MEAT & LIVESTOCK AUSTRALIA





State of the industry report

Exploring the economic impact and landscape of the Australian red meat and livestock industry using comprehensive data from 2025

The *State of the Industry Report* provides a comprehensive snapshot of the red meat and livestock industry in 2025. Data from that period is used to assess the Australian red meat and livestock industry's performance and measure its contribution to the wider economy. Commentary throughout this document, including the executive summary, is largely based on the industry landscape in 2025.

For timeliness, MLA has provided a number of snapshots on key issues and topics relevant to the current environment, from page 27.





Contents

2 **Executive summary**

3 **The operating environment**

4 **Industry overview**

- 4 Production of livestock
- 5 Consumption of red meat
- 6 Key export and import players

7 **The economic importance of the Australian red meat and livestock industry**

- 7 Industry turnover
- 9 Industry value add
- 11 Employment
- 14 Number of businesses
- 15 Exports

17 **Species statistics and performance**

- 17 Beef cattle
- 21 Sheep
- 25 Goats

27 **Key issues snapshots**

36 **Glossary and key terms**

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Executive summary

In 2025, Australia's red meat and livestock industry strengthened its contribution to the national economy. Despite rising input costs and variable on-farm conditions, positive market fundamentals continued to support producers. While financial performance improved through the recovery in livestock prices and favourable global supply conditions for Australian red meat, profitability remained constrained by input cost volatility, seasonal variability and changing market access conditions that extended into 2026.

Seasonal conditions in 2025 were mixed, with a clear divide between northern and southern Australia. In general, northern Australia experienced excellent conditions, while southern Australia faced challenging seasonal impacts. Given the prominence of sheep farming enterprises in southern regions, dry conditions significantly affected domestic sheep supply.

Southern livestock producers continued to rely on supplementary feeding and, in some cases, trucking in water to maintain animal wellbeing. The additional feeding and water requirements significantly increased operating costs and contributed to supply volatility across southern production systems. As a result, many businesses were forced to reduce stock numbers or liquidate despite improving market conditions.

Lamb and mutton production began to ease from the record highs of the previous two years, as a smaller national flock limited the scale of turn-off. National lamb slaughter fell, and total sheepmeat production declined year-on-year. Despite lower production, sheep and lamb prices recovered strongly, lifting average sheep farm cash income, although returns across sheep-producing businesses remained mixed due to ongoing cost pressures and seasonal conditions.

Cattle turn-off reached new heights during the year, and feedlot capacity hit a record 1.8 million head in the June 2026 quarter amid continued investment. Cattle prices strengthened further, with saleyard indicators lifting between 23% and 29% year-on-year. This contributed to average beef farm cash income rising 80.9% to $140,000 in 2024-25, while average business profit across Australian beef farms reached $13,340.

Overall, turnover across the red meat and livestock industry rose 24.5% to $99.9 billion in 2024–25, while industry value add increased 20.1% to $19.5 billion, reflecting strong global demand for Australian red meat.

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The shift from cattle herd rebuilding to elevated turn-off shaped much of the year's market dynamics. The Australian cattle herd eased 2.2% to 29.7 million head as of 30 June 2025, while the national sheep flock fell 8% to 66 million head, the smallest flock on record. Female slaughter accounted for 53.1% of adult cattle slaughter during the year, reflecting changing producer behaviour as favourable prices encouraged higher rates of turn-off.

Global supply conditions continued to shift in Australia's favour throughout 2025. Tight domestic red meat supply in the United States drove increased demand for imported beef and lamb, with the US becoming Australia's largest export market for both proteins by volume during the year despite the imposition of new tariffs on Australian product. Australia remained the world's second-largest beef exporter behind Brazil and retained its position as the largest exporter of both sheepmeat and goatmeat globally. Beef export value rose 33.3% to $18.7 billion, while total red meat and livestock exports reached a record $28.3 billion in the 2025 calendar year, up 27.0% on 2024.

Market access challenges also emerged during the year. In April 2025, the United States announced a range of tariffs on trading partners, including a 10% tariff on Australian imports, including red meat, although beef was later exempted in November 2025. US tariffs continue to affect sheepmeat and goatmeat and, as of October 2026, stand at 12.5%. In 2026, China introduced safeguard tariff measures on beef imports, including Australian beef, while Korea's safeguard tariff was also triggered in record time. Despite these developments, the United States, China and Korea remained key export destinations for Australian red meat. Ongoing conflict in Iran also affected market access in the Middle East, a key region for Australian sheepmeat and goatmeat. Continued access to more than 100 export markets, supported by free trade agreements, helped the industry manage these challenges and redirect product to alternative markets, reinforcing the resilience of Australian red meat trade.

The Australian goatmeat industry set new benchmarks once again. Goat slaughter reached a record 4 million head, up 19.3% year-on-year and 111% above the five-year average, while goatmeat production increased 17% to 63,700 tonnes carcase weight and exports rose 20% to 61,800 tonnes shipped weight. The United States remained the largest destination for Australian goatmeat, followed by South Korea and Mainland China, underscoring the sector's growing importance to Australia's red meat exports.

Operating environment

Australia is a key exporter in global red meat markets

In 2025, Australia was the second largest beef exporter after Brazil *(Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), Trade Data Monitor (TDM)).*

Australia was the world's largest sheepmeat exporter in 2025 ahead of New Zealand, the United Kingdom (UK) and Kazakhstan *(DAFF, TDM)*.

Australia was the world's largest goatmeat exporter in 2025, ahead of Kenya, Ethiopia and Tanzania *(DAFF, TDM)*.

In 2025, Australia exported 792,087 live cattle and 334,491 live sheep *(DAFF)*.

Australia holds a relatively small share of the global cattle and sheep inventory

Australia held around 1.8% of the global cattle herd in 2024 *(Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO))*.

Australia held around 4.6% of the global sheep flock in 2024 *(ABS, FAO)*.

Global meat consumption is increasing

Over the past 20 years, total global consumption of meat has been steadily increasing at an average annual rate of 0.6% for beef, 1.5% for sheepmeat, 1.3% for pork and 2.6% for poultry meat *(Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD))*.

Australia's per capita beef and sheepmeat consumption continues to be one of the highest in the world[1]

Australian per capita consumption of beef was approximately 21.9kg in 2025, while the global average was 5.9kg *(ABS, DAFF, OECD-FAO)*.

Australian per capita consumption of sheepmeat was approximately 6.5kg in 2025, while the global average was 1.3kg *(ABS, DAFF, OECD-FAO)*.

1 Domestic meat consumption is measured by removing the portion of exports (DAFF data) from total production (ABS data) and assuming the difference is consumed (or at least disappears) domestically. Imports are also added to domestic consumption when present. Per capita consumption is calculated by dividing domestic consumption by ABS population data. Please note, domestic per capita consumption is entirely a supply statistic and does not take account of waste or non-food uses of livestock meat products..

Industry overview

Production of livestock

Global and domestic herd and flock size

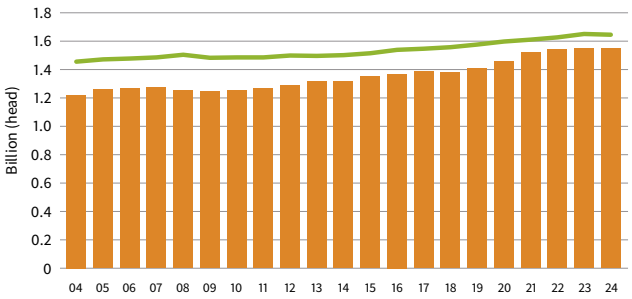
- The global cattle herd was 1.6 billion head in 2024 **(Figure 1)** *(FAO)*.
- The global sheep flock was 1.5 billion head in 2024 **(Figure 1)** *(FAO)*.
- Australia accounts for a small proportion of the world's herd and flock – approximately 1.8% of the global cattle herd and 4.6% of the global sheep flock *(ABS, FAO)*.
- Australia's cattle herd was 29.7 million head and the sheep flock was 65.8 million head as of 30 June 2025 **(Figures 2 and 3)** *(ABS, MLA)*.

Production

- Global beef and veal production was 76.2 million tonnes carcase weight (cwt) in 2024 **(Figure 4)** *(FAO)*.
- Global sheepmeat production was 19.3 million tonnes cwt in 2024 **(Figure 4)** *(FAO)*.
- Australia accounted for approximately 3% of global beef production and around 5% of global sheepmeat production in 2024 *(ABS, FAO)*.
- Australia produced 2.9 million tonnes cwt of beef and veal, and 855,825 tonnes cwt of lamb and mutton in 2025 *(ABS)*.

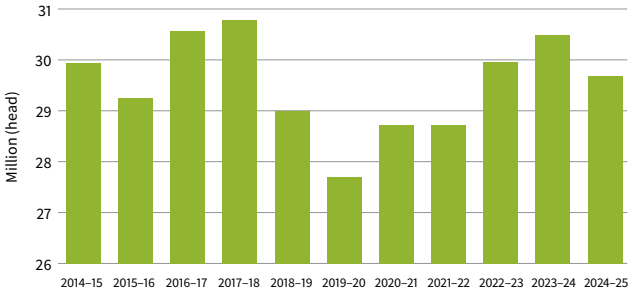


Figure 1: Global cattle herd and sheep flock (2004–2024)



Source: FAOSTAT

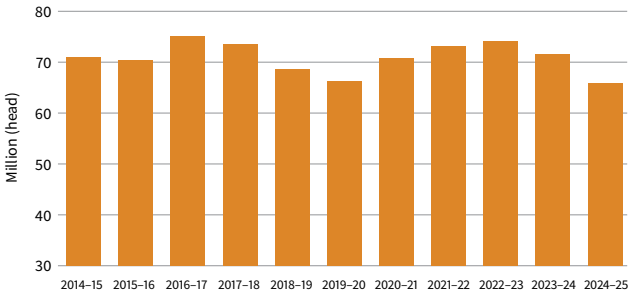
Figure 2: Australian cattle herd (2014–15 to 2024–25)



Source: ABS

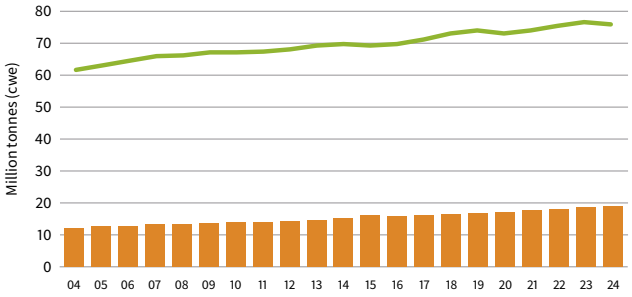
Note: Data is using ABS experimental figures.

Figure 3: Australian sheep flock (2014–15 to 2024–25)



Source: ABS, MLA estimate

Figure 4: Global beef and sheepmeat production (2004–2024)



Source: OECD-FAO

Consumption of red meat

Global consumption

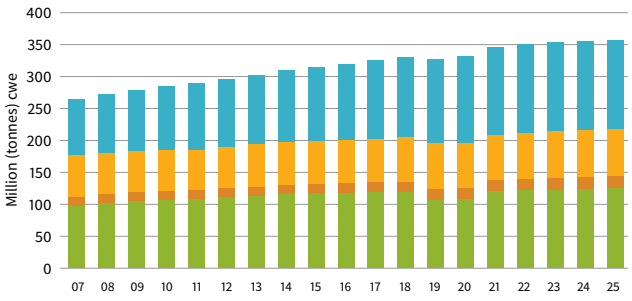
- Over the past 20 years, global consumption of meat has been steadily increasing. In 2025, 361 million tonnes of meat were consumed globally **(Figure 5)** *(OECD)*.
- Total global consumption increased at an average annual rate of 0.6% for beef and veal, 1.5% for sheepmeat, and 1.5% for pork in 2024. Chicken grew 2.6% on average between 2006 and 2025 *(OECD-FAO)*.
- In 2025, sheepmeat accounted for 4.8% of total global meat consumption (excluding seafood), while beef and veal accounted for 21%. Poultry and pork accounted for 40% and 35%, respectively *(OECD-FAO)*.

Domestic consumption

- According to the ABS consumer price index (CPI) data, retail lamb and goat prices have risen by 11.3% in the 12 months to 30 June 2025. Similarly, over the same period, retail beef prices were up 2.1%. In contrast, poultry and pork prices moved by 1.9% and 3.6% respectively in the 2025 financial year.
- Australia remains one of the world's largest consumers of beef, ranked third behind Argentina and the US, with per capita consumption in 2025 averaging 21.9kg[1]. Despite the gradual decrease in Australia's per capita consumption of red meat over the past two decades, consumption has remained stable over the past five years **(Figure 6)** *(ABS, DAFF, OECD-FAO)*.

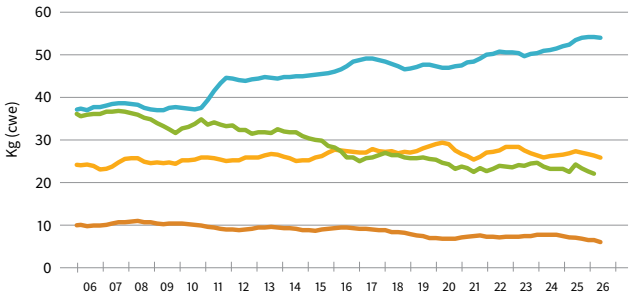
  Note: 92% of Australian households purchased beef and 72% bought lamb in the past year *(NielsenIQ)*[2].
- Australia continues to be one of the largest per capita consumers of sheepmeat in the world. However, the retail price for lamb has increased since the 2024 financial year, reducing domestic lamb consumption. According to the OECD, Australia was the largest sheepmeat consumer on a per capita basis in 2025 followed by Kazakhstan, Türkiye, Israel, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Mainland China and the UK *(OECD-FAO)*.
- Australia's per capita consumption of lamb has eased, averaging 6.9kg between 2022 and 2025 *(ABS, DAFF)*.
- Consumer preferences toward lamb, combined with increased demand from export markets for quality sheepmeat, has resulted in most of Australia's mutton being exported.
- In 2025, more Australians claim to be increasing their red meat intake at 24%, up from 18% in 2024. The proportion of 'increasers' has grown sharply since 2021 **(Figure 7)** *(MLA Community Sentiment Research)*.

Figure 5: Total global meat consumption (2007–2025)



Source: OECD-FAO

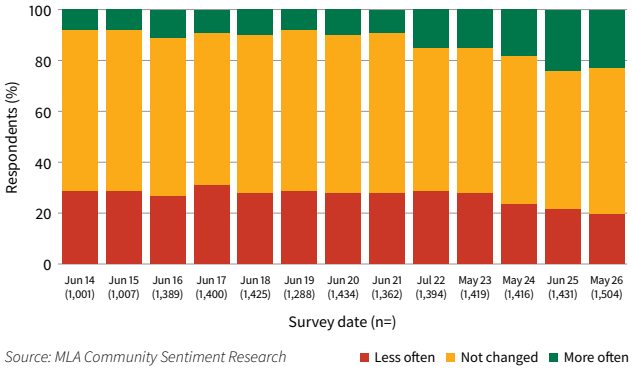
Figure 6: Australian per capita meat consumption (2006–2026)



Source: ABS, DAFF, MLA calculations

Note: Rolling 12-month average per capita consumption kg/head.

Figure 7: Australian red meat consumption patterns (2014–2026)



Source: MLA Community Sentiment Research



2 Meat & Livestock Australia's calculation is based in part on data reported by NielsenIQ through Homescan Service for the Fresh Meat category for the 52-week period ending 30/06/2025, for the Total Australia Grocery, according to the client defined product hierarchy. Copyright © 2026, Nielsen Consumer LLC.

Key export and import players

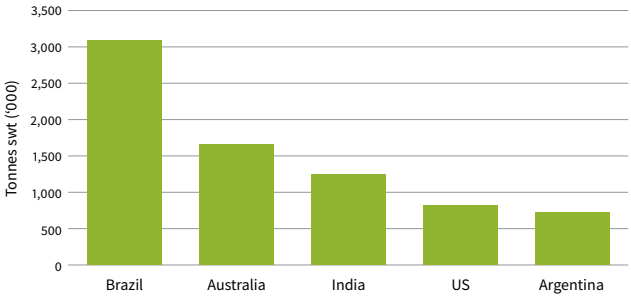
Exports

- Australia was the second largest beef and bovine meat exporter in 2025, after Brazil and ahead of India and the US **(Figure 8)** *(TDM)*.
- In 2025, Australia was the world's largest sheepmeat exporter, followed by New Zealand **(Figure 9)** *(TDM)*.
- Australia was also the world's largest goatmeat exporter in 2025 **(Figure 10)** *(TDM)*.

Imports

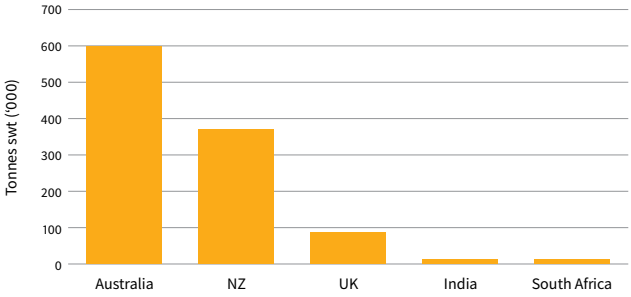
- In 2025, Mainland China held its position as the world's largest importer of beef and veal in volume terms, followed by the US and Japan **(Figure 11)** *(TDM)*.
- Mainland China was also the largest importer of sheepmeat in 2025, followed by the EU and the US **(Figure 12)** *(TDM)*.
- United Arab Emirates was the largest importer of goatmeat in 2025, followed by the US and South Korea **(Figure 13)** *(TDM)*.

Figure 8: Top five beef and bovine exporting countries (2025)



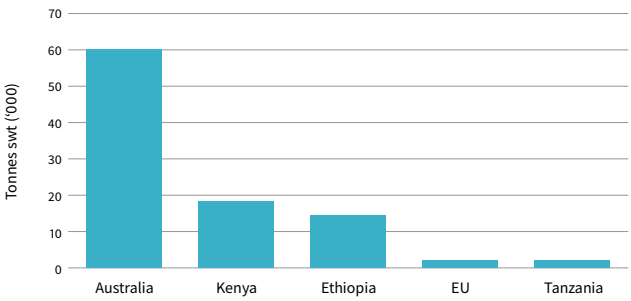
Source: TDM

Figure 9: Top five sheepmeat exporting countries (2025)



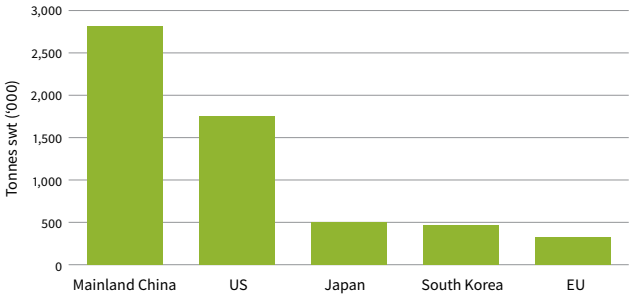
Source: TDM

Figure 10: Top five goatmeat exporting countries (2025)



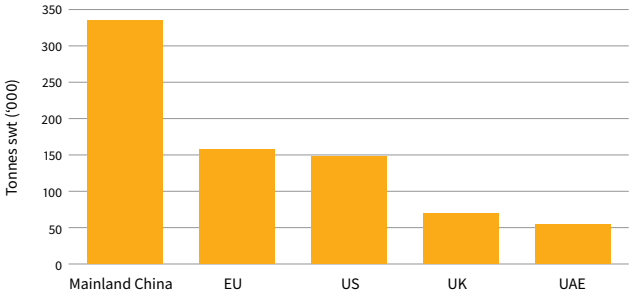
Source: TDM

Figure 11: Top five beef and bovine importing countries (2025)



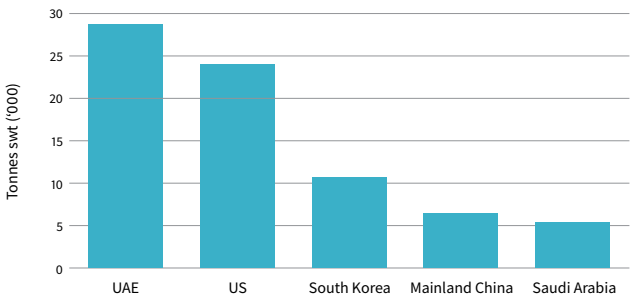
Source: TDM

Figure 12: Top five sheepmeat importing countries (2025)



Source: TDM

Figure 13: Top five goatmeat importing countries (2025)



Source: TDM

The economic importance of the Australian red meat and livestock industry

Industry turnover

Industry turnover is defined as income generated by businesses within the industry from the sales of goods and services.

In 2024–25, Australia's red meat and livestock industry turnover was $99.9 billion. This is a 24.5% increase on revised 2023–24 figures, and 10.3% higher than 2019–20 figures *(ABARES, IBISWorld)*.

Trends over time

- Red meat and livestock industry turnover increased by 24.5% from 2023–24 to 2024–25. A recovery in livestock prices and firm processing throughput lifted turnover across most sub-sectors, with retailing the only sector to ease.
- Beef cattle farming turnover lifted 40.6% year-on-year, supported by a rebound in cattle prices. Sheep farming turnover increased by 17.3% year-on-year also on the back of firmer sheep and lamb prices.
- Feedlot turnover increased 45.4%, rebounding from two consecutive years of decline. Feeder cattle prices strengthened over the year and throughput remained elevated.
- The processing sector continued to grow, with turnover up 23.4%, supported by higher throughput and improved margins. Turnover in the domestic sector (wholesaling and retailing) was mixed, with wholesaling turnover broadly steady (+0.2%) while retailing eased by 2.7%.

Composition by sub-sector

- In 2024–25, red meat and livestock production (beef cattle, sheep farming and feedlots) accounted for 49.4% or $49.4 billion of overall industry turnover, followed by processing (35.9%, or $35.8 billion) and wholesale and retail sales (14.7%, or $14.7 billion) **(Figure 15)** *(EY, IBISWorld, ABS)*.

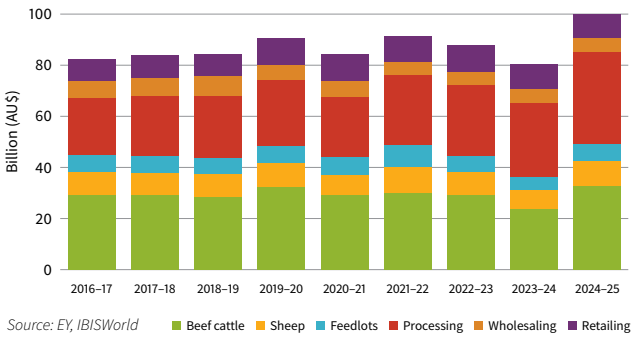
By state

- NSW, Victoria and Queensland accounted for more than 74.2% of red meat and livestock industry turnover in 2024–25, followed by WA (14.3%) and SA (7.2%) **(Figure 16)** *(EY, IBISWorld, ABS)*.

Comparison to other industries

- The red meat and livestock industry's turnover totalled $99.9 billion in 2024–25, accounting for approximately 1.9% of Australia's total key industry turnover which includes 'wholesale trade', 'construction' and 'mining'.
- In comparison to other industries, the red meat and livestock industry remains larger than the 'education and training (private)', 'arts and recreation services' and 'public administration and safety (private)' industries. However, it is smaller than the 'information media and telecommunications' industry **(Figure 17)** *(EY, IBISWorld, ABS)*.
- The 'wholesale trade' industry, by turnover, retained its position as the largest in the country in 2024–25, with a turnover almost eight times larger than that of the red meat and livestock industry.

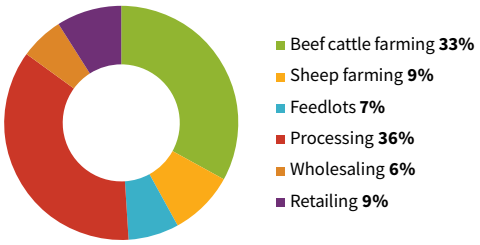
Figure 14: Industry turnover by sub-sector* (2016–17 to 2024–25)



Source: EY, IBISWorld

*The contribution of live exports to industry turnover is represented in beef and sheep farming.
From 2021–22 mixed farming outputs were disaggregated to their respective beef and sheep farming categories.

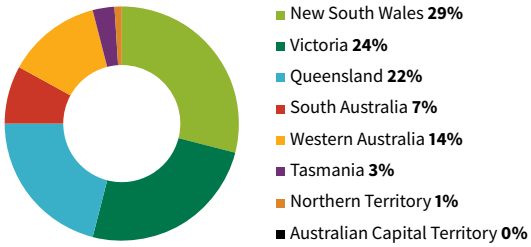
Figure 15: Industry turnover by sub-sector (2024–25)



Source: EY, IBISWorld, ABS

From 2021–22 mixed farming outputs were disaggregated to their respective beef and sheep farming categories.

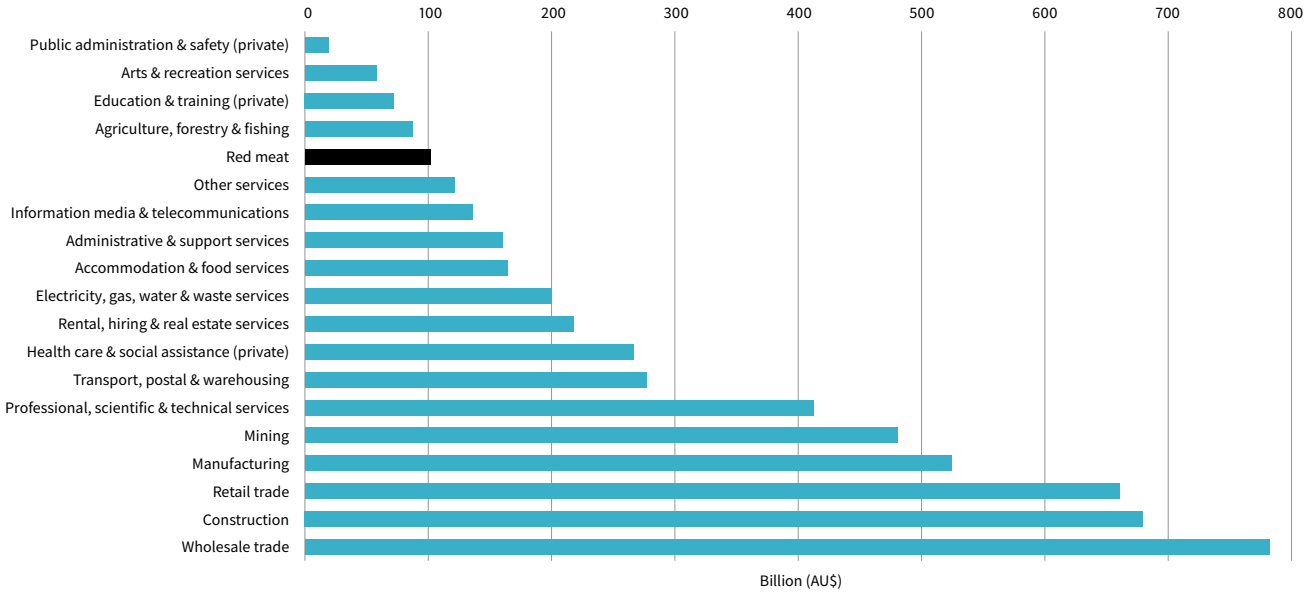
Figure 16: Industry turnover by state (2024–25)



Source: EY, IBISWorld, ABS

In 2024–25, red meat and livestock production (beef cattle, sheep farming and feedlots) accounted for 49.4% or $49.4 billion of overall industry turnover.

Figure 17: Industry turnover compared with other industries (2024–25)



Source: EY, IBISWorld, ABS

Note: This only includes direct industry turnover for the defined industries.

Table 1: Industry turnover by sub-sector ($million, 2017–18 to 2024–25)

Revenue (m)	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
Beef cattle farming	29,095	28,824	32,318	29,350	32,057	29,417	23,600	33,183
Sheep farming	9,193	8,482	9,402	7,982	8,232	8,606	7,836	9,190
Feedlots	6,258	6,579	7,047	6,898	8,714	6,521	4,804	6,987
Processing	23,532	24,479	25,505	23,566	27,071	27,656	29,033	35,818
Wholesaling	6,954	7,316	6,041	5,917	5,624	5,512	5,614	5,624
Retailing	8,590	8,539	10,234	10,518	9,724	10,389	9,360	9,105
Total	**83,622**	**84,219**	**90,548**	**84,231**	**91,422**	**88,101**	**80,248**	**99,907**



Industry value add

Industry value add is the overall value of goods and services produced by businesses in an industry (also known as contribution to gross domestic product (GDP)) *(ABARES, IBISWorld)*.

Australia's red meat and livestock industry value add was $19.5 billion in 2024–25, 20.1% higher than 2023–24.

Trends over time

- Australia's red meat and livestock industry value add lifted 20.1% from 2023–24 to 2024–25, driven by a strong rebound in the domestic livestock market in both the cattle and sheep industries as prices recovered.
- During this period, industry value add for the production sector – encompassing beef cattle, sheep and feedlots – increased $3.3 billion or 33.8%.
- The processing, wholesaling and retailing sectors all had value add ease year-on-year, down 0.6%, 2% and 2.2% respectively. Margins came under pressure despite higher turnover for each of these sub-sectors.

Composition by sub-sector

- In 2024–25, the production sector (beef cattle, sheep and feedlots) accounted for 67.6% (or $13.2 billion) of industry value add, followed by processing which accounted for 22.1% (or $4.3 billion) – followed by sales (wholesale and retail) at 10.3% ($2.0 billion) **(Figure 18)** *(EY, IBISWorld, ABS)*.
- The increasing proportion of value add in the production sector was driven by a recovery in livestock prices and improved throughput across the beef and sheep industries.

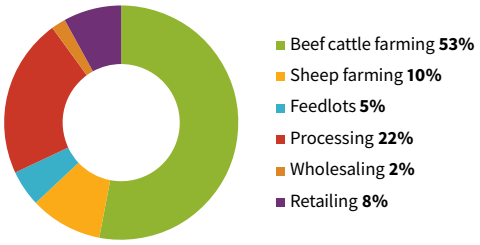
By state

- Queensland, NSW and Victoria accounted for 73.2% or $14.3 billion of industry value add. The largest state in industry value add terms was NSW, with 28.5% ($5.5 billion), followed by Victoria and Queensland with 22.7% and 22.1% respectively ($4.4 billion and $4.3 billion). These were trailed by WA 14.0% ($2.7 billion), SA 7.8% ($1.5 billion), Tasmania 3.6% ($699 million), NT 1.1% ($209 million) and ACT 0.3% ($50 million) **(Figure 19)** *(EY, IBISWorld, ABS)*.

Comparison to other industries

- In 2024–25, value add from the red meat and livestock industry was $19.5 billion, larger than the 'public administration and safety (private)' industry ($9.9 billion) **(Figure 21)** *(EY, IBISWorld, ABS)*.
- The red meat and livestock industry accounted for 1% of Australia's key industry total value add in 2024–25.

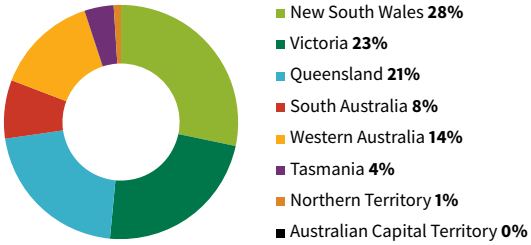
Figure 18: Industry value add by sub-sector (2024–25)



Source: EY, IBISWorld, ABS

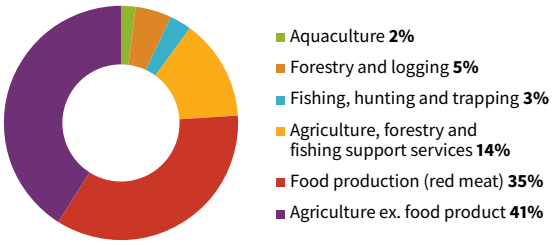
From 2021–22 mixed farming outputs were disaggregated to their respective beef and sheep farming categories.

Figure 19: Industry value add by state (2024–25)



Source: EY, IBISWorld, ABS

Figure 20: Agriculture production industry value add (2024–25)



Source: EY, IBISWorld, ABS



Figure 21: Industry value add compared with other industries (2024–25)

Source: EY, IBISWorld, ABS

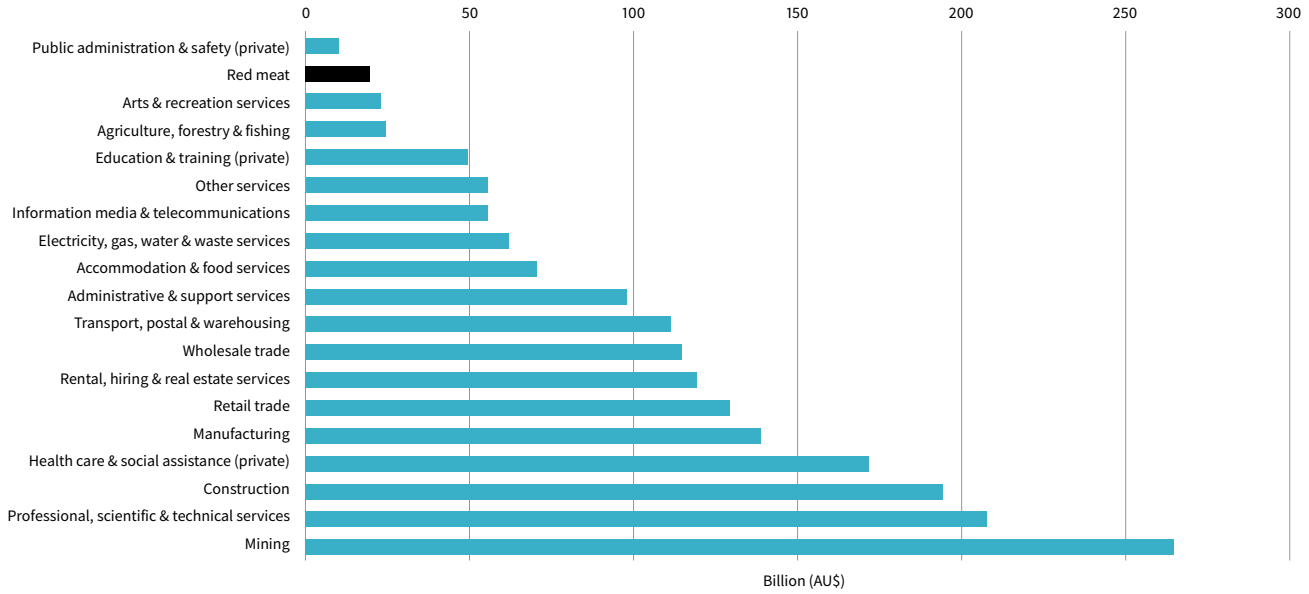
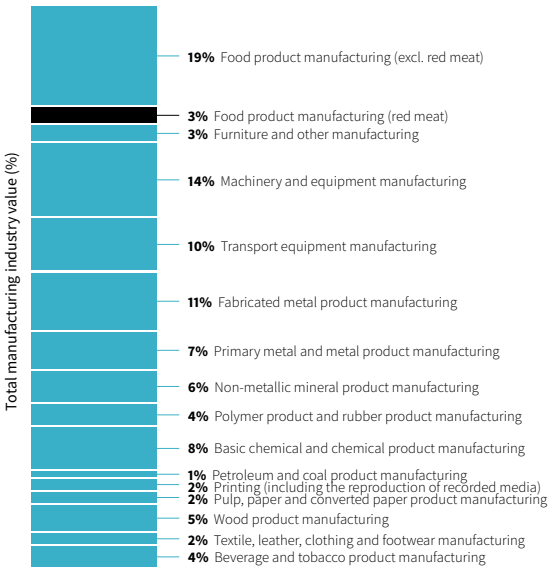


Table 2: Industry value add by sub-sector ($million, 2017–18 to 2024–25)

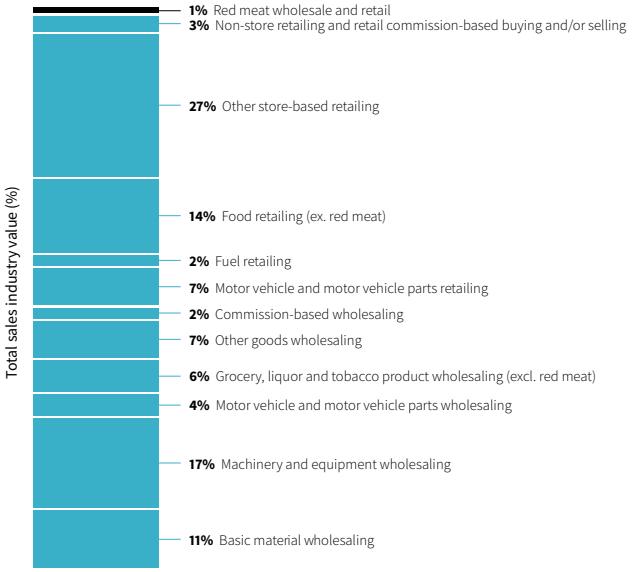
IVA (m)	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
Beef cattle farming	11,394	5,591	4,561	13,246	17,881	14,146	7,554	10,333
Sheep farming	3,046	1,870	2,217	3,729	3,915	3,533	1,640	1,919
Feedlots	957	954	1,036	1,035	1,055	678	644	915
Processing	3,647	3,990	4,081	3,252	3,898	3,927	4,326	4,298
Wholesaling	533	526	489	527	477	474	456	447
Retailing	1,460	1,393	1,672	1,704	1,546	1,703	1,590	1,555
Total	**21,037**	**14,324**	**14,056**	**23,493**	**28,771**	**24,462**	**16,210**	**19,467**

Figure 22: Manufacturing industry value add (2024–25)



Source: EY, IBISWorld, ABS

Figure 23: Sales industry value add (2024–25)



Source: EY, IBISWorld, ABS

Employment

In 2024–25, the Australian red meat and livestock industry employed approximately 432,784 people.

Of these, 196,766 were directly employed in the industry – down 0.2% on a revised 197,167 in 2023–24. The industry was also responsible for the employment of a further 236,018 people in businesses servicing the red meat and livestock industry.

Note: 2021 was the last Census year. Therefore, some employment figures in this section reference 2021 statistics as this is the most recent year of data to make comparisons with.

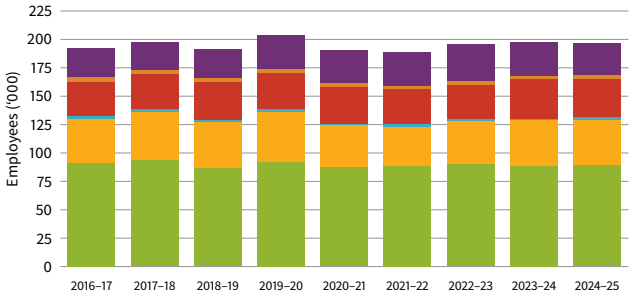
Generation of direct and indirect employment

- The red meat and livestock industry directly employed 196,766 people in 2024–25, 0.2% lower year-on-year, and 3.1% lower than 2019–20 employment levels *(EY, IBISWorld, ABS)*.
- The 2024-25 estimate indicates the industry was responsible for generating indirect employment for 236,018 people in businesses servicing the red meat and livestock industry. These additional jobs included those involved in transporting meat and livestock, activities related to livestock sales (i.e. livestock agents), and employment in providing animal health services and supply of farm inputs, such as fertiliser *(EY, IBISWorld, ABS)*.

Composition by sub-sector

- The production sector (beef cattle, sheep farming and feedlots) accounted for 131,208 jobs in 2024–25, while the processing sector accounted for 34,707. The remainder were in wholesaling and retailing **(Figure 24)** *(EY, IBISWorld, ABS)*.
- Sheep farming employment eased 0.6% year-on-year while beef cattle farming employment lifted 0.5%. Employment in retailing eased 3.9%, while processing (+1.5%) and wholesaling (+1.4%) both grew modestly. The largest movement was a 4.6% fall in feedlot employment.

Figure 24: Direct employment by sub–sector* (2016–17 to 2024–25)



Source: EY, IBISWorld, ABS

*The contribution of live exports to industry turnover is represented in beef, sheep and mixed farming. From 2021–22 mixed farming outputs were disaggregated to their respective beef and sheep farming categories.

Direct employment by state

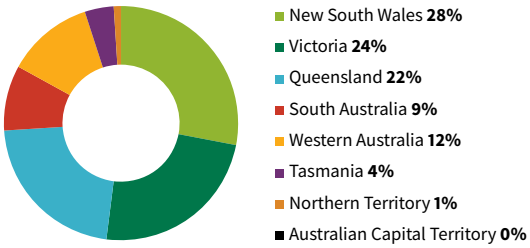
- In 2024–25, NSW continued to have the highest level of direct employment in the red meat and livestock industry at 28.5%, followed by Victoria at 23.8% and Queensland at 21.7% **(Figure 25)** *(EY, IBISWorld, ABS)*.

Employment compared with other industries and total workforce

- Direct employment in the red meat and livestock industry represented approximately 1.5% of Australia's key industry total employment in 2024–25 **(Figure 27)** *(EY, IBISWorld, ABS)*.
- Australia's red meat and livestock production sector (beef cattle, sheep farming and feedlots) accounted for 66.7% of Australia's total direct employment in red meat production in 2024–25. This demonstrates the foundational role the production sector plays in rural and regional communities alongside meat processing **(Figure 24)** *(EY, IBISWorld, ABS)*.

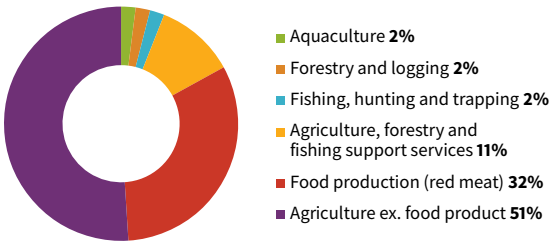
The red meat and livestock production sector accounted for 32% of Australia's total direct employment in agricultural production.

Figure 25: Direct employment by state (2024–25)



Source: EY, IBISWorld, ABS

Figure 26: Agriculture production employment – persons (2024–25)



Source: EY, ABS, IBISWorld

Figure 27: Direct employment compared with other industries (2024–25)

Source: EY, IBISWorld, ABS

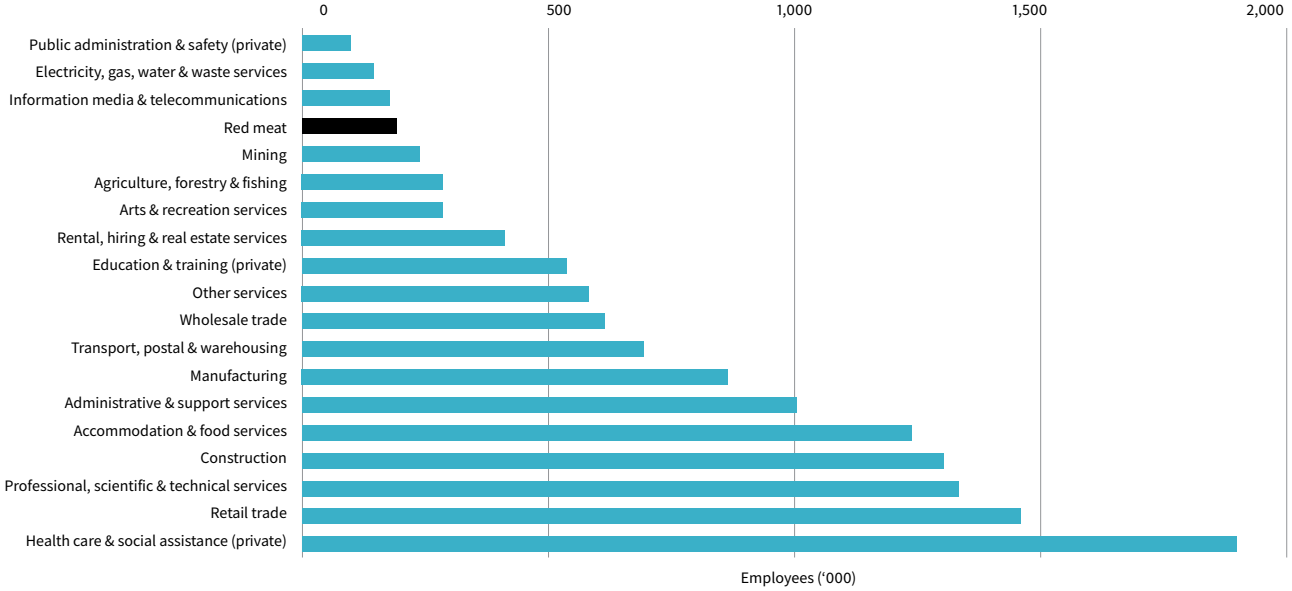
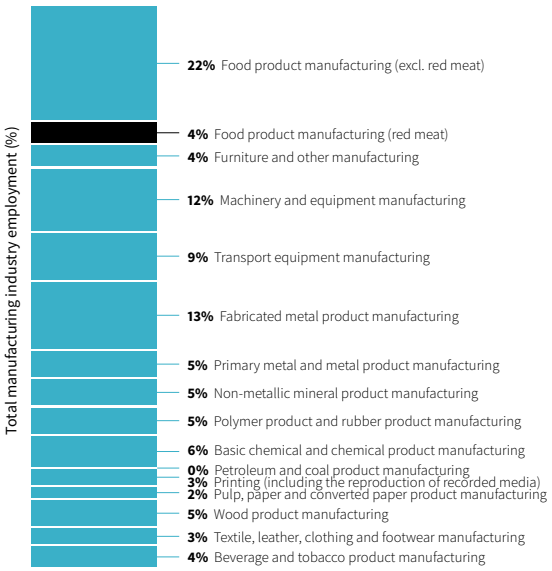
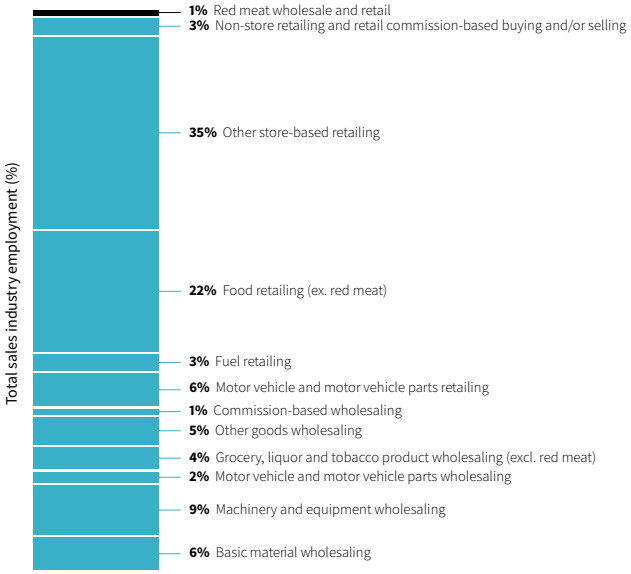


Figure 28: Manufacturing employment (persons) (2024–25)



Source: EY, IBISWorld, ABS

Figure 29: Sales employment (persons) (2024–25)



Source: EY, IBISWorld, ABS

Table 3: Major players in Australia's red meat processing sector

Source: IBISWorld

Rank	Company	Employees
1	Industry Park Ltd (JBS Australia and Australian Consolidated Food Investment)	15,996
2	Thomas Foods International	3,610
3	Teys Australia	3,472
4	NH Foods Australia	1,575
5	Yolarno Pty Ltd (previously Bindaree Beef Group and Sanger)	1,304
6	Kilcoy Pastoral Company Limited	1,064
7	Casino Food Company (previosly NCMC)	1,000
8	Fletcher International Exports	808
9	Australian Meat Group Pty Ltd	598
10	Midfield Finance Pty Ltd (previously Midfield Meat International)	568
11	Craig Mostyn Group	555
12	Nolan Meats Pty Ltd	511
13	G & K O'Connor Pty Ltd	321
14	Western Australian Meat Marketing International Co-operative (WAMMCO)	198

Industry employment is focused on rural and regional areas

- The majority (85%) of meat and livestock industry employees live in rural and regional areas. This contributes to national decentralisation by taking pressure off increasingly crowded capital cities. Capital cities experienced a 17% increase in population, or 2.5 million people, between 2011 and 2021. Populations in regional Australia also grew by 11%, or 832,000 people, over the same period.
- Just over 60% of meat processing employment and 95% of all beef cattle, sheep and feedlot production employment are located outside capital cities *(ABS 2021)*.

Age profile of the workforce

- Compared to the total Australian workforce, the meat processing industry offers more employment opportunities to younger Australians, with 55% of workers under 40 years-of-age **(Figure 30)** *(ABS 2021)*. Across the total Australian population, 49% of employees are under 40 years old.
- Older Australians tend to dominate in the sheep and beef cattle production sectors, just as they do in the agriculture sector as a whole, with 53% of employees over the age of 55 *(ABS 2021)*.

Education profile of the workforce

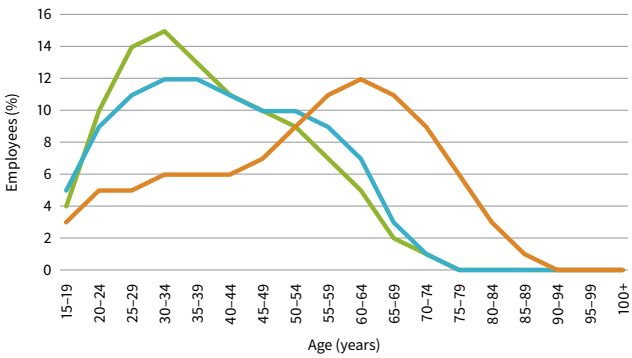
- In the red meat and livestock industry, both the livestock production and meat processing sectors offer most employment opportunities to those with practical and technical skills, rather than those with higher levels of formal education (Associate degree of higher).
- In 2021, the highest level of education achieved by more than 60% of red meat and livestock employees was years 10, 11 and 12 or a certificate level; 15% of red meat and livestock employees held a Bachelor degree or higher **(Figure 31)** *(ABS 2021)*.



First Nations peoples employment

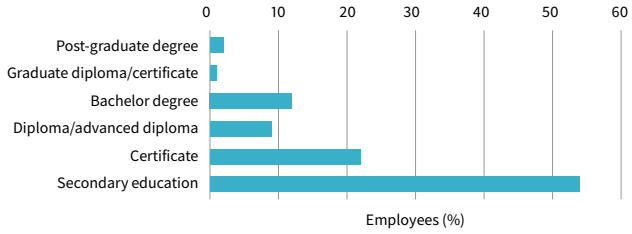
- First Nations peoples employment plays an important role in sheep, beef cattle, grain farms and cattle feedlots.
- Of those directly employed in specialist beef or sheep farms, 1.6% identified as Indigenous or Torres Strait Islander in 2021 **(Figure 32)** *(ABS 2021)*.
- For specialist cattle farms in the NT, First Nations peoples employment accounted for 8.8% of the total employment in 2021, while in north-west WA, it was 16.2% **(Figure 32)** *(ABS 2021)*.
- First Nations peoples also comprised a higher proportion (3.1%) of the meat processing workforce than for Australian industries in general in 2021, at 2.1% **(Figure 32)** *(ABS 2021)*.

Figure 30: Age profile of industry and Australian workers (2021)



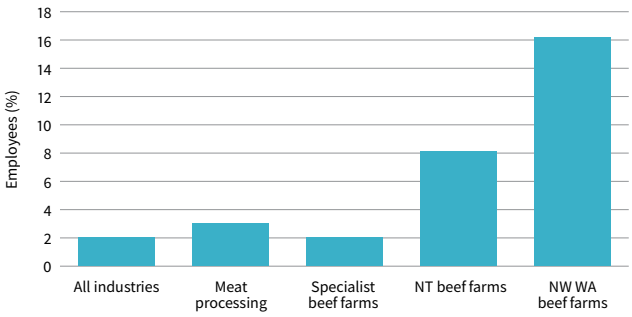
Source: ABS

Figure 31: Red meat sector education level (2021)



Source: ABS

Figure 32: First Nations peoples employment (2021)



Source: ABS

Number of businesses

In 2024–25, Australia had 77,119 red meat and livestock businesses, down 1% from revised 2023–24 figures and up 3.5% on 2020–21 levels.

Trends over time

- The number of businesses within the red meat and livestock industry has been volatile over the last five years. However, after hitting its lowest figure in 10 years in 2021–22, the number of businesses is beyond its five-year average of 76,269.
- The fall in red meat and livestock businesses since 2015 can be attributed to industry rationalisation through economies of scale, with a move to larger farms and fewer individual businesses in total as well as a difficult operating environment post COVID-19. The 2024 price recovery can be attributed to a lift in sentiment, market conditions and improved on-farm conditions post-drought.

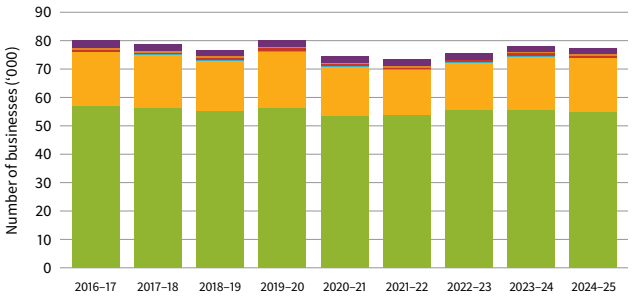
Composition by sub-sector

- In 2024–25 production, (beef cattle, sheep farming and feedlots) accounted for 96.1% of all red meat and livestock businesses. Processing was the only sub-sector that experienced a lift in number of businesses year-on-year.
- Sales – which encompasses wholesale and retail – made up 3%, while the processing sector remained relatively steady at 0.9% **(Figure 34)** *(EY, IBISWorld, ABS)*.

By state

- NSW had the largest number of red meat and livestock businesses in 2024–25 (21,111), accounting for 27.4% of all red meat and livestock businesses in Australia. This was followed by Queensland at 22.9% (17,683) and Victoria at 21.4% (16,472). Queensland overtook Victoria as the second largest state for red meat and livestock businesses during 2024-25 **(Figure 35)** *(EY, IBISWorld, ABS)*.
- In 2024–25, business numbers increased in NSW, Queensland and the NT, while easing in Victoria, SA, WA, Tasmania and the ACT. NT recorded the largest increase, up 39%, while SA eased the most, down 12% *(EY, IBISWorld, ABS)*.

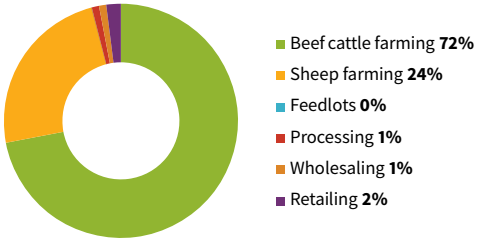
Figure 33: Red meat and livestock businesses across the supply chain* (2016–17 to 2024–25)



Source: EY, IBISWorld

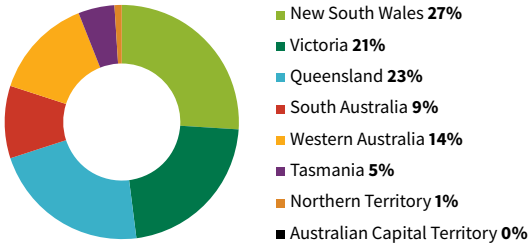
*The contribution of live exports to industry turnover is represented in beef, sheep and mixed farming. From 2021–22 mixed farming outputs were disaggregated to their respective beef and sheep farming categories.

Figure 34: Business numbers by sub-sector (2024–25)



Source: EY, IBISWorld, ABS

Figure 35: Red meat and livestock business numbers by state (2024–25)



Source: EY, IBISWorld, ABS

Table 4: Number of businesses by sub-sector (2017–18 to 2024–25)

Source: EY, IBISWorld, ABS

Establishments	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
Beef cattle farming	56,277	55,483	56,218	53,287	53,930	55,780	55,584	55,275
Sheep farming	18,587	17,475	19,974	17,519	15,696	16,360	18,845	18,467
Feedlots	394	393	392	386	383	350	355	335
Processing	608	660	695	673	701	657	674	697
Wholesaling	562	562	468	460	462	443	435	425
Retailing	2,217	2,190	2,349	2,174	2,068	2,051	1,975	1,919
Total	78,645	76,764	80,095	74,499	73,241	75,641	77,869	77,119

Exports

Red meat and livestock export value rose 20.7% year-on-year to $25.1 billion in 2024–25 (Figure 37).

Trends over time

- Red meat and livestock exports (including co-products) reached a record $28.3 billion in the 2025 calendar year, up 27% on 2024 and 72.6% higher than 2020 levels (Figure 36) *(TDM)*.

Composition by sub-sector

- Australia's red meat and livestock exports occur in three primary forms: meat, meat co-products and further processed products, and livestock.
- In 2025, the value of boxed meat accounted for 89% of total meat and livestock exports at $25.2 billion, with live sheep and cattle exports accounting for 4% at $1.1 billion. Co-products and further processed exports accounted for the other 7%, valued at $2.0 billion (Figure 37) *(IBISWorld, TDM)*.

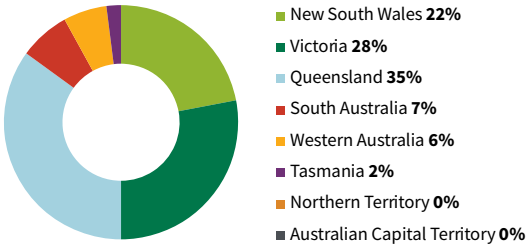
By state of production

- Of all Australian states and territories, Queensland continued to be the largest exporter of beef and veal by volume in 2024–25, accounting for approximately 49.5% of Australia's beef and veal export volumes (Figure 36) *(EY, IBISWorld, ABS)*.
- Victoria was Australia's largest sheepmeat exporter, accounting for approximately 41.4% of total sheepmeat exports. NSW was the second largest sheepmeat exporter, accounting for 32.6% of total exports *(EY, IBISWorld, ABS)*.
- The three mainland eastern states accounted for 84.8% of total red meat exports, followed by SA (6.5%), WA (6.1%) and Tasmania (2.5%) *(EY, IBISWorld, ABS)*.

Comparison to other industries

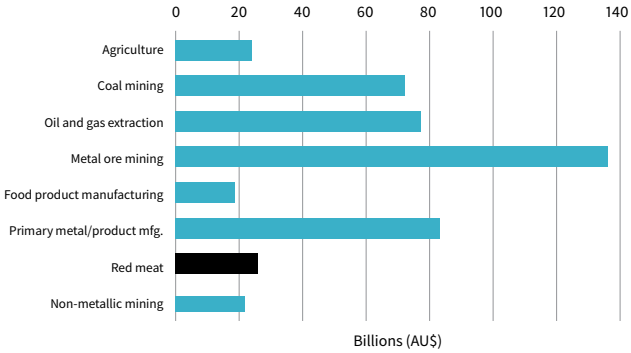
- In 2024–25, red meat and livestock exports accounted for approximately 4.9% of Australia's key industry exports, valued at $25.1 billion (Figure 37) *(EY, IBISWorld, ABS)*.

Figure 36: Red meat export volume by state of production (2024–25)



Source: EY, IBISWorld, ABS

Figure 37: Red meat exports compared with other industries (2024–25)



Source: EY, IBISWorld, ABS

Red meat and livestock exports reached a record $28.3 billion in 2025 – 72.6% higher than 2020 levels.





Species statistics and performance

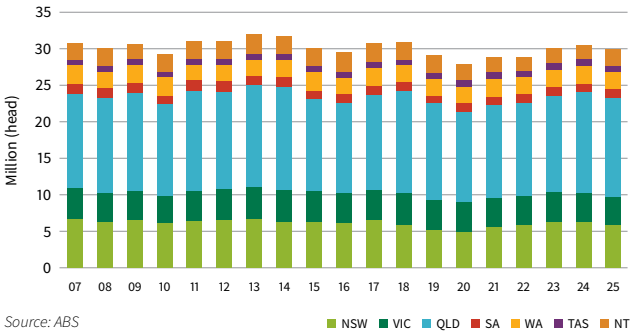
Beef cattle

- The Australian cattle herd sat at 29.7 million head on 30 June 2025, dropping 2.2% year-on-year *(ABS)*.
- 92.9% of the herd consisted of beef cattle, while 7.1% were dairy cattle in 2024–25 *(ABS)*.
- Queensland cattle accounted for 45.8% of the national herd in 2024–25, NSW made up 19.6% and Victoria accounted for 13.1%. The NT and WA accounted for 7.1% and 7.7% respectively, while SA and Tasmania made up the remaining 4.0% and 2.9% respectively **(Figure 39)** *(ABS)*.
- The November 2025 *Beef Producer Intentions Survey*, run by MLA, indicated 64% of the beef herd were breeding cows and heifers (aged one year and over), 6% were calves, and 30% were other (castrated males, and bulls) **(Figure 40)** *(MLA)*.

Feedlots

- The number of cattle on feed was reported at 1.7 million head in the June quarter of 2026, a record quarterly number and an increase of 5% on year-ago levels and 25% above the five-year average **(Figure 41)** *(MLA/Australian Lot Feeders' Association (ALFA) Feedlot Survey)*.
- National utilisation for the quarter lifted to 93%, while capacity further increased to 1.8 million head *(MLA/ALFA Feedlot Survey)*.
- There were 3.7 million grainfed cattle turned off in 2025, a 17% lift on 2024 levels, with the increase driven by further investment in capacity **(Figure 42)** *(MLA/ALFA Feedlot Survey)*.
- When compared to the June quarter of 2025, feedlot capacity grew in every state except Victoria and South Australia. NSW witnessed the largest capacity growth, increasing by 13% *(MLA/ALFA Feedlot Survey)*.

Figure 38: Australian cattle herd (2007–2025)

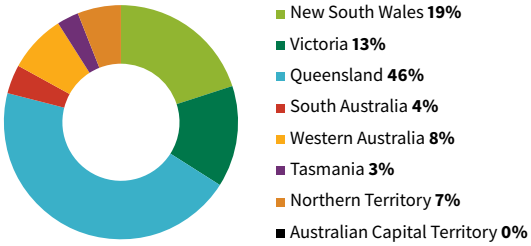


Source: ABS

Note: June 30 year end. Data is using ABS experimental figures.

Cattle on feed reached a record 1.7 million head in June 2026 – 25% above the five-year average.

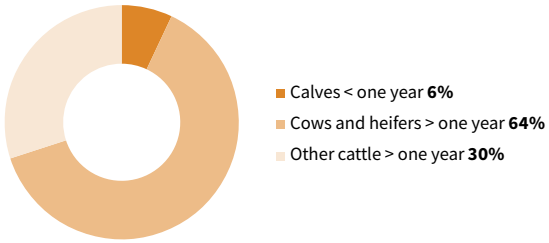
Figure 39: Australian cattle herd by state (2025)



Source: ABS

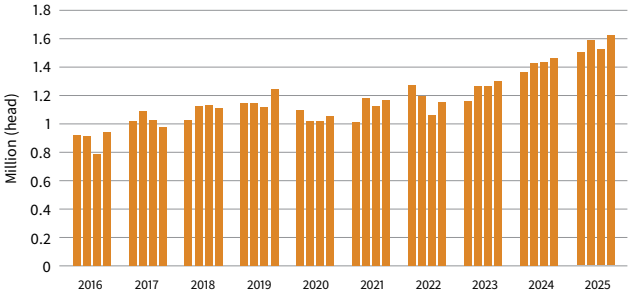
Note: Data is using ABS experimental figures.

Figure 40: Australian grassfed beef cattle herd composition (2025)



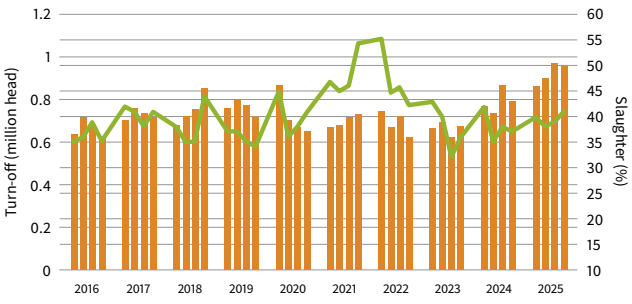
Source: MLA Beef Producer Intentions Survey – November 2025

Figure 41: Australian cattle on feed (2016–2025)



Source: MLA/ALFA Feedlot survey

Figure 42: Australian grainfed cattle turn-off (2016–2025)



Source: MLA/ALFA Feedlot survey

Grainfed beef exports

- In 2025, grainfed beef exports accounted for 29% of Australia's total beef export volumes, up from 28% in 2024 *(DAFF)*.
- Australia's grainfed beef exports totalled 449,292 tonnes shipped weight (swt) in 2025, up 20% from 2024 *(DAFF)*.
- Mainland China overtook Japan to be Australia's largest destination (in volume terms) grainfed beef exports in 2025 **(Figure 43)** *(DAFF)*.
- Mainland China accounted for 33% of Australia's total grainfed beef exports in 2025, followed by Japan at 28% and South Korea at 17% *(DAFF)*.
- Compared with the five-year average (2021-2025), grainfed beef exports to Japan lifted 4% in 2025, while exports to Mainland China increased by 61% and exports to South Korea decreased by 10% *(DAFF)*.

Slaughter

- Adult cattle slaughter totalled 9.3 million head in 2025, up 11.9% year-on-year **(Figure 44)** *(ABS)*.
- In 2025, female (cow and heifer) slaughter accounted for 53.1% of total adult cattle slaughter **(Figure 44)** *(ABS)*.
- Female slaughter totalled 4.9 million head, up 15.6% on year-ago levels, while male slaughter increased 8% to 4.3 million head *(ABS)*. The significant increase in female slaughter lifted the female slaughter rate.

Carcase weight

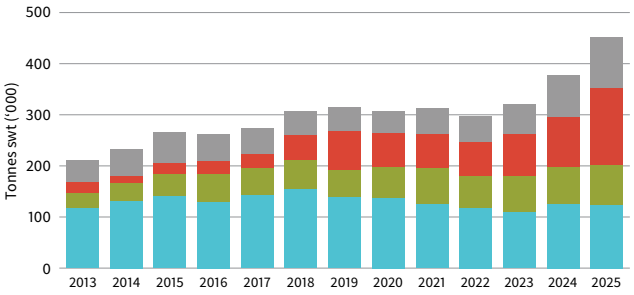
- The national average adult carcase weight in 2025 was 309.22kg/head, stable on the previous year (down 0.2%). This stability in carcase weight was driven mainly by elevated female slaughter numbers **(Figure 45)** *(ABS)*.

Production

- In 2025, Australian beef and veal production totalled 2.9 million tonnes cwt, up 12% on year-ago levels. Record lifts to slaughter numbers resulted in record production **(Figure 46)** *(ABS)*.
- Queensland accounted for 40.5% of total beef production in 2025, followed by NSW (22.6%), Victoria (25.3%), WA (5%), Tasmania (2.9%) and SA (3.7%) *(ABS)*.

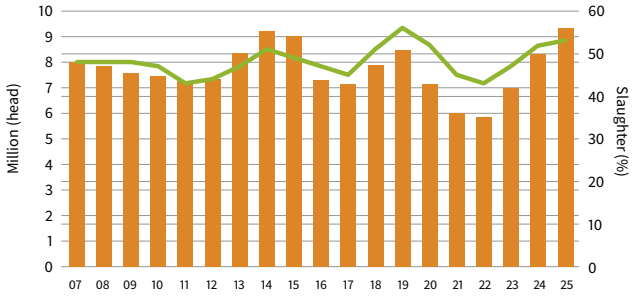
Australia's grainfed beef exports reached 449,292 tonnes in 2025, up 20% year-on-year.

Figure 43: Australian grainfed beef exports (2013–2025)



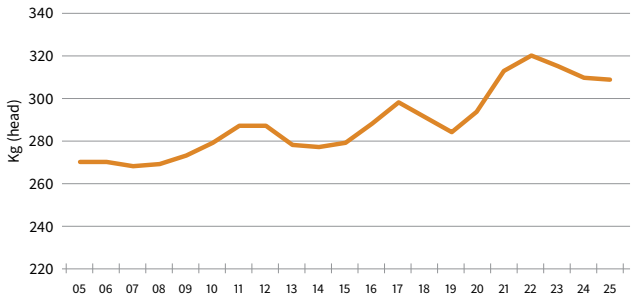
Source: DAFF

Figure 44: Australian adult cattle slaughter (2007–2025)



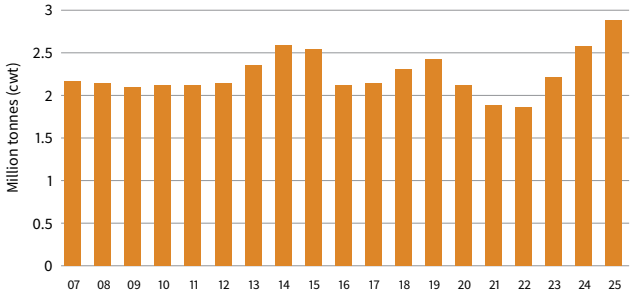
Source: ABS

Figure 45: Australian average adult cattle carcase weight (2005–2025)



Source: ABS

Figure 46: Australian beef and veal production (2007–2025)



Source: ABS

Beef exports

- In 2025, Australian beef and veal exports totalled 1.56 million tonnes swt, up 15% year-on-year **(Figure 47)** *(DAFF)*.
- The US was Australia's largest beef export market (in volume terms) in 2025, totalling 453,292 tonnes swt **(Figure 48)** *(DAFF)*.
- The US' market share of Australian beef exports in 2025 was 29%, followed by Mainland China (18%) and Japan (17%) *(DAFF)*.
- The value of Australian beef exports was $18.7 billion in 2025, which is an increase of 33.3% year-on-year **(Figure 47)** *(TDM)*.

Live cattle exports

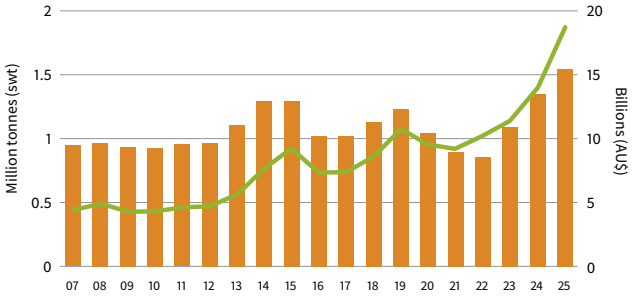
- Live cattle exports totalled 792,087 head in 2025, up 3% from 2024 **(Figure 49)** *(DAFF)*.
- In 2025, feeder cattle accounted for 77% of Australia's live cattle exports, followed by slaughter at 11% *(DAFF)*.
- Indonesia was Australia's largest market for live cattle exports in 2025 (74%), followed by Vietnam (11%) and Mainland China (4%) *(DAFF)*.

Saleyard prices

- The National Feeder Steer Indicator saw a 24% year-on-year increase to average 421.67¢/kg liveweight (lwt) in 2025 **(Figure 50)** – 3.6% below the five-year average *(MLA NLRS)*.
- The National Heavy Steer Indicator averaged 394.30¢/kg lwt in 2025, 26% above the previous year and 11.1% under the five-year average *(MLA NLRS)*.
- The National Processor Cow Indicator lifted 29% year-on-year to average 324.24¢/kg lwt in 2025, 14.3% above the five-year average *(MLA NLRS)*.
- The National Young Cattle Indicator, covering online and saleyard transactions, averaged 409.80¢/kg lwt in 2025. This is 23.3% above the previous year, and 6.3% below the five-year average *(MLA NLRS)*.

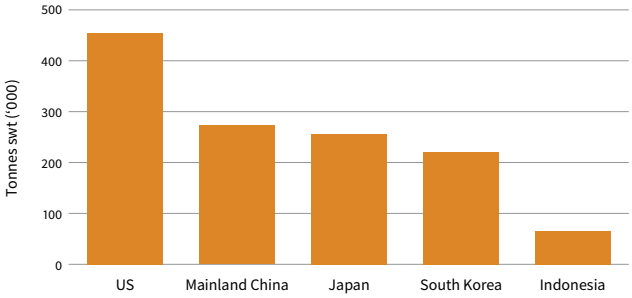


Figure 47: Australian beef and veal export volume and value (2007–2025)



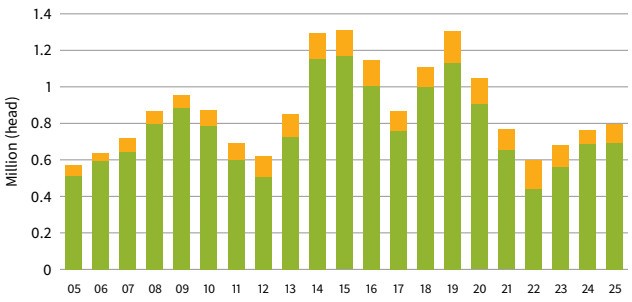
Source: DAFF, TDM

Figure 48: Australia's top five beef export markets (2025)



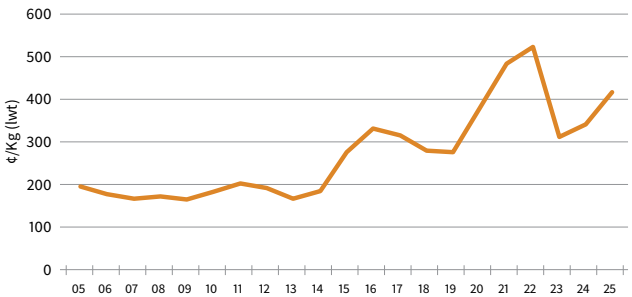
Source: DAFF

Figure 49: Australian live cattle exports (2005–2025)



Source: DAFF

Figure 50: National feeder steer saleyard indicator (2005–2025)

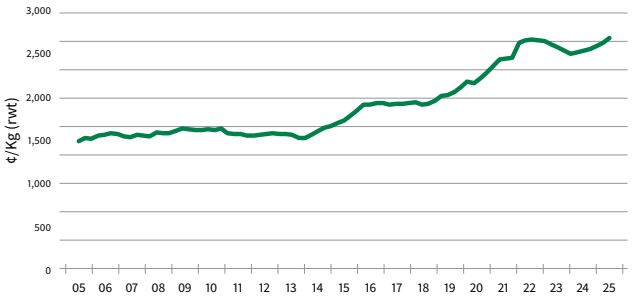


Source: MLA NLRS

Retail price

- The national beef retail price indicator averaged $27.22/kg retail weight (rwt)6 in 2025, up 6% year-on-year **(Figure 51)** *(ABS, MLA calculations)*.

Figure 51: National beef retail price indicator (2005–2025)

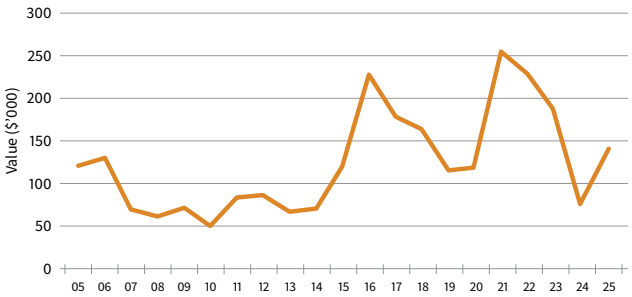


Source: ABS, MLA NLRS

Farm financial performance

- Improved seasonal conditions in northern Australia, where most cattle businesses are, and continuing confidence in cattle markets impacted prices in 2024–25. Input costs lifted year-on-year, placing further financial pressure on farm.
- The average farm cash income of Australian beef producers was estimated to be $140,000 in 2024–25, an 80.9% increase on year-ago levels (in real terms) *(ABARES)*.
- The average rate of return (excluding capital appreciation) of Australian beef cattle farms lifted out of a negative return to 0.5% in 2024–25, with the average business profit reaching $13,340 (in real terms) **(Figure 52)** *(ABARES)*.

Figure 52: National average beef farm cash income (2005–2025)



Source: ABARES

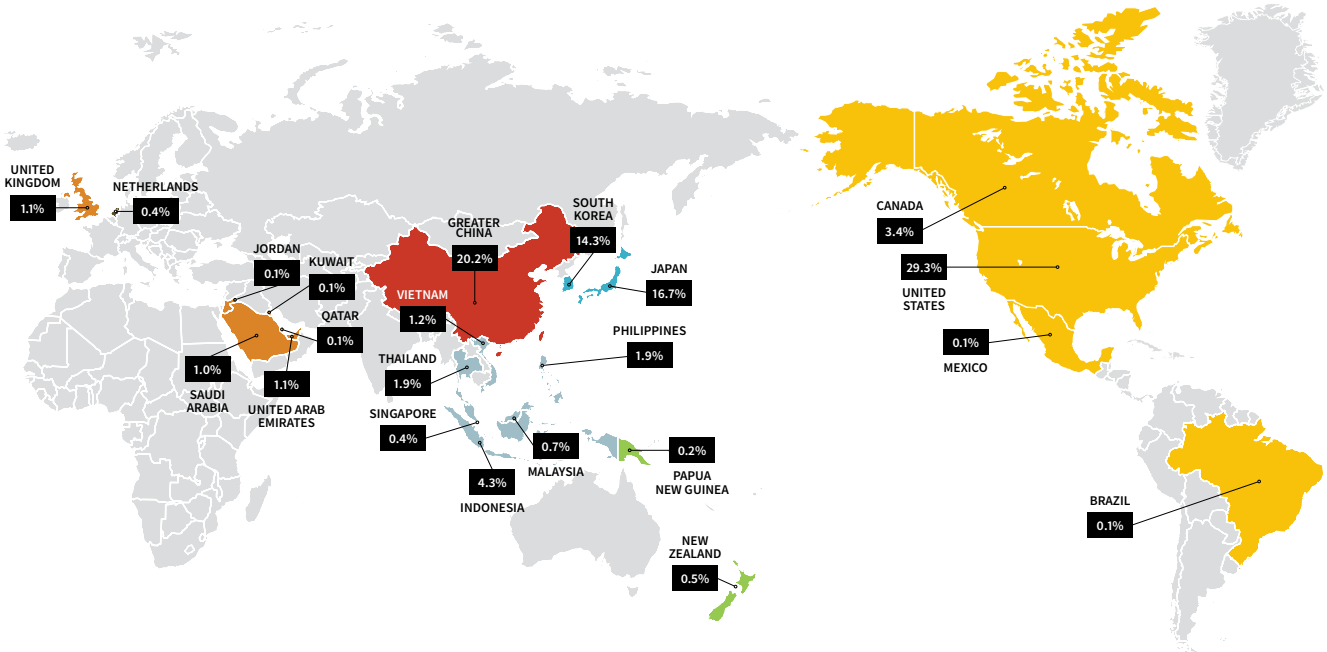
Note: This data is in real terms.

The average farm cash income of Australian beef producers was estimated to be $140,000 in 2024–25, an 80.9% increase on year-ago levels.

Figure 53: Australian beef exports by volume (2025)

Source: DAFF

In 2025, Australia's top three beef export destinations (in volume terms) were US (453,292 tonnes swt, or 29.3% of total exports), Greater China (312,607 tonnes swt, or 20.2% of total exports) and Japan (257,379 tonnes swt, or 16.7% of total exports).



Sheep

National sheep flock

- The national sheep flock comprised of 66 million head on 30 June 2025, a 8% decline on year-ago levels, making it the smallest sheep flock on record *(ABS)*.
- Most of Australia's sheep population was located in NSW (39%), Victoria (24%), WA and SA (both 16%). Tasmania and Queensland accounted for 3% and 2% respectively **(Figure 55)** *(ABS)*.
- Breeding ewes (aged one year and over) accounted for 73% of the national flock, while lambs under one year made up 19% in 2025 **(Figure 56)** *(MLA/Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) Sheep Producers Intentions Survey (SPIS) – May 2026)*.
- The composition of the breeding flock was 63% Merino, 16% prime lamb and 10% first cross *(MLA/AWI SPIS – May 2026)*. Lamb composition was 40% prime lamb, 34% Merino and 14% first cross *(MLA/AWI SPIS – October 2025)*.

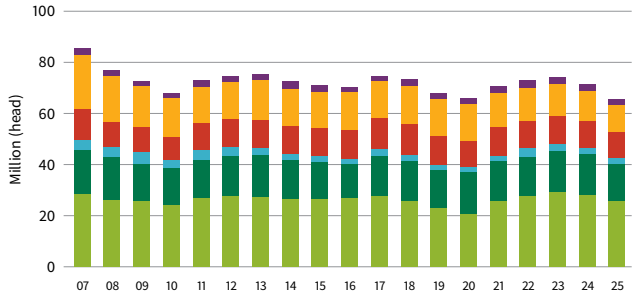
Slaughter

- In 2025, national lamb slaughter totalled 24.6 million head, 6.9% down year-on-year, though still 5.3% above the five-year average **(Figure 57)** *(ABS)*. This eased from the back-to-back record highs of 2023 and 2024, when slaughter peaked at 26.4 million head.
- Sheep slaughter totalled 10.2 million head, down 13.5% from the previous year but 33.3% above the five-year average, easing back from 2024's decade-high total **(Figure 57)** *(ABS)*.

Carcase weights

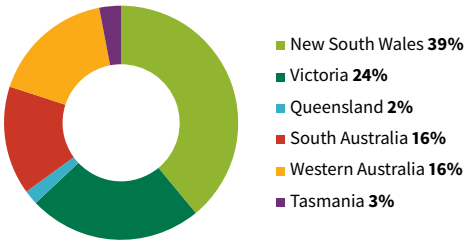
- National lamb carcase weights averaged 24.3kg/head in 2025, up 1.7% year-on-year but 0.4% below the five-year average **(Figure 58)** *(ABS)*.
- Sheep carcase weights increased 0.8% from 2024 to 25.4kg/head but remained 1.4% below the five-year average **(Figure 58)** *(ABS)*.

Figure 54: Australian sheep flock (2007–2025)



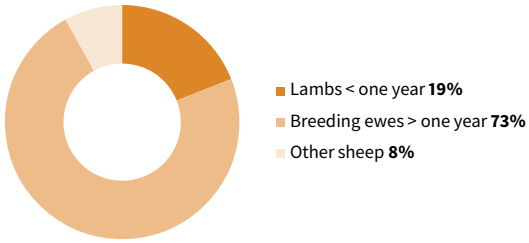
Source: ABS, MLA projections.
Note: 30 June year end.

Figure 55: Australian sheep flock by state (2025)



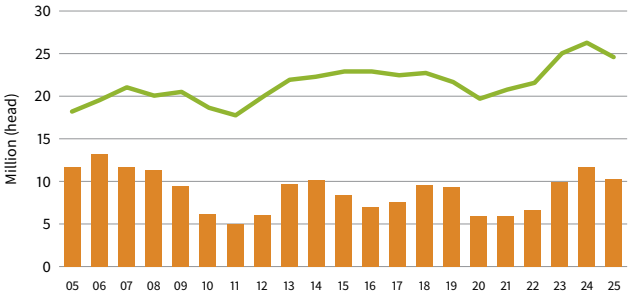
Source: ABS, MLA projections, MLA Sheep Producers Intentions Survey – May 2026

Figure 56: Australian sheep flock composition (2025)



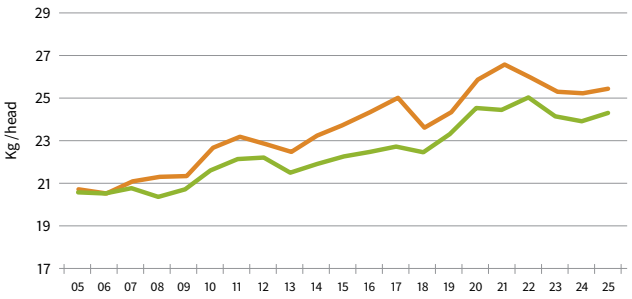
Source: MLA Sheep Producers Intentions Survey – May 2026

Figure 57: Australian sheep and lamb slaughter (2005–2025)



Source: ABS

Figure 58: Australian average sheep and lamb carcase weights (2005–2025)



Source: ABS

Production

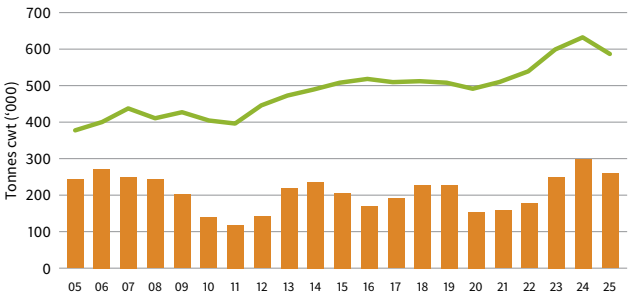
- In 2025, lamb production in Australia totalled 587,068 tonnes cwt, 6.8% below year-ago levels, easing from the record production of the previous two years **(Figure 59)** *(ABS)*.
- Mutton production decreased 13% year-on-year, totalling 258,757 tonnes cwt **(Figure 59)** *(ABS)*.
- Total sheepmeat production (lamb and mutton) was 845,825 tonnes cwt in 2025, 8.8% below year-ago levels *(ABS)*.

Sheepmeat exports

- In 2025, Australian lamb exports totalled 342,759 tonnes swt, 4% lower than 2024 **(Figure 60)** *(DAFF)*.
- The US became Australia's largest lamb destination in 2025 (in volume) at 84,569 tonnes swt, followed by Mainland China at 63,007 tonnes swt. **(Figure 61)** *(DAFF)*.
- Exports to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) saw a 8% decrease year-on-year to 25,163 tonnes swt, becoming the third largest export destination for Australian lamb.
- Australian mutton exports were 215,404 tonnes swt in 2025, down 16% year-on-year **(Figure 60)** *(DAFF)*.
- Mutton exports to Mainland China (in volume terms) were 56,157 tonnes swt, down 41% year-on-year **(Figure 62)** *(DAFF)*.
- The other key export destinations for Australian mutton were Malaysia (27,347 tonnes swt) and Saudi Arabia (20,711 tonnes swt) **(Figure 62)** *(DAFF)*.
- The value of Australian sheepmeat (lamb and mutton) exports in 2025 was $6 billion, up 16% from the previous year *(TDM)*.

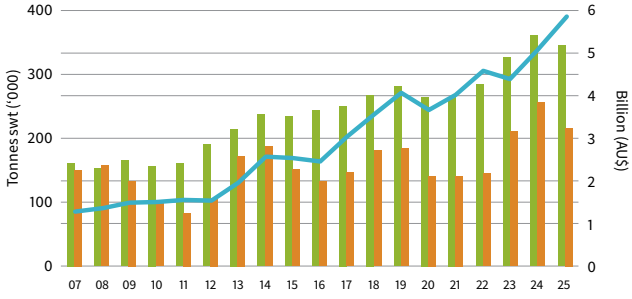


Figure 59: Australian sheepmeat production (2005–2025)



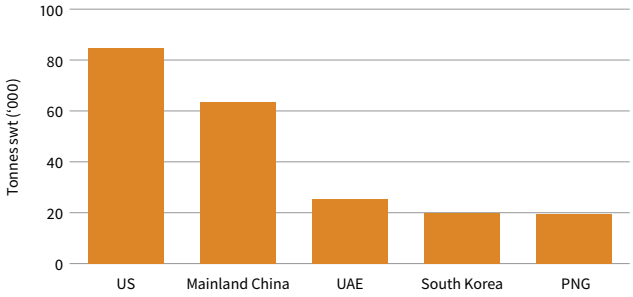
Source: ABS

Figure 60: Australian sheepmeat export volume and value (2007–2025)



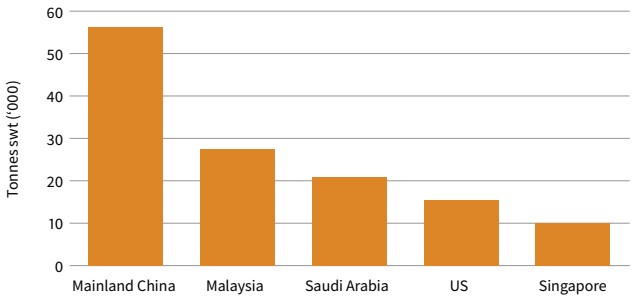
Source: DAFF (volume), TDM (value)

Figure 61: Australia's top five lamb export markets (2025)



Source: DAFF

Figure 62: Australia's top five mutton export markets (2025)



Source: DAFF



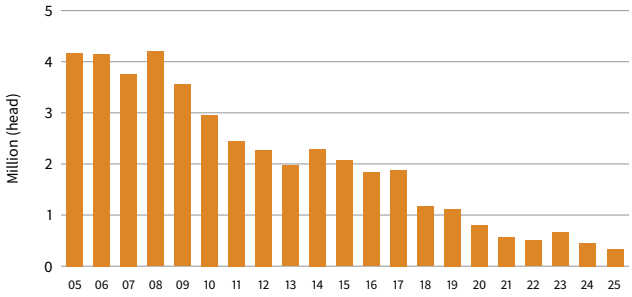
Live sheep exports

- In 2025, Australian live sheep exports totalled 334,491 head, down 23% on the previous year **(Figure 63)** *(DAFF)*.
- Kuwait was Australia's largest destination for live sheep exports, accounting for 44% of exports *(DAFF)*.

Saleyard prices

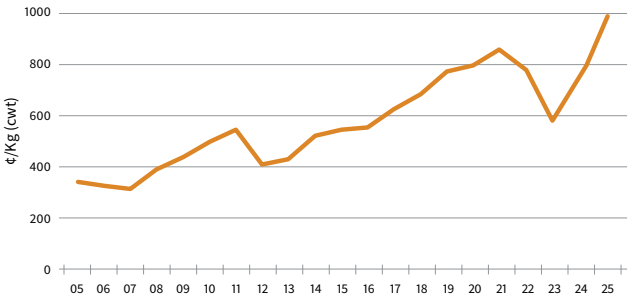
- The National Trade Lamb Indicator averaged 991.75¢/kg cwt in 2025 **(Figure 64)**, up 32.1% on the previous year and 31.2% above the five-year average *(MLA NLRS)*.
- In 2025, the National Mutton Indicator increased 89.7% year-on-year to 600.38¢/kg cwt, 28.1% below the five-year average *(MLA NLRS)*.

Figure 63: Australian live sheep exports (2005–2025)



Source: DAFF

Figure 64: National trade lamb saleyard indicator (2005–2025)



Source: MLA NLRS

Figure 65: National lamb retail price indicator (2005–2025)



Source: ABS, MLA NLRS

Retail prices

- The average lamb retail price indicator was estimated at $19.81/kg rwt[3] in 2025, up 11.5% year-on-year **(Figure 65)** *(ABS, MLA calculations)*.

The National Trade Lamb Indicator averaged 991.75¢/kg cwt in 2025, up 32.1% on the previous year.

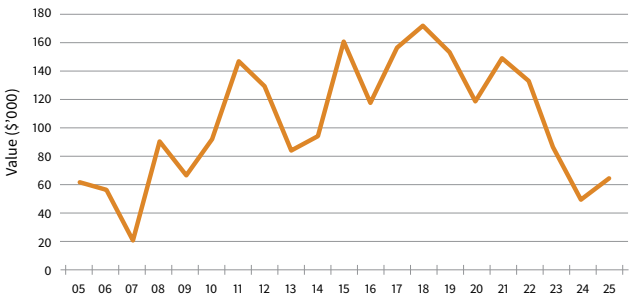
3 Retail price indicators are estimated by indexing forward from actual average prices of beef, lamb and pork during the December quarter 1973, based on meat sub-category indexes of the consumer price index. These indexes are based on average retail prices of selected cuts (weighted by expenditure) in state capitals.

Farm financial performance

- Sheep farm business profit decreased to a loss of $107,810 in 2024-25, while the average farm cash income of Australian lamb producers lifted 27.7% to $63,600 in 2024-25, the pressure on profitability for sheep producers[4] is clear (in real terms) **(Figure 66)** *(ABARES)*.
- The average rate of return (excluding capital appreciation) of Australian sheep producing farms eased to -1% in 2024–25 *(ABARES)*.

The average farm cash income of Australian lamb producers was estimated at $63,600, up 27.7% year-on-year.

Figure 66: National average sheep farm cash income (2005–2025)



Source: ABARES

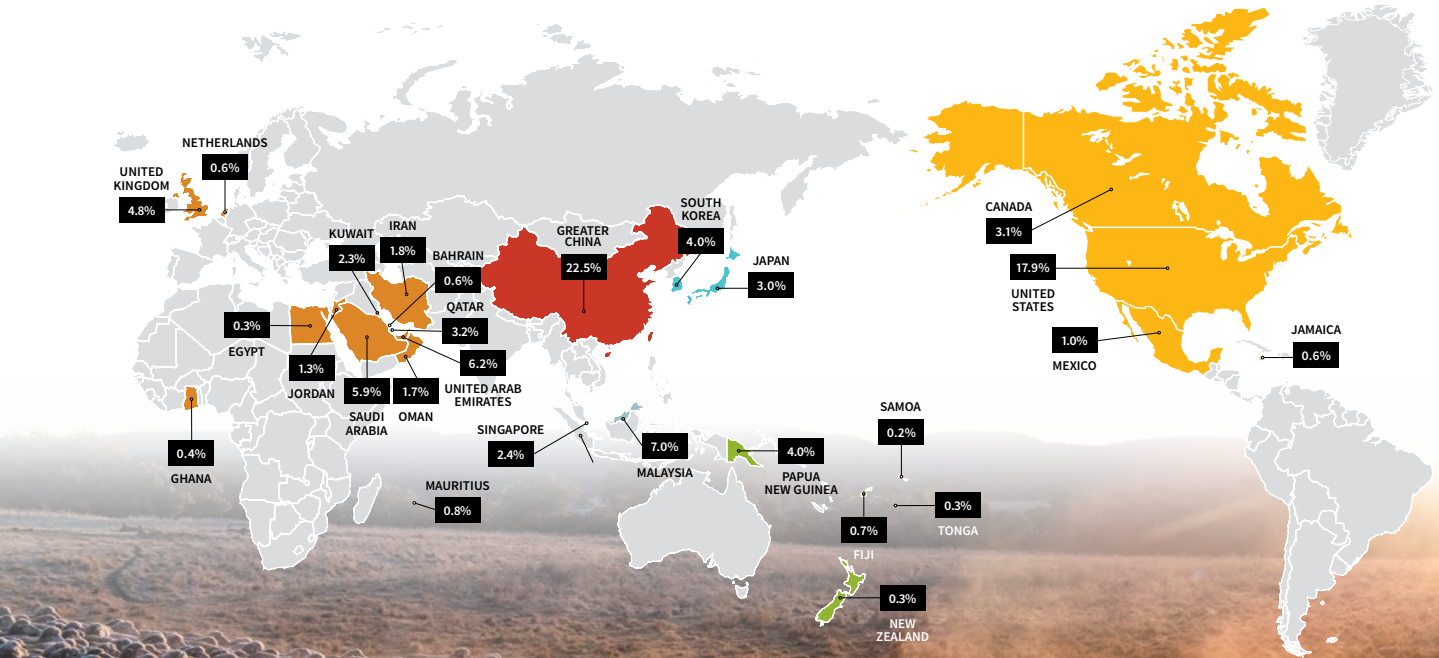
Note: This data is in real terms.

4 The ABARES Australian Agricultural and Grazing Industries Survey includes producers that sold at least 200 lambs for slaughter.

Figure 67: Australian sheepmeat exports by volume (2025)

Source: DAFF

In 2025, Australia's top three sheepmeat (lamb and mutton) export markets were Greater China (125,899 tonnes swt, or 22.5% of total exports), the US (100,115 tonnes swt, or 17.9% of total exports), and Malaysia (39,310 tonnes swt, or 7.0% of total exports).



Goats

Slaughter

- Australian goat slaughter totalled 4 million head in 2025, up 19.3% year-on-year and 111% above the five-year average – a new record for goat slaughter **(Figure 68)** *(ABS)*.
- In 2025, goat slaughter in Victoria made up 43.1% (1,744,010 head), Queensland made up 26.3% (1,064,873 head), NSW 25.9% (1,048,821 head), SA 3.7% (151,594 head) and WA made up 1.0% (40,297 head) **(Figure 69)** *(ABS)*.

Carcase weights

- Australian goat carcase weights averaged 15.7kg/head in 2025, down 0.5% on the 2024 carcase weights *(ABS)*.

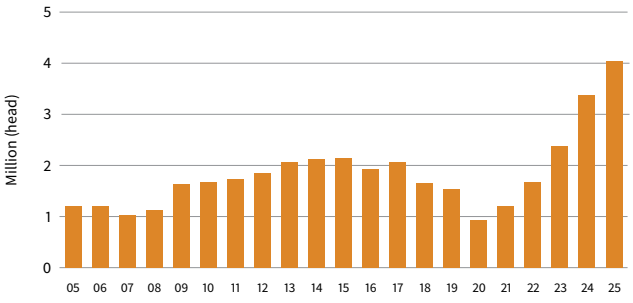
Production

- Goatmeat production increased 17% to 63,700 tonnes cwt in 2025 **(Figure 70)** *(ABS)*.

Goatmeat exports

- Australian goatmeat exports totalled 61,800 tonnes swt in 2025, up 20% on the year prior **(Figure 71)** *(DAFF)*.
- The US remains the largest destination for goatmeat, accounting for 48% of exports or 29,649 tonnes swt in 2025 **(Figure 72)** *(DAFF)*. Korea remained Australia's second largest export market for goatmeat in 2025, taking 17%, or 10,638 tonnes swt in 2025 **(Figure 72)** *(DAFF)*. Mainland China completed the top three, with 5,365 tonnes swt or 9% of the market share.

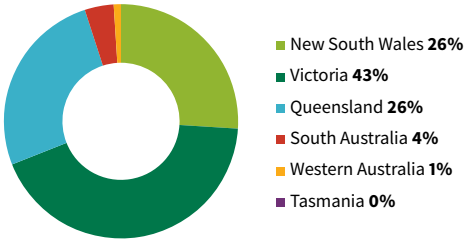
Figure 68: Australian goat slaughter (2005–2025)



Source: ABS

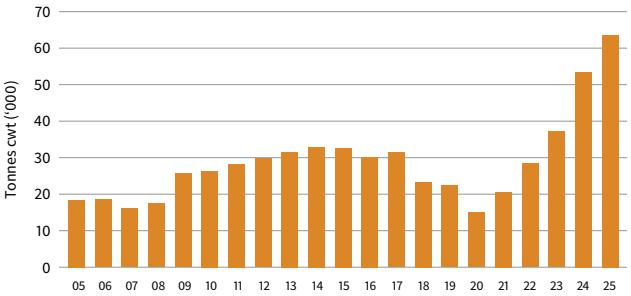
Australian goat slaughter totalled 4 million head in 2025, up 19.3% year-on-year and 111% above the five-year average – a new record for goat slaughter.

Figure 69: Australian goat slaughter by state (2025)



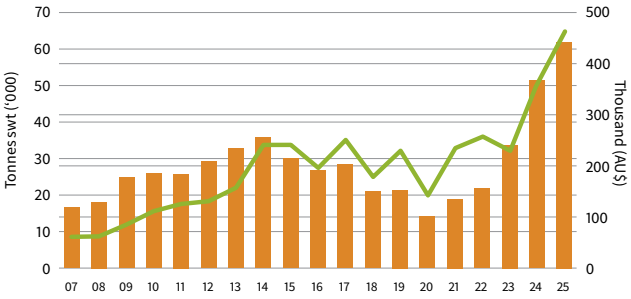
Source: ABS

Figure 70: Australian goatmeat production (2005–2025)



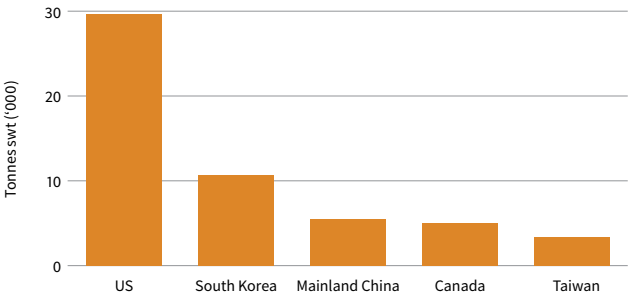
Source: ABS

Figure 71: Australian goatmeat export volumes and value (2007–2025)



Source: DAFF

Figure 72: Australia's top five goatmeat export markets (2025)



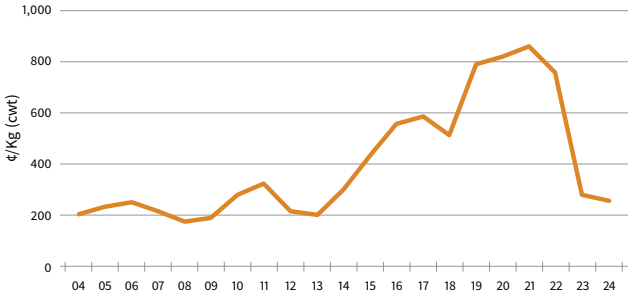
Source: DAFF

Live goat exports

- In 2025, Australian live goat exports increased 112% on 2024 levels to 31,204 head. Exports to Malaysia, the largest live goat export market, increased 192%, while exports to Mainland China decreased to zero *(DAFF, ABS)*.

In 2025, Australian live goat exports increased 112% on 2024 levels to 31,204 head.

Figure 73: Eastern states Over-The-Hooks goat indicator 12–16kg (2004–2024)



Source: MLA NLRS

Figure 74: Australian goatmeat exports by volume (2025)

Source: DAFF

In 2025, Australia's top three goatmeat export destinations (in volume terms) were the US (29,649 tonnes swt, or 48.2% of total exports), South Korea (10,638 tonnes swt, or 17.3% of total exports) and Greater China 8,652 tonnes swt, or 14.1% of total exports).



Key issue snapshots

How can Australia protect and capture value from its biosecurity advantage?

Australia's biosecurity advantage

Australia's freedom from many major livestock diseases supports market access, reliable supply and customer confidence. However, this advantage is not permanent. Protecting it requires continued investment in surveillance, traceability, diagnostics and emergency response. Capturing its value depends on credible evidence that markets and supply chains can use.

A changing global risk environment

Recent outbreaks of animal diseases that are exotic to Australia shows how quickly animal disease can disrupt production and trade. In 2025, 47 countries and territories reported foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) outbreaks, while lumpy skin disease (LSD) spread through Asia reaching Indonesia in 2022. More recently it was again detected in parts of western Europe. An extremely virulent strain of FMD, the SAT-1 strain, is currently causing widespread disease in Mainland China. African swine fever continued to affect pork production and trade, while highly pathogenic avian influenza caused poultry losses and market restrictions. This disease was found for the first time on Australian shores in June 2026. New World screwworm also continued to spread through the Americas, where control measures have recently eased.

These events do not mean an Australian incursion of exotic animal disease is inevitable. They show that disease pressure is changing as movements of people and goods increase, and vectors of disease expand into new areas. For an export-focused industry such as Australia's red meat industry, biosecurity is both a production safeguard and a requirement for continued market access.

An advantage built on systems

Australia remains free from FMD, LSD and other diseases that currently affect other red meat producing countries. Geographic isolation and border controls remain important, but they are only part of the system. Surveillance rigour and traceability are essential components of good biosecurity.

Australia's position is supported by surveillance programs in the north, veterinary and laboratory networks, national diagnostic capability and agreed emergency response arrangements. The Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement establishes shared responsibilities between governments and livestock industries, while AUSVETPLAN provides disease-specific response frameworks.

To increase traceability strength, electronic identification for sheep and goats began in 2025, with full national implementation scheduled from 2027. Together with the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) and Livestock Production Assurance (LPA), these systems improve the speed and accuracy of tracing. Their value depends on complete and timely records, producer participation and regular testing.

Building future capability

Emerging technologies strengthen preparedness but should not replace core biosecurity systems. Some examples of impactful research projects include:

- MLA-supported mRNA vaccines for exotic disease research project, which aims to establish local capability to develop livestock vaccines that can be used in the event of an exotic disease outbreak.
- The Sterile Insect Technique sheep blowfly program has developed capability in mass-rearing, sterile insects to provide area-wide eradication of blowflies. Technology like this provides the operational knowledge relevant where the technique could be applied to other insects like New World Screw Worm Fly.

Regional preparedness is also important. Australian-funded work in Indonesia has supported surveillance, vaccination systems, traceability and emergency-response capability following the emergence of FMD and LSD in that country. Stronger regional detection and response can reduce uncertainty across Australia's northern borders and has the potential to reduce the risks of diseases entering Australia.

The value of biosecurity

Australia already captures value through export-market access and reliable supply. Australian red meat exports were valued at $25 billion in 2025, and beef is exported to 83 countries. Future value could come from stronger supply assurance, faster tracing, improved market-continuity arrangements and greater confidence among customers and investors.

Protecting Australia's advantage will ensure ongoing maintenance of a robust biosecurity system. Components like measurable system performance, stronger data quality, trained people, modern and novel diagnostic and vaccine capability, and market planning to respond to an outbreak form the foundation of valuable biosecurity infrastructure.

For more information visit mla.com.au/biosecurity

Protecting Australia's biosecurity advantage requires continued investment in surveillance, traceability, diagnostics and emergency response.

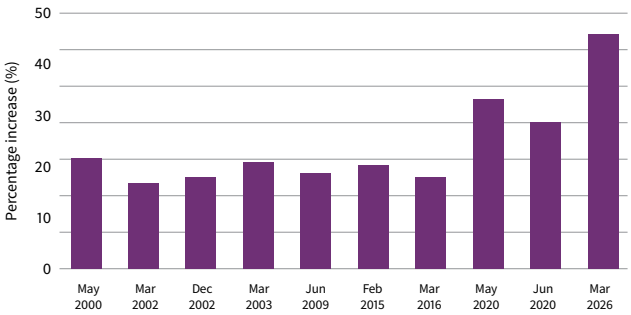
How are geopolitical tensions, regional conflicts and supply chain disruptions reshaping input costs, trade flows and market access, and what does this mean for how Australian red meat competes globally?

Global conflict and supply chain disruptions are fundamentally changing red meat trade. Input costs are rising and market access is constantly changing, presenting both challenges and opportunities for the Australian red meat industry.

Middle East conflict creating heightened supply chain risks

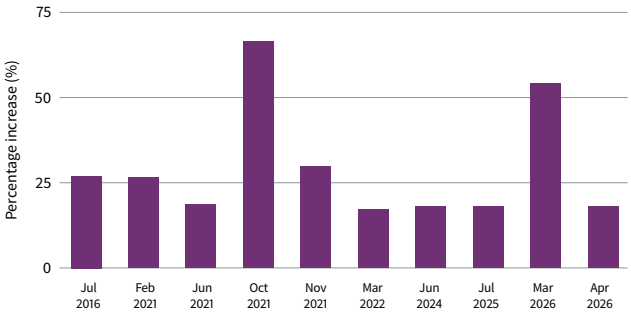
The Strait of Hormuz is one of the world's most important trade corridors for energy and commodity flows. Prior to the Middle East conflict, approximately 35% of global seaborne crude oil shipments passed through the Strait. The Gulf region is also a critical supplier of fertilisers, particularly urea, making disruptions to trade significant for global agricultural markets.

Figure 75: Crude oil – largest Brent price (US$/Bbl) increase (since 2000)



Source: World Bank, MLA

Figure 76: Urea – second largest price (US$/mt) increase (since 2016)



Source: World Bank, MLA

Since the outbreak of the conflict, crude oil prices have surged, peaking at US$118 per barrel – the largest increase on record **(Figure 75)**. Similarly, the fertiliser price index rose sharply in March, marking its second-largest increase of the past decade **(Figure 76)**.

While prices eased, the outlook remains subject to significant uncertainty. Should the conflict continue there is further potential for higher-than-expected energy prices, increased production disruptions, and prolonged constraints on shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, which could continue to affect global supply chains and commodity markets.

Market access challenges emerge

With 70% of Australian red meat production destined for export markets, market access is key to supporting the industry. The activation of safeguard measures in Mainland China and Korea has increased tariffs on Australian beef exports to those markets, creating additional trade challenges. Mainland China and Korea were the second and third largest beef export destinations in value terms during 2025, and demand from these two markets significantly impacts Australia's beef trading landscape, particularly for grainfed beef. Despite the imposition of trade protections such as tariffs, Australian red meat exports to the US have continued to grow as local supply remains tight, with the US remaining the largest export market for grassfed beef and an increasingly important destination for grainfed beef.

In July 2026, the United States Trade Representative (USTR) launched a safeguard investigation into the impact of lamb imports on the domestic industry. Any resulting trade measures could present additional market access challenges for Australian lamb exporters and producers.

Diversification supports trade resilience

Demand for Australian red meat remains resilient. Australia has been able to leverage its extensive global market access, with export pathways available to more than 100 countries and supported by 19 Free Trade Agreements (FTAs).

This diversification has given the industry the ability to redirect product to alternative markets when disruptions arise and minimise the impact of trade barriers. At the same time, the sector continues to strengthen its presence in emerging markets such as South-East Asia, supporting long-term growth opportunities and enhancing resilience against future trade disruptions.

For more information visit mla.com.au/market-access

Australia's access to more than 100 markets helps protect the industry against trade disruption.



How is new technology being used and adopted to shape change across the red meat supply chain?

Across the red meat industry, recent investments in objective measurement, remote sensing, connectivity, automation and digital traceability are helping producers move from subjective observations to data-informed management. These technologies are improving visibility of pasture, livestock and environmental performance while supporting more efficient use of labour and land resources.

Seeing feed before it becomes a problem

One of the strongest examples of digital adoption has been the growth of the Australian Feedbase Monitor (AFM). The platform provides satellite-derived pasture biomass and ground cover information that enables producers to objectively monitor feed availability and seasonal conditions.

Independent evaluation found the platform was used across more than 5,000 farms managing approximately 235 million hectares, representing a significant proportion of Australia's grazable land. Users reported substantial reductions in time spent manually assessing feed conditions, while gaining greater confidence in stocking, purchasing and destocking decisions.

The challenge

Grazing decisions have traditionally relied on visual assessment and local experience. Variability in seasonal conditions can make it difficult to objectively assess feed availability across large properties.

The innovation

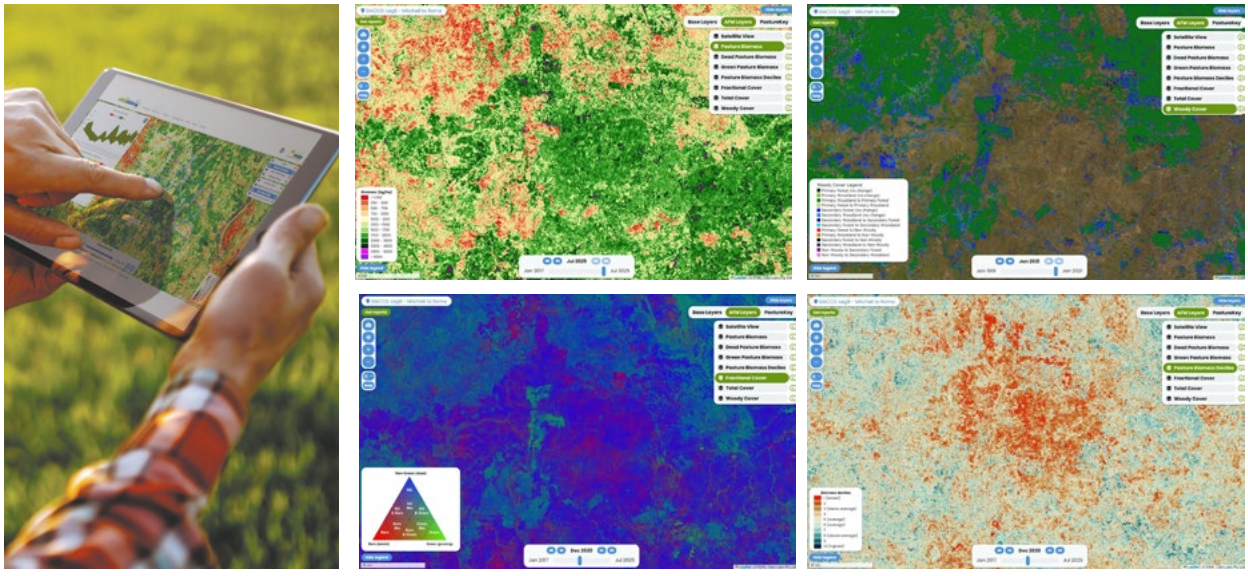
The Australian Feedbase Monitor combines satellite imagery, climate data and modelling to provide objective information on pasture biomass and ground cover across Australian grazing systems.

Industry impact

- Used across more than 5,000 farms.
- Monitoring approximately 235 million hectares of grazing land.
- Supports stocking, supplementary feeding and destocking decisions.
- Reduces time spent on manual feed assessments.
- Provides greater confidence during periods of climate variability.

Why it matters

Objective feed information enables producers to respond earlier to changing seasonal conditions and make more informed management decisions. This supports productivity, profitability and resilience across the grazing sector.



Drones take mustering to new heights

Drone technology is also transitioning from early experimentation to commercial application within grazing enterprises. MLA-supported work with SkyKelpie documented 63 adoptions of drone technology for mustering and on-farm tasks during the project period, with additional uptake occurring beyond the scope of the project. Producers reported benefits including improved safety, enhanced animal welfare outcomes, reduced labour requirements and greater efficiency during mustering and monitoring activities.

Demonstrations across a range of production systems showed drones can complement traditional livestock management approaches, particularly in challenging terrain, during flood and fire events, and when locating stock over large areas. A growing focus on training, simulation tools and aerial stockmanship is helping build producer confidence and capability, supporting broader industry adoption.

The challenge

Mustering livestock across large and difficult terrain can be labour-intensive, costly and potentially hazardous.

The innovation

SkyKelpie combines drone technology, training and aerial stockmanship techniques to support livestock mustering and monitoring.

Industry impact

- 63 documented adoptions during the project period.
- Improved producer confidence through training and demonstrations.
- Reduced labour requirements for some mustering activities.
- Enhanced safety and operational flexibility.
- Demonstrated value in difficult terrain and during adverse events.

Why it matters

Drone technology is moving beyond demonstration activities and into practical commercial use, providing producers with an additional tool to improve operational efficiency and workforce safety.



Industry first: AUS-MEAT approves MEQ Camera

JBS Australia became Australia's first beef processor to receive Facility Objective Carcase Measurement Device Approval from AUS-MEAT for the MEQ Solutions cold carcase grading camera, marking a major milestone in the evolution of carcase grading technology. Integration of AUS-MEAT accredited cold-grading cameras enable producer feedback fixed with pricing signals. The camera replaces traditional visual assessment methods with technology-enabled eating quality predictions. This is improving quality and consistency in overall eating quality and visual traits such as marbling, both of which are key requirements for product positioning in domestic and international markets. This data-driven insight allows producers to better understand how specific traits – such as marbling, fat distribution, and muscle conformation – impact grading outcomes and market performance. Over time, this leads to improvements in herd genetics, carcase quality, and overall productivity – ultimately boosting profitability and competitiveness.

The integration of objective measurement (OM) technologies will enhance the well adopted Meat Standards Australia (MSA) carcase grading measures and support the shift toward real-time data-driven decision-making. Modelling suggests it could deliver $50.2 million in additional value for the cattle industry by 2030, rising to $174.5 million by 2040.

Building a more connected and productive industry

The next phase of digital agriculture is likely to be characterised by integration rather than individual technologies. Feedbase monitoring, satellite connectivity, livestock sensors, drones, sustainability reporting and traceability systems are increasingly being connected into broader decision-support ecosystems.

For producers, successful adoption will continue to depend on practical value, ease of use and demonstrable return on investment. As digital tools become more accessible and interconnected, they have the potential to improve productivity, resilience and market competitiveness across Australia's red meat supply chain.

How can industry respond to growing sustainability expectations while supporting producers and market access?

Australia's red meat integrity system is well positioned to expand through the Livestock Production Assurance (LPA) program, electronic National Vendor Declarations (eNVDs) and the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) to meet emerging market access and compliance requirements, including the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (*EPBC Act*) obligations, Scope 3 reporting and methane-related genetics, while maintaining producer practicality and creating measurable on-farm value.

Emissions of red meat production

Breeding values for methane will enable the complementary selection of low emitting animals alongside productivity traits and performance indexes. Methane breeding values for sheep and beef are forecast to be available to industry by 2028. This will provide an additional practical abatement strategy for producers, and supported by recognised accounting practices, can deliver reductions in Scope 3 emissions for customers of red meat.

European Union Deforestation Regulation

Industry has responded to the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) by building practical, low-burden tools into existing systems rather than creating new compliance layers. The LPA Program now includes a geolocation-sharing tool for producers, while the NLIS provides feedlots and processors purpose-built reports to retrieve and pass on lifetime geolocation data for EUDR compliance. The EUDR will come into effect on December 30, 2026 for beef imported to the region. A welcome exemption for leather and hides was announced by the European Commission in July 2026.

Biodiversity

The red meat supply chain is increasingly seeking evidence of strong environmental management practises on farm. Global reporting frameworks, such as the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures, are driving companies to assess and report on nature-related risks and opportunities. At the same time, customers are increasingly expecting evidence that biodiversity is being maintained or improved. Regulatory changes, including those associated with the *EPBC Act*, are further reinforcing these expectations.

As a result, producers face increasing compliance requirements and potential risks, including reduced market access if expectations are not met.

MLA works closely with red meat producers, Research Advisory Councils and the Goat Industry Research, Development and Adoption Committee (GIRDAC) to identify and prioritise on-farm research investments. Two GIRDAC-prioritised projects, *BioBrowser: Establishing a Biodiversity Baseline for the Australian Goat Industry and Sustainability Credentials*, are helping build the evidence base needed to demonstrate the industry's environmental performance.

The BioBrowser project is establishing a biodiversity baseline for the Australian goat industry by assessing rangeland condition and natural capital. It aims to better understand and validate the industry's contribution to biodiversity, while recognising the importance of harvested rangeland goats to Australia's export markets. The project also considers the role goats can play in managing invasive plant species within rangeland ecosystems.

The Sustainability Credentials project is improving understanding of greenhouse gas emissions from goats across different physiological states, including age, sex, pregnancy, lactation and parasite burden. It is also examining carbon accounting profiles on participating properties and assessing management practices, such as exclusion fencing, that may support increased on-farm carbon sequestration.

Through this work, MLA continues to support practical, science-based approaches that reduce the compliance burden on producers, create opportunities to capture value from emerging nature-focused markets, and help protect the landscapes that underpin sustainable red meat production for future generations.





High-quality protein diets, GLP-1 medications and value opportunities for Australia's red meat industry

Consumer preferences are evolving as health, wellness and healthy ageing become increasingly important drivers of food choices.

Growing awareness of the role nutrition plays in wellbeing, combined with an ageing population and the growing adoption of GLP-1 weight-loss medications, is increasing demand for foods that deliver high-quality protein and essential nutrients. These shifts present a significant opportunity for Australia's red meat industry to promote the health benefits of nutrient-dense, protein-rich foods, such as beef and lamb, and capture value by aligning with consumer demand.

The global wellness economy is forecast to reach almost US$9 trillion by 2028, reflecting the extent to which consumers are prioritising health in their purchasing decisions. Across developed and emerging markets, consumers are becoming more intentional about food choices, seeking products that provide functional health benefits while fitting within balanced and personalised diets. Fresh, minimally processed foods and home-prepared meals are increasingly preferred, reinforcing demand for whole-food protein sources.

Australian beef and lamb are well positioned to benefit. Red meat provides high-quality, complete protein containing all essential amino acids required for muscle maintenance, growth and repair. It also supplies bioavailable iron, zinc and vitamin B12, nutrients that support energy levels, immune function and cognitive health. These nutritional attributes are becoming increasingly relevant as consumers focus on healthy ageing, weight management and proactively taking care of their wellbeing.

The growth of GLP-1 medications is further strengthening the importance of nutrient density. While these medications reduce appetite and overall food intake, they also increase the need for foods that deliver essential nutrients in smaller portions. Consumers using GLP-1 treatments are often seeking ways to maximise nutrition while eating less, creating opportunities for foods that provide a high concentration of nutrients and protein.

For the Australian red meat industry, this represents an opportunity to capture value through nutritional quality. Red meat is well suited to the needs of consumers managing their weight, providing high-quality protein alongside essential micronutrients in relatively small serves. Protein intake is particularly important during weight loss, as reductions in body weight can also lead to the loss of lean muscle mass. Preserving muscle is increasingly recognised as a critical component of healthy weight management, supporting strength, mobility and long-term health outcomes.

Although some GLP-1 users may initially reduce red meat consumption due to appetite changes or gastrointestinal side effects, they are advised by healthcare professionals to reintroduce protein-rich foods to help meet their nutritional requirements. This highlights the importance of educating consumers about the role of red meat in supporting nutrient adequacy and muscle preservation.

As these trends continue to shape food choices, evidence-based nutrition communication will become increasingly important. Consumers are exposed to nutrition advice from a growing number of sources, including social media, influencers and wellness platforms, where the quality and accuracy of information can vary significantly. Trusted, science-based communication is essential to helping consumers make informed decisions and understand the role of red meat within healthy dietary patterns.

> **Australian beef and lamb are well positioned to benefit as consumers increasingly prioritise health and wellbeing.**

Preparing Western Australia's supply chains for the transition beyond live sheep exports in 2028

The phase-out of live sheep exports by sea from 1 May 2028 represents a significant transition for the Western Australian (WA) sheep industry.

While live export has historically provided an outlet for Merino wethers and mechanism for drought-driven destocking, more recently other breeds and younger sheep have also been live exported by sea to markets largely across the Middle East region. As such, the industry now faces the challenge of redirecting these sheep into domestic processing and alternative markets. Live export currently accounts for around 12% of WA sheep turn-off, meaning the focus is less about replacing a single market and more about capturing greater value through a stronger and more integrated supply chain.

The industry-led WA Roadmap to 2028 identifies a clear vision: a confident and adaptable sheep industry underpinned by efficient supply chains, informed decision-making and stronger collaboration. Economic analysis suggests that coordinated improvements across production, processing and marketing could substantially increase both industry value and confidence over the next decade. A critical priority is strengthening domestic processing capability. WA processors must be able to manage additional sheep volumes while improving efficiency, product consistency and value recovery. Technologies such as objective measurement, electronic identification, hook tracking and carcase imaging can improve feedback loops between processors and producers, enabling sheep to be bred, finished and marketed to meet specific customer requirements. More transparent market signals and stronger processor-producer partnerships will also help encourage investment and reduce supply chain volatility.

Supply chain logistics will also need to evolve. The end of live exports will increase the importance of sheep feedlotting, grain finishing, tactical forage systems and improved livestock transport pathways. These systems can help spread turn-off more evenly throughout the year, reducing processing bottlenecks and improving processor utilisation. Government transition programs and investments may also support supply chain capacity, logistics infrastructure and business adaptation to assist this adjustment.

Market development remains equally important. Future growth is expected to come from sheepmeat rather than live animal exports. Success will require a deeper understanding of domestic and international customer requirements, continued engagement with key markets in the Middle East and North Africa, and alignment of production systems with market specifications. The opportunity is to shift from exporting animals to exporting higher-value products, thus creating greater value capture throughout the supply chain.

While the transition away from live sheep export by sea creates uncertainty, it also provides an opportunity to reshape the WA sheep industry around productivity, innovation and customer-focused value creation. Success will depend on coordinated action from producers, processors, government and industry organisations to improve confidence, strengthen collaboration and maintain a profitable sheep sector beyond 2028.

Three priorities for 2028

1. Create a more efficient processing sector
   - Expand adoption of objective measurement, electronic identification and carcase feedback systems.
   - Improve processor-producer integration to align production with customer requirements and maximise carcase value.
2. Build a resilient year-round supply chain
   - Invest in feedbase innovation, grain finishing, feedlotting and transport systems that improve supply consistency and reduce seasonal bottlenecks.
   - Leverage government and industry transition funding to strengthen processing and logistics infrastructure.
3. Grow high value sheepmeat markets
   - Focus on premium domestic and international sheepmeat opportunities, including key MENA markets.
   - Use market intelligence and stronger value-chain collaboration to improve market alignment, customer satisfaction and profitability.

For more information visit mla.com.au/wa-transition





How can industry strengthen price discovery, carcase feedback and market signals across the over-the-hooks channel to support informed selling decisions and confidence across the supply chain?

Strengthening carcase feedback systems and market signals in the over-the-hooks (OTH) channel requires greater collaboration, accessibility and consistency of information right up and down the red meat supply chain.

As OTH transactions are now the dominant sale channel for producers to sell livestock, improving the availability and quality of information across this channel is critical to support informed selling decisions, build confidence and generate value.

Effective market signals are critical to informed on-farm decision-making. Beyond the point of sale, MLA has a strong Meat Standards Australia (MSA) feedback system in place for some time; further evolution of these systems, to even capture non-MSA animals and other additional traits, will allow for better value capture and feedback loops to be created. myFeedback for cattle is an existing feedback system that can be strengthened to whole of animal carcase feedback. myFeedback for sheep will allow for more individual carcase information to be available to scrutinise.

Timely, consistent and meaningful feedback systems enable producers to identify measurable genetic and management improvements that can increase compliance. Understanding how livestock perform against customer requirements provides producers with the information needed to make more informed breeding, feeding and management decisions and improve future returns.

Improving the accuracy of livestock assessment through emerging objective measurement technologies can further strengthen confidence and efficiency within the OTH channel. For example, AI cameras in feedlots and saleyards, emerging yield technologies such as grading cameras to collate disease and defect data. Improving consistency of specification compliance can ultimately reduce waste, enhance saleable meat yield and quality, which remain key market requirements.

Technology and data integration will play a critical role in enabling these outcomes. Leveraging digital technologies, such as the use of third-party systems, to link on farm data with carcase data to connect whole of life animal performance improve insights, predict future outcomes and accelerate productivity gains. This is where producer reactive decision-making can turn into adoption of a more proactive approach to forward planning for business decisions.

Ultimately, supply chain alignment, underpinned by trust is fundamental to a well-functioning OTH channel. Support for value-based marketing initiatives through improved visibility, including the potential to better quantify premiums associated with production attributes. Sharing of signals up and down the supply chain, with existing and new feedback systems will play a key function in recognising production initiatives that deliver value to industry and reward equitably.

> **Timely, consistent and meaningful feedback systems enable producers to identify measurable genetic and management improvements that can increase compliance.**

Glossary and key terms

ABARES	Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ALFA	Australian Lot Feeders' Association
AU$	Australian dollar
AWI	Australian Wool Innovation
CPI	Consumer price index
cwt	carcase weight
DAFF	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
EPBC	*Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*
eNVD	electronic National Vendor Declarations
EU	European Union
EUDR	European Union Deforestation Regulation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
Farm cash income	A measure of cash funds generated by the farm business for farm investment and consumption after paying all costs incurred in production.
FMD	foot-and-mouth disease
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
GIRDAC	Goat Industry Research, Development and Adoption Committee
GDP	gross domestic product
GLP-1	Glucagon-like peptide-1
Industry turnover	The income generated by business within the industry from the sales of goods and services including the income generated from rent, leasing and hiring income.
Industry value add	The overall value of goods and services produced by businesses in an industry (also known as contribution to gross domestic product (GDP)).
LPA	Livestock Production Assurance
LSD	lumpy skin disease
lwt	liveweight
MLA	Meat & Livestock Australia
MSA	Meat Standards Australia
MDC	MLA Donor Company
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NLIS	National Livestock Identification System
NLRS	National Livestock Reporting Service
NSW	New South Wales
NZ	New Zealand
NT	Northern Territory
NW	North-west
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OM	Objective measurement
Over-the-hooks	The direct sale of cattle, sheep or lambs from farm to abattoir, with producers paid according to carcase value on a sliding grid. The processor also assesses and purchases the skin based on length and quality. Sellers generally cover transport costs, with payment received within 7–14 days.
PNG	Papua New Guinea
rwt	retail weight
SPIS	Sheep Producers Intentions Survey
swt	shipped weight
SA	South Australia
Tariff	A tax or duty to be paid on a particular class of imports or exports
TDM	Trade Data Monitor
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
WA	Western Australia


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