

FutureBeef webinars – an effective tool for promoting beef industry research

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FutureBeef is an important partnership between Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia agricultural departments and Meat & Livestock Australia. It provides a coordinated approach to the delivery of online information and industry engagement for the northern beef industry, utilising a variety of communication tools (e.g. website, webinars, social media and eBulletins). Webinars (online seminars) enable industry to access relevant and topical information in a timely manner. They save time and money by attendees (and presenters) not having to travel, plus attendees can access experts and ask their specific questions from the comfort of their own home (James 2010). Where webinars are recorded, they can also be viewed by people in their own time. Even though webinars are not new technology, very little has been published on their use, results and outcomes.

In this study we assessed the effectiveness of FutureBeef webinars in disseminating timely and relevant beef industry information, particularly to producers. Data was collected for webinar registrations, attendees, survey responses, and number of views of webinar recordings.

From November 2011 to February 2020, FutureBeef delivered 64 webinars, with key data about these webinars highlighted in Table 1. Additionally, since October 2018 (representing 16 webinars), data was collected on webinar attendees' intention to make a change (62%) and if they were very likely to make this change (32%). From November 2018 (representing 14 webinars) data was also collected on the area of land (8.8 million ha) and cattle numbers (675,000) represented by the producer attendees.

Parameter	Value
Webinar registrations	10,218
Attendees at live webinar	4,228 (41%)
Attendance rate per webinar	66 (range 13-282)
Producer attendees	2,880 (68%)
Satisfaction with webinar ^A	8.4
Improvement in knowledge due to webinar ^A	7.8
Recording views ^B	36,114

^ABased on 1312 survey responses. Scale 1-10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 the highest.

^BSource: YouTube analytics.

Table 1. Key data indicating the effectiveness of 64 FutureBeef webinars delivered between November 2011 and February 2020

Similar to James (2017), only 41% of webinar registrations attended the live webinar, with a 48% conversion rate for webinar series targeting extension practitioners rather than producers. However, the substantial number of views of webinar recordings (36,114) indicates that a large number of people take advantage of the ability to watch the webinar at a time that suits them rather than watching live. As the recordings are promoted through the FutureBeef network even those that did not register can learn and benefit from the information. It appears likely that this has occurred as the number of recording views is larger than the number of registrations.

It is evident that the main target audience for FutureBeef is being reached through the use of webinars as 68% of attendees were producers, with producers from the last 14 webinars representing 8.8 million ha of land and 675,000 cattle (4.5% of the northern herd, Meat & Livestock Australia 2019). Evidence that FutureBeef webinars have delivered timely and relevant information is provided by attendees (who completed the feedback form) rating the webinars as 8.4 out of 10 for satisfaction and 7.8 out of 10 for improving knowledge.

In conclusion, FutureBeef webinars are proving to be an effective tool for disseminating information to the northern beef industry. Ongoing data collection and reporting will allow further comparisons over time.

References

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