



Final report

WALRC - Livestock Matters 2025

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Prepared by: Amy Coombe
Executive Officer – Western Australian Livestock Research Council
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Abstract

Livestock Matters 2025 was undertaken to engage Western Australian red meat producers in identifying barriers to productivity and informing future MLA research priorities. Two on-farm forums were delivered in Walebing and Gingin, targeting sheep and cattle producers respectively.

The forums used a combination of producer case studies, research presentations and facilitated discussion sessions to encourage participation and knowledge exchange. The forums attracted over 150 stakeholders and achieved high satisfaction ratings (8.8-8.9/10), with 98% of respondents reporting they learned something new.

Key outcomes included strong engagement from previously under-represented regions such as the West Midlands, validation of existing research priorities, and identification of emerging industry trends. The forums also contributed to rebuilding producer confidence during a period of industry uncertainty.

The results will inform future MLA and WALRC research, development and adoption activities, supporting improved productivity and resilience across the red meat industry.

Executive summary

Background

Livestock Matters is a WALRC initiative designed to facilitate direct engagement between producers, researchers and MLA. The 2025 program focused on addressing barriers to livestock productivity and strengthening two-way communication to inform research priorities.

The target audience was sheep and cattle producers in the West Midlands region of Western Australia – an area with historically low engagement in MLA and WALRC activities. Outcomes from the forums will be used to guide future investment in research, development and adoption.

Objectives

All objectives of the project were achieved. The project successfully delivered one sheep and one cattle event, both held in the West Midlands region. Both forums had a target of 30 registrations per event, with a stretch target of 80 registrations. All promotional and delivery objectives were achieved.

Methodology

The event program for both days was developed through a structured planning and consultation process, a WALRC producer and Chair planning meeting, followed by Committee review, ongoing MLA input, speaker briefings, and pre-event farm visits to ensure the content was practical, relevant and aligned with desired outcomes. Post-event feedback was collected through surveys (85 responses), alongside forum discussions, and analysed to identify key themes and priority areas, which were consolidated and used to inform the priority setting process for future R&D, development and extension activities.

Results/key findings

The event achieved strong engagement, exceeding attendance stretch targets and resulting in a budget variance due to increased attendance. Both forums effectively met the objective of inspiring and informing producers on best practice livestock management during a period of significant industry pressure.

Benefits to industry

Feedback from the forums also indicates that the agenda met the needs of the participants. Survey responses indicated that participants were engaged and learnt something new. Importantly, WALRC has now consulted with almost 200 stakeholders, providing a significant amount of data for priority setting discussions.

Future research and recommendations

High attendance and engagement provided clear direction on industry research priorities and reinforced the importance of effective extension. While knowledge gaps were identified, a major challenge remains the translation of research into practice, with future investment needed to support both targeted R&D and improve adoption pathways. WALRC has collected research priority

recommendations, which will be considered when forming the 2026-2028 Research, Development and Adoption priorities that are submitted to MLA.

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1. Background

Livestock Matters 2025 was designed to address the need for improved engagement between red meat producers, researchers and funding bodies. A key challenge within the livestock industry is ensuring that research priorities accurately reflect on-ground production issues and that research outcomes are effectively communicated to producers.

The project focused on the West Midlands region of Western Australia, which had historically experienced lower levels of engagement with WALRC and MLA initiatives. This created an opportunity to expand consultation reach and capture insights from a broader producer base.

The primary aim was to identify barriers to productivity and provide a platform for producers to engage directly with current research and innovation. The outcomes of this project will be used to inform future MLA research investments and adoption strategies.

2. Objectives

The objectives of Livestock Matters 2025 were to:

1. Organise
2. Achieve a minimum of 30 registrations per event, with a stretch target of 80
3. Conduct monitoring, evaluation and reporting aligned with the MER framework
4. Demonstrate engagement with producers by identifying research priorities
5. Deliver confidence and motivation for best-practice livestock management.

Table 1: Project and event objectives and outcomes of project P.PSH.1600

Project Objective:	Outcome:
Organize and deliver two separate regional events focused on different livestock species: sheep and cattle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Both events delivered. - Sheep forum held in Walebing, WA on 24th July 2025. - Cattle forum held in Gingin, WA on 25th July 2025
Promote the events through various channels, including WALRC social media/newsletters, other relevant regional networks, and MLA channels, aiming for a minimum of 30 registrations per event, with a stretch target of 80 registrations per event.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delivered. - All event collateral created and circulated through relevant social media channels. - Both minimum and stretch target of registrations was met for both forum events.
Conduct monitoring, evaluation, and reporting activities in line with the MLA Adoption MER framework for each event, targeting 80% completion rate for post event evaluations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delivered. - Registration process completed electronically via MLA's customer voice e-form system. - Printed copies of post-evaluation form from MLA's Customer Voice platform, were handed out and QR code displayed on screen linking to online platform.

	<p>- A total of 89 survey responses were collected across two days. Target completion rate not met.</p>
Event Objective:	Outcome:
<p>To clearly demonstrate that MLA is listening to and engaging with producers in the region via its Research Council</p>	<p>Almost 200 stakeholders were engaged at the two forums with an average forum satisfaction of 9/10. MLA was acknowledged at the forums with current and previously funded research presented to the regional audiences. MLA staff were recognised and attendees had the opportunity to engage with both them and the WALRC team.</p>
<p>To reinforce and identify research priorities, and to show that previous priorities are now 'in the field' and making a difference.</p>	<p>WALRC was proud to showcase updates from previous WALRC and MLA funded priorities and other MLA projects on both Livestock Matter programs including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shade and Shelter Project - Heat Stress - The SmartBEEF Project - Australian Beef Sustainability Framework
<p><i>To deliver confidence and motivation for best practice livestock management during challenging environmental and economic times.</i></p>	<p>Feedback and engagement from attendees indicate that both events effectively met this objective by inspiring and informing producers on best practice livestock management during a period of significant industry pressure. This was particularly evident at the Walebing event, where a key focus was restoring confidence in the sheep industry following the live export ban. This was achieved through an honest and open Q&A session with Livestock Matters host Michael Humphry, which directly addressed the financial and mental health impacts of the ban on producers and businesses. By creating space for open discussion and acknowledgement of these challenges, the session supported participants in processing the situation before shifting the conversation toward future opportunities. The event concluded by encouraging trust in the research and innovation that will support industry recovery and long-term resilience.</p>

3. Methodology

3.1 Event programs

The Livestock Matters Forums at both Walebing and Gingin followed a similar agenda. The programs included:

- a description from the host producer about their production system including highlighting any gaps in knowledge
- research updates from MLA funded programs that had come from previous WALRC priorities
- a market update from guest speaker Andrew Whitelaw (AgWatchers)
- an “over-the-fence” description of a different production system by a guest producer

In addition, the Gingin Forum included a discussion about the Australian Beef Sustainability Framework by guest speaker Patrick Hutchinson. Patrick was also able to discuss the sheep supply chain and relationships with processors at the Gingin Forum.

See forum programs in appendix 7.1 and 7.2.

3.2 Event delivery

The methodology was underpinned by a structured pre-event planning and consultation process, beginning with a planning meeting involving two WALRC producers and the WALRC Chair to identify key focus areas for the program, design the event layout, and agree on the structure of the day to maximise value for attendees. This was followed by a WALRC Committee meeting to review the proposed plan and provide additional feedback and input into the program design.

Ongoing consultation with MLA was maintained throughout the planning process to provide updates, share information, and incorporate feedback on potential improvements and alternative approaches. Speakers were then individually briefed, supported by smaller group discussions with producers and/or the Executive Officer, to ensure alignment of messaging with the intended outcomes of the day. In parallel, pre-event farm visits to Walebing and Gingin provided on-ground context to further inform program content and relevance.

3.3 Promotion and engagement

In the lead up to the forums, both events were promoted through a variety of channels. This included but was not limited to; WALRC’s newsletter, MLA’s weekly Friday Feedback, Farm Weekly, and WALRC’s social media channels, X and LinkedIn.

3.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

Feedback was subsequently collected through post-event surveys distributed to attendees, with a total of 89 responses received across both forums. The survey included a mix of quantitative (multiple choice) and qualitative (open-ended) questions to capture both measurable outcomes and detailed insights.

Responses were collated and analysed to assess participant experience, whether attendees learnt anything new, and to identify key themes, trends, and priority areas. These were summarised in a

spreadsheet and incorporated into the priority setting day to inform future research, development, and extension priorities. Additional insights were drawn from forum discussions and reviewed by the WALRC committee during the post-event meeting, contributing to final priority considerations.

4. Results

4.1 Attendance

Both forums exceeded the initial registration target and the stretch target, demonstrating strong regional demand and interest. Many attendees had not previously engaged with WALRC, expanding the consultation reach. 89 and 101 registrations were captured for the Walebing and Gingin forums respectively.

4.2 Monitoring and Evaluation data collected

WALRC and MLA established a minimum target of 30 registrations per event, with a stretch target of 80 registrations. Both events exceeded the stretch target, with 89 registrations recorded for the Walebing event and 101 registrations for the Gingin event. Registration data was collected through MLA's Customer Voice e-Form system, as well as directly by the WALRC Executive Officer via phone and email.

WALRC and MLA established an 80% completion rate for the completion of post-event survey forms. We received a 52% completion rate for Walebing and 43% for Gingin. While the number of formal post-event survey responses fell below the target, valuable feedback was continuously gathered through in-person conversations that extended well beyond the formal sessions. Meaningful discussions, idea sharing, and networking occurred not only during scheduled breaks but also well into the hours following the event. These informal interactions provided rich, on-the-ground insights that, in many cases, offered equal or greater value than what is typically captured through formal feedback mechanisms. As such, we believe the event successfully facilitated a strong exchange of ideas and perspectives among attendees.

Some of the key themes discussed and received from producers via face-to-face feedback and discussions were:

- Crop grazing guidelines for sheep
- Feedlotting and confinement feeding information and know how
- Lamb losses and repro
- How to talk to processors in the sheep industry
- Feedbase and pasture species for finishing cattle
- Feedbase options for sheep
- Wool removal technology
- Use of virtual fencing

4.3 Attendee Feedback

Post-event surveys included both qualitative and quantitative data. The data supports anecdotal evidence of the success of the forums. Survey data is summarised in table 2 below:

Table 2: Quantitative data collected from post-event surveys for the Livestock Matters 2025 series

Event	Walebing – 24 th July 2025	Gingin – 25 th July 2025
Registrations	89	101
No. of responses	46 (51.7% of attendees)	43 (42.6% of attendees)
Average satisfaction (1-10)	8.9/10	8.8/10
Did you learn anything new? Yes (of those that answered this question)*	98%	98%
Do you plan to make changes to your business? Yes (of those that answered this question)*	52%	71%

* There were several people who did not complete the second page of the printed survey. It is not clear if they didn't realise there was a second page.

The qualitative data collected for priority setting has been shared with MLA and will be used for WALRC discussions.

4.4 Post-event review meeting

The WALRC Committee of Management (COM) met on the 9th of September 2025 to review the event in detail, including:

- Successes from the event
- Opportunities and considerations for future events
- Financial summary of the event including budget vs. actual spend
- Forum feedback including future priorities received from attendees

4.5 Post-event financial reconciliation

Total funds received: \$35,000.00

Planned expenses: \$29,504.82

Actual expenses: \$39,231.94

The final financial reconciliation indicates a budget variance of \$4,231.94 between planned and actual event expenses. This overspend is attributed to four key areas; audiovisual requirements, catering adjustments, additional advertising and changes to the coffee van arrangements. Each of these key areas is detailed further below, outlining the reasons for additional costs and the decisions made to support the increase in spend and the overall success of the events. This is detailed further in table 3 within section 4.5.5.

WALRC are happy to absorb the additional spend as this supported extra attendees at both forums, further enhancing the consultation conversation.

4.5.1 Catering

Based on initial registration numbers, catering was originally capped at 70 people per forum.

- Walebing based on 70 people @ \$ 65.00 + GST / person = \$4,550.00
- Gingin initially based on 70 people @ \$68.00 + GST / person = \$4,760.00

Final numbers were due to be confirmed 2 weeks prior to the event dates, however in the weeks and days leading up to Livestock Matters, numbers for both events were increasing exponentially. It was agreed to cap the numbers at the 100 for Gingin and 90 for Walebing so the caterers could plan their final order and WALRC could be assured that catering would cover attendee final numbers. During the Walebing event, registrations were still coming in for Gingin, so numbers were again increased to 110 to ensure we covered catering for all attending.

- Final paid was for 90 people @ \$65.00 + GST / person = \$6,435.00
- Final paid was for 110 people @ \$68.00 + GST / per person = 8,228.00

Upon reflection, there was a significant amount of food left over. In hindsight, the original catering estimate for 70 people would have been sufficient, as the catering company provided very generous portion sizes. While the final catering numbers closely aligned with actual attendance, the volume of food per person exceeded expectations. This outcome was difficult to anticipate and could not have been known in advance.

4.5.2 AV Equipment

The Livestock Matters planning committee initially agreed to provide audiovisual (AV) equipment, specifically a projector and screen, at the Walebing event only, with Gingin intended to be a more casual gathering without AV. However, two key factors led to a change in this plan. First, Andrew Whitelaw and all presenting researchers contacted the WALRC Executive Officer to advise that their presentations relied heavily on slides containing data and graphs, and that the absence of AV would significantly reduce the effectiveness and impact of their delivery.

Second, as registrations for Gingin continued to increase, it became clear that the event would exceed initial expectations and surpass Walebing in size. In response, it was agreed, one week prior to the event, to include AV in the setup to support the delivery of high-quality presentations. This adjustment was made to ensure the success of the day and meet audience expectations. The inclusion of AV at Gingin resulted in a higher cost, however to reduce the impact on the overall budget, it was agreed to take off the AV Tech Crew from Walebing and have AV ran by the WALRC Executive Officer for both events. The WALRC EO met the AV company on site at both locations the day prior to Livestock Matters commencing to run through the set up and trouble-shoot to ensure a smooth delivery of tech was achieved.

4.5.3 Coffee Van

The Gingin location had very limited access to power, making it unsuitable for a traditional tea and coffee station. To accommodate this, a coffee van was booked for a fee of \$440, which included travel and coffee service prior to the first presentation. Following this arrangement, the Walebing hosts requested the same coffee van setup for their event, emphasising the importance of maintaining their reputation among industry peers. They also selected their preferred catering provider to ensure the highest quality food was served on their property. As a result, an additional

day was added to the coffee van booking, with a matching fee of \$440 to align with the agreement at Gingin. WALRC committed to covering the full coffee costs at Walebing, accepting that this would impact the overall event budget. To ensure consistency and equity across both events, the same approach was then applied at Gingin.

4.5.4 Rural Press

The initial marketing plan included two advertisements in The Farm Weekly. However, when registration numbers remained lower than expected, an additional promotional push was deemed necessary. The Countryman offered a significantly reduced advertising rate, from \$3,000 to \$1,100, due to a last-minute opportunity to fill a page. Given the need to boost visibility, the offer was accepted and an ad was placed. Some attendees confirmed within the registration questions that they had seen the event advertised in The Countryman, indicating that the additional spend was a worthwhile and effective investment in increasing event awareness and attendance.

4.5.5 Financial summary

Although the total spend exceeded the budget by \$4,231.94, WALRC is proud of the quality and impact of the two events delivered, particularly given the constraints of a reduced budget compared to previous years. Both events were professionally executed, well-organised, and ran smoothly from start to finish. The provision of AV at both events, high-quality catering and coffee contributed to a positive experience for attendees, and the events were very well received. WALRC considers the overspend a worthwhile investment that directly contributed to the overall success, reputation, and effectiveness of the forums.

Table 3: Planned vs. actual event expenses for Livestock Matters 2025

Expense Category	Planned	Actual	Comment
Total	\$29,504.82	\$39,231.94	\$4,231.94 over total project budget
Toilet hire	\$2,175.06	\$2,175.06	
Equipment hire including set up, pack up, 2 event support staff	\$4,006.50	\$4,006.50	
AV Hire including set up, pack up	\$2,701.60	\$5,695.25	See section 4.5.2
Catering	\$10,241.00	\$14,663.00	See section 4.5.1
Presenter fees & travel	\$6,381.47	\$6,381.47	Pat Hutchinson: \$3,282.18 Andrew Whitelaw: \$3,099.29
Rural press advertising	\$2,067.12	\$3,167.12	See section 4.5.4
Coffee van	\$880.00	\$2,244.00	See section 4.5.3
Youtube videographer	\$550.00	\$550.00	Booked at the request of the host, Deb Dowden.
Printing/event supplies	\$202.07	\$202.07	
Thank you gifts for hosts	\$300.00	\$147.47	

4.6 Media Coverage

Livestock Matters 2025 received positive media coverage across The Farm Weekly, The Countryman, Twitter and Youtube, highlighting strong community engagement and the overall success of both

events. Featured articles showcased key moments, highlighted content and relevant industry topics, are included in appendix 7.4.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Key findings

- Strong engagement in both attendance and engagement demonstrates high interest and relevance of the project to industry stakeholders.
- Feedback indicates that the project successfully identified key knowledge priorities and potential research directions that align with the industry's practical needs.
- Several attendees noted gaps in current knowledge, indicating that certain areas of research require deeper exploration to meet industry needs.
- Translating research findings into practical on-farm or operational practices remains a barrier for some producers, suggesting a need for clearer guidance or demonstration projects.
- Limited awareness or accessibility of existing resources and tools may reduce the uptake of new insights, highlighting a challenge in extension and communication.

5.2 Benefits to industry

The forum delivered significant benefits to the red meat industry by increasing participant knowledge and awareness of key issues and emerging opportunities. With 98% of respondents indicating they learned something new, the event demonstrated strong value in knowledge transfer and industry engagement. The feedback collected has also provided clear direction on priority areas for future research, development, and extension, ensuring that investment is aligned with the needs of producers and advisors. In addition, the forum facilitated valuable networking and collaboration opportunities, strengthening connections across the supply chain and supporting ongoing information sharing. The insights generated through both survey responses and forum discussions will support more informed decision-making contributing to improved productivity, resilience, and long-term sustainability within the sector.

6. Future research and recommendations

A key success of the project was the strong level of both attendance and engagement from industry participants, with 89 completed surveys (across both forums) providing valuable feedback on current knowledge gaps, emerging issues and future research priority suggestions. Feedback collected indicates the agenda meets the needs of participants.

WALRC and MLA established an 80% completion rate for the completion of post-event survey forms. While the number of formal post-event survey responses fell below the target (52% and 43% for Walebing and Gingin respectively), valuable feedback was continuously gathered through in-person conversations that extended well beyond the formal sessions. Meaningful discussions, idea sharing, and networking occurred not only during scheduled breaks but also well into the hours following the event. These informal interactions provided rich, on-the-ground insights that, in many cases, offered equal or greater value than what is typically captured through formal feedback mechanisms. As such, we believe the event successfully facilitated a strong exchange of ideas and perspectives among attendees.

WALRC will utilise feedback collected to further improve development and delivery of adoption events in WA. Future investment in these forums is beneficial for WALRC to consult with wider industry, engaging producers that may not be members, but are engaged with research and development in the regions.

7. Appendix

7.1 Final Livestock Matters Program – Walebing

7.2 Final Livestock Mattera Program – Gingin

7.3 Post event survey results

7.4 Media Coverage