



Infonote RANGELANDS

Herd management options – for extended dry times

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- Assess feed and water supply and location e.g. are there areas where water is likely to run out later in the year and should be grazed while water is still available and stock are strong
- Calculate and use experience to work out how many stock can be carried on the available feed until there is a good probability of useful rain – likely to be next summer for Pilbara and Kimberley but maybe sooner for Gascoyne and further south.
- Review what stock, classes, numbers and condition of different classes are on hand – maybe possible from previous mustering records or might need to muster earlier in the year to accurately assess.
- Investigate market and/or agistment opportunities to, reduce numbers. Selling stock that are in demand is likely to produce a better financial outcome than selling stock that 'you want to sell'. Agistment is usually only a viable option for cattle that are destined for sale and will not be returning to the property – do the sums! "How well agistee and agistor can communicate is more important than the country being agisted".
- Question the common sale strategy of selling all dry cattle and keeping the breeders to 'breed up again' when better seasons return. Breeders are a high maintenance group of animals and will certainly require higher feed inputs to maintain and losses are more likely. While it can be good idea to maintain a 'nucleus' of females numbers should be carefully 'pruned' to ensure that only productive and younger breeders are retained.
- Future sale animals; surplus females (spayed) and steers with lower nutrient requirements should be considered as part of the herd to be carried forward. These will provide cash flow as the season progresses or in the recovery period.
- Consider selling all dry females at an early muster. Most of them are likely to be pregnant to calve during the dry time and become survival risks. Pregnancy testing would provide the PTIC sale option. Lactating cows are likely to be in poorer condition and less saleable at this time and once they wean their calf they become a lower risk group but still with the potential to breed when seasons improve.
- Dry cows require around 40% less energy than lactating cows so weaning is by far the most effective help that can be provided for lactating cows.
- While young calves can certainly be successfully reared it is usually time consuming and expensive and requires consistent management input.
- Where infrastructure and circumstances permit, the segregation of different groups of cattle during mustering will make management during dry conditions much more efficient and effective. Groups segregated might include:
 - Breeders with calves too young to wean (<100kg) drafted off with heavily pregnant dry cows for preferential management e.g better paddock, supplementation, future mustering for weaning etc.
 - Sale cattle, sometimes in different weight ranges, to make it easier and quicker to respond to market opportunities.

- Be aware that the people involved in managing livestock businesses during difficult times, seasons/& or market conditions experience an increase in stress. Many managers become so involved with the day to day tasks of running the property surrounded by cattle showing the effects of the season and feeling helpless to do anything about the situation that they understandably lose sight of issues outside this focus and relationships with partners, families and friends can suffer. These problems are not confined to owners and managers but include many station staff as they feel for the livestock and the landscape that they are living and working in.