

Participant questions

MLA Updates: Building resilience through community trust

1. Does MLA publish the consumer insights R&D? If so, where can we find it?

Yes, you can find the 2020 Consumer Sentiment research report, short video and infographics on the MLA website <https://www.mla.com.au/marketing-beef-and-lamb/consumer-sentiment-research/>

2. In addressing animal welfare issues, and specifically pain relief during dehorning, recent industry claims have been made around the degree of polledness in the national beef herd. The original figure published by industry bodies was later downgraded, without explanation, however it still looks optimistically high. After a number of inquiries, nobody has been able to tell us what the source was for the polledness claims. How important is it for such claims to be verifiable, with clearly-established facts?

The Australian Beef Sustainability Framework reported in 2019 that 73% of the national cattle herd are genetically polled. This figure came from a different data source compared to the previous year's data. This makes it difficult to compare data to last year. For this report, MLA has identified the proportion of each breed genetically polled from the L.GEN.1713 report and extrapolated this to the national herd using each breed's share of the total herd.

The commercial herd is expected to have a lower percentage due to generational intervals and lag in genetic progress between stud and commercial herds. The data is further limited as not all seedstock herds record poll status comprehensively.

Advances in testing for the polled gene - which will guide the purchase of polled sires - is an important step towards increasing the percentage of polled cattle within the Australian herd.

3. Is the TV show *Outback Ringer* the kind of promotion we are looking for to help the industry profile?

ABC's *Outback Ringer* has not been sponsored or endorsed by MLA. We understand for many it may have been entertaining and reflects the life of those involved – but it doesn't reflect best practice animal welfare or is representative of the broader industry. It's important that we are showcasing for vast majority of those in our industry who are best practice operators – and MLA will continue to work with industry to highlight those individuals and businesses through our community engagement and Good Meat platforms.

4. Great presentations, thank you. Re consumer sentiment, one of the heartening things about COVID-19 was the fact that in the first panic shopping that meat alternatives were left on the shelves, can that be leveraged?

During the height of the pandemic in March 2020, Australian grocery experienced unprecedented sales (Nielsen Homescan). A wide range of areas across the supermarket were impacted, including fresh meat. Sales of fresh beef and lamb in Australian grocery increased during March (Nielsen Homescan). Even plant-based meat products experienced an uplift in sales at this time. In addition, we know from Nielsen Homescan that the majority of consumers who buy plant-based alternatives also buy fresh meat, suggesting they are simply adding it to their repertoire of proteins consumed rather than giving up meat entirely.

MLA consumer research indicates that:

- the drivers of purchasing plant-based alternatives are:
 - a perception that these products are healthier than conventional meat
 - a perception that these products are better for the environment
- these products cannot compete with red meat on taste, which is a key driver for consumers choosing Australian beef and lamb.

Red meat's taste and strong traceability credentials from paddock to plate, are key strengths that help consumers feel good about eating red meat.

5. Did you have any push back about the processing chain scenes in the VR from schools/parents/teachers and I assume you need to communicate the content to them beforehand?

We have received some questions with regards to the processing content, so we do explain to the viewer what they will see within the experience. The Paddock to Plate Story VR experiences have been produced to accommodate to a wide audience, from school children to international markets customers. The processing segment of the virtual tour is 'tastefully transparent' but does not show the actual slaughter, going from the carcase to cuts being packed.

6. I'm concerned about what my kids are learning at school about the Beef industry. How can I get my child's schools to use the materials mentioned that MLA have produced?

The best way is to have a chat with the school and make them aware of the curriculum aligned and Australian industry relevant resources on goodmeat.com.au and PIEFA's [PrimeZone](#) website, as well as this website [for students and teachers](#) . You can also contact info@mla.com.au to receive more information on where to find free, easy to access resources for the school to use.