biosecurity implementation among non-commercial animal owners.
- Strengthen trust, relevance, and engagement through co-designed, locally appropriate extension and adoption approaches.
- Contribute to reduced biosecurity risk through more proactive, preventative behaviours across the system.

#### Definition of Impact (Mandatory Requirement)

All proposals **must define and quantify expected impact**, including:

- Change in adoption levels of clearly defined biosecurity practices (baseline to endline)
- Evidence of awareness and behaviour change (frequency, consistency, or depth of practice implementation)
- Economic benefit at enterprise level (e.g. avoided cost, productivity gain, risk reduction)
- Sustained adoption beyond project completion (minimum 12 months where feasible)

Proposals that do not clearly define measurable impact will not be considered competitive.

#### Scope

MLA is calling for applications for [MDC-funded projects](#) that include the design, delivery and evaluation of activities that support improved biosecurity adoption through engagement, communication, and practice change.

The scope will encompass:

- Commercial red meat producers across regions and production systems.
- Small, medium and large enterprises with limited biosecurity resourcing.
- Non-commercial producers, hobby farmers, and animal owners who pose indirect biosecurity risk.
- Local communities whose awareness and behaviour influence on-farm and off-farm biosecurity outcomes.

The initiative will focus on biosecurity adoption as part of everyday business decision-making rather than solely emergency or exotic disease preparedness, and will leverage existing industry investment in animal health, welfare, productivity and extension programs wherever possible.

Project proposals that clearly demonstrate meaningful engagement and consultation with producers, will be favourably assessed.

## Proposed activities

Applicants should clearly define the **outputs** (e.g. tools, knowledge products, technologies, systems, recommendations) created by the project and describe the attributable **outcomes** and **impacts** for producers and the broader red meat industry.

The proposed project should include, where relevant:

### 1 Articulation of the Biosecurity Value Proposition

- Quantify and communicate the economic, operational, social and risk-reduction benefits of biosecurity, with clear return-on-investment narratives.
- Develop tailored messaging that resonates with different producer (small, medium & large) and non-commercial animal owners.

### 2 Co-designed Engagement Extension & Adoption Programs

- Work with producers and industry groups to co-design regionally relevant biosecurity adoption programs.
- Ensure programs address real-world constraints such as time, cost, infrastructure and competing priorities.

### 3 Integration with Existing RD&A and Extension Investments

- Leverage established animal health, welfare and productivity programs as platforms for embedding biosecurity practices.
- Align biosecurity messaging with broader on-farm business improvement and risk management activities.

### 4 Targeted Community Awareness and Inclusion

- Develop inclusive engagement approaches that raise biosecurity awareness beyond the commercial sector.
- Improve understanding of shared responsibility and collective risk management across industry and community stakeholders.

### 5 Behaviour Change and Practice Embedding

- Design activities that move beyond awareness to support sustained behaviour change and routine adoption of biosecurity practices.
- Build trust, normalise biosecurity as “business as usual,” and support peer-to-peer learning where appropriate.

### 6 Monitoring and evaluation

- Incorporate mechanisms to capture lessons learned, identify barriers and enablers to adoption, and inform future biosecurity RD&A and extension investments.
- All projects **that deliver attributable adoption and impact (category 1)** must include a robust monitoring, evaluation and reporting (MER) framework that captures outputs, outcomes (adoption) and both economic and/or social impacts. Impacts should demonstrate producer

engagement, practice change and benefit to production businesses and the broader industry. This includes baseline measurement, clear success metrics, and where feasible, approaches to attribute observed changes to the project interventions. The MER plan will be a requirement of Milestone 1 if the project is successful, and applicants should ensure adequate budget allocation for MER activities.

The [MLA Triple Bottom Line Evaluation Framework](#) and guidelines are available on MLA's web site and must be used for MER, should your application be successful.

## Project duration and timing

A maximum project duration of approximately 48 months is anticipated. Proposals should clearly outline key milestones that clearly and appropriately justify the duration of the project.

## Resources Required

Proposals must include details of all resources required to complete the project, including personnel, expertise, infrastructure, operating costs and total budget. Co-investment and in-kind contributions should be clearly identified.

## Important information and selection criteria

Proposals will be assessed against criteria that may include:

- Demonstrated experience delivering **behaviour change, practice adoption or extension programs** in agriculture, biosecurity, animal health, or related sectors
- Clear articulation of the biosecurity adoption challenge, including cultural, economic and structural barriers
- Demonstrated understanding of shared responsibility, collective risk and the role of non-commercial animal owners
- Recognition of constraints faced by producers (time, cost, infrastructure, competing priorities)
- A coherent, staged approach aligned to a 48-month delivery horizon
- Evidence that activities are locally relevant, practical and scalable
- Clear integration with existing RD&A, extension or productivity programs rather than duplication
- Strategy for sustaining engagement and avoiding fatigue
- Approach to defining success beyond awareness (e.g. adoption depth, behaviour change, practice embedding)
- Clear plans for monitoring, evaluation and learning over the life of the project
- Ability to generate transferable insights to inform future biosecurity investments
- Alignment with producer priorities and animal wellbeing outcomes.
- Scientific and technical merit.
- Feasibility and value for money.
- Strength of producer engagement and adoption approach
- Capability and track record of the project team.

Additional weighting will be given to proposals that:

- Demonstrate clear, quantifiable economic value to producers
- Show credible pathways to sustained adoption
- Leverage system-level change mechanisms
- Integrate with other RD&A opportunities (e.g. surveillance, data, pest management)

The successful project will be funded by the [MLA Donor Company \(MDC\)](#) funding model. The successful applicant will be required to enter into an umbrella research agreement with MLA, as outlined in the request for tender documentation.

## Deadline for submissions

Preliminary proposals must be received by **MLA before 11.59pm (NSW time) Monday 22 June 2026 and must not be more than 8 pages in length. Demonstration of team capability may be added as an appendix. Late proposals will not be accepted.**

Applicants should review MLA's [Project application guidelines and forms](#) web page and the [MLA Project Funding Application Guidelines](#) before completing their preliminary project application.

Use the [MLA preliminary project funding application](#) to submit proposals electronically to MLA at [projectcall@mla.com.au](mailto:projectcall@mla.com.au) and cc [sdundon@mla.com.au](mailto:sdundon@mla.com.au).

Preliminary Proposals will be acknowledged and recorded on the MLA project information system.

Applicants will be advised in writing if they will be invited to submit [a detailed funding application](#) for consideration by 14 July 2026. Applicants which are not successful will be advised in writing by 14 July 2026.

## Further Information

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

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