



Final Report

WALRC Livestock Matters Forum 2026

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Abstract

The purpose of Livestock Matters is to directly and indirectly answer the question ‘what are the barriers to increasing productivity on your farm?’ and to take the answers received through conversations held during the forums and given within the post event feedback surveys, to help form the next round of MLA funded research priorities.

The purpose of Livestock Matters is to:

1. Keep WALRC and MLA at the forefront of red meat producers' minds as a trusted source of production support;
2. Ensure that through this relationship there is a quality two-way communication flow between researcher, funder and farmer that delivers a set of priorities that represent genuine and thorough consultation;
3. Deliver a spirit of optimism to the livestock sector, particularly during times of crisis-in-confidence brought on by cessation of live exports and a continuing series of dry seasons. Only when there is a spirit of optimism are producers inclined to participate, engage and adopt.

Executive summary

Background

Livestock Matters is a free, on-farm extension initiative built around the guiding question, 'what are the barriers to increasing productivity on your farm?', engaging producers to surface practical constraints and opportunities directly from their experience. These insights, gathered through forum discussions and post-event surveys, are used by WALRC and MLA to inform trusted two-way communication and to develop and finalise the next round of MLA-funded R&D priorities, while also strengthening industry engagement, fostering optimism, and supporting participation, adoption and resilience during challenging periods.

Objectives

All objectives were achieved. The project successfully delivered a sheep-focused forum in the Great Southern region, exceeding attendance targets with over 130 participants. All promotional, delivery, and evaluation objectives were achieved, with strong engagement reflected in 85 completed post-event surveys.

Methodology

The program was developed through a structured planning and consultation process, beginning with 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 targets and resulting in a minor budget variance of \$710 due to increased participation. Post-event review processes identified key successes, areas for improvement, and industry priorities to inform future investment and submissions to MLA.

Benefits to industry

The forum delivered strong industry benefits through effective knowledge transfer and engagement, with 96.5% of participants reporting they learned something new. It also identified clear priorities for future research and strengthened industry collaboration, supporting improved decision-making and long-term sector sustainability.

Future research and recommendations

High levels of attendance and engagement provided clear direction on industry research priorities and reinforced the importance of effective extension. While key 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 improved adoption pathways. WALRC will submit prioritised recommendations to MLA based on combined insights from recent forums.

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1. Background

1.1 Purpose and description

Livestock Matters is the name given to a style of extension and communication that is synonymous with WALRC events. These forums are staged on-farm and free of charge to attendees (to ensure no pricing/registration barrier) and content is exclusively designed to answer the question asked to host farmers – ‘what are the barriers to increasing productivity on your farm?’

The process of answering this question is the single best way to give clarity to priorities around current and future research. WALRC will draw on input from their tier 1 members to develop a program relevant to the host and farms in the region. The purpose of Livestock Matters is three-fold. These events are designed to:

- Keep WALRC and MLA at the forefront of red meat producers’ minds as a trusted source of production support;
- Ensure that through this relationship, there is a quality two-way communication flow between researcher, funder and farmer that delivers a set of priorities that represent genuine and thorough consultation;
- Deliver a spirit of optimism to the livestock sector, particularly during times of crisis-in-confidence brought on by cessation of live exports and a continuing series of dry seasons. Only when there is a spirit of optimism are producers inclined to participate, engage and adopt.

2. Objectives

Objective:	Outcome:
Organise and deliver one event focused on sheep production in the Great Southern region.	Delivered. Sheep focused forum was held on March 18 2026 at Moojepin Merinos, Coyrecup, WA
Promote the event through various channels, including WALRC social media/newsletters, other relevant regional networks, and MLA channels, aiming for a minimum of 40 registrations for the event, with a stretch target of 80 registrations.	Delivered. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Event flyer created - Event program created - Event promoted via WALRC newsletter - Event promoted via WALRC social media channels (X & LinkedIn) - Event promoted in Farm Weekly with 2 marketing adverts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Both minimum and stretch target of registrations were achieved with a total of 127 registrations recorded via MLA’s customer voice e-form system. More attendees arrived on the day who had not formally registered seeing over 130 people attend the forum.
Conduct monitoring, evaluation and reporting activities in line with the MLA adoption and MER framework for the event, targeting 80% completion rate for post event evaluations.	Delivered. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Registration process completed electronically via MLA’s customer voice e-form system.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Customer voice link used on all event promotional material including flyer, program and marketing ads. - Collaboration between WALRC and MLA to create post event evaluation questions in line with MLA MER - 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. - A total of 85 surveys were completed and collected.
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3. Methodology

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 Moojepin provided on-ground context to further inform program content and relevance.

Feedback was subsequently collected through post-event surveys distributed to attendees, with a total of 85 responses received. 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 Post-Event Financial Reconciliation

The final financial reconciliation indicates a modest budget variance of \$710 over the original forecast. This increase was directly attributable to higher-than-anticipated attendance, with over 130 participants attending compared to the projected 80. To accommodate this growth, additional expenditure was required for catering, amenities (including toilets), and event equipment such as seating. Despite the increased costs, the strong attendance represents a positive outcome for the event, and the final financial position is considered satisfactory given the scale of engagement achieved.

4.2 Post-Event Review Meeting

The WALRC Committee of Management met on Thursday 2nd April to review the event in detail, including:

- what worked
- what didn't work
- how future forums could be improved
- the financial summary of the event including budget versus actual spend
- forum feedback including future priorities, received from attendees

The committee met again on 10th April, to discuss and review the current list of priorities to be put forward, including those collected at the Livestock Matters forum, with the aim to agree on the top priorities to be submitted to MLA later in the month.

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 96.5% 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 85 completed surveys providing valuable feedback on current knowledge gaps, emerging issues and future research priority suggestions.

The high proportion of attendees who reported learning something new demonstrates the value of the forum as an effective extension and knowledge-transfer activity.

The project also successfully created a platform for producers, advisors and industry stakeholders to collaborate and share practical experiences and identify areas where additional support is needed. This direct industry input provides a strong foundation for future investment by ensuring that research and development priorities remain aligned with industry needs.

A key challenge identified was the ongoing gap between research outcomes and practical adoption at the producer level. Several attendees highlighted the need for more accessible extension resources, clearer communication of findings, and practical demonstrations that translate research into on-farm application.

Our recommendation from this forum is that future investment should focus not only on generating new research and knowledge in the key priority areas that WALRC will submit to MLA as part of the priority setting process, but also on improving adoption pathways.

The WALRC committee met on April 10th to review the full list of suggestions for future research priorities, as well as the gaps identified in adoption and extension with the aim to prioritise them in order of importance and impact. Drawing on the submissions and discussions from 3 Livestock Matters forums held this financial year, the committee will then submit their top recommendations for future project funding priorities that addresses critical knowledge gaps and aligns with industry needs.

7. Appendix

7.1 Final Livestock Matters Program

7.2 Final Registration List

7.3 Post Event Survey Results

7.4 Media Coverage