



Sheep Producers Intentions Survey
PULSE – FEBRUARY 2024

February 2024

About the Sheep Producer Intentions Survey	3
A recap of the October 2023 survey	4
The aim of the February 2024 survey	5
Insights and results	6
Results from the February PULSE survey	
Lamb flock – change in reported/expected sales from October 2023	8
Lamb flock – re-estimate of sales through to 31 December 2023	10
Reasons for the decline in lamb sales against expectation	11
Reasons for the increase in lamb sales against expectation	12
Lamb flock – change in expected sales through Jan-Jun 2024	13
Lamb flock – re-estimate of expected sales through Jan-Jun 2024	15
Lamb flock – expected sales channels through Jan-Jun 2024	16
Attachments	17

Producer Update on Lamb Sales Estimates

The survey, undertaken by MLA and AWI, is used to help industry determine wool and lamb production forecasts and to understand the breed composition of the Australian flock on a national, state and regional basis. It is used by processors for budgeting purposes and allows import markets to ascertain short-term supply estimates.

The research has three primary objectives, namely to:

- ✓ **Measure and report** on flock population, demographics, sheepmeat and wool supply information and producer production intentions.
- ✓ Ensure estimates are reliable and based on sufficiently large sample sizes to ensure the **robustness and accuracy** of estimates. The sample should be representative or weighted to be representative of the producer population structure.
- ✓ Provide capacity to **explore and investigate results** at a smaller area and segment level. This will include – among other things – across states and MLA reporting regions.

The following report provides an overview of results for the **FEBRUARY 2024 – PULSE** survey.

The February 2024 - PULSE survey

Feedback for the PULSE survey was sought from producers over the period 29th January – 20th February 2024. Producers were invited to complete the online survey if they had completed the October 2023 survey.

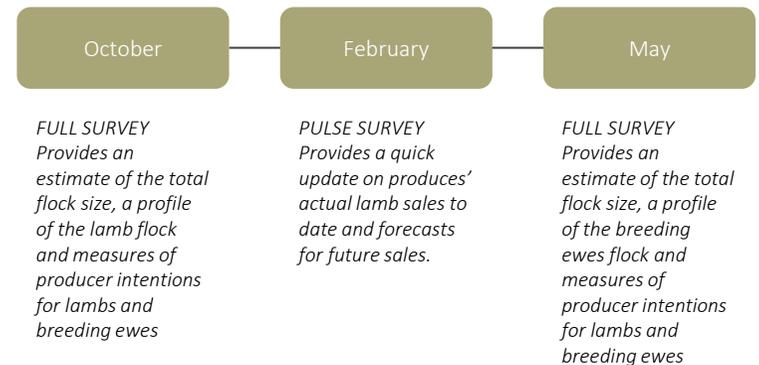
A total of 748 producers from across Australia responded to the survey invitation. The feedback was then weighted using the latest available ABS data, to produce industry estimates. This weighting was also the same weighting used in the October 2023 survey to ensure consistency across the time periods.

A breakdown of the sample make-up by State plus a description of the ABS data used and the weighting approach is included as an attachment to this report.

Details of the aims of the February PULSE survey are outlined next.

An overview of the research design

Three separate but integrated surveys will be conducted across the calendar year. Each survey will have a specific focus and purpose and provide the required flock and producer intention estimates required.



A recap of the October 2023 lamb sales estimates

The second year of the revamped Sheep Producers Intentions Survey was launched in October 2023 to measure and report on flock population, demographics, sheepmeat and wool supply information and producer production intentions.

Data was collected across several topic areas, however the focus of the October 2023 survey was specifically on the lamb flock of producers and their intentions for the remainder of the spring flush and onward to June 2024.

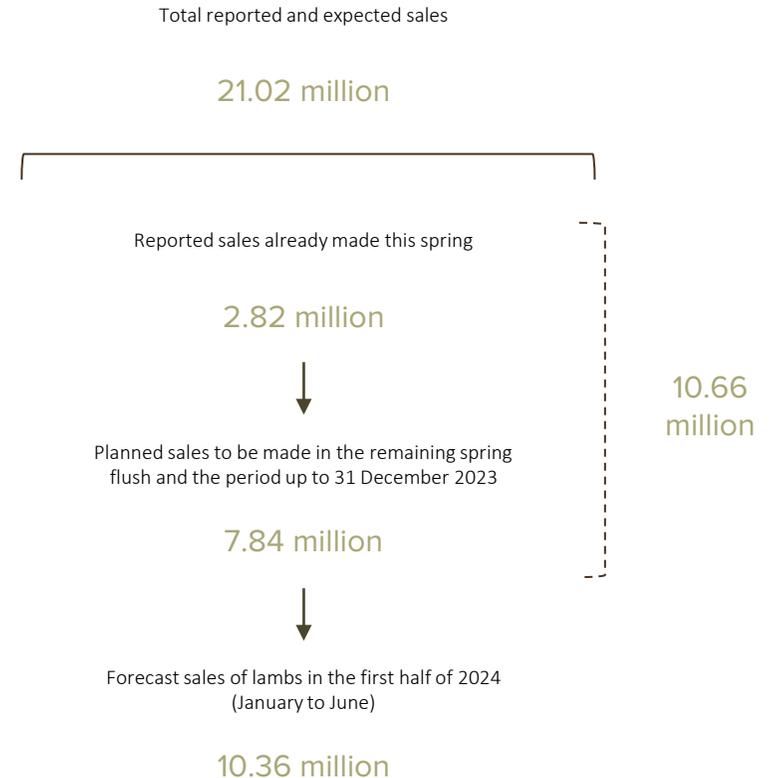
The October 2023 research reported on an estimate of the reported, planned and forecast lamb sales covering three time periods:

- **Reported sales:** sales of lambs that had been made up to the point of the producer completing the October survey – that is sometime between 29th September to 8th November 2023;
- **Planned sales:** this was a producer estimate of the sales to be made in the remaining spring flush and the period up to 31 December 2023; and
- **Forecast sales:** this was a producer forecast of their lamb sales across the first half of 2024 (January to June).

These estimates derived from the producer feedback provided from the October 2023 research are shown on the right.

Clearly on-farm, market and climate factors may have impacted producers' behaviours since their participation in the October survey.

The February PULSE survey was designed to provide a quick update on these October estimates. An outline of the aims of the February PULSE survey now follows.



The aim of the February 2024 survey

The aim of the February 2024 PULSE research is to provide updated estimates of the October 2023 producer lamb sales estimates. Specifically, the February PULSE survey was designed to confirm:

- Producer-reported sales in the period up to 31 December 2023. This will confirm the total sales made in the second half of 2023 with analysis exploring if this revised figure was different to that planned and reported in October and the reasons behind any changes in lamb sales last year.
- Producer forecast sales for the first half of 2024 (January to June). Analysis will explore whether this revised forecast is different to that provided in October; and
- Producer sales channels intentions. The February PULSE survey explored what sales channels producers were planning to use and if this varied from what was identified in the October survey.

The survey will then aim to update the estimate of 2023 sales and re-estimate forecast sales for 2024.

The February PULSE methodology involved:

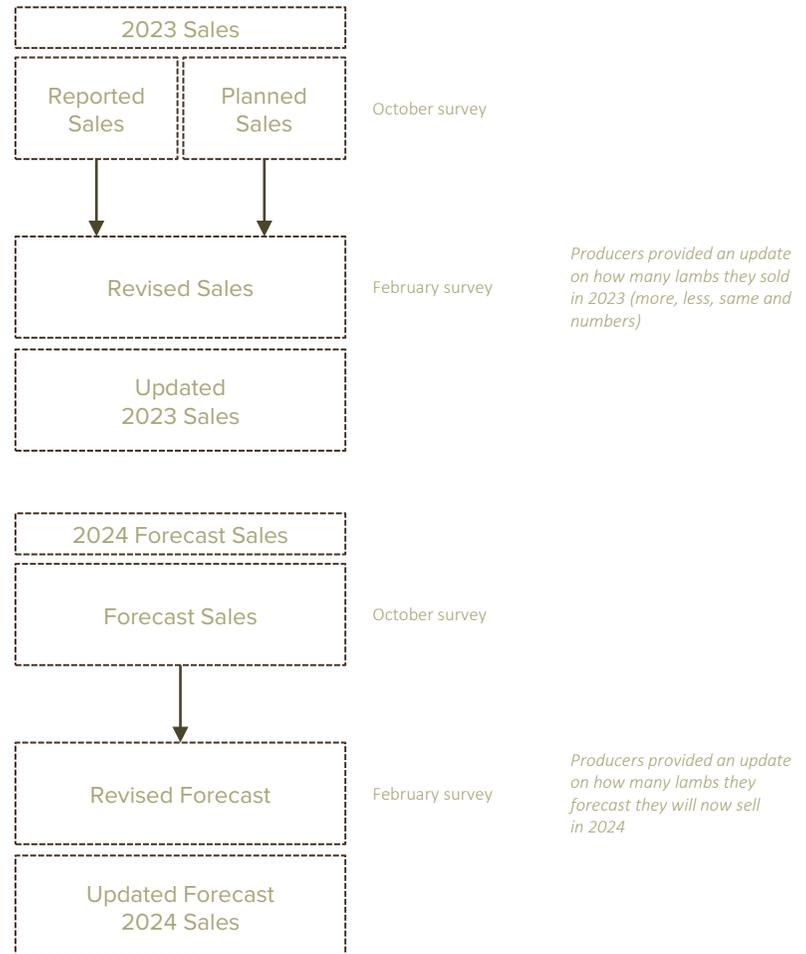
- Taking the reported 2023 sales figures and updating these. As part of this analysis, the February PULSE survey explored what reasons were behind producers selling more or less lambs than they had planned in October.
- With a new position now available, producers were asked to forecast their lamb sales for the first half of 2024. Analysis will again focus on the differences in forecasts between October and February surveys,

The February PULSE survey will report on producer level results (how many producers sold more, less or the same lambs as they indicated in October) and an estimate of the revised total lamb sales (acknowledging producers hold different lamb stock levels).

Of note is that there were outliers that needed to be considered, namely those who experienced a severe change in estimate upward (e.g. estimating very little or no sales in October 2023 and then a large amount of reported/expected sales in February 2024). These outliers were removed to ensure the average change within each cells remains within a reasonable limit.

Details of the research design for the February PULSE survey are described in the attachments.

Methodology undertaken for the revision of lamb sales estimates



The feedback from producers in the February PULSE survey has indicated that:

The majority of producers made some change to their planned 2023 sales volumes:

- 40% sold fewer lambs than expected in this period; whilst
- 14% reported they sold more lambs than expected; and
- the remaining 46% sold the number of lambs they planned.

Behind the two in three (40%) of producers reporting they sold fewer lambs, the reasons were varied but can be attributed to three key explanations:

- lamb prices for 2023 were below expectations;
- forecast prices for 2024 are influencing producer's intention to retain lambs; and
- weather conditions impacting the ability to achieve the targeted lamb performance.

When then taking account of the lamb flock sizes, the analysis indicates that the 2023 lamb sales was closer to 8.47M than the planned 10.66M, underscoring the impact the above factors have had on producer behaviours.

The results also highlight the somewhat agile approach producers are taking to their lamb sales, adjusting their position based on other intervening factors.

When asked about their forecasts for lamb sales in 2024, the feedback suggests that the majority of unsold lambs in 2023 are planned to be sent to market in 2024. Clearly this intention will be subject to the impact (positively or negatively) of these and other intervening factors.

The detailed results from the February PULSE survey now follow.

	2023 Sales		2024 Forecast Sales
October survey	Reported Sales	Planned Sales	Forecast Sales
	10.66 million		10.36 million

	2023 Sales		2024 Forecast Sales
February survey	Updated Sales		Updated Forecast Sales
	8.47 million		12.80 million



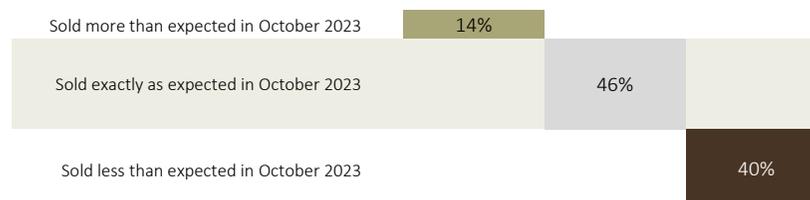
results from the
February PULSE survey

Lamb flock – change in reported/planned sales from October 2023

Q1. When we spoke to you in October, you indicated that you had sold or were planning to sell a total of [ANSWER FROM OCT 2023 SURVEY] lambs up to 31 December 2023.

How many lambs did you actually end up selling through spring and the period up to 31 December 2023?

Base: All respondents, n = 748



Note: these results are producer level results and do not reflect the total lamb sales.

The results provide an indication of the producer experience.

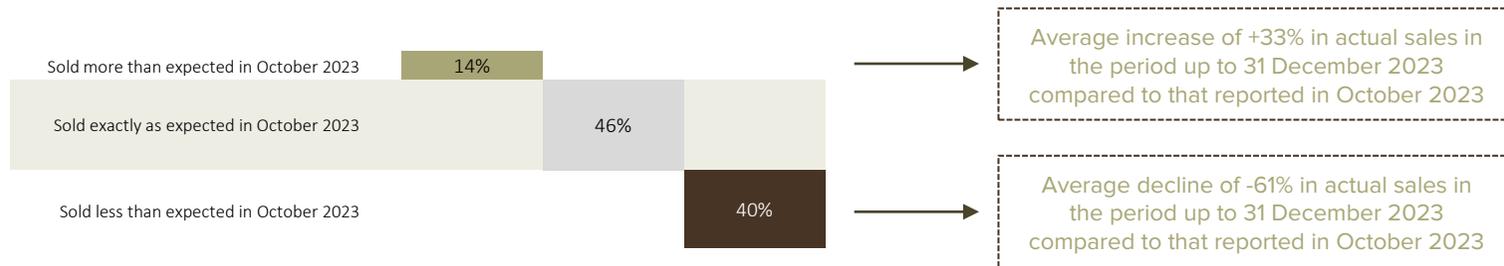
	State						Total Flock Size (sheep and lambs)							
	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Less than 500	500 – < 1,000	1,000 – < 2,000	2,000 – < 3,000	3,000 – < 5,000	5,000 – < 10,000	10,000 – < 20,000	20,000 or more
<i>Base:</i>	219	20	127	23	173	185	97	88	137	107	129	128	41	21
Sold more than expected in October 2023	11%	0%	17%	6%	21%	16%	12%	20%	13%	20%	16%	18%	13%	26%
Sold exactly as expected in October 2023	50%	58%	36%	77%	41%	42%	52%	44%	46%	35%	36%	34%	42%	24%
Sold less than expected in October 2023	39%	42%	47%	17%	38%	42%	36%	36%	41%	44%	48%	47%	45%	50%

Lamb flock – change in reported/planned sales from October 2023

Q1. When we spoke to you in October, you indicated that you had sold or were planning to sell a total of [ANSWER FROM OCT 2023 SURVEY] lambs up to 31 December 2023.

How many lambs did you actually end up selling through spring and the period up to 31 December 2023?

Base: All respondents, n = 748

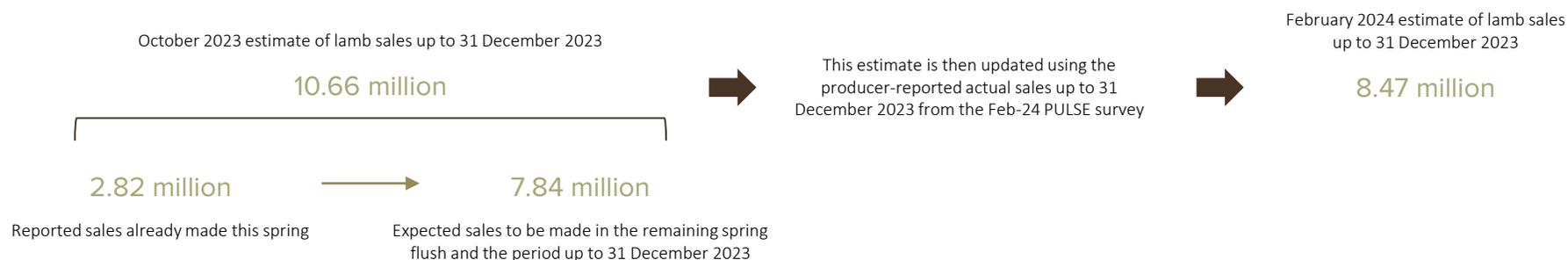


Lamb flock – re-estimate of sales through to 31 December 2023

Q1. When we spoke to you in October, you indicated that you had sold or were planning to sell a total of [ANSWER FROM OCT 2023 SURVEY] lambs up to 31 December 2023.

How many lambs did you actually end up selling through spring and the period up to 31 December 2023?

Base: All respondents, n = 748



	State						Total Flock Size (sheep and lambs)							
	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Less than 500	500 – < 1,000	1,000 – < 2,000	2,000 – < 3,000	3,000 – < 5,000	5,000 – < 10,000	10,000 – < 20,000	20,000 or more
<i>Base of Oct-23 estimate:</i>	528	46	258	42	366	363	206	177	285	243	289	261	104	39
October 2023 estimate	3.68M	0.16M	2.00M	0.24M	2.88M	1.70M	0.85M	0.62M	1.47M	1.39M	1.98M	2.28M	1.22M	0.85M
<i>Base of Feb-24 estimate of change:</i>	208	20	119	20	164	176	90	82	134	100	123	122	39	18
February 2024 estimate	2.98M	0.12M	1.54M	0.17M	2.24M	1.41M	0.65M	0.52M	1.11M	1.08M	1.56M	1.83M	1.12M	0.59M

Reasons for the decline in lamb sales against expectation

40% of producers reported they sold **LESS** lambs up to 31 December 2023 than planned

We asked these producers what were the reasons behind the difference between the expected sales and what actually happened...



Q2. Why did you end up selling fewer lambs last year than you expected back in October?
Please select all the reasons that explain why.

Base: All respondents who reported selling less lambs than expected, n = 325



* Response has been coded from open-ended feedback via "Other (please describe)".

Reasons for the increase in lamb sales against expectation

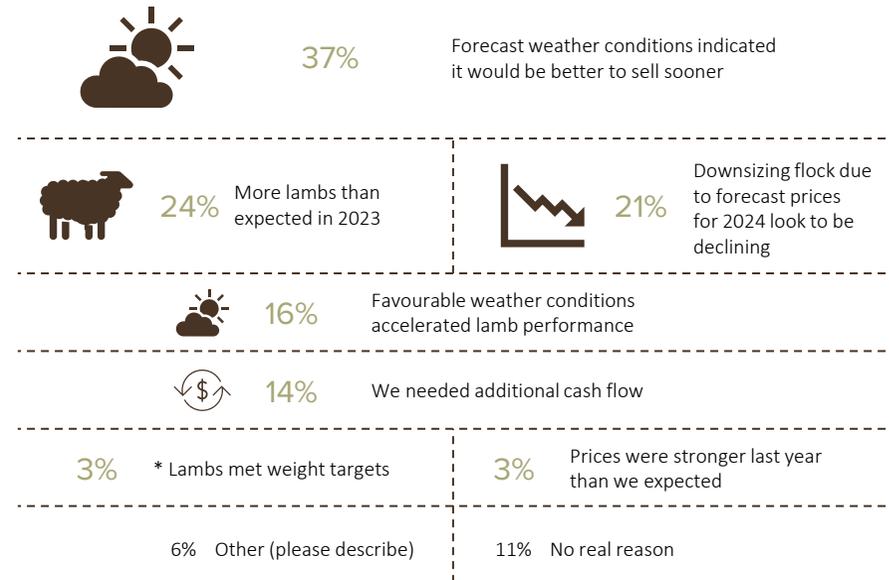
14% of producers reported they sold **MORE** lambs during the spring and the period up to 31 December 2023 than planned

We asked these producers what were the reasons behind the difference between the expected sales and what actually happened...



Q3. Why did you end up selling more lambs last year than you expected back in October? Please select all the reasons that explain why.

Base: All respondents who reported selling more lambs than expected, n = 121



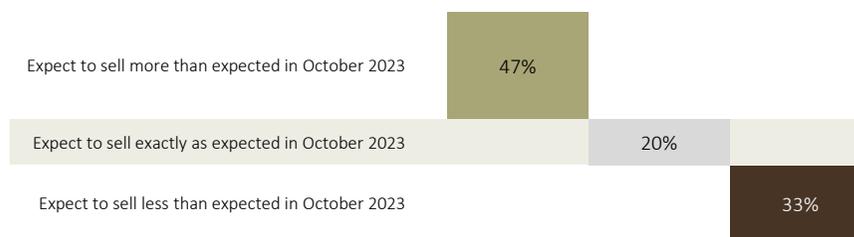
* Response has been coded from open-ended feedback via "Other (please describe)".

Lamb flock – change in forecast sales through Jan-Jun 2024

Q4. How many lambs have you sold and/or are expecting to sell in the first half of 2024 (January to June)?

Please do not include sales made up to 31 December 2023.

Base: All respondents, n = 748



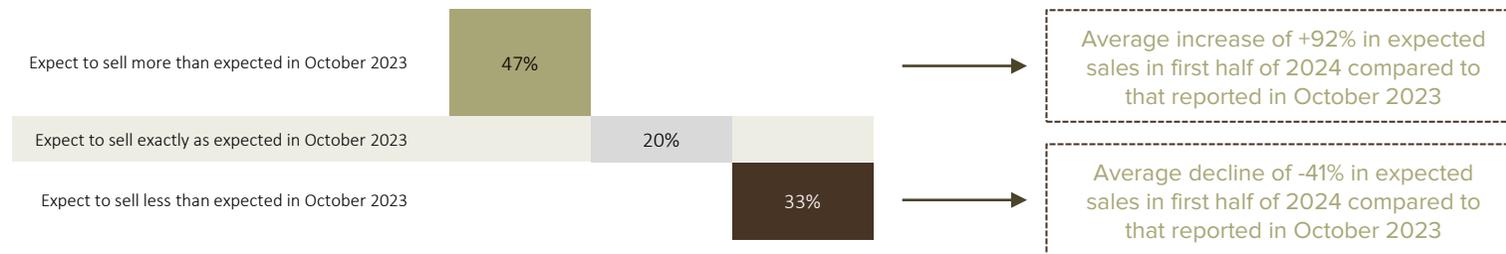
	State						Total Flock Size (sheep and lambs)							
	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Less than 500	500 – < 1,000	1,000 – < 2,000	2,000 – < 3,000	3,000 – < 5,000	5,000 – < 10,000	10,000 – < 20,000	20,000 or more
<i>Base:</i>	219	20	127	23	173	185	97	88	137	107	129	128	41	21
Expect to sell more than expected in October 2023	45%	83%	50%	27%	42%	48%	46%	52%	45%	44%	48%	46%	48%	37%
Expect to sell exactly as expected in October 2023	19%	16%	25%	5%	21%	20%	20%	15%	26%	23%	17%	16%	20%	6%
Expect to sell less than expected in October 2023	35%	2%	25%	68%	36%	32%	34%	33%	28%	33%	35%	38%	33%	56%

Lamb flock – change in forecast sales through Jan-Jun 2024

Q4. How many lambs have you sold and/or are expecting to sell in the first half of 2024 (January to June)?

Please do not include sales made up to 31 December 2023.

Base: All respondents, n = 748



Lamb flock – re-estimate of expected sales through Jan-Jun 2024

Q4. How many lambs have you sold and/or are expecting to sell in the first half of 2024 (January to June)?

Please do not include sales made up to 31 December 2023.

Base: All respondents, n = 748

October 2023 estimate of lamb sales during January-June 2024 period

10.36 million



This estimate is then updated using the producer-reported expected sales in the first half of 2024 from the Feb-24 PULSE survey



February 2024 estimate of lamb sales during January-June 2024 period

12.80 million

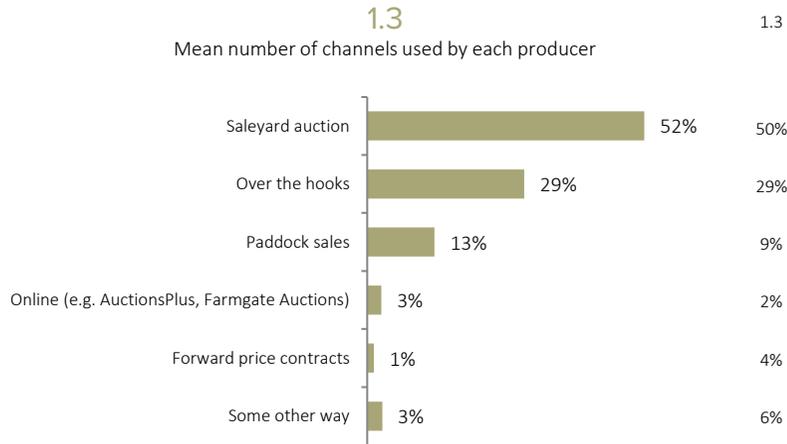
	State						Total Flock Size (sheep and lambs)							
	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Less than 500	500 – < 1,000	1,000 – < 2,000	2,000 – < 3,000	3,000 – < 5,000	5,000 – < 10,000	10,000 – < 20,000	20,000 or more
<i>Base of Oct-23 estimate:</i>	528	46	258	42	366	363	206	177	285	243	289	261	104	39
October 2023 estimate	3.70M	0.17M	1.39M	0.60M	2.50M	2.00M	0.66M	0.62M	1.30M	1.42M	1.83M	2.51M	1.17M	0.84M
<i>Base of Feb-24 estimate of change:</i>	182	12	102	23	149	160	70	75	123	92	108	107	34	20
February 2024 estimate	4.12M	0.16M	1.89M	0.70M	3.73M	2.21M	0.63M	0.77M	1.59M	1.85M	2.09M	3.29M	1.17M	1.43M

Lamb flock – expected sales channels through Jan-Jun 2024

Q5. Of the sales (actual and expected) to be made in the first half of 2024, what proportion will be made through the following sales channels?

Base: All respondents with lambs sold or expected to sell in 2024, n = 613

Oct-23 Result
(2023 channels)*



Producers responding to both the October 2023 survey and the February 2024 survey indicated minimal change between the number of channels used and also the preferred channels, with at most a 4% difference between channels for expected sales in 2023 and in 2024 (Paddock sales – 2023: 9%; 2024: 13%).

	State						Total Flock Size (sheep and lambs)							
	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Less than 500	500 – < 1,000	1,000 – < 2,000	2,000 – < 3,000	3,000 – < 5,000	5,000 – < 10,000	10,000 – < 20,000	20,000 or more
Base:	186	12	102	23	138	151	71	76	101	90	110	112	34	19
Mean number of channels used	1.2	1.9	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.6	1.5	1.6
Saleyard auction	73%	35%	40%	3%	53%	26%	59%	54%	59%	41%	38%	27%	17%	9%
Over the hooks	14%	46%	41%	18%	34%	48%	21%	32%	27%	38%	40%	44%	52%	71%
Paddock sales	8%	13%	11%	78%	6%	19%	16%	10%	6%	11%	9%	11%	23%	8%
Online	4%	5%	3%	0%	2%	0%	0%	3%	1%	5%	9%	9%	7%	3%
Forward price contracts	1%	0%	4%	0%	0%	2%	0%	1%	3%	1%	2%	5%	1%	9%
Some other way	1%	1%	2%	0%	5%	5%	4%	0%	4%	2%	1%	4%	0%	0%

* Question asked in October 2023 survey: Q17. Of the expected lamb sales to be made in 2023, what proportion will be made through the following sales channels?



attachments

Comparison of October 2023 and February 2024 sample

October 2023 Survey completes (count)

	ALL FLOCK SIZES	Less than 500	500 – < 1,000	1,000 – < 2,000	2,000 – < 3,000	3,000 – < 5,000	5,000 – < 10,000	10,000 – < 20,000	20,000 or more
AUSTRALIA	1,709	245	197	302	256	297	266	106	40
NSW	572	104	65	99	95	85	83	31	10
VIC	384	63	48	76	54	64	51	20	8
QLD	56	10	5	4	3	17	9	6	2
SA	272	30	43	63	46	46	32	10	2
WA	379	35	32	54	53	79	85	29	12
TAS	45	3	4	6	5	5	6	10	6
NT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ACT	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0

October 2023 Survey completes (proportion of total)

	ALL FLOCK SIZES	Less than 500	500 – < 1,000	1,000 – < 2,000	2,000 – < 3,000	3,000 – < 5,000	5,000 – < 10,000	10,000 – < 20,000	20,000 or more
AUSTRALIA	100%	14%	12%	18%	15%	17%	16%	6%	2%
NSW	33%	6%	4%	6%	6%	5%	5%	2%	1%
VIC	22%	4%	3%	4%	3%	4%	3%	1%	<1%
QLD	3%	1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	1%	1%	<1%	<1%
SA	16%	2%	3%	4%	3%	3%	2%	1%	<1%
WA	22%	2%	2%	3%	3%	5%	5%	2%	1%
TAS	3%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	1%	<1%
NT	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
ACT	<1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	<1%	0%	0%	0%

February 2024 Survey completes (count)

	ALL FLOCK SIZES	Less than 500	500 – < 1,000	1,000 – < 2,000	2,000 – < 3,000	3,000 – < 5,000	5,000 – < 10,000	10,000 – < 20,000	20,000 or more
AUSTRALIA	748	97	88	137	107	129	128	41	21
NSW	219	29	26	37	41	32	37	11	6
VIC	173	31	20	32	21	32	26	8	3
QLD	20	2	1	3	1	4	6	2	1
SA	127	18	23	34	12	18	18	3	1
WA	185	16	16	29	30	39	36	13	6
TAS	23	1	2	2	2	3	5	4	4
NT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ACT	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0

February 2024 Survey completes (proportion of total)

	ALL FLOCK SIZES	Less than 500	500 – < 1,000	1,000 – < 2,000	2,000 – < 3,000	3,000 – < 5,000	5,000 – < 10,000	10,000 – < 20,000	20,000 or more
AUSTRALIA	100%	13%	12%	18%	14%	17%	17%	5%	3%
NSW	29%	4%	3%	5%	5%	4%	5%	1%	1%
VIC	23%	4%	3%	4%	3%	4%	3%	1%	<1%
QLD	3%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	1%	1%	<1%	<1%
SA	17%	2%	3%	5%	2%	2%	2%	<1%	<1%
WA	25%	2%	2%	4%	4%	5%	5%	2%	1%
TAS	3%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	1%	1%	1%
NT	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
ACT	<1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	<1%	0%	0%	0%

Survey Program The Sheep Producers Intentions Survey, undertaken by MLA and AWI, is used to help industry determine wool and lamb production forecasts, and to understand the breed composition of the Australian flock on a national, state and regional basis. The results are used by processors for budgeting purposes and allows import markets to ascertain short-term supply estimates.

Methodology The February 2024 survey utilised a wholly online methodology of producers who responded to the October 2023 survey. Producers were contacted up to four times via email invitation to complete the February 2024 PULSE survey.

Sample lists The list of producers was originally provided for the October 2023 survey by MLA and AWI separately, These lists were merged, de-duped and producers who had requested not to be contacted for market research removed.

Questionnaire A 5-minute questionnaire was used to collect the required information. The survey questionnaire covered the following topic areas:

- What was the actual reported sales through spring and the period up to 31 December 2023, and was this different to their expectation;
 - If different, what was the reason (or reasons) behind selling more or less lambs than they expected;
- What do they now expect to sell in the first half of 2024 (January to June), and is this different to their expectation back in October 2023; and
- Which sales channels do they expect to use during the first half of 2024 (January to June), and is this different to the channels they expected to use for their 2023 sales back in October 2023.

Sample size A total of n = 748 responses were provided by producers, representing a 44% response rate of the n = 1,709 producers who completed the October 2023 survey. The survey respondent breakdown via State was as follows:

	Overall	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA
# of surveys	n = 748	n = 1	n = 219	n = 0	n = 20	n = 127	n = 23	n = 173	n = 185

Timing The interviewing was undertaken between the 29th January – 20th February 2024.

Weighting The survey results were weighted. A description of the weighting process used for the February 2024 Sheep Producers Intentions Survey follows next.

Survey data is often weighted to ensure estimates provide a representative match of the population being estimated and the estimates deliver statistical reliable measures.

For the Sheep Producers Intentions Survey, data has been weighted to ensure the sample provides a strong representation of the population of producers as possible. For this survey, it was considered important to weight the survey data to ensure we have:

- Coverage across the various regions as producers will have different operating conditions. For our purposes, a region is a state – so we need to weight so that our final sample is representative of the distribution of producers across states.
- Coverage across farm businesses of different sizes – obviously, the larger businesses have larger flocks so ensuring we have an appropriate mix of small, medium, large and very large producers is vital for the estimation process.

There may be other variables that help describe the possible differences across producers, but these two variables (state and flock size) will more than likely account for the likely differences that exist in the population of all producers.

For the October 2023 survey, ABS data was used as the population structure that guided the weighting approach. Data at a state and flock size segment was requested from the ABS. This data and its source are shown opposite. The weighting approach involved:

- Using the estimate of the total number of agricultural businesses with sheep and lambs produced by the ABS as the population estimates.
- Adjust this number to reflect that the ABS survey does not include estimates of producers with an EVAO (Estimated Value of Agricultural Operations) of less than \$40,000.

This final weighting matrix was then used to weight the October 2023 Sheep Producers Intentions survey data. The same weighting matrix was also used to weight the February 2024 Sheep Producers Intentions survey data to ensure consistency across the time periods.

Total number of agricultural businesses with sheep and lambs (ABS 2020-21) *

	ALL FLOCK SIZES	Less than 500	500 – < 1,000	1,000 – < 2,000	2,000 – < 3,000	3,000 – < 5,000	5,000 – < 10,000	10,000 – < 20,000	20,000 or more
AUSTRALIA	40,949	19,200	4,813	6,197	3,787	3,573	2,513	709	157
NSW	14,981	6,768	1,876	2,414	1,431	1,341	851	239	61
VIC	11,445	6,067	1,390	1,561	963	766	539	127	30
QLD	1,881	1,350	93	124	85	97	96	29	7
SA	5,980	2,305	829	1,192	627	556	346	102	24
WA	5,107	1,736	473	770	611	735	590	171	20
TAS	1,522	950	148	135	70	76	90	40	15
NT	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ACT	32	23	4	1	0	1	1	1	0

* Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data (ABS, Customised report, 2022)

Reliability of the Estimates

The estimates in this report are based on information obtained from a sample survey. Any data collection may encounter factors, known as non-sampling error, which can impact on the reliability of the resulting statistics. In addition, the reliability of estimates based on sample surveys are also subject to sampling variability. That is, the estimates may differ from those that would have been produced had all persons in the population been included in the survey.

Non-sampling error

Non-sampling error may occur in any collection, whether it is based on a sample or a full count such as a census. Sources of non-sampling error include non-response, errors in reporting by respondents or recording of answers by interviewers and errors in coding and processing data. Every effort is made to reduce non-sampling error by careful design of survey questionnaires and quality control procedures at all stages of data processing.

Sampling error

One measure of the likely difference is given by the standard error (SE), which indicates the extent to which an estimate might have varied by chance because only a sample of persons was included. There are about two chances in three (67%) that a sample estimate will differ by less than one SE from the number that would have been obtained if all persons had been surveyed, and about 19 chances in 20 (95%) that the difference will be less than two SEs.

Calculation of Confidence Interval

If 50% of all the people in a population of 20,000 people drink coffee in the morning, and if you were repeat the survey of 377 people ("Did you drink coffee this morning?") many times, then 95% of the time, your survey would find that between 45% and 55% of the people in your sample answered "Yes".

The remaining 5% of the time, or for 1 in 20 survey questions, you would expect the survey response to more than the margin of error away from the true answer.

When you survey a sample of the population, you don't know that you've found the correct answer, but you do know that there's a 95% chance that you're within the margin of error of the correct answer.

In terms of the numbers selected above, the margin of error *MoE* is given by:

$$MoE = z * \sqrt{\frac{\hat{p}(1 - \hat{p})}{n}}$$

where *n* is the sample size, \hat{p} is the fraction of responses that you are interested in, and *z* is the [critical value](#) for the 95% confidence level (in this case, 1.96).

This calculation is based on the [Normal distribution](#) and assumes you have more than about 30 samples.

Margin of Error for a given sample size and survey estimate	Sample Sizes by State								
	Australia	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT
	n = 748	n = 219	n = 173	n = 20	n = 127	n = 185	n = 23	n = 0	n = 1
Survey Estimate 50%	± 3.58%	± 6.62%	± 7.45%	± 21.91%	± 8.70%	± 7.20%	± 20.43%	n/a	n/a

Note. Margin of Errors are provided at the 95% confidence level on the assumption of a normal distribution and the finite population correction is applied where applicable ($n/N > 5\%$). Results labelled "n/a" are due to the assumption of the normal distribution not being upheld ($n\hat{p} < 10$ or $n(1-\hat{p}) < 10$).



Sheep Producers Intentions Survey PULSE – FEBRUARY 2024

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