

SOCIAL VALUE OF SALEYARDS

RESEARCH REPORT 2022

*Australian Livestock
Markets Association
Initiative*



Working to improve the long term sustainability
of the saleyard and lairage industry in Australia.

President's foreward

In the 1880's almost every village, town and settlement in Australia had its own set of livestock saleyards. These were often sited near a hotel or tavern so that farmers could refresh themselves and socialise on market day. On these days partners also came to town, did their shopping and met with friends and relatives.

We have always known that saleyards have provided a setting and an environment for social interaction. We also know that the support systems that arise from that interaction is, particularly in rural communities, important for our mental health and wellbeing.

However, until now the role saleyards play in providing a setting and an environment for such support systems has never been quantified.

This trail blazing report, "The Social Value of Saleyards" commissioned by the Australian Livestock Markets Association (ALMA), is based upon unprecedented research, drawing on the knowledge and experiences of a broad cross section of saleyards, people and professions.

It will be of enormous value, not only to those directly involved with saleyards, but also to many organisations and individuals, including those offering multiple services to support social and economic outcomes, particularly in rural communities.

I wish to acknowledge the work of the ALMA Board and Board member, Stephanie Whitaker in particular. Thank you to our Executive Officer, Kate McGilvray for her work and enthusiasm. I commend Heather Ellis and her Blue Wren Connections team and I thank of all those who participated in the research for their efforts and contribution.



Ken Rogers
President
Australian Livestock Markets Association



Acknowledgements



The Australian Livestock Markets Association (ALMA) is the national industry body for saleyard owners and operators in Australia. ALMA commissioned this research project investigating the social value of saleyards to rural communities.

ALMA is the peak national advocacy body working to improve the long term sustainability of the saleyard and lairage industry in Australia.

People, place and purpose

We acknowledge the time, involvement and support of the livestock industry, transport operators, stock agents, producers, policy makers, health professionals, journalists and government staff who were involved in this research and have contributed to its development. We at BlueWren Connections, aim to honour the data given to have influence for the continued improvement of the saleyards industry.

The District Council of Grant

The Initial project did not include South Australia. The District Council of Grant funded the Flights to South Australia and in-kind support to the research team.

Stephanie Whitaker

The social value of saleyards has been a concept that Stephanie Whitaker has been passionate about for many years. She has been working to capture the impact of interactions and meanings that sale days have for communities and individuals culminating in successfully pitching the project to ALMA for funding.

Stephanie owned and operated a saleyard in Queensland for fifteen years and participated in the project as an industry stakeholder. Specific roles filled by Stephanie throughout the research project include:

- ALMA board member representative
- Owner of Burnett Livestock Exchange, Biggenden, throughout the development, planning and research phase of the project
- Support to the research consultants for industry reference in the design, research and report compilation of the project.



Stephanie gave willingly of her time, talent and passion for the industry.

Photos

- Markki Media
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- Lisa Alexander Photography
- Paul Beutel Photography

BlueWren local support team

- Andrew Bryant
- Jenny Keogh
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- Marie O'Dea

Thank you to the saleyard managers

QLD

- Blackall Saleyards and Transit Centre – Dave and Dee Carter
- Coolabunia Saleyards - Mark Berthelsen
- Burnett Livestock Exchange – Stephanie and Lance Whitaker

NSW

- Dubbo Regional Livestock Markets - Ross McCarthy
- Tamworth Regional Livestock Exchange - Steve Davidge

VIC

- South West Victoria Livestock Exchange – Paul White
- Central Victoria Livestock Exchange - Jeff Paull

SA

- The Mount Gambier and District Saleyards - Dave Wallis
- Millicent Stock Saleyards – Andrew Robinson
- Naracoorte Regional Livestock Exchange – Rebecca Barry

WA

- Mount Barker Saleyards – Greg Moore and Erika Henderson



BlueWren Connections team

The BlueWren Connections business prides itself on being a diverse and capable business which has carefully selected its employees to have complimentary skillsets.

Heather Ellis is the Founding Director of BlueWren Connections Pty Ltd.

Debbie Atkins is skilled in project management and research and her passion is in regional communities, where people are actively involved in creating their future.

Connor Ellis has a Bachelor of Business and a passion for management and marketing.

Tim Capuano has a Bachelor of Arts and Social Science with skills and experience in social research, policy analysis, communications, project management, and social impact assessment.



The Authors acknowledge the traditional custodians, of the many lands on which stakeholder interviews were undertaken. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Disclaimer:

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Executive summary

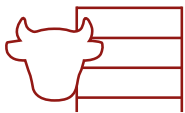
The Australian Livestock Markets Association (ALMA) is the national industry body for saleyard owners and operators in Australia. ALMA commissioned BlueWren Connections PTY LTD to conduct a research project investigating the social value of saleyards to rural communities. The project scope is seeking to capture what sale day means to community members, service providers and saleyard stakeholders. Previous research in the industry has currently provided a measure of economical significance. The purpose of this project is to measure the social benefits the saleyard communities provide.

Industry leaders report to know anecdotally that where saleyards are active, sale days bring a vibrancy and energy to communities. Conversations with stakeholders, service providers and individuals from saleyard communities indicate sale days are a significant contributor to reducing social isolation, building community identity and promoting well-being in the population. However, initial reviews have shown a clear absence of research into the social value of sale days at livestock selling centres. ALMA has identified that it is important to capture the data to reflect and give evidence of the social value in having saleyards operating in regional communities in rural Australia.

The central purpose of this study is to collate data that reflects what value saleyards bring to the social wellbeing of rural communities. This is a national project that worked with eleven key saleyard communities in Australia, engaging with people around the benefits of sale days and the impacts of when sales are cancelled. Research was conducted through observations, face to face interviews, and online surveys, recording people's stories and experiences.

People, place and purpose

Observations were conducted at six saleyards. 152 people completed the online survey and 105 people participated in interviews from five Australian States.



6 saleyards
observed



152 people
completed the survey



105 people participated
in interviews



5 states
participated

Research participants were passionate about the industry and connected to their saleyard community. Some people were sceptical and unsure about what "social value" meant or how to measure social value. However, when the rapport developed, they gave freely of their stories and knowledge.

Australian social commentator Hugh Mackay stated there are people whose work forces them into social isolation – *but when the week's work is done they are often seeking companionship, connection, community* (Mackay, 2014)¹.

For the participants, saleyards provide an environment where they feel a connection both socially and physically.

Aims and objectives

The key objectives of exploring the social value of saleyards across Australia are to gain:

- Improved understanding of the social role of saleyards
- Improved understanding of how saleyards reduce social isolation in regional communities
- Improved understanding of how community services (e.g. health services, drought information) utilise saleyards and sale days as an access point and the effectiveness of this strategy
- Improved understanding of the demographic that utilise saleyards as a social access point
- Improved understanding of the potential impact on social well-being when saleyards are removed from a community.

Valuable themes

The research provided varied, deep insights into the social value of saleyards in rural Australian communities. Some key findings include:

- 96% of people identified that when they're not buying and selling, they are socialising - catching up with their mates and having a laugh
- Participants in the research identified that they have a sense of belonging and connection to the saleyard community
- Stakeholders undertake information sharing, networking and market research – learning from one another
- Not being able to attend saleyards led to an increase in loneliness and social isolation for stakeholders
- Saleyard communities provide a 'hub' to deliver a range of services to a diverse group of people.

Social value

The purpose of capturing the Social Value of Saleyards (SVOS) is to provide the basic building blocks for anyone who wants to make decisions that take this wider definition of value into account, in order to increase equality and improve wellbeing.

The Standards and Guidance document from Social Value International (2022)² states that:

“Social value is about understanding the relative importance of changes that people experience and using the insights we gained from this understanding to make better decisions.”

It is a story about the changes experienced by people. It includes qualitative, quantitative and comparative information, and also includes environmental changes in relation to how they affect people's lives.

The primary purpose for saleyards is to provide a platform for business transactions and economic development.

However, from this research it is evident that saleyards create a place for social connection and when people have limited access to be able to attend, they experience loneliness and social isolation.

The data suggests stakeholders that attend the saleyards build a sense of connection and belonging through positive social interactions such as: sharing stories, a smile, shaking hands, networking, learning about best practise and industry development and having a meal and a coffee at the canteen.

For this cohort of rural Australians, saleyards provide a place for connection and storytelling. People experience being listened to and this in turn allows for people to feel better about themselves. Research from Mckeever (2020)³ suggests that a positive impact on personal wellbeing has links to a strong society and economy.

Often people may not discuss the complex topics in their lives, however the positive experiences happening at the saleyards increases people's well-being. These experiences provide an opportunity to strengthen their economy.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this is the first research done on the social value of saleyards in Australia. As such, there is more work to do to better harness and celebrate the values identified.



Social value of saleyards

Key findings

Participants



Observations of people interactions

6 Saleyards



Online survey

152 Participants



Interviews

105 Participants

Socialising



Observations of people interactions

- Multiple groups of people engaged in conversation and laughter
- Mixed generations and mixed age groups interacting



Online survey

60% of respondents come together for social interactions



Interviews

96% of respondents come together for social interactions

Belonging and connection



Observations of people interactions

- Shaking of hands
- Making eye contact
- Welcoming smiles
 - Tips of the hat
- Pats on the back (human touch)
- People taking time to sit and talk with elders (semi-retired or retired)



Online survey

- Saleyards are an informal but critical space to build community and support
- Gives a strong sense of identity and connection to the saleyard community



Interviews

- 78% of participants identified finding connection and belonging to the saleyard community
 - Saleyards are a place where people feel they fit in and feel connected with like-minded people
 - People have deeper conversations
 - People are not rushed

Information sharing and networking



Observations of people interactions

- People engaged in one on one conversations with agents and producers
 - Producers talk to each other about genetics, feed, and weed problems after recent rain



Online survey

- 50% of participants identified networking as one of the main reasons to attend saleyards



Interviews

- 76% of participants identified networking as one of the main reasons they attend saleyards
- People learn from peers and agents

Impact of not being able to attend



Observations of people interactions

- Two sets of yards were at risk of closing
 - People reported being angry about restrictions on attendance
 - Taking social action/ having community meetings to keep saleyards operating



Online survey

- 50% of participants were not directly affected by COVID-19 due to their role in the industry
- Some reported feeling angry, frustrated and isolated
 - Some people felt like their rights had been taken away



Interviews

- 57% experienced social isolation
- 59% experienced loneliness
- 46% experienced a decline in not being able to share information and learn from peers

Services accessed at saleyards



Observations of people interactions

- Mental health professionals
- Fence post salesperson
 - Health checks



Online survey

- Rural financial services
 - Industry education
- Mental health professionals
- Employment opportunities
- Weed and pest management
- Some noticeboards often had information that was out of date



Interviews

- Fit to load (animal welfare)
 - Rural financial services
 - Industry education
- Mental health professionals
- Employment opportunities
- Weed and pest management
 - Mental Health workshops

Scope methodology limitations

Scope



Online survey

Was developed for people across Australia to complete. 152 people participated in this survey which was available from June to November 2021.



Interviews






Face-to-face, phone and video interviews were conducted at 11 saleyards, with 105 people participating across Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia.



Observations

People's interactions and body language were observed during site visits at six sets of saleyards; three in Queensland and three in South Australia.

Saleyards

 Queensland	 New South Wales	 Victoria	 South Australia	 Western Australia
Blackall Saleyards and Transit Centre	Dubbo Regional Livestock Markets	South West Victoria Livestock Exchange (Warrnambool)	Mount Gambier and District Saleyards	Mount Barker Regional Saleyards
Coolabunia Saleyards	Tamworth Regional Livestock Exchange	Central Victoria Livestock Exchange (Ballarat)	Naracoorte Regional Livestock Exchange	
Burnett Livestock Exchange (Observations only)			Millicent Stock Saleyards	

The stakeholders consulted were:

- Individual producers
- Retired producers
- Hobby farmers
- Commission buyers
- Standard buyers
- Health professionals
- Local Government e.g. CEO, Executive Staff and Councillors
- Saleyard facility owners
- Saleyard facility managers and employees
- Livestock agents and agency staff
- Livestock transporters - corporate, owner-operators
- Business owners
- Canteen operators
- Saleyard contractors
- Stock Inspectors
- Industry representatives
- Business Development Officers
- Detective – NSW Rural Crime
- Tourists



Method

The mixed methods approach used a combination of qualitative and quantitative research. The research used purposive, non-probability sampling. This is generally used in exploratory research using qualitative methodology. It is useful and justifiable when seeking new information (Alston & Bowles, 2013)⁴.

Researchers engaged with a broad range of industry stakeholders. The engagement of participants was through established relationships and local connections. Information was collected by recording people's stories and experiences, through online surveys, one on one interviews and attending saleyards. This information was given context around the communities' demographics, health and economic data. The use of differing research methodologies enabled comparative data analysis (triangulation) of the findings which will converge, resulting in findings that reinforce each other.

The type of questions and interviewing used in collecting the data was through a semi-structured approach using Appreciative Inquiry (AI). AI involves asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential. Using positive questions, instead of negation, criticism and spiralling, leads more effectively to a diagnosis. AI seeks fundamentally, to build a constructive union between people and the massive entirety of what people talk about as past and present capacities. This includes such things as achievements, assets, unexplored potentials, innovations, strengths, elevated thoughts, opportunities, benchmarks, high point moments, lived values, traditions, strategic competencies, stories, expressions of wisdom, insights and visions and more (Cooperrider, 1998)⁵.

Each site had a local partner or champion who was happy to work with the research team to promote the Social Value of Saleyards project through networks and media. This partner was placed to advise on suitable days to visit and whether multiple meetings might be required to capture the information.

The research project was promoted through social media, radio stations, newspaper articles and ALMA's website to encourage participation and strengthen the sample size. It should be noted that all ALMA members and industry stakeholders were directly emailed.

This research used thematic analysis with open coding to analyse the transcribed interviews. Rubin & Babbie (2007)⁶ define 'open coding' as creating code categories after examining data rather than starting out with codes from theories. Notes written up directly after each interview and observations at saleyards, were reviewed when analysing the data. Difference in codes was discussed and resolved. Firstly, the audio-recorded material was transcribed verbatim into a Microsoft Word document. Alston & Bowles (2003)⁴ suggest coding each interview separately by using respondents' key words or phrases, looking for patterns and collating information under similar headings, into more uniformly defined categories. This method provided a way of strongly contextualising the data.

Ethics

The research team had a social worker and community development officer undertaking research who were aware of the ethical implications where the dual roles of service provider and researcher were involved.

Confidentiality and anonymity are paramount in this research project. Participants were informed verbally about the research, as well as through an information sheet and a consent form. The information sheet explained the purpose of the project, the risks and benefits of the research as well as the option for the participant to withdraw from the research at any time. Any questions or uncertainties were addressed at this time.

In the interest of anonymity and safe keeping of information, contributions were recorded and transcribed without identifying participants. All information provided during the interviews and surveys was treated as strictly confidential. All audio recordings and transcripts are kept in a secure filing system until they are destroyed on completion of the project. No identifying information will be used in reports or published papers without consent from the participants.

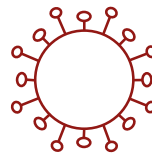
Challenges and problems or limitations



Interview processes



Increased interest



COVID-19



Quality of interviews

The initial project was supposed to cover 6 saleyard sites across Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria with group interviews. The **interview process** had to be adjusted to individual preferences so that participants felt more comfortable to express their opinions anonymously.

The promotion of the research provided more **interest on a national scale** with other states and saleyard communities inquiring about participating. This presented a challenging timeline to complete the report which had to be renegotiated on two separate occasions.

Once the individual interviews were confirmed, the initial proposal was that they would all be face-to-face. **COVID-19 restrictions** provided challenges which influenced the ability to conduct site visits in NSW and Victoria. Attending the annual ALMA conference in Tamworth was cancelled, limiting the ability to promote the project and provide a greater sample size. Redirecting the other site visits to South Australia was a significant modification. In South Australia the site visits provided opportunities for face-to-face interviews and observations however, it should be noted that phone and video calls were the primary source of data. In New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia interviews were conducted using a mixed method of both phone and video calls. This was due to the State restrictions enforced due to COVID-19.

During the interviews, there was a significant **difference in the average time** an interview took place between face-to-face and over the phone/video calls. The face-to-face interviews conducted at the saleyards were much shorter in comparison to those interviewed over the phone and through video. The differences in interview length influenced the level of detail provided throughout the interviews.

There were no direct questions asked about online sales as this was not the focus of this research. Participants commented on some of the benefits, however others mentioned it was less personable, with no ability to have positive social interactions.

Please see appendix



Interview question



Consent form

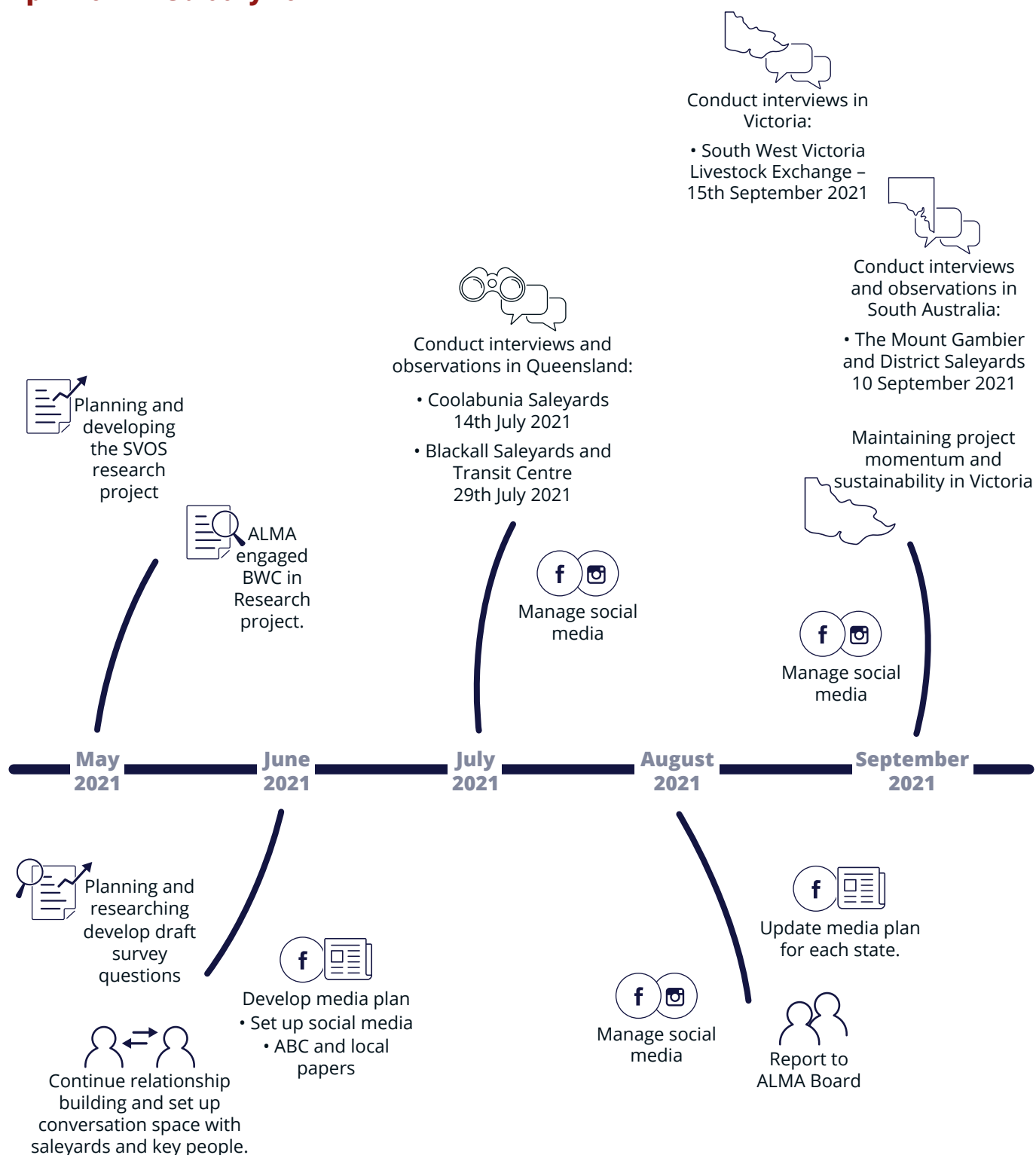


Survey Questions



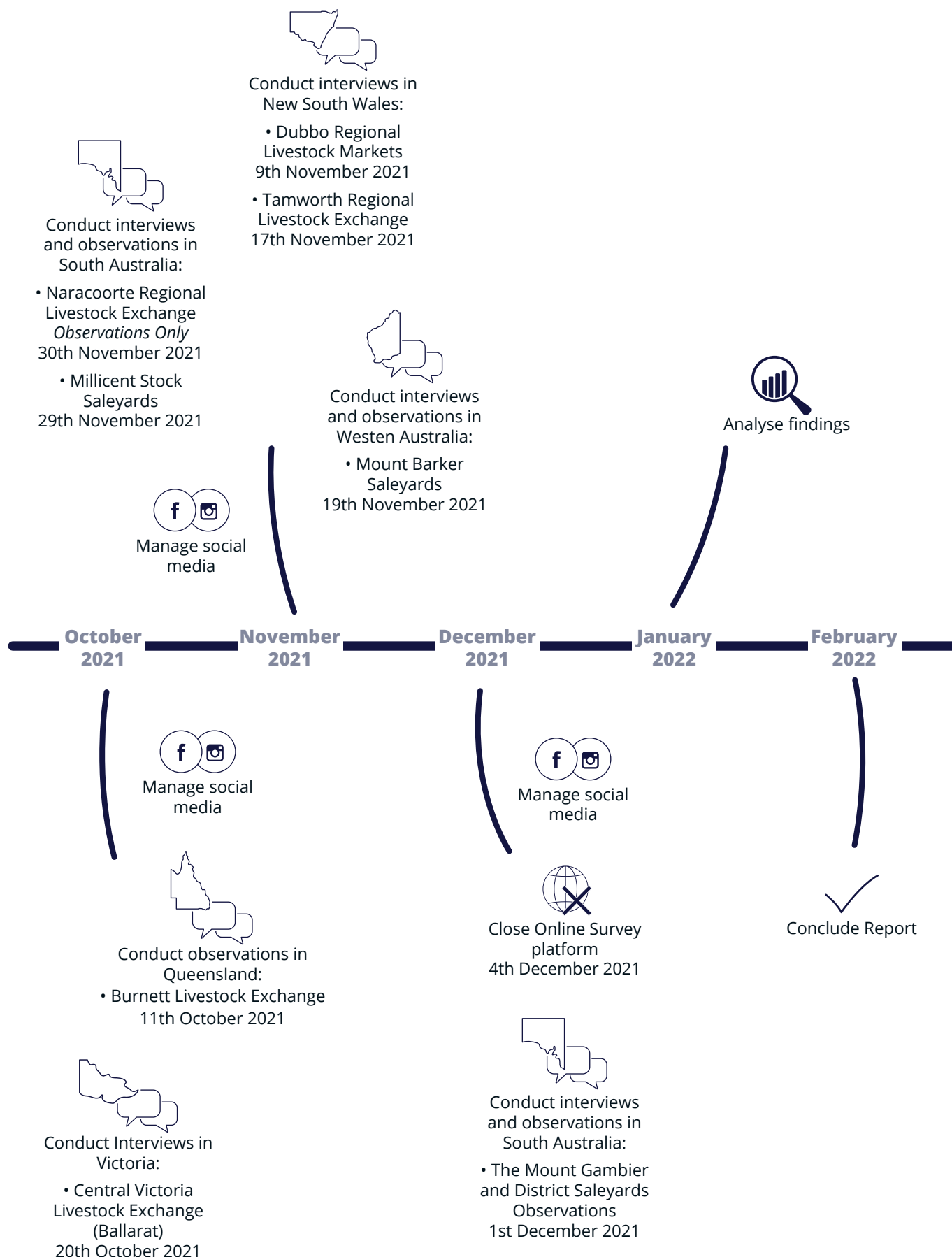
Social value of saleyards - timeline

April 2021 - February 2022



Social value of saleyards - timeline

April 2021 - February 2022



Online National Survey Summary

Demographics

In the online survey looking at the social value of saleyards in rural Australia we had 152 participants.

Participants were able to identify as having more than one role at the saleyards:



67% identified as being a producer



17% identified as being a livestock and property agent



14.5% other - identified as being an ALMA board member, a livestock buyer, Ausmeat representative, Outcross contractor, mental health worker, journalist, commission buyer, a doctor, agent administrator, farm manager, and owner/operator of saleyards



12% identified as a saleyard staff member



9.3% identified as local government or state government representative



6% identified as a truck driver (transport operator)



3% identified as a community worker



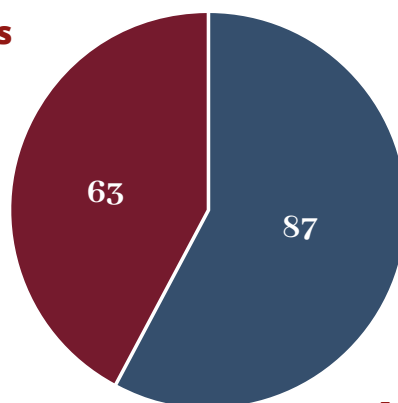
6% identified as being retired



2% identified as an allied health worker

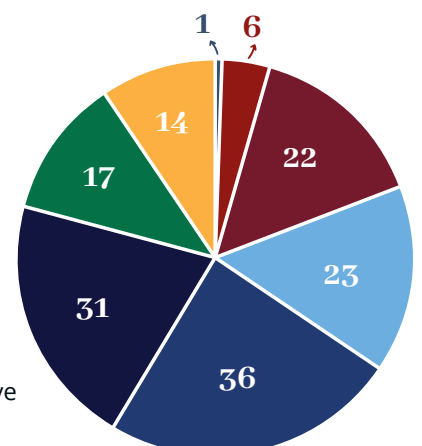
152 Participants

87 Male
63 Female
0 Non-binary
0 Prefer not to say



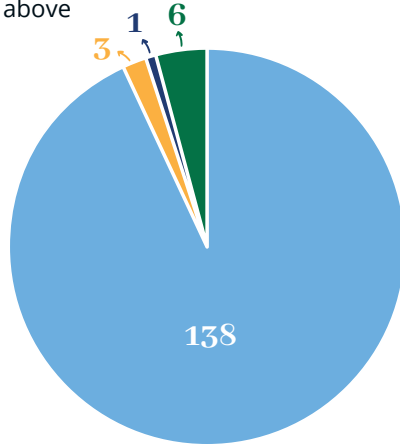
Age

1 10-15
6 16-20
22 21-30
23 31-40
36 41-50
31 51-60
17 61-70
14 71 and above



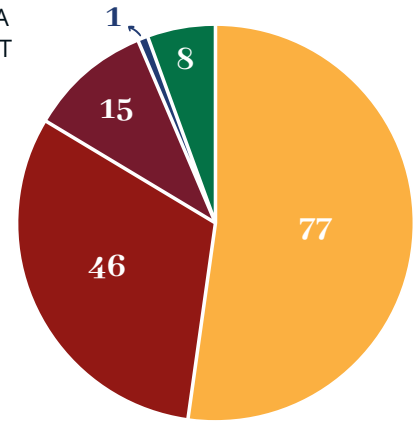
Racial or ethnic identity

138	Caucasian
3	Aboriginal
0	Torres Strait Islander
1	Pacific Islander
6	None of the above



State or Territory

77	QLD
46	NSW
15	VIC
0	ACT
1	WA
8	SA
0	NT



What people identified they were doing at the saleyards when they were not buying or selling:

This data has been collected through comments people made in their responses to the question: Besides buying and/or selling livestock, what are three reasons you come to the saleyards?



60% identified that they come together for social reasons



53% identified for business



50% identified for networking



45% identified for market research



12% identified for community involvement



11% identified for education and learning



6% identified that they work at the yards



5.5% identified that they were looking for work



3.5% identified as a government worker



3% identified for providing health services

What sort of impact is COVID-19 having on others, when vendors and spectators were not permitted to attend saleyards?

Feedback from research participants identified several key impacts of COVID-19 restrictions on saleyards attendance.

The mental health of the residents who normally attend sales drastically deteriorated as they could no longer talk to like-minded people who were going through the same issues as they were. The feelings they had were unable to be expressed, it's amazing what that cup of tea with a mate at the saleyards actually does for a person's wellbeing.

It's been very isolating. Some retired producers only go to the sale as their weekly outing, so to not be allowed to go meant they had nothing to look forward to and couldn't catch up with their friends as regularly as they had previously.

The bush is a lonely place at times and a saleyard is one place men in particular will make the effort to go and talk to others.

Increased loneliness and a sense of isolation was experienced, and a disconnect from older and retired men from the livestock industry who relied on saleyards to connect with their peers was identified.



What have you noticed in communities where saleyards have closed?

Producers love to see their stock sold or compare other stock to their own to work out market values. People come to the saleyards to network and socialise and will then often go into town to shop, eat or get cars serviced etc. When the saleyards are closed to the public it has huge implications on the whole community.

Analysis of the online survey indicated that there were a number of people that weren't necessarily impacted by COVID-19 because they were permitted to attend the yards as their role deemed them to be an essential service (e.g. buyer and agent, agent administrator, yard staff and transport operator), this allowed them to be in attendance at the saleyards.

When saleyards were closed participants identified a loss of a sense of community and belonging and a decline in information sharing.

Participants were concerned about the effect on the local economy; and furthermore the research identified that it had impacts on stress, mental health and wellbeing through a loss of association, a loss of friendship and a loss of learning.

Comments regarding the health benefits

Research participants expressed an enjoyment in being able to attend saleyards and talk face to face to people each week or fortnight. A common expression was that it is great to catch up and talk with people who are going through the same highs and lows as you are, right now the cattle prices certainly make it enjoyable.

Other participants' comments include:

- *Some of the residents and farmers attending the saleyards are retired and living in town so the saleyards are a connection to their mates and their past. Not being able to attend has drastically changed their life and not for the better.*
- *As quite a lot of rural communities are made up of older Australians, I feel saleyards play an important part in mental health as this is sometimes the only contact that is had with like-minded people. Noticed a void with the closing of the local Bundaberg saleyards as this was the only time we caught up with some on sale day.*
- *An informal but critical space to build community and support. A fantastic way for health services to reach out to the community and build inroads.*
- *Saleyards impact on the mental wellbeing along with the social, educational and business opportunities, whilst may be difficult to quantify, is huge.*
- *Needed for men more than women, women tend to find other ways to connect*
- *Helps by getting all ages to mix and talk, to educate and encourage young farmers to enter the industry.*
- *Canteens at most yards are usually run by a community group providing funds for said groups.*
- *Saleyards are a wonderful opportunity for community connection and social interaction. It's an informal but critical space to build community and support. It's also a fantastic way for QLD health to reach out to the community and build inroads.*

Appendix 1

SVOS survey

Information and consent

The Australian Livestock Markets Association (ALMA) is the national industry body for saleyard owners and operators in Australia. Previous research has established that saleyards and livestock exchange facilities provide extensive economic value to regional Australia; but there is also a huge social benefit to having operating saleyards in these areas. Sale days bring crowds to towns; are multi-generational events and are a meeting place for people who normally might lead a more isolated life. Sale days are also known to be key contact places for service providers to connect with communities for information sharing and service access.

ALMA has commissioned a research project investigating the social value of saleyards to rural communities. The project has a three-pronged approach to capturing what sale day means to community members, service providers and saleyard stakeholders. Site visits for face-to-face interviews will be carried out at four saleyards across Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria.

Confidentiality

Your participation is voluntary, and while we will record what you say with your consent, the interview will not collect any identifying information, and your responses will remain confidential. If there are any concerns with sharing information which may identify you, this material will be withdrawn or withheld. Any information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements, upon receipt of appropriate documentation. Data will be securely stored for a duration of 5 years from publication of the final report.

Right to withdraw

Your participation is voluntary. Any data already provided by you will be withdrawn.

Outcome

The results of this research will be disseminated in the form of a final project report, which may be shared on related websites (e.g., Australian Livestock Markets Association). Furthermore, it could be used to produce or influence information flyers, books and social media.

Consent

Your consent to participate in this project will be obtained through your completion of the online survey.

Questions / Further information

If you have any questions about this project, please contact the Reacher, Heather Ellis via email heather@bluewrenconnections.com.

Ethical conduct will be adhered to in accordance with the 'National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007' (Updated 2018), the National Health and Medical Research Council, the Australian Research Council and Universities Australia, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.



The central purpose of this study is to collate data that reflects what value saleyards bring to the social wellbeing of rural communities.

Interview Findings

Australia

By State

QLD

- Blackall Saleyards and Transit Centre
- Coolabunia Saleyards
- Burnett Livestock Exchange

NSW

- Dubbo Regional Livestock Markets
- Tamworth Regional Livestock Exchange

VIC

- South West Victoria Livestock Exchange
- Central Victoria Livestock Exchange

SA

- The Mount Gambier and District Saleyards
- Millicent Stock Saleyards
- Naracoorte Regional Livestock Exchange

WA

- Mount Barker Saleyards



Findings for
AUSTRALIA



Demographics

Overview

Thirty women and seventy-five men participated in the interviews across 11 saleyards sites in Australia.

Stakeholders interviewed included: producers, agents, transport operators, canteen operators, community members, journalists, local and state government personnel.

The demographics that utilise saleyards as a social access point include agents, buyers, producers, hobby farmers, families and older men.



For my dad I see coming to the saleyards like how the townies go to the Mens Shed without having to worry about being a formal part of a group and they get to stay connected with the people they know.

Producer - Queensland

Personally, I have brought my small children here today and I'm getting to catch up with other mums and their kids, my kids get to see their dad who is an agent doing his job. It's good for my husband too, he loves that the kids get to see him and what he does. These yards are nice, and the yards have a good feel about it and it is safe and it is a relaxed environment. We come every Thursday.

Producer - Queensland

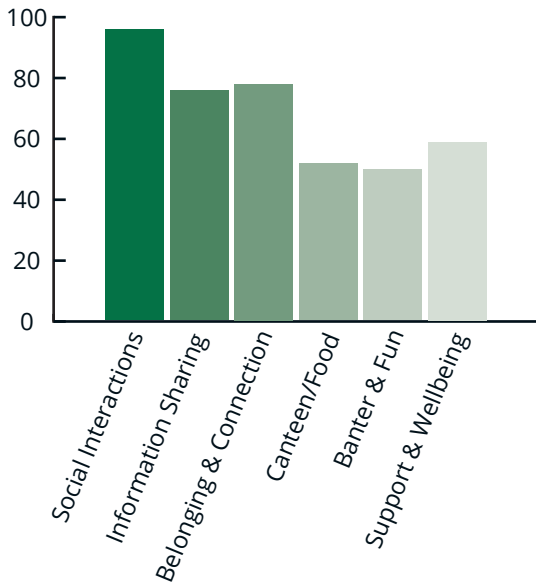
There is a special interaction working with people that you have known your whole life. Relationships are strong and build trust, you make connections that continue for years. They are not just a quick transaction.

Producer- Victoria

Interactions

Overview

Of the 105 participants 96% said that they experience social interactions and 76% said saleyards provide an integral place for information sharing and education. Another 78% stated a feeling of belonging and connection with the community around the saleyards. Furthermore, 52% stated that the canteen is the key social area at the saleyards while 50% of respondents enjoy the banter and fun. Finally, 59% stated that they felt an informal support that assisted their wellbeing.



When you are at the saleyards, it is genuine, it is happiness, it is interaction, it is engagement connecting with your fellow people. Not like “R U OK Day’s, we are doing this in a genuine way.

Service provider – Victoria

Learn new ideas to take home to your own operation. If someone’s cattle make good money, you might strike up a conversation to find out what they had been feeding them.

Service provider - SA

In drought times the saleyards become more important, it’s tough sitting at home seeing starving cows. It is great to catch up with people and know you are not in it alone. You can get stuck in a bit of a rut every day on your own.

Producer – Queensland

Isolation impacts



52% of people experienced a loss of community and belonging when they were not able to attend the saleyards



57% of people experienced social isolation when they were not attending the saleyards



59% of people experienced loneliness when they were not attending the saleyards

Overview

It was clear COVID-19 restrictions impacted everyone to some extent. With older men not being able to attend, agents and buyers reported that there was a very different feel at the saleyards. Vendors were frustrated not being able to attend and catch up with mates. It was clear that producers living and working on their own or with their partner, missed coming to the saleyards to socially connect and keep up to date with market trends and information.

Since the drought and COVID-19, people's mental health is really struggling. The government have had groups and people out and about and I'm not sure how many people access this information; but for me as an agent I learnt what was available so then I could provide my clients the information.

Agent – NSW



Everyone checks in with their circle. Mental health is a big factor. It is always better to talk to others, it always helps to talk.

Commission Buyer - SA

There is not enough support at the yards. There have been times where support was available, but not enough for the people. We need rural counsellors and professionals hanging around. And people can call and get in touch in a few days' time.

Producer - NSW

I have made great mates with agents and buyers, I have made some lifelong friends. We always pull together in hard times.

Producer/ Agent - NSW



To gain improved understanding of how saleyards reduce social isolation in regional communities is one of the objectives of this study.





QLD

Findings

Social value of saleyards QLD findings

Blackall saleyards and transit centre

The Blackall Saleyards, established in 1968, is located in Blackall, central west Queensland, and is approximately 960 kms from Brisbane. Blackall Saleyards is also a transit centre for spelling stock during travel. In previous years the sales at Blackall have been reduced due to drought and large-scale destocking of western Queensland. Sales have since recommenced regular activity and people have returned to the centre for sale days. The centre holds weekly prime and store sales and monthly weaner and store sales. The centre attracts visitors to experience live selling from the purpose built viewing platform.

Blackall saleyards is a multi-agent, local government owned cattle selling centre drawing stock from a vast geographical area and sold over 104 000 head in the 2020/21 financial year. This throughput placed Blackall as the fourth largest selling centre in Queensland in that period*.

Coolabunia saleyards

The Coolabunia Saleyards is located near Kingaroy in Queensland, approximately 220km from Brisbane. The saleyards were built in 1982 and were built by and remain owned by local government. The saleyards are a liveweight cattle selling centre operated by the South Burnett Regional Council as a multi-agent yards, tick clearing centre and bull sale facility.

When the Coolabunia saleyards were offered for sale, and appeared to be at risk of closing, the local community became highly active in calling for keeping the saleyards operating, and for them to stay in local government ownership. At the time of writing the South Burnett Regional Council were finishing a review of the operations and investigating opportunities for funding and greater utilisation of the facilities.



Burnett Livestock Exchange (observations)

The Burnett Livestock Exchange is a family-owned single agent cattle saleyards located at Biggenden in Queensland. It is approximately 285 kms from Brisbane. It is somewhat different in that it is owned and operated by a private livestock and property agent. The Biggenden Saleyards has been in operation since the 1950s and underwent a redevelopment in 2018 to rebuild all selling and holding pens, loading and drafting facilities and weighbridge. It was rebranded the Burnett Livestock Exchange at this time.

The centre sold just under 65 000 head of cattle in the 2020/21 financial year, placing it at sixth highest throughput in Queensland*. The yards conduct fortnightly meatworks and store sales and several feature sales throughout the year. At the time of writing the centre had recently been sold to another family-owned company.



Demographics

Overview

Fifteen women and thirty-eight men participated in interviews across two sites: Blackall Saleyards and Coolabunia Saleyards. The Burnett Livestock Exchange was used for observations only in Queensland.

Stakeholders interviewed included: producers, agents, transport operators local government personnel, canteen operators, community members, journalists, tourists, and state government personnel. The demographic that utilises saleyards as a social access point included: agents, buyers, producers, farmers, families and older men.

 **15**
women

 **38**
men

Personally, I have brought my small children here today and I'm getting to catch up with other mums and their kids, my kids get to see their dad who is an agent doing his job. It good for my husband too, he loves that the kids get to see him and what he does. These yards are nice, and the yards have a good feel about it and it is safe and it is a relaxed environment.

We come every Thursday.

Agent's Wife – Queensland

I see a lot of lonely men and I worry about them; they are comfortable in this environment. You can walk about the catwalk by yourself, and not feel shame.

Producer – Queensland

It is a mixed generation coming through. Especially on school holidays we have a lot more families here, and sometimes three generations here at the same time.

Agent – Queensland

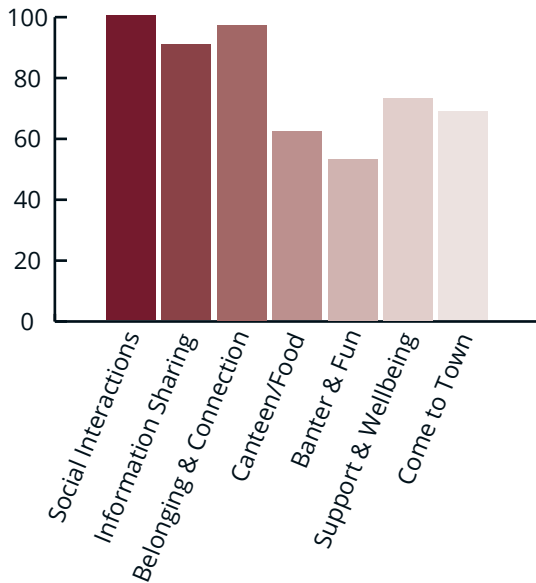
Tourists often have a question, we are only too happy to answer and explain it and we love that people are keen to learn about our industry.

Retired Farmer – Queensland

Interactions

Overview

Of the 53 participants 100% said that they experience social interactions at the saleyards and 90.5% said saleyards provide an integral place for information sharing and education. Another 97% of participants stated a feeling of belonging and connection with the community around the saleyards. Furthermore, 62% stated that the canteen is the key social area at the saleyards, while 53% enjoy the banter and fun. Finally, 73% stated that they felt an informal support that assisted their wellbeing and 69% of participants reported that the sale was an excuse to come to town.



It's always a good time to come together and talk to people with the same interests. I find for my husband it is really important for him as he can talk to other agents, clients and mates. There are a large number of tourists that come through and kids from the city.

Producer – Queensland

There is a lot of problem solving around local issues; saleyards provide a regular place where people come together – local, state, personal, media, weeds; information gathering, you can learn lots from everyone.

Agent – Queensland

23 years managing saleyards; a lot of the older people just love coming out even for morning tea. It is an outing for them, it is the highlight of their week.

Saleyard Manager – Queensland

In drought times the saleyards becomes more important (it's tough sitting at home seeing starving cows) to catch up with people and know you are not in it alone. You can get stuck in a bit of a rut every day on your own.

Saleyard staff – Queensland



One of the objectives of this study is to gain improved understanding of the social role of saleyards.

Isolation impacts



76% of people experienced a loss of community and belonging when they were not able to attend the saleyards



71% of people experienced social isolation when they were not attending the saleyards



93% of people experienced loneliness when they were not attending the saleyards

Overview

Queensland was not as impacted as other states during COVID-19, however, it did create concern and complexities for saleyard managers and operators. Some vendors reported feeling frustrated that different saleyards had different COVID-19 processes. It was clear that producers living and working on their own, or with their partner, missed coming to the saleyards to socially connect and keep up to date with market trends and information.

I think I underestimated the social value of the saleyard until COVID-19 shut down a lot of things. Because the yards were still operating it gives you people to talk to. Recently they were planning to shut down the yards, and the community said no. Every man and his dog turned up and whether they wanted to sell or not, there was a massive sale, and people just brought cattle to the saleyards to show the council do not touch our saleyards. There were blokes on the back of utes doing speeches.

Agent – Queensland

A lot of the elderly graziers that were sort of retired and came to town and a lot of local people that have some association with the cattle industry, they loved coming out even if it was just for morning tea and just having a chat and catching up. In the middle of drought it is pretty tough, and the sales allow people to take their mind off things.

Saleyard Manager - Queensland

People don't have anywhere else to go and it doesn't only affect my dad, mum looks forward to it too as it gives her 3 to 4 hours of peace and quiet. There is stress around the uncertainty of yards staying open in our community.

Producer and Local Government – Queensland

Mentally I struggle so I never really leave the farm; to come here and be amongst such great people is lovely.

Producer – Queensland

When COVID-19 restrictions were lifted in QLD and you were able to come back in you could see the pure joy on people's faces. It made us appreciate living in rural Australia.

Agent - Queensland



Further information

Mental wellness education and support

All three saleyards in Queensland had different types of workers: Resilience officer, Lifeline counsellor (Farmer to Farmer program) or Royal Flying Doctors Service (RFDS) suicide prevention worker. Refer to pages 76 and 77 for more information.

Tourists

One of the differences between Queensland and other states is the benefits of having planned tours and looking after tourists providing education to the wider community. Tourists interviewed stated they wanted to know more about where their meat came from. Operating tours provided meaningful roles (both paid and voluntary) for tour operators in the community to share their knowledge and wisdom about the industry. Tour operators, vendors and agents were proud and excited to be sharing information with people that were in interested in learning about the livestock industry.

Support workers

In Queensland, carers and support staff from a care facility took clients to the saleyard. The two clients shared that in their younger days, one used to drive trucks and the other worked in a meatworks. They were excited to see how the industry had changed and loved that the saleyard staff took the time to talk with them and answer any questions they had even though the staff were busy. Staff faces showed they enjoyed sharing and talking with the men.

Natural disasters

During local bushfires the saleyards provided a safe haven for people's livestock, because of the relationships that had been built at the saleyards everybody chipped in - from making sandwiches to moving stock and fighting fires. An interviewee stated *"We all look out for each other"*. Furthermore some saleyards have had local Rural Fire Service provide education and information.

Corrective services workcamp

Saleyards identified that using some of the clients from the corrective services work camp is a benefit when it came to mowing, minor repairs and cleaning of the saleyards.

Apart from livestock sales, the saleyards in Queensland are often used for:

- Festivals – Paddock to Plate (Celebrating Local Food)
- Tourism tours
- Different yards in Queensland offered different levels of support including
 - o Rural financial counsellors to provide support to producers
 - o Centrelink staff (Farm subsidy)
 - o Royal Flying Doctor Service and local health services – health checks and conversations
 - o Local area drought resilience workers

Other uses of saleyards included:

- Wedding venues
- Mental health first aid workshop
- Government staff to provide education around industry changes





A large graphic of the state of New South Wales (NSW) in white, set against a solid blue background. The map is positioned in the upper half of the page.

NSW

Findings

Social value of saleyards NSW findings

Dubbo Regional Livestock Markets

The Dubbo Regional Livestock Markets is located at Dubbo in western New South Wales, approximately 400 kms from Sydney. It has been in operation since 1950 with significant upgrades and expansions made in 2015 and 2016. The saleyard is a local government owned, multi agent facility and sells cattle, sheep and goats. There are weekly prime cattle and prime sheep and lamb sales and store cattle sales twice a month. Four goat sales are held throughout the year. It also offers wash down facilities, spelling paddocks.

Dubbo Regional Livestock Markets sold over 680,000 sheep and over 115,000 cattle in the 2020/21 financial year. This throughput placed Dubbo as the largest cattle selling centre and third largest sheep selling centre in New South Wales*.

Tamworth Regional Livestock Exchange

The Tamworth Regional Livestock Exchange (TRLX) is a privately owned multi-agent facility. It is managed by AAM Investment Group, who have a portfolio of Regional Livestock Exchanges across eastern Australia. The TRLX was opened in 2013 as a new build and also offers transit spelling and bull sale facilities. It holds weekly prime and fortnightly store cattle sales, and weekly sheep and lamb sales.

TRLX sold over 140,000 sheep and 101,000 cattle in the 2020/21 financial year, placing it as tenth largest sheep selling centre and fourth largest cattle selling centre for New South Wales¹⁴.

Demographics

Overview

Three women and twelve men participated in the interviews across two sites - Dubbo and Tamworth - in New South Wales. Stakeholders interviewed included: producers, agents, transport operators, local government personnel, a Stock Squad representative, and saleyard managers. The demographics that utilise saleyards as a social access point include agents, buyers, vendors, hobby farmers, families and older men.



It is definitely a meeting place and here we see a lot of older cockies, a lot of leaning on the rail and chatting and if they aren't watching the sale, they are over in the canteen. There is a group of young adults with a disability group, and they love coming out to the sale days. They help out around the yards and help load the trucks.

Cattle Buyer – NSW

It's the social centre in rural communities, people talk about their families and community. It is a community space and the social benefit is so important for people's mental health. Getting to network and find out what the market is doing.

Agent - NSW

It is an important meeting place in the life of producers in particular, especially going through drought and mouse plague, it serves as a place where these producers can get together and see other people that are going through similar things to them.

Saleyard Manager – NSW

People are just coming together to chew the fat. 25% of people genuinely want to buy, but there will be 75% of people connecting. It's a great melting pot for community.

Stock Squad – NSW



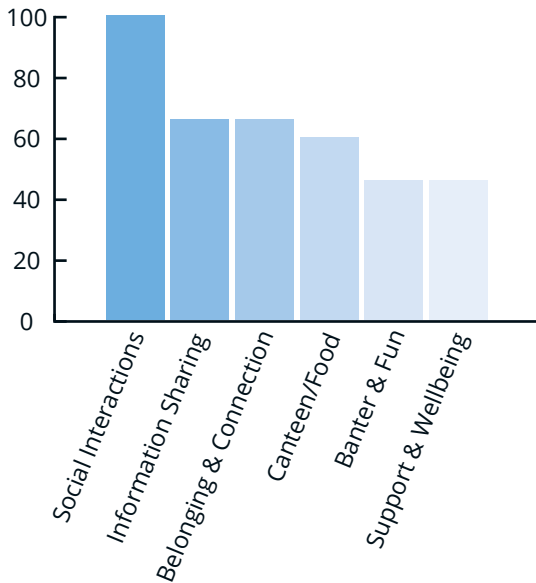
Another objective of this study is to gain improved understanding of how community services (e.g. health services, drought information) utilise saleyards and sale days as an access point and the effectiveness of this strategy.



Interactions

Overview

Of the fifteen participants 100% said that they experience social interactions and 66% said that saleyards provide an integral place for information sharing and education. 66% stated a feeling of belonging and connection with the community around the saleyards. Furthermore, 60% of participants stated that the canteen is the key social area at the saleyards, while 46% enjoy the banter and fun. Finally, 46% stated that they felt an informal support that assisted their wellbeing.



The yards are full of different characters, blokes, flamboyant, the quiet people. There is a space there for everyone.

Agent - NSW

Since the drought and COVID-19, people's mental health is really struggling. The government have had groups and people out and about and I'm not sure how many people access this information; but for me as an agent I learnt what was available so then I could provide my clients the information.

Agent - NSW

There is not enough support at the yards. There have been times where support was available, but not enough for the people. We need rural counsellors and professionals hanging around. And people can call and get in touch in a few days' time.

Producer - NSW

Isolation impacts



22% of people experienced a loss of community and belonging when they were not able to attend the saleyards



40% of people experienced social isolation when they were not attending the saleyards



20% of people experienced loneliness when they were not attending the saleyards

Overview

It was clear COVID-19 impacted everyone to some extent: older men not being able to attend; agents and buyers reported that there was a very different feel at the yards. Vendors were frustrated at not being able to attend and catch up with mates. While interviewees in New South Wales did not directly talk about loneliness and social isolation they were very concerned around people's mental health and wellbeing.

We have been running out of Tamworth a mental health awareness program, where we have had different agents and individuals at the yards speak up about their story and what they do to keep well.

Agent, Producer - NSW

During the COVID-19 periods, I don't believe it was healthy for the community when people didn't have a place to connect (from the mental health perspective). Even if they only call in for 20 minutes it gets people to connect.

Agent - NSW

People really miss it when they can't come into the yards. They make it part of their routine, even if they aren't buying, to spend two or three hours here.

Producer - NSW

I think if you had a mental health type bloke came out, we would go "we're too tough," but if there was someone that we knew and recognised in the industry we would probably go for support.

Local councillor, hobby farmer - NSW

Further information

Saleyards are important for both commercial and social outcomes and people appreciate and use the additional services and opportunities provided. When it comes to mental health, people could encourage others to seek support as they have great influence with each other.

When social services and opportunities are offered it attracts more people that would not normally come to the saleyards with really good outcomes, but it takes a lot of work to make it come together.

A lot of knowledge is passed on at saleyards by observation, asking questions, listening, learning through planned activities, generational connections.

COVID-19 restrictions affected who could attend saleyards and this led to people using online sales. Online selling can have benefits as it allows for people interstate to bid on cattle, but people miss out on the face-to-face connection.

Apart from livestock sales, the saleyards in New South Wales are often used for:

- Annual Mental Health Awareness days
- Rural Resilience NSW Health (one off event)
- School visits to provide education
- Hobby farm sales (bi – monthly at Tamworth)
- Westpac Rescue fundraiser (Westpac tag and calf sale)
- Truck wash
- Government staff to provide education around industry changes
- Car club use the space for an annual show

Points of interest

- Two participants reported feeling like they don't think that people understand the value of saleyards, there is a big disconnect between city and country, reinforcing the need for education about the role of saleyards and the industry generally.
- New South Wales state rural crime investigators reported improving how they work by having a presence at saleyards, providing education to saleyard operators around security and the importance of building relationships with the rural communities.
- One saleyard staff member reported they were committed to their staff wearing Tradie Mutt shirts, which work as a conversation starter to link tradies, truckies, blue collar workers, and those who care about them, with free counselling and mental health support through the TIAC.





VIC

Findings

Social value of saleyards VIC findings

South West Victoria Livestock Exchange (Warrnambool)

The South West Victoria Livestock Exchange (SWVLX) is located in Warrnambool, Victoria, and has been operational at the current site since 1970. It is approximately 270 km from Melbourne and is located close to the South Australian border. The facility is owned and operated by Warrnambool City Council and is a multi-agent selling centre. The SWVLX holds weekly prime cattle sales and monthly store cattle sales. The centre was previously a ring selling operation but changed to pen selling in 1984. It is now a post-sale weighing operation. The centre underwent a major upgrade in 1999 as well as upgrades in the past two years including covering selling pens with a roof.

Uniquely, the SWVLX has a licensed bar operating on sale days in addition to the canteen.

The SWVLX sold over 62,000 cattle in the 2020/21 financial year placing it at sixth largest throughput in Victoria*.

Central Victoria Livestock Exchange (Ballarat)

The Central Victoria Livestock Exchange (CVLX) is a privately owned multi-agent facility located at Ballarat, approximately 120 kms from Melbourne. It is managed by AAM Investment Group, who have a portfolio of Regional Livestock Exchanges across eastern Australia. The facility was built in 2018 replacing the previous Ballarat Saleyards. It is a cattle and sheep selling centre with fortnightly prime cattle and monthly store cattle sales and weekly sheep sales.

The CVLX sold over 54,000 cattle and over 1,644,000 sheep in the 2020/21 financial year. This throughput places CVLX as the seventh largest cattle selling centre and the largest sheep selling centre in Victoria*.



The study found that participants were passionate about the industry and connected to their saleyard community.

Demographics

Overview

Two women and six men participated in the interviews across two sites in the Warrnambool and Ballarat regions. Stakeholders interviewed included: graziers, agents, vendors, local government personnel, yard managers and yard administrators, and service providers. The demographics that utilise saleyards as a social access point include agents, buyers, producers and transport operators.



There is a pretty special interaction working with people that you have known your whole life. At the yards on sale day, it's pretty cool that I get to work with my mum. Relationships are strong and build trust, you make connections that continue for years. They are not just a quick transaction.

Producer - Victoria

A camaraderie of everyone in the yards. I do think that they are a very important asset, to not only maintaining mental health, but having social outlets. They keep people of the land connected with their community.

Producer, Agent - Victoria

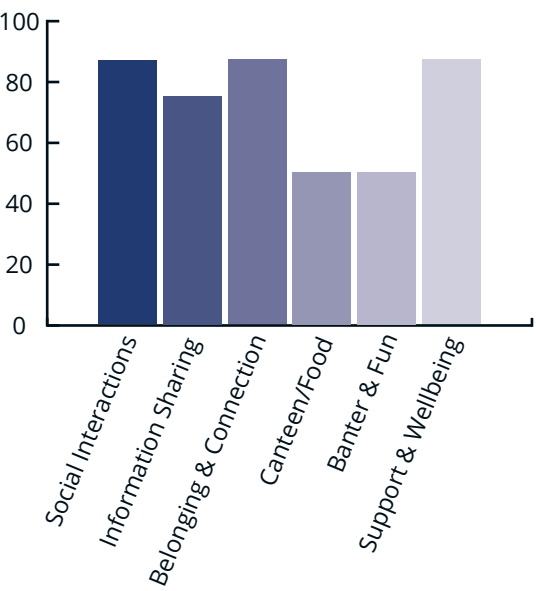
Old fashioned community, but it is changing. People come into the yards because they are interested, they are lonely, they may talk to agents about cattle they want to sell. They are looking for their community to support them. Coming into the saleyards to have that connection is important for men. The saleyards have its own community. Hairdresser, bar, and business are close by and often people would come in where the wife does the shopping, and the husband goes to the saleyards.

Mayor - Victoria

Interactions

Overview

Of the participants 87% said that they experience social interactions and 75% said that saleyards provide an integral place for information sharing and education. Another 87% stated a feeling of belonging and connection with the community around the saleyards. Furthermore, 50% of participants stated that the canteen is a key social area at the saleyards, and 50% enjoy the banter and fun. Finally, 87% stated that they felt an informal support that assisted their wellbeing.



The saleyards gives people permission to come to town. Talking to their mates, it is an outlet that was, and still is, it's the social outlet for so many. It's a habit.

Mayor – Victoria

Beyond blue was used as a get together for agents straight after a sale, and I think that was very good.

Agent - Victoria

Mental health foundation called “Let’s Talk” is a local grass roots organisation, so it works better than a government initiative.

Vendor, Agent - Victoria

Isolation impacts



50% of people experienced a loss of community and belonging when they were not able to attend the saleyards



50% of people experienced social isolation when they were not attending the saleyards



12% of people experienced loneliness when they were not attending the saleyards

Overview

In Victoria, when the interviews were being conducted, the areas were experiencing their seventh COVID-19 lockdown and had procedures and policies in place to minimise transmission. For vendors and producers to attend the sales they were required to have a government work permit. On the days the interviews were conducted many of the regular, older sale goers were not in attendance due to the restrictions.

Some people go weeks without seeing anyone. The yards are really an excuse to socialise and see others. When you are talking to people about things going on, they really understand, because they are going through it as well. The older generation need those social interactions.

Vendor, Agent – Victoria

When you are at the sale yards, it is genuine, it is happiness, it is interaction, it is engagement connecting with your fellow people. Not like “R U OK Day’s, we are doing this in a genuine way.

Service provider - Victoria

Week in and week out it would be predominantly the older demographics attending sales, but in saying that we have young ones there. Grandkids as it is seen as a safe place. Multi-generational groups.

Vendor, Agent - Victoria



A lot of our vendors are getting older but there are those younger generations coming through.

Agent - Victoria

I think that women have become more and more accepted and are more important in agriculture with each year that goes by. I think that the gender gap is getting closer and closer, it isn't just females on the books anymore.

Vendor, Agent - Victoria

Further information

The services or information that people accessed at saleyards, apart from livestock transactions, included rural financial counselling, health services, hairdressers, business services, the bar on sale days and information. It was also noted that some services were available but may not be taken up due to the stigma, such as mental health support.

There is opportunity for more services to be available such as training/education on technology, succession planning, car and bike sales and community sport.

In areas where saleyards have closed people commented that the community is disconnected from the livestock industry around them. People who don't work directly in livestock have no opportunity to see the benefits the industry has on the community. It was also noted that there was a loss of social connection for rural people in those areas.

Research indicated saleyards provide spaces where two and three generations are involved so it is good for connection and passing on knowledge.

Apart from livestock sales, the yards in Victoria are often used for:

- Annual Beyond Blue awareness days
- Local grass roots organisation "Let's Talk" have signage at the saleyards (mental health awareness)
- Social Change Dairy Industry (meeting and collaboration for changes in the dairy industry)
- School visits to provide education
- Government staff to provide education around industry changes

Points of interest

- The importance of locally lead movements: 'Let's talk' has grown the conversations in the farming community to bring about changes to address the high rates of suicides in the community.
- SWVLX has a licensed bar operating on sale days.
- The saleyard industry as an employment or career opportunity, changing the perception that working at the saleyards is just about chasing cows. The face-to-face interactions with people, and the public transparency of the industry is an opportunity for telling the story of the saleyards industry including animal, people and community welfare.





SA

Findings

Social value of saleyards SA findings

The Mount Gambier and District Saleyards

The Mount Gambier and District Saleyards is owned and operated by the District Council of Grant. It is located 10 km east of Mount Gambier and approximately 435 kms southeast of Adelaide and has been in operation since 1977. It is a multi agent facility selling cattle and sheep. There are weekly sales for meatworks cattle and sheep, with store cattle sales fortnightly. There have been capital improvements to the yards since commencement with the most recent in 2021 with new double loading ramps opened in November.

The Mount Gambier and District Saleyards sold over 70 500 cattle and over 119,000 sheep in the 2020/21 financial year, placing it as the second highest throughput of cattle and third highest throughput of sheep in South Australia*.

Naracoorte Regional Livestock Exchange

The Naracoorte Regional Livestock Exchange (NRLE) is located outside Naracoorte, approximately 340 kms from Adelaide. The yards are owned and operated by the Naracoorte Lucindale Council and is a multi-agent selling centre. The yards were built in 1973 with significant upgrades since, including roof cover for the cattle selling pens, truck wash down facilities and water reclamation infrastructure.

The NRLE has weekly cattle and sheep sales and monthly store sales, with further sales held according to market and seasonal demand. The NRLE sold over 82,500 cattle and over 559,000 sheep in the 2020/21 financial year, placing it as the largest selling centre for both cattle and sheep in South Australia*.



Millicent Stock Saleyards

The Millicent Stock Saleyards is located at Millicent, approximately 400 kms from Adelaide. The centre is owned and operated by the Wattle Range Council and has been in operation since 1976. It is a multi-agent selling centre with fortnightly cattle sales. The centre has recently undertaken an operational review that raised issues that threaten its future viability. In November 2021 the community gave passionate and vocal support for the continued operation of the saleyards and secured support from Council for upgrades to be undertaken.



The study found that participants identified that they have a sense of belonging and connection to the saleyard community.



Demographics

Overview

Seven women and seventeen men participated in the interviews across three sites: Mt Gambier, Millicent and Naracoorte on the Limestone Coast in South Australia. Stakeholders interviewed included: producers, agents, transport operators, a canteen operator, community members, journalists and local government and state government personnel. The demographics that utilise saleyards as a social access point include agents, buyers, producers, hobby farmers, families and older men.



On school holidays you have kids running around with their grandparents as their parents are working. A more diverse group regards gender, more often females are coming to see the prices or see their cattle being sold.

Producer/Journalist - SA

It is more than just a business centre, after the sale everyone gathers at the canteen. The canteen is part of the culture, they are with their kind, and they can be themselves and they feel comfortable.

Producer - SA

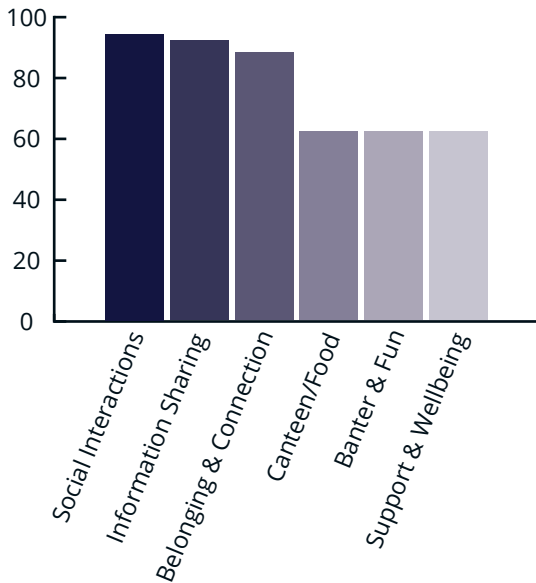
Agents and their sons and daughters and grandkids spend time at the yards.

Agent - SA

Interactions

Overview

Of the 24 participants 94% said that they experience social interactions and 92% said that saleyards provide an integral place for information sharing and education. Another 88% stated a feeling of belonging and connection with the community around the saleyards. Furthermore, 62% stated that the canteen is a key social area at the saleyards, while 62% enjoy the banter and fun. Finally, 62% of respondents stated that they felt an informal support that assisted their wellbeing.



There are people that come solely for the social interaction.

Saleyard Manager - SA

Saleyards are all different, but they have the same good country values that people in agriculture have. Agents, buyers, vendors and contractors all like working with like-minded people. They talk about the big topics like the seasons, weather, best profitability on farm as well as some gossip and footy talk. It is a great place to network.

Service provider - SA

A farmer with Parkinson's can attend the sale and is welcomed and treated without judgement or pity. It's a safe place to be where you are not judged on your condition.

Farmer - SA

Isolation impacts



58% of people experienced a loss of sense of community and belonging when they were not able to attend the saleyards



67% of people experienced social isolation when they were not attending the saleyards



66% of people experienced loneliness when they were not attending the saleyards

Overview

It was clear COVID-19 restrictions impacted everyone to some extent - older men not being able to attend; agents and buyers reported that there was a very different feel at the yards; producers were frustrated at not being able to attend and catch up with mates. It was clear that producers living and working on their own or with their family missed coming to the saleyards to socially connect and keep up to date with market trends and information.

When you are on your own six days a week the saleyards is the place to meet and connect.

Agent - SA



Everyone checks in with their circle. Mental health is a big factor. It is always better to talk to others, it always helps to talk.

Commission Buyer - SA

I was stuck at home with all my problems and didn't get to come in for a bit of a vent.

Farmer - SA

The mood was very sombre when COVID-19 restricted vendors and public, was very sad for vendors.

Administrator - SA

Saleyards are a conduit for a demographic that is generally withdrawn from the sociological construct of Australia.

Ben Jones, Agent - SA

Further information

Interviews also explored the wellbeing of the saleyard communities in South Australia when saleyards were removed or when participants were not able to attend during COVID-19 restrictions. 58% of participants identified experiencing the loss of a sense of belonging and connectedness and 48% expressed feeling stressed and angry (this could be due to the frustration experienced in Millicent saleyards with the potential closure).

During the research it also became apparent that saleyards play a role in addressing social isolation with 40% of the participants interviewed identifying that sale day was an opportunity to escape from the farm. Attending the sale was identified as a legitimate excuse to come into the saleyards and have a break from the direct work on the land.

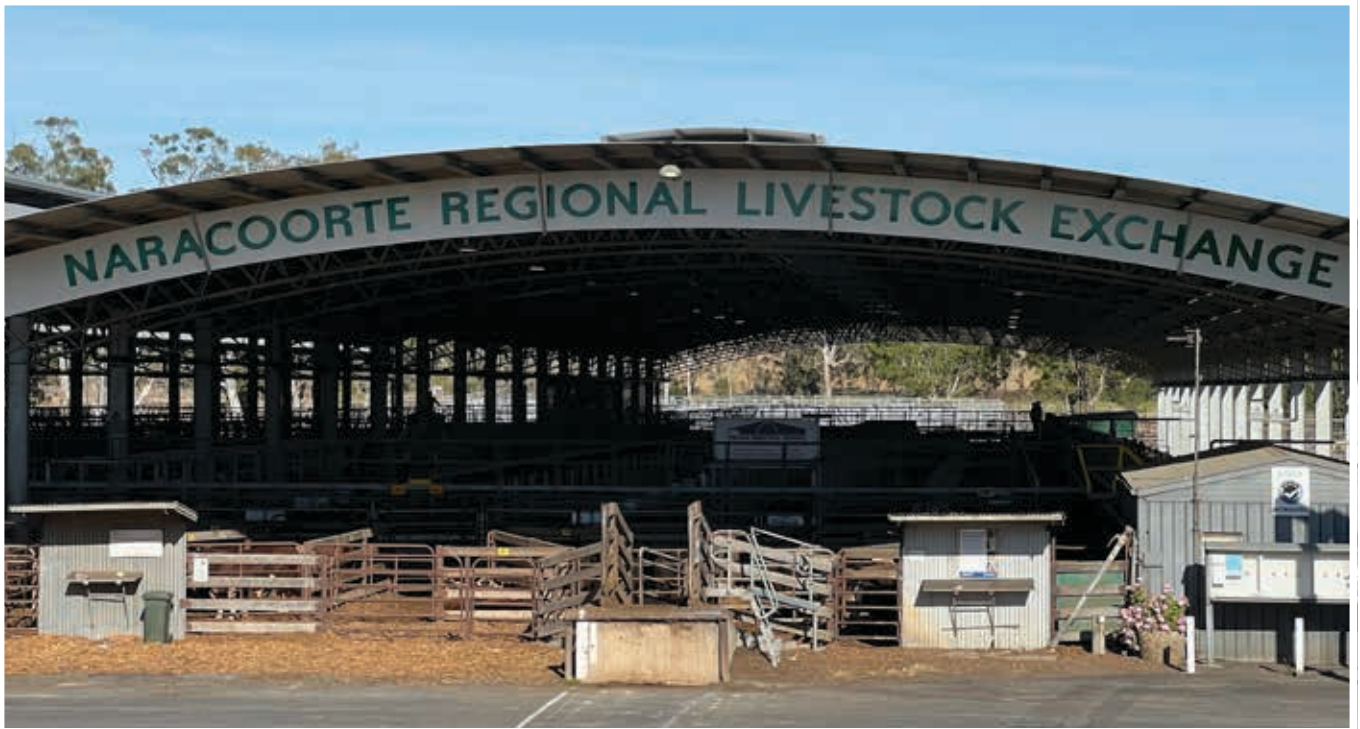
Apart from livestock sales, the saleyards in South Australia were often used for:

- Driving schools
- Learner truck driving
- Truck washes
- Hot rod exhibitions

While not something that happens regularly there have been times where the saleyards have been used for:

- St John's defibrillation demonstrations
- Hearing aid checks
- Blood pressure checks
- Car dealerships displays
- Merchandise stands

Participants identified it would be beneficial to offer some of these alternative uses and services on a more regular basis.





WA

Findings

Social value of saleyards WA findings

Mount Barker Regional Saleyards

The Mount Barker Regional Saleyards is owned and operated by the Shire of Plantagenet and is a multi-agent cattle selling centre. Mount Barker is the major town within the Shire of Plantagenet and is approximately 370 kms from Perth. Mount Barker is a significant service centre for the surrounding agricultural areas and it plays an important role in the region. The selling centre was constructed in 2000 with further upgrades in 2013 and 2014. The centre holds weekly prime cattle sales and seasonal weaner sales (November to March) and trade cattle sales.

The Mount Barker Regional Saleyards sold over 71,000 head of cattle in the 2020/21 financial year, placing it at third highest throughput for Western Australia*.

Demographics

Overview

Three women and two men participated in the interviews at Mount Barker in Western Australia. Stakeholders interviewed included: producers, agents, local government, yard manager and a rural financial counsellor. The demographics that utilise saleyards as a social access point include agents, buyers, vendors, hobby farmers, families and older men.



3
women



2
men

There is the beauty of saleyards where people feel like they are part of the dust and the fun. There is a respect for the elders of the industry, you have a respect for their knowledge and what they have done. They all have brilliant stories about Australian agriculture.

Producer – WA

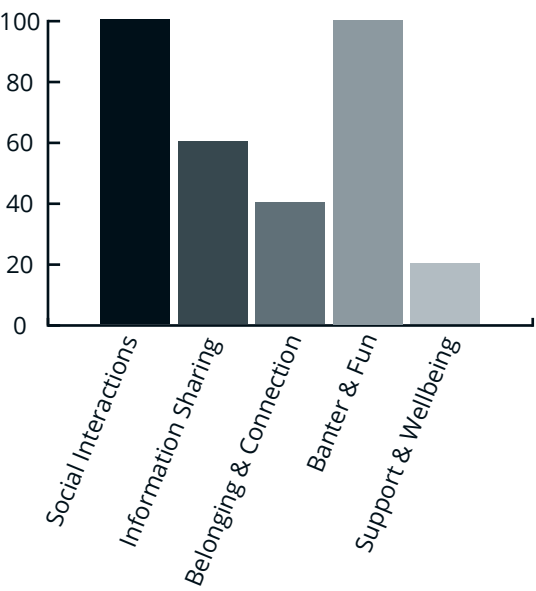
Saleyards give people the space to come and connect, that would not otherwise connect.

Producer – WA

Interactions

Overview

Of the five participants 100% said that they experience social interactions and 60% said saleyards provide an integral place for information sharing and education. Another 40% stated a feeling of belonging and connection with the community around the saleyards, while 100% enjoy the banter and fun. Finally, 20% of respondents stated that they felt an informal support that assisted their wellbeing.



We have a number of yards closed and only get used once a year and all the cockies come out of the woodwork to attend.

Agent and producer – WA

I love going to the saleyards. Every day is a good day. I had eight days to pull off a clearing sale and we loved pulling that off and making that happen.

Producer – WA

An objective of the study is to gain improved understanding of the potential impact on social well-being when saleyards are removed from a community.

Isolation impacts



50% of people experienced a loss of community and belonging when they were not able to attend the saleyards



55% of people experienced social isolation when they were not attending the saleyards



50% of people experienced loneliness when they were not attending the saleyards

Overview

Western Australia appeared to be one state that attendance was not directly impacted because of COVID-19. A number of smaller yards have closed in recent times and only operate annually for key events. Concerns for saleyard community stakeholders' well-being in mental health was apparent with one of the participants recently attending a suicide prevention workshop.



I've just attended a two-day suicide prevention workshop. Human contact is so important to our farmers' wellbeing that are socially isolated. It is good for our mental health.

Producer – WA

The fact that there is saleyards means we have trucks, and agents which fits with economics which also fits with the social value of our saleyards.

Rural Financial Counsellor – WA

Further information

One of the differences between Western Australia and other states was that sales tend to run for a shorter period of time (generally an hour at the saleyards) and that there was a sale circuit, so people jumped in their vehicles and drove to the next set of saleyards. This was different from other saleyards in regional Australia. The demographics that access the saleyards were predominantly middle aged and older men, however it was also identified that women and families also attended.

Apart from livestock sales, the yards in Western Australia are often used for:

- “Gate to plate” education and information days
- Regional men’s health days - the “pit stop”
- School visits to provide education
- Tourism events

Other users of saleyards include:

- Agents who use the yards for trainees
- Rural financial counsellors to provide support to producers and small business
- Governments staff to provide education around industry changes

While there were only five people interviewed from Western Australia three identified that culture needed to change within the industry.

There is a lot of room for culture change in relation to chauvinism. It is male dominated. Commission buyers and agents - in their contracts it says nothing about their behaviour and that needs to change. It is a bullying behaviour, bullying practices to anyone that they think is a target. Agent, WA

Saleyards set our markets; we would like to have more producers at our markets. Producers feel that saleyards are a big scary place, buyers are rude to producers. Producers are confronted - attitude has to change a fair bit. Agent, WA

Points of interest

- One of the participants interviewed identified that during COVID-19 - *I invited some of my clients to watch stud sales on a big screen trying really hard to create that social interaction, however it was still not quite the same as Sale Day at the yards. Financial Counsellor, WA*
- One participant described a partnership - *with University of Western Australia engineering students were able to come up with a creative way to map wastewater management. They allowed us to come up with innovation - an opportunity to have practical training in, and explore, out of the box solutions. Producer, WA*
- One participant reported attending a local aged care facility and providing farmers with a saleyards report.



After fifteen years no female has ever sold off the rail and I am yet to see any female sheep buyers. I am ashamed to say it's a chauvinistic industry. We have had young girls start buying and they generally get broken after six months because of the older generation being so chauvinist and hard on them. I've seen a lot of young men broken too.

Agent, WA

I have made great mates with agents, buyers, and producers. I have made some lifelong friends. We band together in hard times. At the salyards you see a lot of regular faces, meet up and catch up with their mates have a cup of tea or stand and have a yarn under the shade of a tree. It's a great knowledge exchange learning and sharing information from generation to generation.

Agent, Producer - NSW





The mood was very sombre when COVID 19 regulations, restricted vendors and the public it was very sad for vendors.

We have always known that the Saleyards played a social role, but COVID 19 restrictions have made it very clear.

Administrator - SA

Valuable themes of saleyards across Australia

“Human beings are like mobs of kangaroos, like these animals we are creatures who thrive on connections and belonging with each other we are at our best when we are fully integrated with the herd we are at our worst when we are isolated.”

Social commentator on Australian culture, Hugh Mackay (1999)

The most valuable findings from the research have been broken into 5 categories:



Socialising



Belonging and connection



Information sharing and networking



Impact of not being able to attend



Services accessed at saleyards



Socialising

Peer interaction provides a major benefit to stakeholders. During the interviews, 96% of the respondents stated that they came together for social interactions. Barry (2009)⁸ suggests that there is a strong link between mental health and social interactions. He states that positive mental health is a major component of a social and economic society. This was evident in the observations as a variety of age groups engaged in meaningful conversations with each other sharing laughs, past experiences and industry knowledge.



Belonging and connection

Analysis of the data suggested that there are strong traditions that allow community members to feel like they belong and are connected. The interviews show that 78% of participants identified that they found a sense of belonging and connections to the saleyards.

“Belonging is a necessary ingredient for our performance individually, in teams and for our communities because we can more effectively engage and bring our best selves. And even more importantly, belonging is good for our wellbeing as humans. It’s important for individual physical, mental and emotional health and it’s critical to the health of our communities.”

(Brower 2016⁹)

The value of belonging was visible through observations of physical interactions such as shaking hands, talking with elders and maintaining traditions such as how to select the order of agents selling at the sale (the agents’ draw). Finding happiness in a place and environment allows for stakeholders to experience better health.



Information sharing and networking

It is common in saleyard communities for discussions around improved practice to occur. It is evident that in these conversations agents, producers and buyers network with common topics including genetics, feed and weather. Over half of the participants expressed networking as one of the main reasons to attend saleyards. Topping (2005)¹⁰ suggests that peer learning holds significant value with cognitive gains, but also social and emotional gains. This demonstrates that information sharing and networking contribute to a strong link.



Impact of not being able to attend saleyards

There are a number of reasons that a community member might not be able to attend their local saleyards. Whether it is a natural disaster, government regulations due to COVID-19 or personal reasons, there was found to be significant impacts on the community as a whole. Of the participants that were interviewed, 57% said they experienced social isolation. Others reported feeling angry and frustrated and some stated that they felt like their rights had been taken away. Cornwell and Waite (2009)¹¹ suggest in a study around social disconnectedness that low physical health is associated with loneliness or social isolation, where mental health can also deteriorate. The impact on the saleyard communities when stakeholders cannot attend can have serious health implications both physically and mentally.



Services accessed at saleyards

Queensland is currently the leader in providing health support services to their stakeholders through holding workshops and having information awareness days. Across all states, there are numerous industry related resources provided unique to each saleyards such as animal welfare, weed and pest management, employment opportunities and financial services. Galbreath and Galvin (2008)¹² discuss the importance of quality resources in optimising performance of a community. Where saleyards have quality health support specialists and industry related resources, there is a greater opportunity for the saleyard community to achieve individual and community success.

Additional Themes



Mental health

During the interviews there were no direct questions about mental health and suicide, however it became a common thread with people sharing their stories or their concerns about other people around them.

Forty of the participants identified that a saleyards would be a great place to have education and awareness raising around the challenges of mental health and wellbeing.

Agents also identified that it was a great place for them to have access to information, learning and training about how to support their clients and where to refer them for support.

If we didn't have saleyards in rural Australia, we would need 1 000 counsellors. Because the saleyards is a place where you can come and share your burdens. When you talk about what is going on with someone that understands, it doesn't make it go away, but it makes you feel lighter.

Agent employee and producer – Queensland

Small talk - Big difference.

Service provider - Queensland





Mental health takeaways from Queensland

Listed below are common themes from support providers in Queensland who included a resilience worker from the Burnett Inland Economic Development Organisation (BIEDO), a Farmer to Farmer Lifeline counsellor and a suicide prevention worker from the Royal Flying Doctors Service (RFDS):

- Each of these three workers understood the rural industry - they were either a current primary producer, were previously a primary producer, or had worked elsewhere in the industry
- When they were new to the role it took time to build rapport and trust
- They didn't wear any uniforms with branding and logos
- They had discreet business cards with phone numbers and support, and they identified that most people generally got in touch a few days after initial contact at the saleyards
- They delivered "awareness days" at the saleyards where professional athletes talked about their own mental health journey
- They provided information about other issues such as weed management, hearing loss and blood pressure checks.

Many of the saleyards participated in levels of mental health awareness raising including:

- Blackall Saleyard staff wear the TradeMutt shirts as conversation starters
- Tamworth Regional Livestock Exchange hosts "R U OK?" days. This is a platform that helps conversations happen more frequently around mental health and well being
- The South West Victorian Livestock Exchange at Warrnambool supports a local group "LETS TALK" (suicide prevention).

Other supports and services include:

- During droughts in Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia, health services and support services provided teams at the yards
- Rural financial counsellors attend many saleyards
- Centrelink had farm support staff at saleyards providing information in relation to farm subsidies during natural disasters



Canteen – the power of connecting over a meal

57% of participants identified that the canteen was a great place to catch up and have a coffee, tea or bacon and egg burger and have a yarn with colleagues. During the observations it was noted that clusters of groups met at the canteen, and caring conversations were happening between canteen staff and customers. People greeted each other by name and with a smile, asking each other about family and friends.



Saleyard Managers - their role in creating the social environment

Observations and interviews with Saleyard Managers, and from other stakeholders' responses, indicated that:

- Managers that are able to work relationally with their stakeholders developed a respect and sense of community at their yard. They had the skill to call out behaviour that was not okay while maintaining relationships.
- Managers understood the importance of taking the time to say hello and connect with the range of stakeholders.
- Managers worked hard to make sure that animal welfare was maintained - everyone wants livestock to be cared for.



Fundraising and giving back to community

Each state was dedicated in their own way about giving back to community, with individual saleyards supporting community in different ways. Observations found that:

Queensland rallied behind natural disasters or personal community experiences with fundraising to get in and support the cause

New South Wales had a strong focus on particular fundraisers like the Westpac Rescue Helicopter

South Australia had a method where sporting clubs actually own stock and different producers agisted and managed the animals on their land for no fee.

This highlighted that when saleyard stakeholders give back to our communities and provide a level of financial support and generosity, it allows people to feel good about themselves, it improves their well-being and adds to a vibrant community.



Relationships of a different kind (love)

In three out of the five states it was shared in the interviews that people had found their partners at the saleyards and they all went on to marry their significant other. It was highlighted that there have been several weddings at the Blackall Saleyards given the fabulous shade trees and relaxed country environment they create.



Paddock to plate

Two of the saleyards worked with the community as part of a tourism or economic benefit, or as an education event. This differed from state to state. One saleyard hosted a paddock to plate event sharing local food and produce and provided it to the wider community and as a tourism event. A Meat and Livestock Australia report on community sentiments towards red meat¹³ released in 2021 highlighted the benefits of Paddock to Plate events, including as a successful strategy to provide education to the wider community about the meat industry. These events also promote the saleyard industry and contribute to stakeholder pride and wellbeing.



Employment

While employment was not necessarily an element of this research, of the 105 people interviewed employment came up 39 times in conversation. They had either gained employment by meeting somebody at a saleyard, or employed people looking for work that they met at the saleyards. The saleyards are a conduit for employment.



Social Action

The dairy industry has experienced a number of significant changes over the years in New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria. It is evident dairy farmers band together because of the relationships and trust they had in their connections from the industry and the saleyards. The saleyards was a place where they shared their concerns and took action, by uniting to have influence for change. Meetings were held regularly at the saleyards.

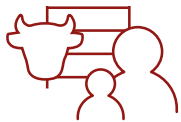


Disaster management

Communities that experienced natural disasters, such as storms, fires and floods, reported that the saleyards were a common place of refuge for livestock. Going forward it would be beneficial that saleyards connect with local disaster recovery teams and to be included in discussions about future planning.

During local bushfires the saleyards provided a safe haven for people's livestock, because of the relationships that had been built at the saleyards. Everybody chipped in, from making sandwiches to moving stock, fighting fires. We all look out for each other.

Producer – Queensland



Children and saleyards

Interviewees were asked about the best day they ever had at the saleyard. Most shared fond memories as a child, being with their father or their uncle at the saleyards. When sharing their stories people often became animated and some shed a tear for the fond memories. One of the New South Wales respondents shared a story about a local schoolteacher who brought down a regular group of students to the saleyards. In Western Australia saleyards are used for cattle handling schools. It was also evident that during school holidays kids and families have a strong presence at the yards around Australia.

The issue of safety concerns for children was also raised. Parents of young children expressed a desire for appropriate playground equipment. Children have always been a part of saleyards culture and history, with many interviewees reporting they had spent time as a child at the saleyards and went on to work in the industry. It is recommended that further research into safely and appropriately including children in the industry could be undertaken.



Improving the saleyards culture for everyone

While the saleyards are places with a caring, supported and welcoming culture it would be remiss to not include the reports of bullying, physical abuse and unwelcome behaviour. There reports include:

Physical abuse:

- An elbow in the chest while attempting to bid
- A punch in the face to resolve conflict

Verbal derogatory language:

- Publicly shamed and put down in front of others including workmates and the public
- Sexual verbal abuse including “show us your tits”
- Publicly degrading comments at the sale by making explicit comments likening a cow to a local woman in the community
- Producer told to “f*** off and not come back” by a commission buyer. Agents stated they knew to give it back as good as they were given, but for the producer they were left feeling intimidated and never returned to the saleyards.

Feeling welcome:

“Some of the old school fellas at the yards are hard to crack; I have been working in this space and saying good morning mate, and know they will go first but it has taken twenty years. They just don’t think women should be at the yards.

Culture needs to change; I think more women are keen to enter into the workforce, but the industry is slow to change.”

Yard staff and local government councillor - QLD

It is recommended that further research into workplace culture could be undertaken for best practice in the saleyards industry, including exploring how to communicate industry behaviour standards.



Tourism

Tourism provided a great way to bridge the city country divide. Tourists reported that they loved learning about the role saleyards play in the meat industry. Vendors that attended the yards enjoyed having conversations and sharing knowledge about the industry with tourists. Locals at the saleyards enjoyed the fact that people cared and were grateful to listen to their stories about the industry.

One of the differences between Queensland and other states is the benefits of having planned tours, looking after tourists and providing education to the wider community. Tourists interviewed stated they wanted to know more about where their meat came from. Providing saleyard tours gave meaningful roles (both paid and voluntary) for tour operators to share their knowledge and wisdom about the industry. Tour operators, producers and agents were proud and excited to be sharing information with people that were interested in learning about the livestock industry.



Support workers

In Queensland the research team observed support staff from a care facility taking clients to the saleyard. The two clients explained they had previously worked in the livestock industry – one person drove trucks and the other worked in a meatworks. They were excited to see how the industry had changed and loved that the staff took the time to talk with them and answer any questions they had despite the busy workload. The enjoyment of sharing the industry knowledge was evident on all faces, including the saleyard worker.



Corrective Services workcamp

Saleyards identified the utilisation of corrective services clients from the nearby work camp was beneficial when it came to mowing, minor repairs and cleaning of the saleyards.



Rural crime

New South Wales Rural Crime investigators reported improving how they work by having a presence at saleyards, providing education to saleyard operators around security and the importance of building relationships with rural communities.



Leadership development and networks

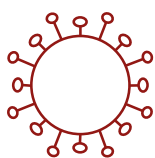
A number of the participants discussed wanting extra opportunities for further leadership development. Two women offered to mentor younger women interested in entering the industry. Some felt there was a lack of leadership and collaboration at their local saleyards. COVID-19 limited networking opportunities for the industry.



Older men

At all of the sites visited there was a cohort of older men – semi retired or retired producers. Sale day was a social event and a point of many connections. The research team observed men positioning themselves at points of high traffic – places that people flowed past during the sale - so they could be certain to maximise catching up with all of their associates, colleagues and friends. Intentionally or unintentionally this allowed for social connection and interaction. These positions were outside the canteen, or at the top of stairs at viewing platforms, depending on accessibility and agility of the person.

One person interviewed shared the extent of their connection – not only sharing industry news and changes but also forging new friendships - giving fish to the saleyard manager when the participant had a successful day fishing; the saleyards having extended this person's circles of friendship and care. The saleyards forges a person's identity when retiring might weaken a sense of self. The saleyards gives these people a place to belong and feel connection. There are not many places in our society where retired and semi-retired producers can attend regularly and have the level of belonging and connection they have identified as having at the saleyards.



COVID-19

Community is important in 'typical times', but it is vital when things get tough and the COVID-19 pandemic has brought this into sharp focus. Where communities were already strong, social life has flourished: people have been checking in on each other more and have helped each other with food shopping or other chores. However, for others the pandemic has been an isolating experience and certain groups, such as older retired men from the saleyards community, have been particularly affected by loneliness.

While the saleyard industry secured essential service status to remain operating and keep people safe, there were some concerns around how information was interpreted in local regions. Saleyard vendors expressed a struggle to understand the required, but varying, operational restrictions between saleyards, even within the same state, impacting their access to sale days. Stakeholder response to differing COVID-19 operational procedures between different saleyards highlighted three key elements:

At saleyards, vendors have struggled to understand how operators in the same states operate according to different COVID-19 rules. There are three key elements here:

- Firstly, is to be kind to ourselves as an industry. We have never navigated a pandemic before, and everybody is learning.
- Secondly, the constant shift in strategies and messages from national, state and local government were confusing for people.
- Thirdly, the community was operating out of fear and not having any control and felt their rights had been taken away.

It is important to note that while industry protocols were consistent across the nation, implementation may have differed across states, and between individual saleyard facilities, for site-specific reasons related to infrastructure, layout and access.



Extra services

- Hair dresser
- Knife sharpening

Important Areas To Explore

**Identifying accessible places to
maximise social outcomes**

*eg. Put new seats near the
canteen or under a tree*

**Learn from industry leadership
through Covid-19**

*Being prepared for
unexpected events*

Mental Health and Well-being

*What is it that saleyard
stakeholders really want to
support mental health?*

The future of saleyard culture

*Broaden inclusivity and diversity
in saleyards*

Conclusion

This report represents a strong first step in capturing the social value of saleyards in rural and regional communities.

Research participants share their lived experience of the benefits and complexities that saleyards play in their regional communities and across the livestock industry. The research follows and explores five thematic areas: Socialising; Belonging and Connection; Information Sharing and Networking; the Impact of Not Being Able to Attend; and Services Accessed at Saleyards.

It found that saleyards are critical to the social fabric of regional communities, and that a visit to a saleyard livestock sale in regional locations helps to improve social outcomes for people living in rural and regional Australia. Saleyards do this by: reducing social isolation, providing connection to key services otherwise not available in isolated locations, facilitating exchange of information, enabling deeper and more open conversations in a safe environment, informal support, and maintaining cross-generational connection.

Saleyards in rural Australia are often the backbone of rural communities, and they provide substantial economic and social value to those who visit.

They are a place to connect and engage socially, uphold tradition, and share services and information that continues to grow the livestock industry, as well as maintain positive social, emotional and physical wellbeing.

This report can be used by organisations, service providers, policy makers, and community members to continue to develop evidence-based, people-first approaches to their decision making, that takes into account the social value that exists and can be drawn upon across regional Australian saleyards.

Further, it is a valuable endorsement of the organisations across rural Australia who have been innovative in using saleyards as a venue to provide various types of support. These support services are needed (but may not ever be directly requested) by people living and working in rural and regional areas.

As well as providing useful data, many people who contributed to the research commented that they appreciated that this work was being done, that their voices were being heard and that the social value of saleyards was acknowledged as a key outcome, and not just an added bonus.

More than complimenting the economic value of saleyards, this report demonstrates that the social value of saleyards can be, and should be, measured as a key outcome when analysing the importance of saleyards in rural and regional communities.



Glossary of social value of saleyards terms

ALMA - Australian Livestock Markets Association is the peak body for the saleyard industry working for an innovative, sustainable and responsible livestock market.

MLA - Meat and Livestock Australia delivers research, development and marketing services to Australia's cattle, sheep and goat producers. MLA is funded by industry levies.

Agent (livestock agent): Acts for the producer/vendor to secure a sale and earn commissions. Agents are active in a variety of sales channels including saleyard auctions, direct sales and over the hooks transactions.

Belonging – Belonging is the innate human desire to be part of something larger than us.

Commission buyer: Acts on behalf of a third party to purchase cattle. Major acquirers of cattle generally employ their own 'corporate' salaried buyers and rarely use commission buyers.

COVID - Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Dollars per head (\$/hd): A pricing method. Cattle ready for slaughter are generally priced according to weight, and not dollars per head.

Liveweight ('over the scales') (pre and post-sale weighing): Where cattle are sold based on their live weight, usually in cents per kilogram. Also referred to as 'over the scales'.

Prime cattle (fat or slaughter cattle): Cattle which are at a size (weight) that is suitable for slaughter. Saleyards tend to have a 'prime' cattle sale and a 'store' cattle sale. Store cattle are not ready for slaughter.

Saleyard: A physical auction market where buyers and sellers trade livestock. There may be separate sales for store and prime cattle.

Social Value – Social Value is the value that stakeholders experience through changes in their lives. Some, but not all of this value is captured in market prices.

Stakeholder – is an individual or group that has an interest in any decision or activity of an organisation.

Store cattle: Cattle suitable for breeding or finishing, but not for slaughtering.

TIACS - An organisation providing tradies, truckies, blue collar workers and those who care about them with free counselling & mental health support.

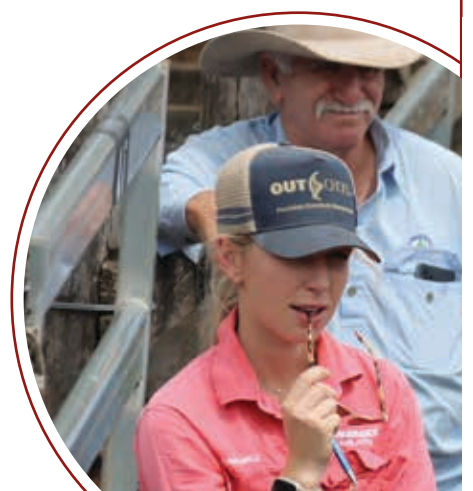
TradeMutt - Design Unique Tradie Workwear to Start Conversations About Mental Health. Making An Invisible Issue Impossible. Mental Health Advocates. Shirts (conversation starter).

Vendor – a person or company offering cattle or sheep for sale.

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Appendix





AUSTRALIAN LIVESTOCK MARKETS ASSOCIATION

Social Value Of Saleyards (SVOS) Research Project

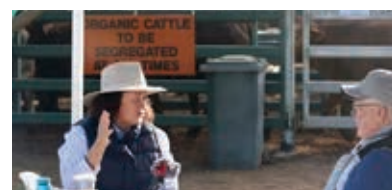
The Australian Livestock Markets Association (ALMA) is the national industry body for saleyard owners and operators in Australia. Previous research has established that saleyards and livestock exchange facilities provide extensive economic value to regional Australia; but there is also a huge social benefit to having operating saleyards in these areas. Sale days bring crowds to towns; are multi-generational events and are a meeting place for people who normally might lead a more isolated life. Sale days are also known to be key contact places for service providers to connect with communities for information sharing and service access.

ALMA has commissioned a research project investigating the social value of saleyards to rural communities. The project is seeking to capture what sale day means to community members, service providers and saleyard stakeholders. Site visits for face-to-face interviews will be carried out (where possible due to COVID) at four saleyards across Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. An online survey will also be available for people across Australia to complete as well as virtual interviews.

The project report will be a valuable tool in working with all levels of government and the livestock industry to help shape future policy and funding direction.



- PEOPLE
- PLACES
- PURPOSE



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT
HEATHER ELLIS 0427 639 848 OR
SALEYARDSPROJECT@GMAIL.COM
FACEBOOK.COM/SOCIALVALUEOFSALEYARDS





AUSTRALIAN LIVESTOCK MARKETS ASSOCIATION

INVITES YOU TO JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Exploring the Social Value of Saleyards

- PEOPLE
- PLACES
- PURPOSE

**COOLABUNIA
SALEYARDS**

15 • JULY • 2021

7am to 3pm

(We need 30mins of your time)



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT
HEATHER ELLIS 0427 639 848 OR
SALEYARDSPROJECT@GMAIL.COM



bluewrenconnections.com

Research Project Into Social Value of Saleyards

The Australian Livestock Markets Association (ALMA) is the national industry body for saleyard owners and operators in Australia. Previous research has established that saleyards and livestock exchange facilities provide extensive economic value to regional Australia; but there is also a huge social benefit to having operating saleyards in these areas. Sale days bring crowds to towns; are multi-generational events and are a meeting place for people who normally might lead a more isolated life. Sale days are also known to be key contact places for service providers to connect with communities for information sharing and service access.

ALMA has commissioned a research project investigating the social value of saleyards to rural communities. The project has a three-pronged approach to capturing what sale day means to community members, service providers and saleyard stakeholders. Where possible site visits for face-to-face interviews will be carried out at four saleyards across Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia. An online survey will also be available for people across Australia to complete and virtual interviews will also be conducted for additional sites.

The project commenced in Queensland in July and interviews have been conducted in each other state. On the 19th of November interviews will be conducted using zoom at the Mt Barker Regional Saleyards. Project consultants Blue Wren Connections will be conducting interviews using zoom and phone on to meet with stakeholders and community members to hear why their saleyards are important to them. The next interviews will be South Australia and the following week.

ALMA believes the industry has a strong and vibrant future and is committed to showing its many faceted benefits. The project report will be a valuable tool in working with all levels of government and the livestock industry to help shape future policy and funding direction.

Media comment:

General enquiries: Heather Ellis, Blue Wren Connections Tel: 0427 639 848 Email:saleyardsproject@gmail.com

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The project commences with a visit to the Coolabunia Saleyards near Kingaroy in the South Burnett, QLD. Project consultants Blue Wren Connections will be on site for a sale on Thursday 15 July to meet with stakeholders and community members to hear why their saleyards are important to them. The next visit will be Blackall Saleyards, QLD on Thursday 29 July. Visits to Dubbo in New South Wales and Warrnambool in Victoria are also scheduled for later in the year.

ALMA believes the industry has a strong and vibrant future and is committed to showing its many faceted benefits.

ALMA President Ken Timms said 'saleyards have historically formed an integral part of the social fabric of rural communities and this work will help to quantify this important concept.

The project report will be a valuable tool in working with all levels of government and the livestock industry to help shape future policy and funding direction.'

Media comment:

General enquiries: Heather Ellis, Blue Wren Connections Tel: 0427 639 848 Email: saleyardsproject@gmail.com

The outcomes of exploring the social value of saleyards are:

1. Improved understanding of the social role that saleyards play
2. Improved understanding of how saleyards reduce social isolation in regional communities
3. Improved understanding from community services eg health services, drought information about the benefits of saleyards and sale days as an access point
4. Improved understanding of the demographic that utilise saleyards as a social access point
5. Improved understanding of the potential impact on social well-being when Saleyards are removed from a community.

Remember to make observations of who in intendencies at the sale yards eg young families, men, women.

Who makes up the saleyard's community?

- Key open questions
- Info sheet and consent forms

SVOS Research Questions

*are mandatory questions

Online Title	QUESTION TYPE
Q1 Name	Essay
Q2 What is your age? *	Multiple Choice
Q3 What gender do you identify as? *	Multiple Choice
Q4 What is your racial or ethnic identity?	Multiple Choice
Q5 What state or territory do you live in?	Multiple Choice
Q6 What saleyards do you attend?	Essay
Q7 Which of these titles do you identify with? If more than one, select multiple.	Multiple Choice
Q8 Besides buying and selling livestock, what are 3 other reasons you come to the saleyards? i.e. Socialising, Rural Financial Counsellor, Health Services, Learn new information, Community Involvement, Business Opportunities, Networking or Looking for work.	Essay
Q9 What sort of impact is COVID-19 having on you, when vendors and spectators were not permitted to attend sales?	Essay
Q10 How did it feel to not be allowed to attend?	Essay
Q11 In the last 5 years, other than livestock transactions, what services or information have you accessed at saleyards? i.e. financial services, education, Centrelink, industry services, Rural Financial Counsellor, health services, learn new information, employment opportunities.	Essay
Q12 Before the COVID-19 restrictions how many sales would you attend in 6 months?	Multiple Choice
Q13 With the COVID-19 restrictions, how many sales have you attended?	Multiple Choice
Q14 What have you noticed in communities where saleyards have closed? i.e. financial services, education, Centrelink, industry services, Rural Financial Counsellor, health services, learn new information, employment opportunities.	Essay
Q15 This is the last section of the survey before submitting, feel free to take time to go over your answers. Below is a comment box to add anything that you haven't had an opportunity to.	Essay
Q16 What sort of impact is COVID-19 having on others, when vendors and spectators were not permitted to attend sales?	Essay



Social Value of Saleyards to Regional Communities Information Sheet and Consent Form



Project Overview

Australian Livestock Markets Association (ALMA) has commissioned an independent researcher, Heather Ellis, to examine the Social Value of Saleyards (SVOS) in regional communities. Three key saleyard communities in regional Australia will be engaged and connected with around the benefits of sale days, and the impacts when sales are cancelled. The engagement would be done through face-to-face interviews, focus, online surveys and recording people's stories and experiences. This information would then need to be given context around the communities' demographics, and health and economic data. The result would be a document and resource for the industry to use when meeting with government, lobbying for funding, or demonstrating the industry's value to the public. As a key stakeholder, we would like to invite you to participate in this research to hear your views and experiences of the Social value of Saleyards.

Participation

If you consent to take part in this project, your involvement will require taking part in a telephone interview or face to face with Heather Ellis. The interview, scheduled at a time convenient to you, may take approximately 15-30 minutes, depending on the amount of information you choose to share. With your consent, the interview would be audio-recorded to make sure the information is accurately transcribed into documents for use in the preparation of the final evaluation report. The interview would focus on questions such as your perceptions of the social value of saleyards.

Benefits and Risks

There may be no direct benefit to you for participating in this project. However, your insights are valuable and will contribute towards future of regional saleyards. There are no anticipated risks in your involvement in this research, and participation or non-participation in the evaluation will not affect your association with Australian Livestock Markets Association or any other organisation involved in the evaluation.

Confidentiality

Your participation is voluntary, and while we will record what you say with your consent, the interview will not collect any identifying information, and your responses will remain confidential. If there are any concerns with sharing information which may identify you, this material will be withdrawn or withheld. Any information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements, upon receipt of appropriate documentation. Data will be securely stored in a locked filing cabinet for a duration of 5 years from publication of the final report.

Right to Withdraw

Your participation is voluntary. You are free to end your participation in the telephone interview, without penalty, by informing the interviewer. Any data already provided by you will be withdrawn.

Outcome

The results of this research will be disseminated in the form of a final project report, which may be shared on related websites (e.g., Australian Livestock Markets Association).

Consent

Your consent to participate in this project will be obtained through your completion of the Consent Form below.

Questions/ Further Information

If you have any questions about this project, please contact the Researcher, Heather Ellis via email heather@bluewrenconnections.com.

Ethical conduct will be adhered to in accordance with the 'National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007' (Updated 2018). The National Health and Medical Research Council, the Australian Research Council and Universities Australia. Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

Consent Form

I consent to participation in this research project and agree that:

1. An Information Sheet has been provided to me that I have read and understood.
2. I have had any questions I had about the project answered to my satisfaction by the Information Sheet and any further verbal explanation provided.
3. I am aware that the interview will be audio recorded.
4. I understand that my participation or non-participation in the research project will not affect my association with Social value of saleyards to regional communities or any other organisation involved in the research.
5. I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the project without penalty at any time up until my data has been de-identified.
6. I understand the research findings will be included in a final report on the project and this may include other methods of dissemination stated in the Information Sheet.
7. I am aware that a Plain English statement of results will be sent to me if I request a copy in the section below.
8. I agree that I am providing informed consent to participate in this project.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name (please print): _____

	YES	NO
I wish to have a Plain English statement of results sent to me at the address I provide below.		

E-mail Address: _____

**The primary purpose for saleyards is to provide a platform
for business transactions and economic development.
However, this research is evident that saleyards
create a place for social connection.**



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