

SOCIAL VALUE OF SALEYARDS

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH REPORT 2022

***Australian Livestock
Markets Association
Initiative***



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



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 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.

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“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.”



Executive summary

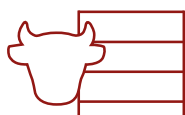
The Australian Livestock Markets Association (ALMA) is the national industry body for saleyard owners and operators in Australia. ALMA commissioned BlueWren Connections PTY LTD to conduct a research project investigating the social value of saleyards to rural communities. The project scope is seeking 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 <i>(Observations only)</i>			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



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

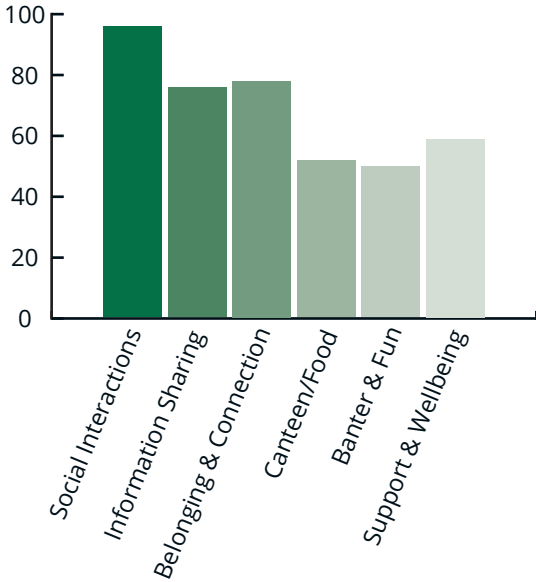
There is a special interaction working with people that you have known your whole life. Relationships are strong and build trust, you make connections that continue for years. They are not just a quick transaction.

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



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)⁵ 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 2016⁶)

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)⁷ 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)⁸ 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)⁹ 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 meat¹⁰ 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.

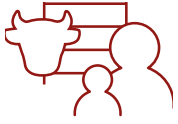


Disaster management

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

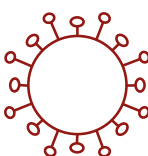
A number of the participants discussed wanting extra opportunities for further leadership development. Two women offered to mentor younger women interested in entering the industry. Some felt there was a lack of leadership and collaboration at their local saleyards. COVID-19 limited networking opportunities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

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.

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