



Secretariat C/- Bluesee | PO Box 668, Denmark 6333 Western Australia | esther@bluesee.com.au

Sheep Alliance Communication Plan

Overview

The Sheep Alliance of WA (the Alliance) was formed in July 2016 following the restructure of the Sheep Industry Leadership Council. Membership of the Alliance is open to all entities that are key contributors to the sheep supply chain and/or actively working towards improving the profitability of the WA sheep industry and where membership is the business, not the individual. The membership base is diverse, bringing together growers, sheep exporters, wool exporters, processors, universities and educational institutions, wool and livestock brokers, ag consultants and various other service providers supporting the sheep industry. There is a founding membership base of 46 entities.

The most valuable aspect of the Alliance is the mechanism it provides for all-of-supply-chain collaboration in forming industry strategy and driving the necessary action to achieve its objectives. At its core is the function it needs to play in communicating key messages to stakeholders in a consistent and united fashion. The test of the effectiveness of this process is the willingness of its target audience to listen and then 'repeated back' or 'forward' the message in a manner that builds understanding.

This degree of penetration will not be achieved by just a standard suite of electronic newsletters, websites and feature articles. Whilst these elements are critical components, the opportunity the Alliance structure brings is the capacity for these messages to be:

- More technical, interesting (challenging) and valuable in content;
- Repeated in more ways, more often, by a multitude of carriers and through a variety of mediums;
- More coordinated – so communications draw on all relevant activities throughout the RD&E delivery chain.

These three factors will help counter the impact of 'communication overload' that every consumer is faced with in today's communication-savvy world.



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What the Alliance aims to do

The Alliance activities is governed by its constitution which states its purpose as **To help arrest the decline of the WA sheep population and generate sustainable industry growth, by:**

- a. Leading a communication process to develop and implement a shared vision between all members of the Alliance and the broader sheep industry;
- b. Optimising WA-relevant sheep research and extension to foster a culture of adopting best-practise sheep business management systems; and
- c. Nurturing and developing quality future industry leadership.

Excellence in internal and external stakeholder communication is the only path to achieving this.

The Communication Plan

This communication Plan articulates:

- What we will say,
- How we will say it,
- When we will say it,
- Who will say it; and
- Why we will say it (*the latter being the check and balance and ultimate evaluation of success. It ensures that we need to say what we say and don't say it for the sake of it!*)

Before we map out this approach, first we need to be clear about our stakeholders.

The table over page considers the stakeholders in the categories of internal and external and provides commentary about what and how each stakeholder needs to 'feel and act' as a consequence of our effective communication.



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1. Defining the target audience

| | Commentary | | Commentary |
|---|---|--|--|
| Internal Stakeholders - Need to be intimately engaged; feel 'ownership' and not disenchanted with process or content in any way – which can be a function of 'information overload'. | | External Stakeholders - Need to receive, understand and act on the key messages that the Alliance and its members conveys | |
| Directors | Equally informed with information provided in a manner that suits them/can optimise their engagement style and capacity to provide strategy and governance to the process. | Mixed farmers <i>May be categorised into large and medium sheep enterprises for eg</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">With 10,000 plus DSEWith 2000-10,000 | Need to be convinced that: <ul style="list-style-type: none">sheep are profitable year in year out;easier to manage than they think (given appropriate investment in technology and handling equipment) |
| All members of the Alliance (note, this captures processors, exporters, brokers, agents, unis etc) | Need to be engaged in two-way conversation with the directors and executive. They need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Feel their ideas are being heard;Be resourced with quality information to forward to their clients and colleagues;Valuing the activities that the Alliance and its directors are undertaking; | Potential investors: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Australian businesses considering entry into sheep;Foreign businesses considering entry into WA ag | Need robust, benchmarked performance information that quantifies the value of sheep in a farm system; and the overall sustainability of the supply chain. |
| SIBI Program Manager/Project Leader | Actively engaged in information sharing with the Alliance on a regular (weekly/fortnightly basis) | Department Premier and Cabinet and Department of Regional Development MLA and AWI Sheep Meat Council of Australia | Needs to see the WA sheep industry 'has its act together' and has a single and coordinated approach to getting stuff done that will drive sustained profitability in the sector, in order for it to fund continued activity in this space. |
| DAFWA DG | Needs us to be able to articulate there is a quality return on DAFWA's investment in this space. | Community | Needs to feel that the WA sheep industry is a responsible, ethical industry producing quality product. |



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2. What will we say

Guiding Principle: No key messages listed below can be executed without the capacity to quantify and prove its content. Therefore, this list is divided into two parts. What we can say now (left hand column); and what we want to say once we have the research to justify it. All forms of communication must link to the key objectives of the Alliance:

- a. Leading a communication process to develop and implement a shared vision between all members of the Alliance and the broader sheep industry;
- b. Optimising WA-relevant sheep research and extension to foster a culture of adopting best-practise sheep business management systems; and
- c. Nurturing and developing quality future industry leadership.

The list of communication activities below must embed the objectives above.

| # | Key Messages - say now | E/I | # | Key messages – say as soon as we can quantify and/or road test | E/I |
|---|---|-----|---|--|-----|
| 1 | Explain to Alliance members why we need a business plan for investment. Ensure they understand that a good plan that all understand, review and engage with, will optimise our chance of the plan being funded. | I | 4 | That sheep can make a sustained contribution to profit in a mixed farming enterprise, but some practise and attitudinal change is required in order to realise that on a broad scale. | E |
| 2 | Articulate the sum of the SIBI projects in a manner that (a) generates interest from sheep producers; (b) increases adoption of the project findings. | E | 5 | That sheep producers should not just assume they have a right to farm, but that they should earn the respect of the consumer to do so, by adopting best-practise animal welfare standards on farm. | E |
| 3 | Articulate the sum of all other relevant WA sheep RD&E projects (beyond SIBI) in a manner that suggests there is collaboration and coordination between all RD&E efforts across institutions, grower groups, noting that the external stakeholder should not necessarily care WHO the deliverer is, but more so, just be reassured that a lot of valuable stuff is happening and they should trust the content. | E/I | 6 | That the business plan for WA sheep supply chain RD&E investment, when complete, has the full endorsement of all Alliance members, in order to optimise. | E |



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3. How and When we will say it

| # | Messages - say now | Member Briefing Notes | Present to members | Open events | Media releases to FW and ABC | Purchased space | By asking members to 'forward' | Alliance Website |
|---|---|--|------------------------|--|------------------------------|--|--|--|
| 1 | Explain to Alliance members why we need a business plan for investment. | Minimum monthly | Seek every opportunity | n/a | Minimum monthly | | Every time | Yes |
| 2 | Articulate the sum of the SIBI projects in a manner that (a) generates interest from sheep producers; (b) increases adoption of the project findings. | Content of the spread also made available to members on line | | New angles and ways of presenting this to be developed for future Sheep Updates – perhaps hosted by the Alliance | Augmented by media releases | Fortnightly double page Alliance-branded (DAFWA/R4R acknowledged) spread* in Farm Weekly with a skilled resource dedicated to developing its content. <i>*This is the most important plank of the engagement strategy and an example of content is listed in Appendix 1</i> | Content of the spread also made available to members on line, in a format suitable for them to incorporate | Farm weekly content uploaded fortnightly |



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|---|---|---|--------------------|--|------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|---|
| 3 | Articulate the sum of all relevant WA sheep RD&E projects (beyond SIBI) in a manner that suggests there is collaboration and coordination between all RD&E efforts across institutions, grower groups, noting that the external stakeholder should not necessarily care WHO the deliverer is, but more so, just be reassured that a lot of valuable stuff is happening and they should trust the content. | The reminder to review the definitive list always listed in member communications | | New angles and ways of presenting this to be developed for future Sheep Updates – perhaps hosted by the Alliance | Augmented by media releases | | | Hosts the 'definitive list'/directory of what's going on. |



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| | Messages - say as soon as the research is ready | Member Briefing Notes | Present to members | Open events | Media releases to FW and ABC | Purchased space | By asking members to 'forward' | Alliance Website |
|---|--|--|--------------------|---|------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|---|
| 4 | Reports commissioned by SIBI have commenced the process of articulating the profit contribution from Sheep. However, the danger of reports is that they sit on shelves. One media release announcing the 'release' of the report has no capacity to create a practise change. Every report commissioned by SIBI could and should generate a large number of communication opportunities. | Outcomes of the reports to feature in Briefing Notes | | Reports land best at events if they are presented in the context of a 'farmer testimonial'. Findings are best presented in tandem, with the consultant plus a farmer example of the finding | | Double page spread should be used to house stories/examples, reinforced messages from the commissioned reports. | | Reports available on Alliance website along with YouTube examples/testimonies from farmers to reinforce message |



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|---|--|--|---|--------------|--|---|--|--|
| 5 | That sheep producers should not just assume they have a right to farm, but that they should earn the respect of the consumer to do so, by adopting best-practise animal welfare standards on farm. | An opportunity to reiterate the Mick Keogh message that if we are to grow by value, not volume, then we are entering a high end market with much greater demands | | | | Message reinforced via the double page spread | | Reinforce the responsibility for the producers to accept the rationale for best practise and to respect that the 'consumer is always right'. |
| 6 | That the business plan for WA sheep supply chain RD&E investment, when complete, has the full endorsement of all Alliance members, in order to optimise. | Ensure members are kept informed with the development of the plan, including early drafts | Schedule a members forum to test the plan; followed up with a second forum to re-test the final version | Launch event | Plan is officially released via a media launch | Message reinforced via double page spread | Always ask members to forward briefing notes in relation to the Plan | Plan is centrepiece of the website |



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4. Who and Why we will say it

| Who Says | Why we say |
|---|--|
| <p>Every attempt should be made for the Alliance to be seen as “the Alliance” and representative of the entire WA sheep supply chain, rather than have Alliance messaging linked to a key individual, such as the Chair, EO or Vice Chair.</p> <p>The message will be stronger if the composition of the Alliance membership is highlighted at every turn, to demonstrate the messaging is reflective of all of industry.</p> | <p>The Alliance messaging is at risk of being complex and misunderstood in a market place that has much ‘static’. There is a culture of interest and stakeholders ‘ready to receive’ information, because of the alarm that has been generated by the reducing sheep flock. This represents a unique opportunity to communicate, as stakeholders are listening and searching for solutions.</p> <p>However in a complex market place, it is difficult to distil our message to a one-liner (eg remember the power of Abbotts’ “Stop the Boats”).</p> <p>We have to be mindful that whatever we say can be easily forgotten – and therefore repeating the same thing many times in different ways is key to the approach.</p> |



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Appendix 1 – Sample story list for Double Page Spread

Guiding principles:

- Each spread needs minimum 2 photos, possibly three.
- Stories must vary in length; and include some elements that appear 'every issue'.
- No story to be more than half a page.
- A strap banner across the top – something like **News from the members of the Sheep Alliance of WA**
- A strap banner along the bottom – brought to you by DAFWA through R4R etc
- A standard footer that gives an elevator statement about the Sheep Alliance – such as
 - *The Sheep Alliance of WA has a membership base that is representative of the entire WA sheep supply chain. The Alliance was formed on the back of a common issue to help arrest the sheep decline in WA. Our objective is to arrest the decline by supporting activities that help drive productivity and profitability throughout the sheep supply chain. The articles that appear on these pages are consistent with that goal*

Sample Article List – Every issue:

- A well-written commentary column from "The Alliance" (ghost written by a selection of consultants including Ritchie, Herbert, Watts et al – addressing key issues/opportunities;
- A snapshot piece on young people in sheep, featuring on a rotation basis, members of the Innovation Pilot group; and/or the 100% club; or LTEM members – that provide examples of 'innovation in action' or 'best practise pastures/repro in action'.
- A 'research in action' piece – each fortnight featuring a different researcher discussing just one element of their research project. *This should not be limited to SIBI researchers, but also capture UWA/Murdoch/CSIRO relevant research.* The piece is short/snappy and always has room for a follow up or 'part 2' to the piece in a subsequent issue.
- A processor/live exporter/wool exporter 'issue update' – to highlight our connection and the importance of linking producer with processor
- A Grower Group activity report – again a tiny snapshot, in the vein of 'did you know' that grower group A is doing xyz (drawing from the Ag Science R&D fund activities but also others that are being undertaken by them; and

Plus

- Use the page to promote a list of 'information workshops' relevant to our objectives, irrespective of whose they are (include MLA, AWI etc)