



Final report

Australian Lot Feeders' Association Annual Service Agreement Final Report FY 2021

Project code: E.ALF.2021
Prepared by: Australian Lot Feeders' Association
Date published: June 2021

PUBLISHED BY
Meat and Livestock Australia Limited
PO Box 1961
NORTH SYDNEY NSW 2059

Meat & Livestock Australia acknowledges the matching funds provided by the Australian Government to support the research and development detailed in this publication.

This publication is published by Meat & Livestock Australia Limited ABN 39 081 678 364 (MLA). Care is taken to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this publication. However MLA cannot accept responsibility for the accuracy or completeness of the information or opinions contained in the publication. You should make your own enquiries before making decisions concerning your interests. Reproduction in whole or in part of this publication is prohibited without prior written consent of MLA.

CONSULTATION

Feedlot industry consultation

ALFA participated in MLA's Annual Consultation process providing MLA guidance on the feedlot Industry's priorities and areas of grain fed levy investment. ALFA's R&D Committee also worked closely with MLA to identify priority areas and invest grain fed levies into research for the betterment of the feedlot industry and operators. The identification of priorities was obtained through feedback from ALFA members and discussions with elected representatives through ALFA's Committee and Council process. ALFA also provided MLA with an update of its forecast grain fed cattle turnoff model providing projections on levy revenue, assisting MLA financial planning. These consultation processes culminated in ALFA's input into MLA's Annual Investment Plan for the FY22 period.

ALFA provided ongoing policy guidance in a number of MLA supported forums. An example of this is ALFA's policy contribution to the A-EU FTA + A-UK FTA: Beef Taskforce and direction to the Federal Government's negotiation team, leading to a A-UK in principle agreement to a free trade arrangement over a 10 year period.

Quarterly Feedlot Survey

ALFA designed a new-look report in 2020 to present the ALFA/MLA Quarterly Feedlot Survey results of cattle on feed and other important Feedlot Industry market indicators. The data from the survey, generated quarterly and obtained by ALFA through consultation with feedlot operators, captures important commercial information that reports the dynamics of the grain fed beef supply chain.

ANIMAL HEALTH, WELFARE AND BIOSECURITY CONSULTATION

Managing Summer Heat in Australian Feedlots

In the lead up to summer 2020-21, the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) predicted that La Niña conditions would prevail which can bring increased rain, humidity and risk of tropical cyclones; all challenging environments when managing cattle. In response, ALFA produced a *Guide on Managing Summer Heat in Australian Feedlots* and an *NFAS Livestock Incident Reporting Requirements* poster and provided these tools to all feedlot operators across Australia. The Guide was developed to assist lot feeders prepare for and manage excessive heat events. Information contained in the Guide support the decision-making process and provides practical management practices that can reduce the risk of heat and help protect cattle welfare.

Feedlot Animal Welfare Benchmarking

ALFA is working with MLA, and the broader feedlot community, to establish Animal Welfare Benchmarking for feedlots. Preliminary results delivered broader indicators than expected and these are being further refined through consultation which will ultimately determine the suitability of the measures, including their adoption pathway in industry.

A focus group of commercial lot feeders was established in 2021 to review the draft indicators and framework, and make recommendations to ensure applicable measures, metrics, thresholds and assessment protocols is achieved by the end of the project. A framework for piloting has been agreed with the research team.

ALFA Shade Initiative

To maximise cattle wellbeing, meet welfare standards, increase productivity, and meet community expectations, ALFA is committed to seeing the adoption of shade in feedlots increase over time.

To support this, ALFA launched the *ALFA Shade Initiative* in November 2020; a project asking all Australian feedlots to make a pledge to provide cattle under their care with access to shade by 2026. The initiative builds on the feedlot industry's already strong commitment to animal welfare – an estimated 66% of Industry feedlot capacity already has shade in place - and positions our sector for long term sustainability.

MLA Research indicates shade has positive outcomes on cattle welfare and comfort, especially during abnormal heat wave conditions. It also showed that shade can result in productivity gains in terms of increased feed intake and hence weight gain at slaughter. Shade enables cattle to display natural shade seeking behaviour, aiding in their ability to reduce the impact of environmental extremes and improve comfort. The *ALFA Shade Initiative* was developed in response to information over two years of work by the ALFA Team, the ALFA Feedlot Committee and ALFA Council.

ALFA continues to support grain fed levy investment through MLA in this area including projects to develop additional types of shade solutions for the feedlot industry.

ALFA Shade Hub

To support lot feeders in implementing shade, ALFA created a dedicated webpage called the ALFA Shade Hub at www.feedlots.com.au/shade. The ALFA Shade Hub houses a range of key resources including a [Unlocking the benefits of Shade Handbook](#) which contains information on the [benefits of shade to animal welfare](#) and [feedlot productivity](#), the [design and construction of shade](#) and answers to [frequently asked questions](#).

Information on financing opportunities through Federal and State low interest loans and asset write off incentives are also available on the Hub. ALFA provided the full range of resources directly to NFAS accredited feedlots and key stakeholders via an Information Pack sent in November 2020 outlining the initiative.

Understanding the Benefits of Shade Webinar – November 2020

ALFA also held a webinar for Lot Feeders to hear about the *ALFA Shade Initiative*. Presenters included Lot Feeders, Bryce Camm of Wonga Plains Feedlot, Tom Green of Thomas Foods International Feedlot, Scott and Katie Llyod of Wiembilla, and Scott Braund of Mort & Co. Attendees also received the latest information from the scientific community including presentations from Dr John Gaughan and Dr David Miller who covered the animal welfare benefits of shade. Lastly the National Australia Bank presented on due diligence and financing capital. A similar, but separate webinar was also held for external stakeholders to inform them of the initiative and the activities and resources in place to support lot feeders.

INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP & CAPABILITY BUILDING

Australian Rural Leadership Program

ALFA, with the support of MLA and grain fed levies, supported Jeff Schuller, Thomas Foods International Feedlot SA to participate on Course 27 of the Australian Rural Foundation's (ARLF) ARLP Course 27. ARLP ensures our upcoming leaders are highly skilled, effective and influential. Lachlan Brown, Pakadaringa Feedlot QLD graduated from Course 26 in 2020 following a delay in the course caused by COVID-19.

Grain Fed Beef Industry Scholarship to TRAIL

ALFA, with the support of MLA and grain fed levies, supported two positions on the ARLF's TRAIL Program in 2020. TRAIL is a cross-sector, challenge-based leadership program set in Canberra and region, for Australia's future emerging rural leaders. In 2020, one position was reserved for the winner of the ALFA Young Lot Feeder of the Year Award, and awarded to Ben Emery, Rangers Valley NSW, whilst the remaining position was by application and awarded to Harrison Lightbody, Thomas Foods International Feedlot SA. Ben was unable to attend the COVID-19 rescheduled course dates and as a result ALFA staff member, Caela Dye, attended in his place. Ben will complete the program in 2021.

Feedlot TECH training, education and careers hub

ALFA recognises that building capable, high performing teams is the key ingredient to operational excellence and that attracting the workforce of the future is essential for business continuity and growth. To realise this goal ALFA progressed development of *Feedlot TECH*, an online training, education and careers hub designed to showcase feedlot industry careers and provide feedlot operators and individuals better access to training, professional development and career path opportunities. *Feedlot TECH* is a joint project between ALFA and Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA).

During the period the website and Learning Management System, which will house online training, was built and piloted with lot feeders. Once launched in October 2021 this tool will provide the Australian feedlot sector, its businesses and current and prospective employees with a clear career pathway and associated training, professional development and support networks.

ADOPTION

Exploring Feedlot Energy Webinar – March 2021

In conjunction with MLA, ALFA delivered a webinar that extended the research findings of MLA Research Project *B.FLT.5003: Improving feedlot energy and water use efficiency*. The webinar aimed to help feedlot operators understand technologies available to improve water and energy usage and efficiency on feedlots. Joe McMeniman, MLA Feedlot Program Manager, moderated the workshop and Q&A session, while Carl Duncan and Max Barnes presented on the research findings and Rob Fowler was engaged as a leading supplier of boilers to present on practical considerations for feedlots. The webinar was attended by 76 feedlot staff from 28 feedlots.

Moving Toward Carbon Neutrality Webinar

Together with MLA, ALFA delivered a webinar in May 2021 to assist feedlot operator awareness, understanding and adoption of methods to manage their carbon footprint and help industry collectively move toward CN30. Presenters included Dr Stephen Wiedemann of Integrity Ag and Environment, Maik Kindermann of DSM (inventor of 3NOP), Dr Amelia de Almeida from the University of New England, Daryl Savage of NAPCO Wainui Feedlot and Doug McNicholl from MLA. A recording

of this webinar is available on the Feedlot Carbon Neutral Hub at www.feedlots.com.au/carbon.

BunkBot demonstrations

MLA's Feedlot Research and Development program has invested grain fed levies into feedlot automation. One of the first solutions to move to commercialisation is the BunkBot, an autonomous robot that manoeuvres a Bunk Scanner around a feedlot, providing estimates of unconsumed feed that have proven to be more accurate and precise than humans. On-site demonstrations of the technology in a commercial setting commenced in 2021 at Mort & Co's Pinegrove Feedlot near Millmerran, Queensland, with multiple groups of feedlot operators attending to see this technology in action. With the adoption of BunkBot, Pinegrove Feedlot have introduced night calls to their operations, enabling them to collect more data, improve feed utilisation and increase knowledge of feed intake. Jeff House organised for 30 participants to the Bunk Bot adoption demonstrations in April, May and June 2021.

Provision of Technical Services

ALFA, in partnership with MLA, provided a jointly funded dedicated Technical Services Officer, Jeff House, who delivers the latest technical information, education, training and support to feedlot operators in the field. Each feedlot visited receives a *Research Extension Information Pack* consisting of ALFA and MLA research and development resources. Cross boarder COVID-19 travel restrictions imposed by state governments disrupted visits, however Jeff still managed to visit 129 feedlots across Australia, out of a target of 100, for the 2020/2021 financial year.