

final report

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Terminal Sire Selection

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Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the contribution of participants, the presenter, Stuart Warner, and DPI who made suggestions for improvement of this learning package.

Most participants were wool and fat lamb producers from around Trentham in central Victoria and gave freely of their time.

Executive Summary

The pilot workshop, *Terminal Sire Selection*, was held on the 27th June 2006 at Trentham in central Victoria. There were 18 participants, 4 women and 14 men (15 were producer participants). The age range of the group was from age 25 to over 50 years of age.

The workshop presentation was measured against the stated learning objectives, principles of adult learning, participation and action learning. The accommodation of the different learning styles in the presentation was also evaluated.

This usefulness of this course when compared to others similar was scored at 8 out of 10.

Key findings

Content

There was a core of very valuable information for producers at this course and this was evidenced by the score participants gave the course overall. Six producers felt that the course was limited by time. However, as observer, I felt that this was less of an issue compared to other similar courses. The evidence for this was that the presenter felt sufficiently comfortable to take more than the time allocated to allow participants to work together through problems and to explain to each other some of the more difficult parts of the program. Participants found this most helpful.

Presentation

The workshop was delivered by a confident and competent presenter. He deferred to the knowledge of the participants on many occasions and invited them to contribute to the course content and they did. All learning styles were catered for, although comments from some participants suggests that the reflective learners would have like a slower pace. Learning objectives were met. Most participants made some contribution to the interaction.

The workshop notes need some reordering of the information for better logic and flow. The presenter's idea of completing the *Take home activity* during the workshop worked very well and allowed the participants to help each other through the difficult parts of the course.

Continuous improvement

There was constant adjustment by the presenter during the workshop to make it flow better or to allow participants more time to learn from each other. There were also reflective questions posed about the value of the exercises.

Accreditation

Most *EDGENetwork* courses are eligible for accreditation. More can be made of this but presenters will need clear notes and guidelines to be able to inform participants what they need to do to apply for accreditation should they wish to do so. A one page information sheet for participants in all the *EDGENetwork* courses would serve this purpose.

A proforma for course writers and developers might also be useful to standardise the presentation of materials. For example, a statement about accreditation and how each course fits into possible accreditation pathways, each section should relate to one of the overall learning objectives, have separate cover and introductory pages, exercises to come at the end of a section.

Participants

How the workshop was valued:

- Over 80% found the workshop enjoyable, valuable and thought provoking, and they believed that the workshop had provided them with new information
- Participants particularly enjoyed working with their peers
- A third of participants thought that too much material was included and there was not enough time to cover the material properly

Impact of the workshop:

- 27% thought that what they had learnt through the workshop was very important for their business performance, and 53% thought that it was important
- 100% improved their ability to determine the factors that drive profitability in a lamb enterprise, and their understanding about how to value rams
- All participants had at least some confidence after the workshop to read LAMBPLAN, Australian Sheep Breeding values and indexes and to determine breeding strategies that will assist in making the desired decisions

Feedback from the deliverer

- The deliverer had generally found the notes for the workshop appropriate, but suggested several changes for future workshops

Recommendations

1. Acknowledgment that the material is highly relevant in the current market.
2. That MLA look at developing generic guidelines to standardise the presentation of the course materials.
3. Specific changes be made to the material as suggested.

1 Introduction

Courses are offered by MLA through its *EDGEnetwork* program. The development of each course has many iterations before it is seen as ready for general release. The course the subject of this evaluation, *Terminal Sire Selection*, is in its final stage of preparation. Courses at any of the stages are evaluated on the basis of:

1. Relevance to the target audience
2. Ability to be understood by the target audience
3. Use of adult learning principles
4. Use of action learning and continuous improvement processes
5. Accommodation of the four learning styles
6. Achievement of the learning objectives
7. Sound research

2 Method Of Evaluation

Data were collected using:

- Participant observation during the workshop
- Structured review with participants after the workshop conducted by the evaluator
- A structured questionnaire after the workshop for participants and the presenter
- Unstructured discussions with participants during the workshop

Data were validated by comparing comments from the presenter with comments from participants and observation notes. They were also validated by comparing written with verbal comments.

3 Workshop evaluation by observation

3.1 *The workshop structure*

Introductions at the beginning of the day were quite lengthy taking nearly 30 minutes but were worth it not just to introduce the participants to the presenter and to each other but it also identified what the focus was of each of the participant's enterprises and whether they had previously used LAMBPLAN data. Those who had already used this data were able to help others with some of the more difficult concepts.

Some discussion about accreditation would have been useful and information on how participants can go about gaining accreditation.

Asking participants to be working on their *Take home activity* right at the beginning and then again at the end of the day was a very useful innovation. It

reinforced some of the learning more firmly in the minds of the participants. It also served as a way for participants to help each other, a strategy that should be encouraged.

Most participants engaged interactions in a variety of ways. They asked questions or were asked questions. Quite frequently, the presenter asked specific participants to explain how they managed the parts of their enterprise that related to the subject matter being discussed.

When it came to the written exercises, one participant was heard to say on two occasions "I was never any good at school and still not". He went on to involve himself in the discussions and was gently helped where necessary by other participants who did not seem to acknowledge his statement as valid. Similar statements were made by others because of the complexity of some of the data.

Adult learning principles were used in the main, however, the question and answer technique where the answers are predetermined contravenes these principles. To make the technique acceptable, the presenter could use a round robin method in which they also participate so that it becomes a friendly competition between participants and presenter and more of a game.

3.2 Continuous improvement

Pilots lend themselves to continuous improvement because both presenters, the evaluators and the participants discuss what worked and what did not. It was the case at this workshop that the presenter was making on going assessments about how the material was being received and adjusting the program.

3.3 The workshop manual

Overall, the notes are comprehensive and well written, the content useful, very informative and relevant. The developers should be acknowledged for their work. The workbook was well presented and looks like a finished product.

What can be improved

In general terms, the MLA courses would benefit by having a standardised format which includes:

1. The statement of learning objectives as occurs now
2. How this course relates to other courses and possible accreditation pathways
3. Each section should:
 - Relate to one of the learning objectives
 - Have its own section cover page with key messages from that section
 - Have an introduction, content and exercises
4. References as occurs now.

The order of the material as presented caused some difficulty in that participants were asked to work with data from LAMBPLAN without knowing how those data were arrived at. Reordering the information may lessen some of this confusion so that an explanation, for example, of how the bands work, how the values are calculated and what they mean is presented before assessments about the value of traits of particular rams is asked for. These explanations will need to be made more slowly and repeated at least twice. Detail about formulae and explanations should also be in the workbook so that participants can read the explanation as they are hearing it thus catering for auditory and visual learners.

Specific comments

The case study table on p11 should be on a slide so that the presenter can take participants through an example of what they need to do in the exercise. Participants were floundering a little at this point. The presenter also has notes that relate to specific changes.

Not much needs to be done to modify the material for this course to be complete.

4 Results and Analysis of what participants and the deliverer stated

4.1 Summary of the results from the workshop

How the workshop was valued

- The participants scored the workshop, on average, 8 out of 10.
- Over 80% found the workshop enjoyable, valuable and thought provoking, and they believed that the workshop had provided them with new information.
- Participants particularly enjoyed working with their peers.
- Six participants thought that too much material was included and there was not enough time to cover the material properly. This had detracted from their enjoyment.

The presenter and the materials

- 80% found the handout notes useful and 57% thought that the graphs and diagrams were clear and relevant.
- 93% found the presenter enthusiastic and 100% thought the presenter was knowledgeable.

The activities

- 80% of participants thought that the examples given were relevant and practical.
- The most useful exercise was gaining information on how to search the LAMBPLAN website.
- The auction was a less useful exercise with 14% of participants believing that it had little use for them.

Impact of the workshop

- 27% thought that what they had learnt through the workshop was very important for their business performance, and 53% thought that it was important. No participants thought they day had little importance.
- 100% improved their ability to determine the factors that drive profitability in a lamb enterprise, and their understanding about how to value rams. 93% believed the workshop had improved their ability to identify the traits of economic importance that can be influenced by genetic selection.
- All participants had at least some confidence after the workshop to read LAMBPLAN Australian Sheep Breeding values and indexes and to determine breeding strategies that will assist in making the desired decisions. 20% were very confident to undertake both of these activities.

Further training

- 64% thought the workshop revealed the need for further training. Ideas for further training included ewe selection, selection for resistance to worms, and more of the same.

Feedback from the deliverer

- The deliverer had generally found the notes for the workshop appropriate, but suggested several changes for future workshops.

4.2 Feedback from participants on the workshop

The 15 producer participants who attended the workshop all completed a written questionnaire at the end of the day. These were distributed and collected by the evaluator.

Through the questionnaire, participants were asked to indicate if they had found the workshop:

- Enjoyable
- Valuable
- Prompted questions from them
- Thought provoking
- Had new information for them

For each question, participants indicated whether they agreed with the question completely, in part, or not at all. Their responses are shown in the figure below. The number of participants is indicated on the bars in the figure¹.

These results show that the majority (over 80%) of participants found the workshop enjoyable, valuable and thought provoking, and they believed that the workshop had provided them with new information. Sixty-nine percent of participants believed that the workshop had prompted questions (and thus participation) from them. Two participants thought that the workshop had not prompted questions from them.

¹ A different total number of participants responded to each question which is why the bars have different percentage values.

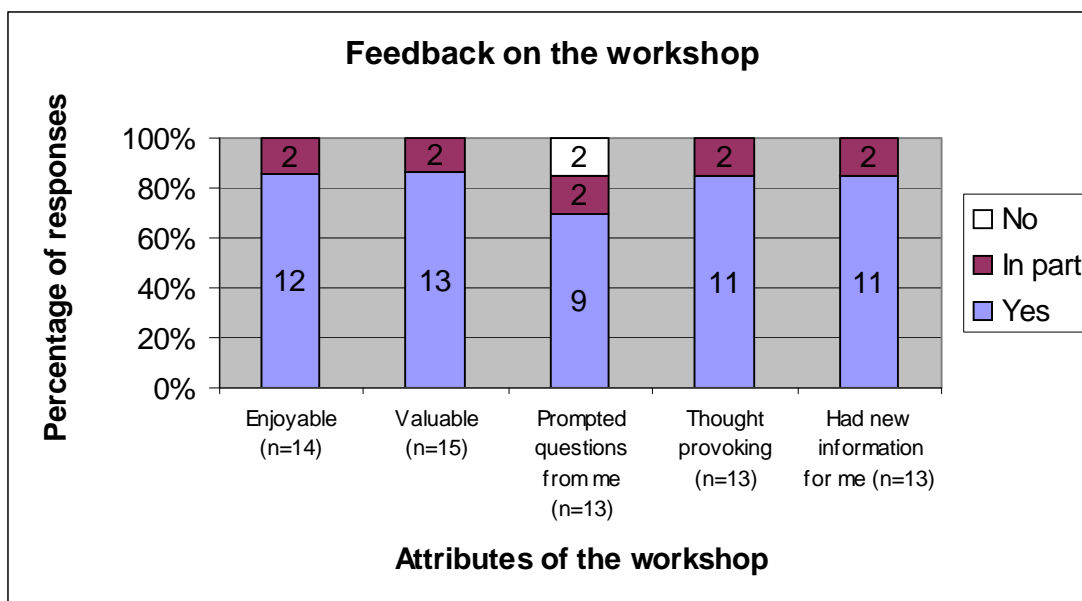


Figure 1 Feedback from participants on the workshop

Participants were asked what they had enjoyed most about the workshop and why.

Four participants had most enjoyed working with their peers in the group activities. They commented:

- Because we were able to use each other's information to work out the exercises without feeling pressured.
- Lots of figures made the activities difficult. However this was made easier because of group input.
- Discussion amongst my peers on specialist defined subject.
- Having the experience of the group interaction and building relationships.

Eight participants had most enjoyed the content they had learned through the day, particularly using ASBVs. They commented:

- Learning how to read ASBVs because I can now buy rams on this and not so much on visual.
- ASBV sheets helps to understand buying rams.
- Learning about the figures, because previously they were like a strange language.
- Working through the percentile report gave me a better understanding.
- How to read the LAMBPLAN and convert it to numbers.
- Seeing the selection of rams and comparing them to LAMBPLAN.
- The full explanation of percentile sheets and ASBV data base. To fully understand these sheets is imperative if you are going to purchase stock using performance data.
- A greater insight into ram selection.

4.2.1 Score out of ten

Participants were asked to compare the workshop with others they had attended, and to give it a score out of ten. The average score was eight. One participant scored the workshop ten out of ten, and three scored the workshop seven out of ten. No participants scored the workshop lower than seven out of ten. These results are shown in the figure below.

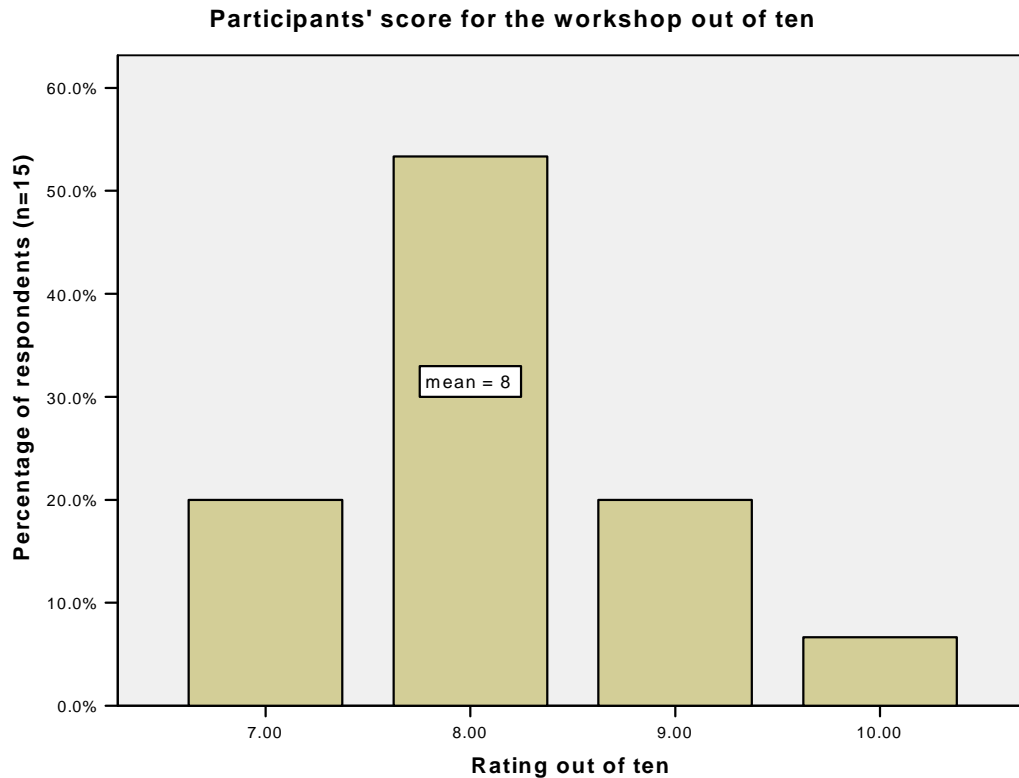


Figure 2. Participants' rating of the workshop

4.2.2 What did participants enjoy the least and why?

Six participants identified aspects of the day that they had not enjoyed. They commented that there had been too much complicated material presented in too short a period of time. Several participants also commented that the presentation of this material could have been better.

- The auction, because there was not enough time.
- Our presenter talking at length on complicated figures. Needed more time, and better presentation of this material.
- Jumping from figures to figures, pages x to pages y. This felt jerky and hurried.
- Too much information, I could not take it in.
- Sometimes I was overwhelmed by volume.
- Trying to understand and work out ASBV values. Perhaps trying to do too much in a short time.

Two participants commented that they had enjoyed everything about the workshop, and the remaining seven participants did not comment.

4.2.3 Support materials

Participants were asked to indicate how useful the handout notes were, and whether the graphs and diagrams were clear and relevant. Their responses are shown in the figure below.

Of the participants, 80% thought that the handout notes were useful and 20% thought that they were partly useful. Fifty-seven percent of participants thought that the graphs and diagrams were clear and relevant, 36% thought that they were partially clear and relevant, and 7% (1 respondent) thought that they were not clear or relevant.

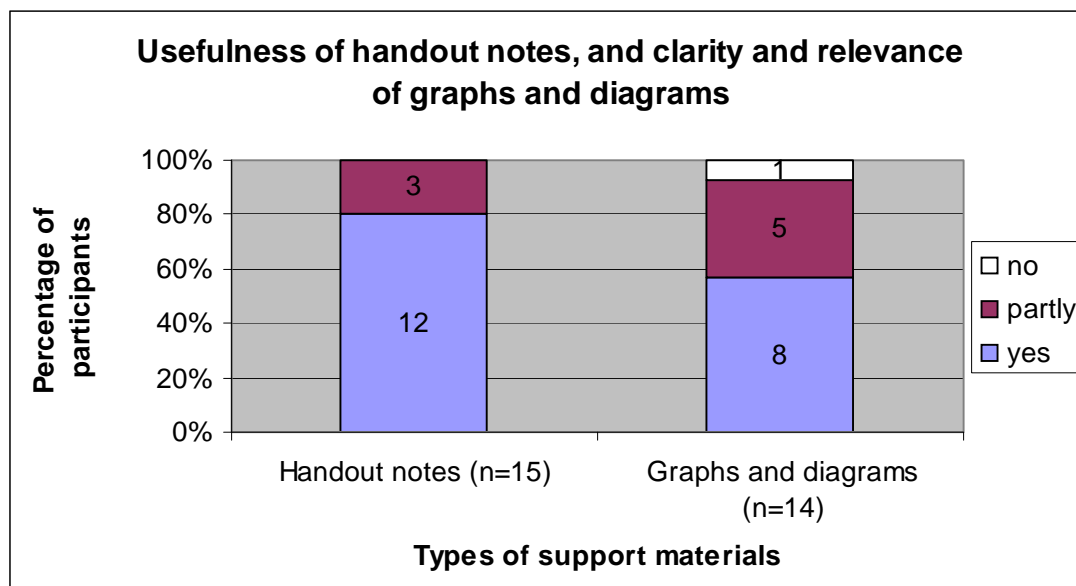


Figure 3 Usefulness of handout notes, and clarity and relevance of graphs and diagrams

Participants were asked to comment on the usefulness of the handout notes. One participant commented that the handouts were ‘clearly set out and organised’. Six participants made other comments and these are included below:

- Perhaps they could put in a different order so attendees do not have to flip from front to back so often.
- Exercise sheets should be separate (e.g. booklet) as used or in full document.
- Could have told which section each time.
- Big book/little use!
- Have only a little time to digest while session was proceeding.
- This will be better judged when notes are reviewed.

Participants were also asked to comment on the graphs and diagrams. Three participants who had indicated that the graphs and figures were clear and relevant commented:

- While they appeared confusing, when explained they became most useful.
- Excellent presentation.
- Very well presented by [the deliverer].

One participant commented that they would be better able to judge when they had had more time to review them, and five participants made other comments.

- Need definitions/legends, e.g. Pwwt = Post Weaning weight @ 200 Day Weight.
- Too many figures for my head.
- Could be made easier - as discussed.
- Not colour in work book.
- Needed shading.

4.2.4 Process

The participants were asked for their feedback on the enthusiasm and knowledge of the presenter, whether the introduction made the purpose of the workshop clear to them, and if the examples given were relevant and practical. Their responses are displayed in the figure below.

In summary:

- 80% of participants thought that the introduction was clear
- 93% of participants thought that the presenter was enthusiastic
- 100% of participants thought that the presenter was knowledgeable
- 80% of participants thought that the examples given were relevant and practical.

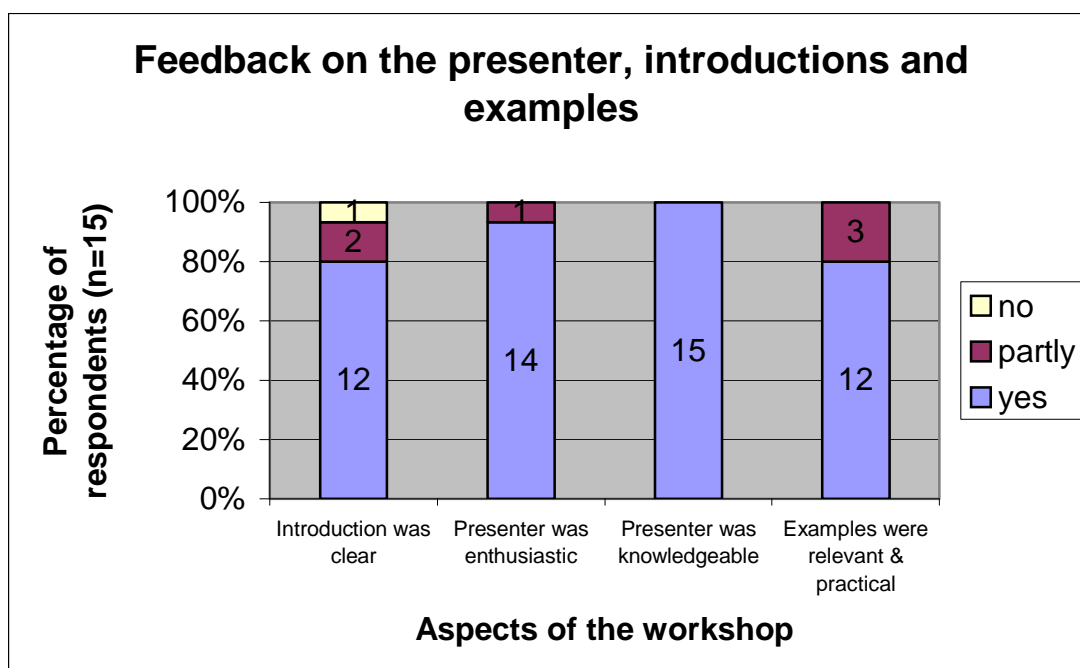


Figure 4 Feedback on the presenter, introductions and examples

One participant who thought that the introduction was only partly clear commented 'Written or verbal detail prior to attendance may have been helpful'.

Two participants who agreed that the presenter was enthusiastic commented:

- [The deliverer] was clear and concise.
- Very good.

Two participants who agreed that the examples given were practical and relevant commented:

- Simon and Ted Beattie [producers] were good hosts of the practical side and went to no end of trouble to assist.
- The practical side is most worthwhile.

4.2.5 Exercises

Participants were asked to indicate how useful the exercises conducted in the workshop were for increasing their learning. The particular exercises were:

- Information on how to search the LAMBPLAN website
- Comparing visual assessment versus objective assessment
- The auction

Their responses are shown in the figure below.

Of the exercises, participants found gaining information on how to search the LAMBPLAN website the most useful with 27% of the 15 respondents finding it very useful and 47% finding it useful. Sixty percent of participants had found the exercise of comparing the visual assessment with the objective assessment useful or very useful. The auction was a slightly less useful exercise by comparison, although 50% thought it useful or very useful.

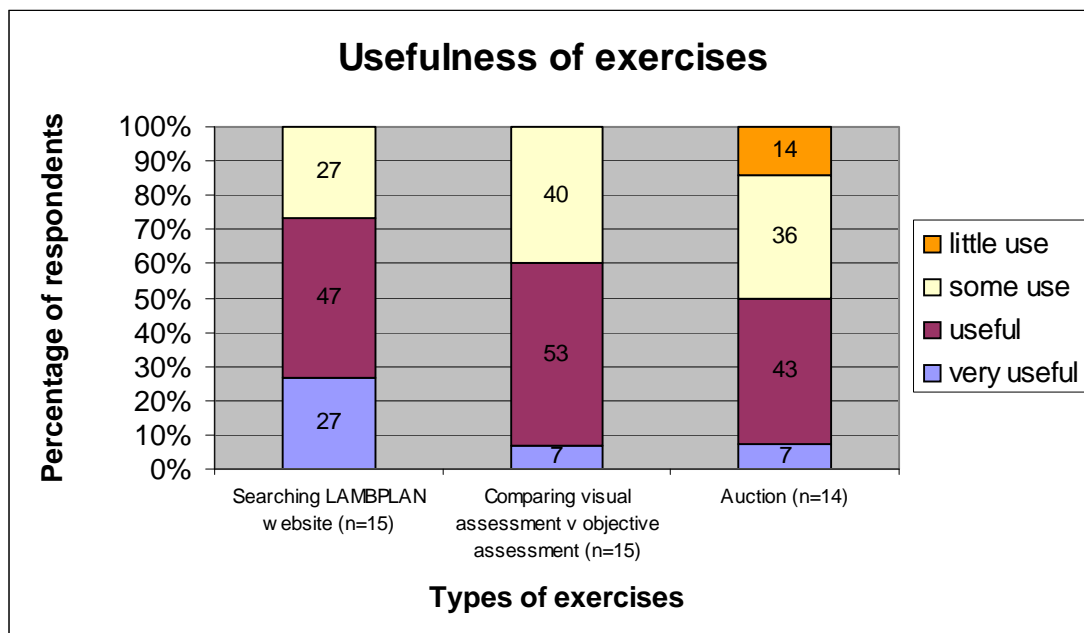


Figure 5 How useful the participants found the various exercises

Participants indicated how important they thought this learning would be for the future performance of their businesses. Of the participants, 27% believed that what they had learnt would be very important, 53% important and 20% of some importance. None of the participants believed that it would have little importance. These results are shown in the figure below.

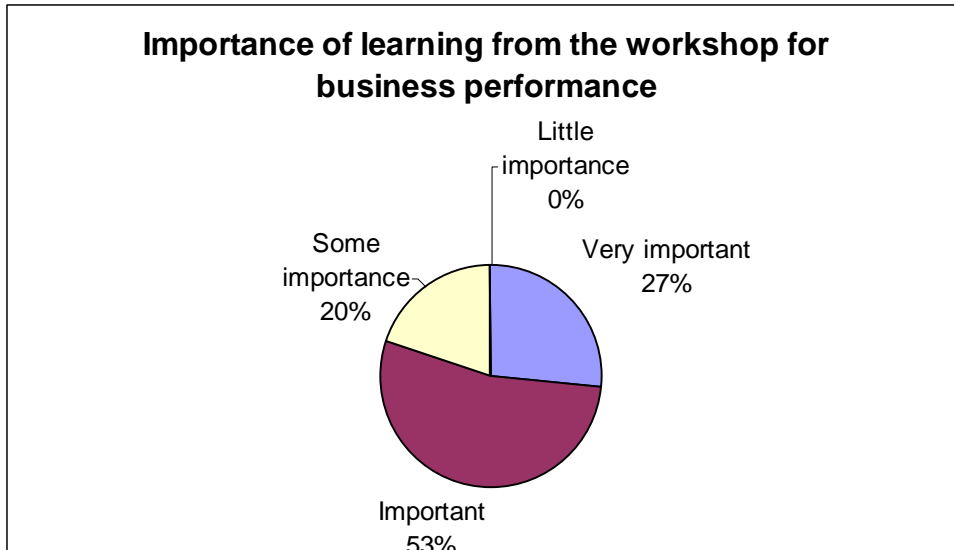


Figure 6 The importance of the learning gained from the workshop for business performance

4.3 Workshop Outcomes

Participants were asked whether the workshop had improved their:

- Ability to determine the factors that drive profitability in a lamb enterprise
- Ability to identify the traits of economic importance that can be influenced by genetic selection
- Understanding about how to value rams

Participants were asked to give a yes or no response. The results are displayed in the figure below.

All of the participants (100%) believed that the workshop had improved their ability to determine the factors that drive profitability in a lamb enterprise, and their understanding about how to value rams. Ninety-three percent (93%) of participants believed that the workshop had improved their ability to identify the traits of economic importance that can be influenced by genetic selection.

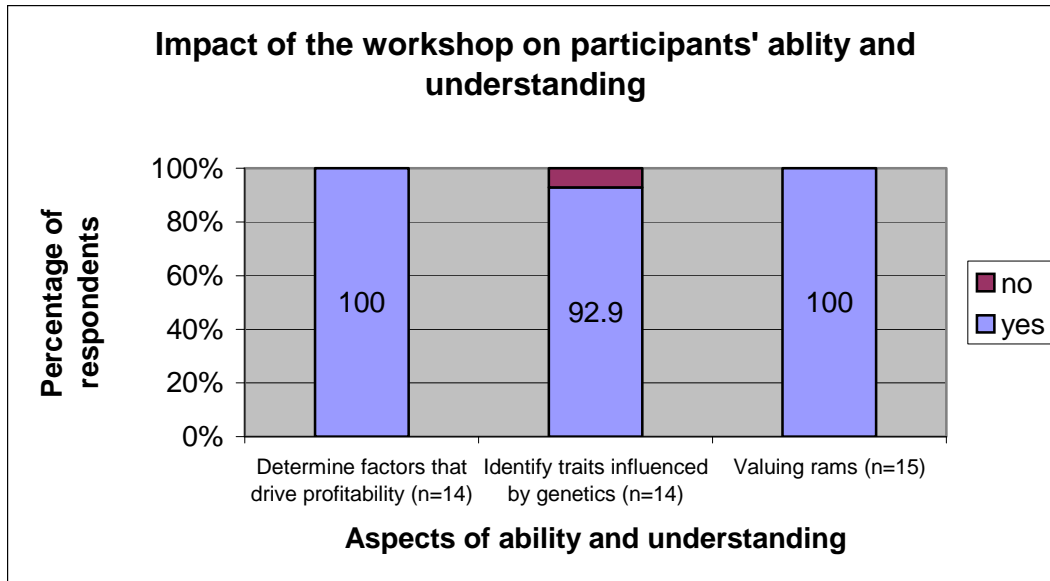


Figure 7 The impact on ability and understanding

One of the participants who believed that the workshop had improved their ability to determine the factors that drive profitability in a lamb enterprise commented 'it has kindled my interest in the subject'. Another participant commented now had a 'far greater awareness' of how to identify the traits of economic importance that can be influenced by genetic selection.

Impact on participants' confidence

Participants were asked to indicate, after attending the workshop, how confident they were to carry out the following activities:

- Reading LAMBPLAN Australian Sheep Breeding values and indexes
- Determining breeding strategies that will assist in making the desired decisions

Participants were asked to indicate their confidence level from very confident through to not confident. Their responses are displayed in the figure below.

All of the participants had at least some confidence to undertake these activities after completing the workshop. Generally, the participants were more confident to read LAMBPLAN Australian Sheep Breeding values and indexes than they were to determine breeding strategies to assist them in making the desired decisions.

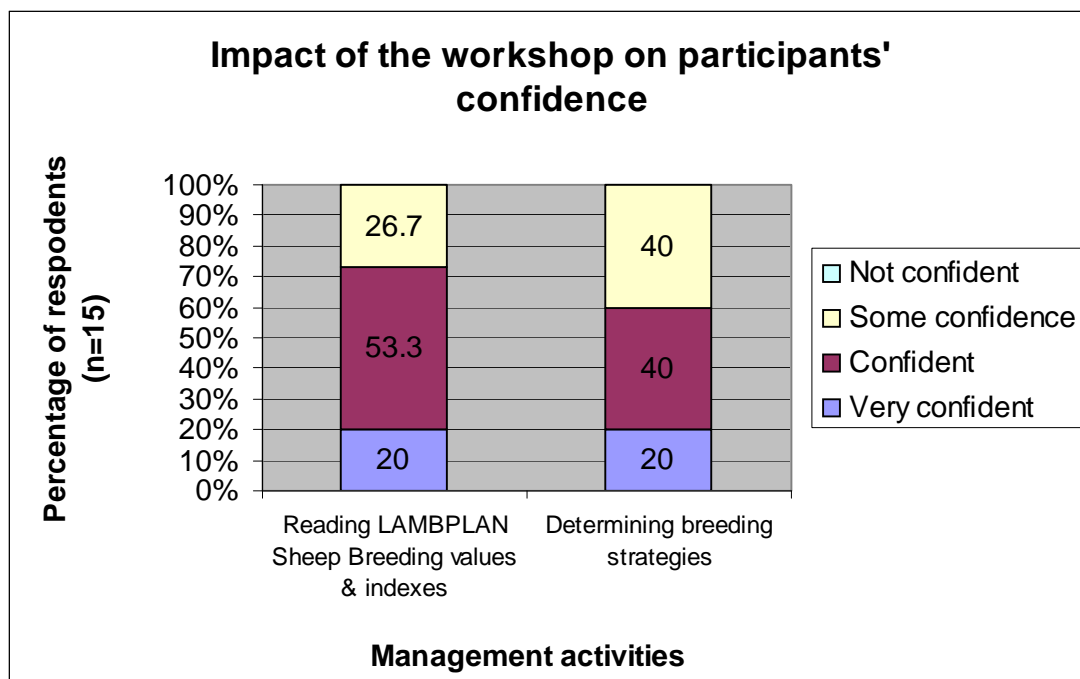


Figure 8. The impact on participants' confidence

4.3.1 Applying the learnings

Participants were asked what they could apply from the workshop on their own farm situation immediately. Ten participants commented.

Six participants commented on their increased skills and confidence in selecting rams:

- Able to buy better rams.
- Better choices in selecting rams for my needs and desired results.
- Definitely better ram purchases.
- Looking to buy rams.
- Using performance measures of both sheep and cattle in selecting breeding stock.
- Will have more confidence when next buying rams.

Four participants made other comments:

- Better management.
- Looking at the age of my rams and their ASDU for my enterprise.
- More research in aims and markets.
- As a stud breeder I will be better able to understand my clients' needs.

4.3.2 Need for further training

Participants were asked if the workshop had revealed the need for further training. Seven (64%) believed that the workshop had revealed **the need for** further training..

Four participants listed the topics that they believed further training was needed in. This included:

- Ewe selection

- Ewe side and worm count
- Worms and resistance and heritability
- More of the same

One participant simply commented 'It has whetted my appetite for further information'.

4.3.3 General comments

Eight participants took the opportunity to make other comments or suggestions on the workshop.

- Great day.
- Thank you very much.
- Very good presenter with great knowledge and ability to help learn.
- Well done.
- This is a worthwhile course that with a little further work could be even better.
- More emphasis on heritable characteristics. Do you want us to use the booklet to make notes? I.e. are the notes in the book or do we need to write it down? Thanks a lot. Food was great.
- Needs to be made simpler depending on groups, i.e. seed-stock providers versus terminal lamb producers require different intensity of information. I do appreciate the work and effort that goes into these days by all associated with them. Thank you!
- Suggest team presentations.

4.4 Feedback from the deliverer

General comments

The deliverer made the following general comments about the workshop:

- The facilitator notes provided part of the detail to understand and deliver the activity. More information on the exercises was needed.
- Oversights were the absence of a road map and that not enough emphasis was placed on within breed variation.
- The recommended resources were sufficient.
- The recommended delivery structure was partially effective and was changed by the deliverer as they ran through the workshop.

What worked well

All of the exercises were valuable. The introduction, market, have you used LAMBPLAN etc, scenario exercises and the take home activity.

What did not work well?

$P = G \times E$. Need to use more picture oriented.

Changes needed to make the workshop more effective

The deliverer made a number of modifications to improve the delivery of the workshop including re-ordering activities as the day went as they felt that some exercises in the workshop plan were out of order.

The deliverer also suggested a number of other modifications including:

- That the profit drivers should be examined and this should be tied in better with the rest of the workshop.
- That the take home section needs to be incorporated into the activity.
- The auction needs more competitive budgets.
- Need to look at rams and possibly use some rams for mock auction for proper scenario.