

Market Update

October 2026

Summary

Australian red meat processors continue to face tight margins as strong livestock supply in beef contrasts with constrained sheepmeat availability, volatile livestock prices and a more complex export environment. September trading was shaped by safeguard restrictions in China and South Korea, softer imported-beef prices in the United States and uneven spring conditions. Early October rainfall supported restocker confidence in parts of eastern Australia, but the seasonal outlook remains mixed and unusually warm conditions are likely through the remainder of 2026. Sheepmeat processors are nervously awaiting the findings from the U.S. International Trade Commission Investigation into lamb imports, which held a hearing in Washington last Friday (16th). The Commission will make a determination of injury by November 13th and report to the President by January 11th.

AMPC		Monthly Market Dashboard									
		Measure	Unit	Value	Change from last month	Year to date	Change from this time last year	Source	Period ending		
	Throughput	Cattle	head	558,221	▼ -4.4%	5,985,288	▲ 3.2%	MLA	4 weeks ending	9-Oct-26	
		Lambs	head	1,421,439	▼ -2.8%	15,675,602	▼ -10.3%	MLA	4 weeks ending	9-Oct-26	
		Sheep	head	134,776	▲ 20.4%	4,393,290	▼ -35.2%	MLA	4 weeks ending	9-Oct-26	
		Goats	head	67,213	▲ 1.8%	2,382,324	▼ -13.6%	MLA	4 weeks ending	9-Oct-26	
	Livestock Prices	National Heavy Steer Indicator	c/kg lwt	466	▲ 3%		▲ 7%	MLA	4 weeks ending	18-Oct-26	
		National Heavy Lamb Indicator	c/kg cwt	1,117	▬ 0%		▬ 1%	MLA	4 weeks ending	18-Oct-26	
		National Mutton Indicator	c/kg cwt	834	▼ -3%		▲ 15%	MLA	4 weeks ending	18-Oct-26	
	Exports	Beef	tonnes	132,146	▲ 3%	1,209,826	▲ 9%	DAFF	Month ending	Sep-26	
		Lamb	tonnes	24,475	▲ 9%	241,812	▼ -10%	DAFF	Month ending	Sep-26	
		Mutton	tonnes	11,718	▲ 49%	97,237	▼ -39%	DAFF	Month ending	Sep-26	
		Goat	tonnes	4,300	▲ 18%	36,606	▼ -14%	DAFF	Month ending	Sep-26	
	Meat Prices	US 90CL beef	AUD \$/kg CIF	10.06	▲ 2%		▼ -15%	MLA	Week ending	9-Oct-26	
		Market	Quota Type	Annual Quota (tonnes)	Shipped (tonnes)	% Shipped	Balance remaining (tonnes)	Source			
	Quota Usage	USA	Beef (WTO and AUSFTA)	500,000	449,461	90%	50,539	DAFF as at 12 October 2026. excludes quotas monitored and enforced outside DAFF			
		UK	UK Beef Meat (FTA)	60,000	19,827	33%	40,173				
			UK HQB (2026-27)	3,761	-	0%	3,761				
			UK Sheep Meat (FTA)	41,667	16,042	39%	25,625				
			UK Sheepmeat (WTO)	13,335	12,347	93%	988				
		EU	HQB (2026-27)	3,389	1,361	40%	2,028				
			Sheepmeat	5,851	5,224	89%	627				
		Japan	Bovine Offal	21,000	923	4%	20,077				
Indonesia	Live cattle (head)	700,000	244,786	35%	455,214						

Beef

Throughput

Cattle slaughter remains historically high, supported by a productive herd, strong feedlot turn-off and ample cattle availability. Weekly slaughter remained near 143,000–147,000 head through late September and early October, although public holidays, plant schedules and processor margins continued to create week-to-week variation.

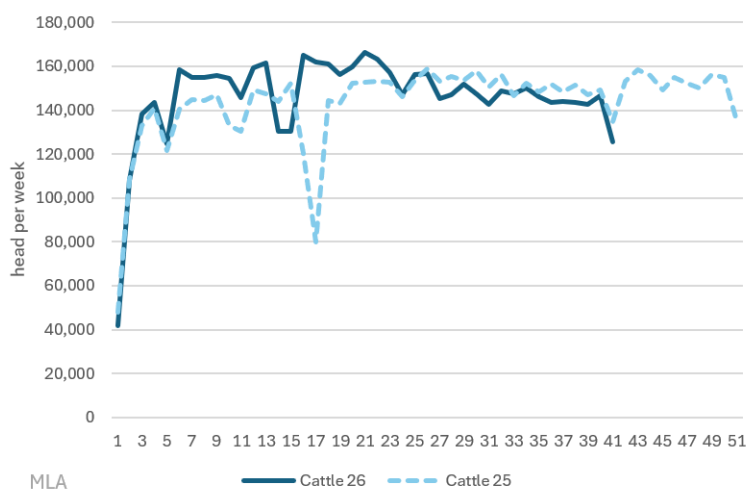
Cattle prices were volatile through September, with restocker categories weakening late in the month before scattered early-October rainfall improved buyer confidence.

Exports

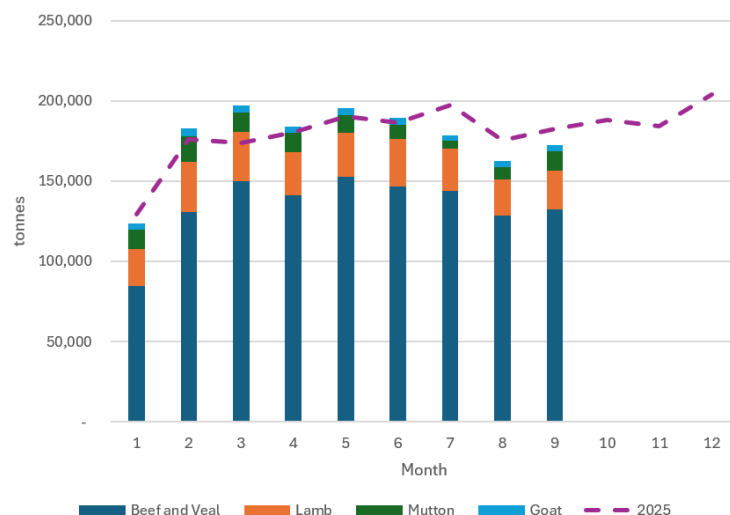
September export conditions remained challenging as safeguard tariffs continued to restrict access to China and South Korea and redirected product towards alternative markets. DAFF has published the September end-of-month trade reports, while early October shipments indicate continued demand from the United States, Japan and Korea. Australia's broad market access and tight global beef supply remain supportive, but competition and tariff settings are limiting returns in some price-sensitive markets.

Imported beef values in the United States remained under pressure in late September, with ample frozen supply, rising domestic cow slaughter and slower buyer activity weighing on the 90CL market. Strong US demand and constrained domestic cattle supply continue to support the medium-term outlook, although a stronger Australian dollar, weaker spot pricing and increased competition are compressing processor and exporter margins.

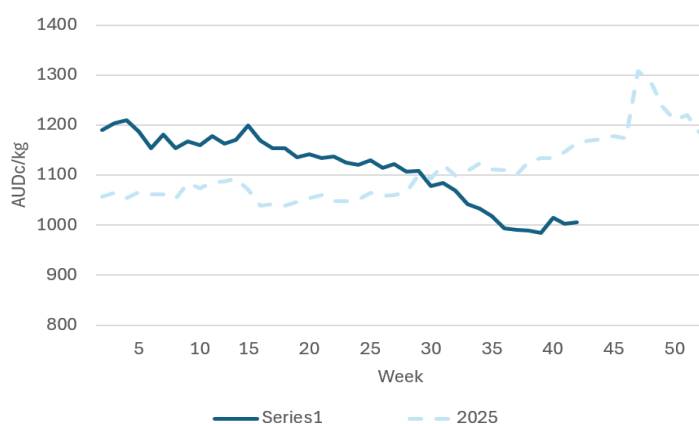
Cattle Slaughter



Australian Monthly Red Meat Exports



90CL Beef Imported to USA from Australia



MLA Cattle Industry Projections

MLA recently released their [September Cattle Industry Projections](#) which are updated twice each year. The projections signal a more gradual decline in the national herd to 2028, supported by favourable conditions this year. Beef and veal production is expected to reach a record 3 million tonnes cwt in 2026 before declining in 2027 and 2028. Average cattle carcase weights are expected to steadily increase reaching 319 kg by 2028, supported by slaughter composition, feedlot expansion, favourable seasonal conditions and long-term improvements in genetics. Strong global red meat demand and tighter beef supply are expected to continue supporting Australian exports and cattle turn-off. Below is the projected percentage changes of key metrics over the coming 3 years.

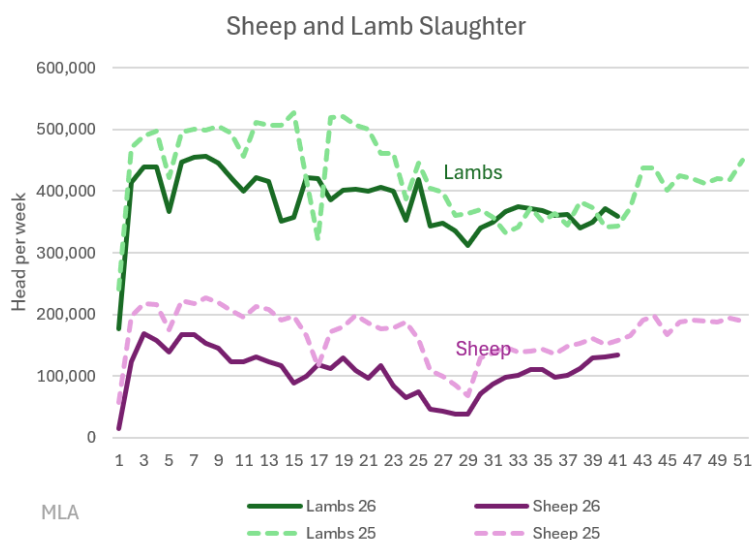
Projected % change from 2025 levels

BEEF	2026	2027	2028	2025-2028 Change
Herd/Flock (no.)	↓ 0.9%	↓ 2.0%	↓ 1.6%	↓ 4.5%
Slaughter (no.)	↑ 3.4%	↓ 4.3%	↓ 3.4%	↓ 4.3%
Carcass weight (kg)	↑ 1.0%	↑ 0.6%	↑ 1.3%	↑ 3.1%
Production (tonnes)	↑ 4.7%	↓ 3.7%	↓ 2.1%	↑ 1.4%
Exports (swt)	↑ 6.5%	↓ 4.0%	↓ 2.5%	↓ 0.3%

Sheepmeat

Throughput

Lamb supply is increasing as new-season lambs enter the market, but national availability remains below recent years after sustained flock contraction and lower 2026 turn-off. Weekly slaughter softened in late September as scheduled processor maintenance reduced capacity, before activity lifted again in early October. MLA forecasts 2026 lamb slaughter at about 21.9 million head and sheep slaughter at about 7.1 million head.



Exports

Sheepmeat export conditions remain mixed. Tight global supply and continued demand for Australian lamb are supporting values, particularly in the United States, while high prices, exchange-rate movements and disruption in some markets are contributing to customer resistance. Mutton availability remains especially constrained after the sharp reduction in sheep slaughter during 2026, supporting prices despite uneven export demand.

MLA Sheep Industry Projections

MLA [September Sheep Industry Projections](#) have the Australian sheep flock declining by 2.5% in 2026 before entering a rebuilding phase in 2027 and 2028. Sheep turnoff continues to tighten falling 38% in 2026 as producers retain core breeding stock during improving seasonal conditions. Lamb production remains more stable down 4.7% benefitting from productivity gains and larger carcass weights.

Projected % change from 2025 levels

SHEEP	2026	2027	2028	2025-2028 Change
Flock (no.)	↓ 2.5%	↑ 2.4%	↑ 3.7%	↑ 3.5%
Slaughter (no.)	↓ 38.2%	↓ 14.2%	↑ 6.0%	↓ 43.9%
Carcass weight (kg)	↑ 3.1%	↓ 1.1%	↑ 0.4%	↑ 2.4%
Production (tonnes)	↓ 36.3%	↓ 15.2%	↑ 6.4%	↓ 42.5%
Exports (swt)	↓ 37.2%	↓ 14.8%	↑ 6.1%	↓ 43.3%
LAMB	2026	2027	2028	2025-2028 Change
Flock (no.)	↓ 2.5%	↑ 2.4%	↑ 3.7%	↑ 3.5%
Slaughter (no.)	↓ 10.6%	↑ 1.3%	↑ 2.5%	↓ 7.2%
Carcass weight (kg)	↑ 6.6%	↓ 3.5%	↑ 0.8%	↑ 3.7%
Production (tonnes)	↓ 4.7%	↓ 2.3%	↑ 3.2%	↓ 3.9%
Exports (swt)	↓ 3.8%	↓ 2.1%	↑ 3.1%	↓ 2.9%

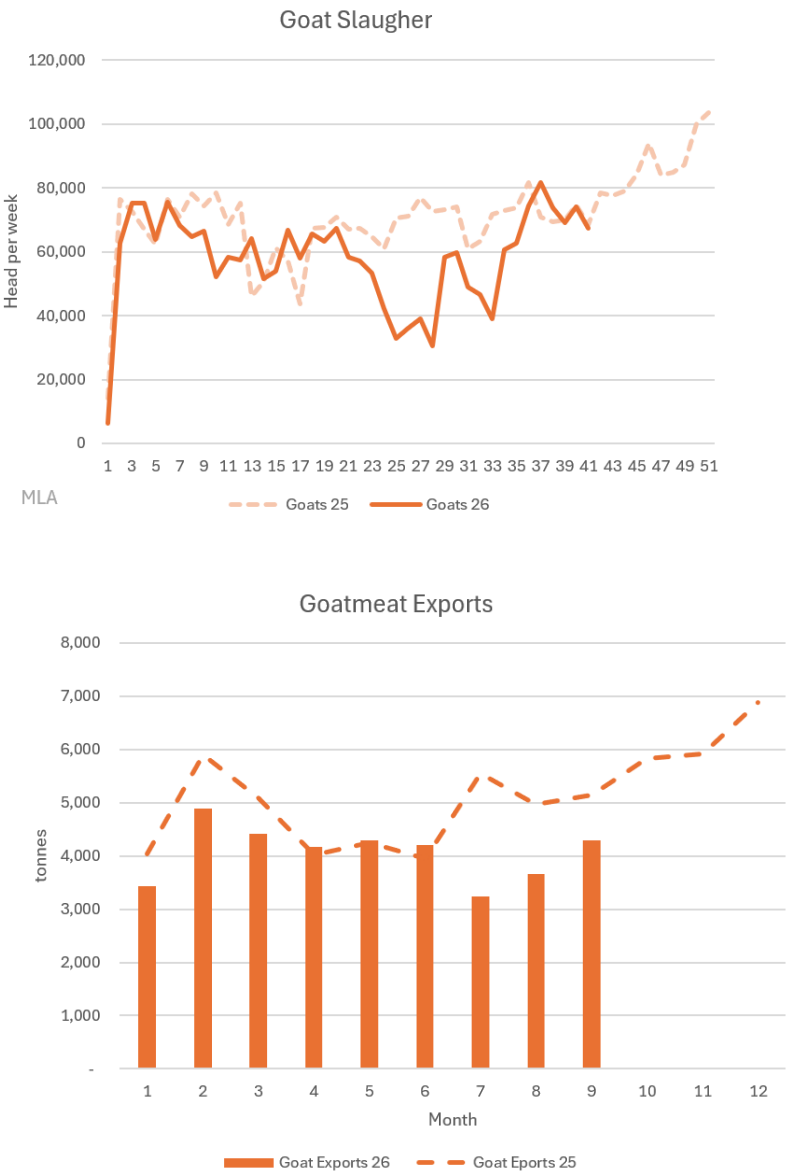
Goats

Throughput

Goat slaughter has improved from the winter lows through August and September as seasonal supply increased.

Exports

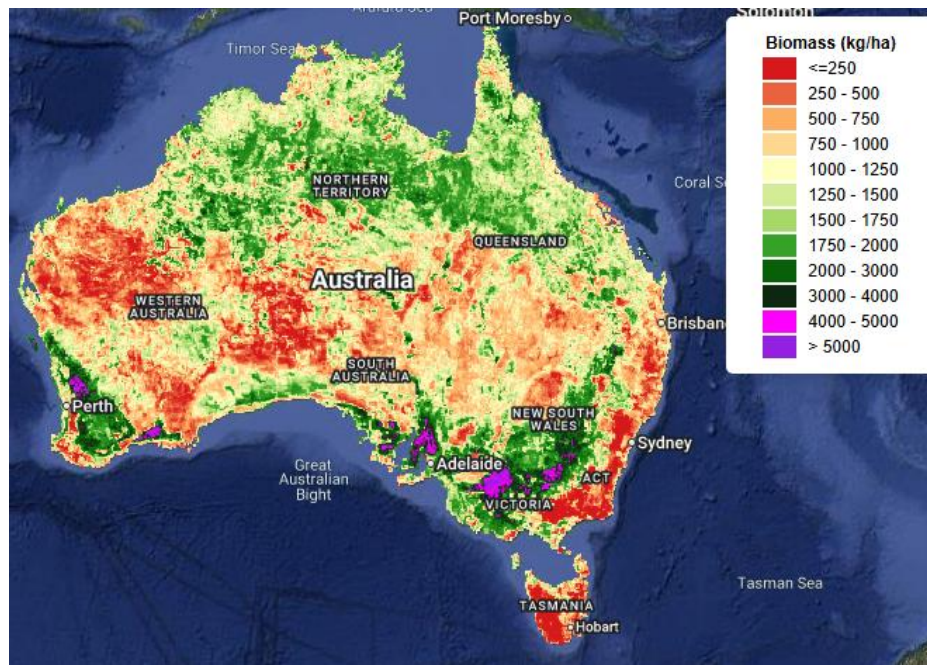
Export demand remains concentrated in the United States and selected Asian markets, while overall 2026 volumes continue to reflect tighter livestock availability than in 2025. Exports to the US have fluctuated throughout the year



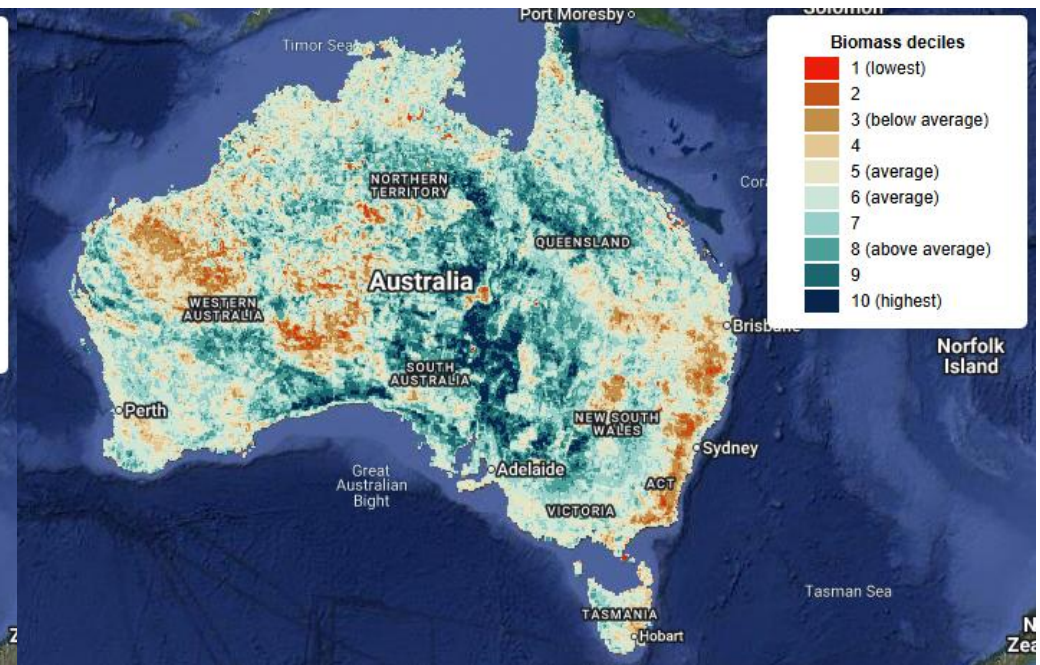
Pasture Biomass October 2026

Current pasture biomass mapping shows above average feed across most of the northern growing regions. Feed availability has also increased in growing regions of Victoria, NSW and Southern Western Australia.

Biomass (kg/ha)



Biomass (change from average)



Weather Outlook

The Bureau of Meteorology's October to December outlook shows a varied rainfall pattern for the remainder of 2026. Above-average rainfall is favoured across much of western and central Australia and may extend into parts of Queensland and New South Wales later in the period. Below-average rainfall is more likely in parts of the far north and south-east. Both daytime and overnight temperatures are likely to be above average across almost all of Australia, with an increased chance of unusually warm conditions in the south-east. For processors, the mixed rainfall outlook may produce regionally uneven livestock turn-off, while warmer conditions increase heat and bushfire risks.

