



Wet season spelling

A grease and oil change
for your grass!



Ross Peatling
The North Australian
Pastoral Company
Alexandria Station

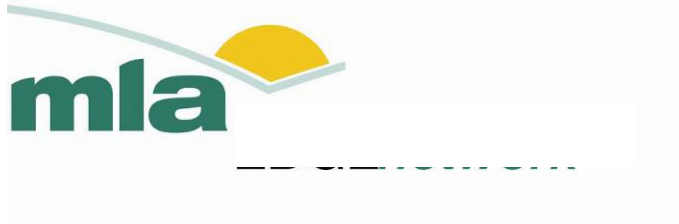


Dionne Walsh
NT Department of
Primary Industry &
Fisheries
Berrimah Farm

A joint initiative of:



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**Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry**



**Northern Territory
Government**

What we'll cover



- What, why and how?
- Practical experience
- The Alexandria demonstration trial
- Take home messages



What and why?

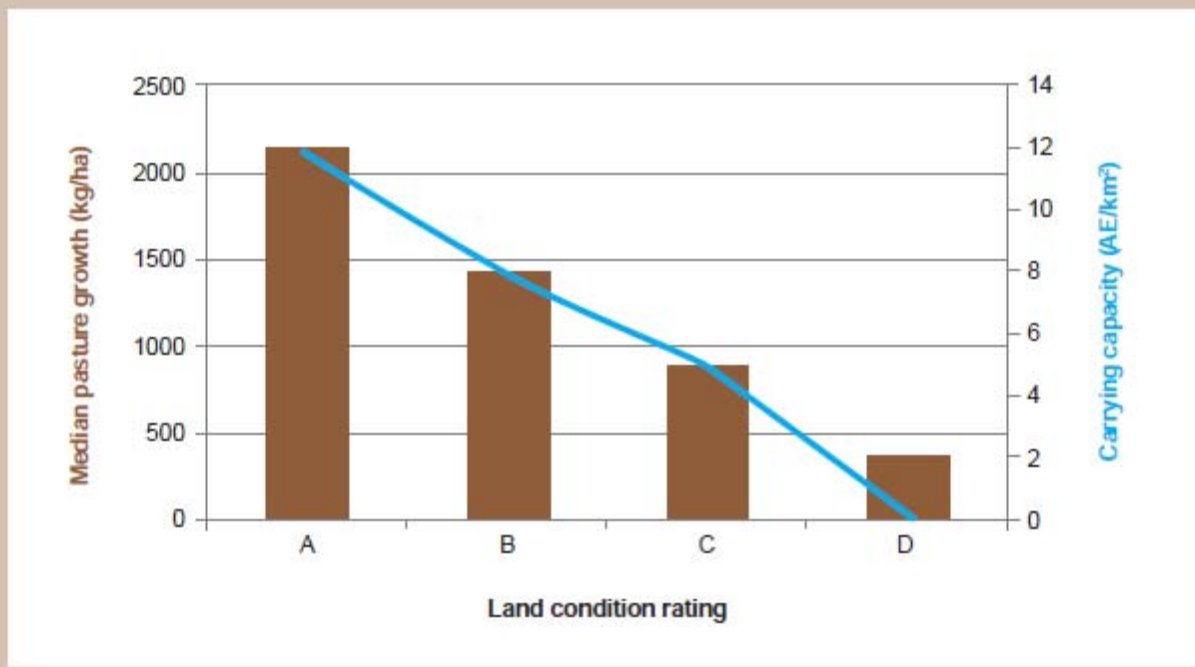
- Removing grazing for some or all of the wet season
- To improve land condition, accumulate feed, defer when feed is used or increase fuel for burning
- Not the same as destocking in dry years or droughts



Good reason # 1

Good land condition = \$\$\$

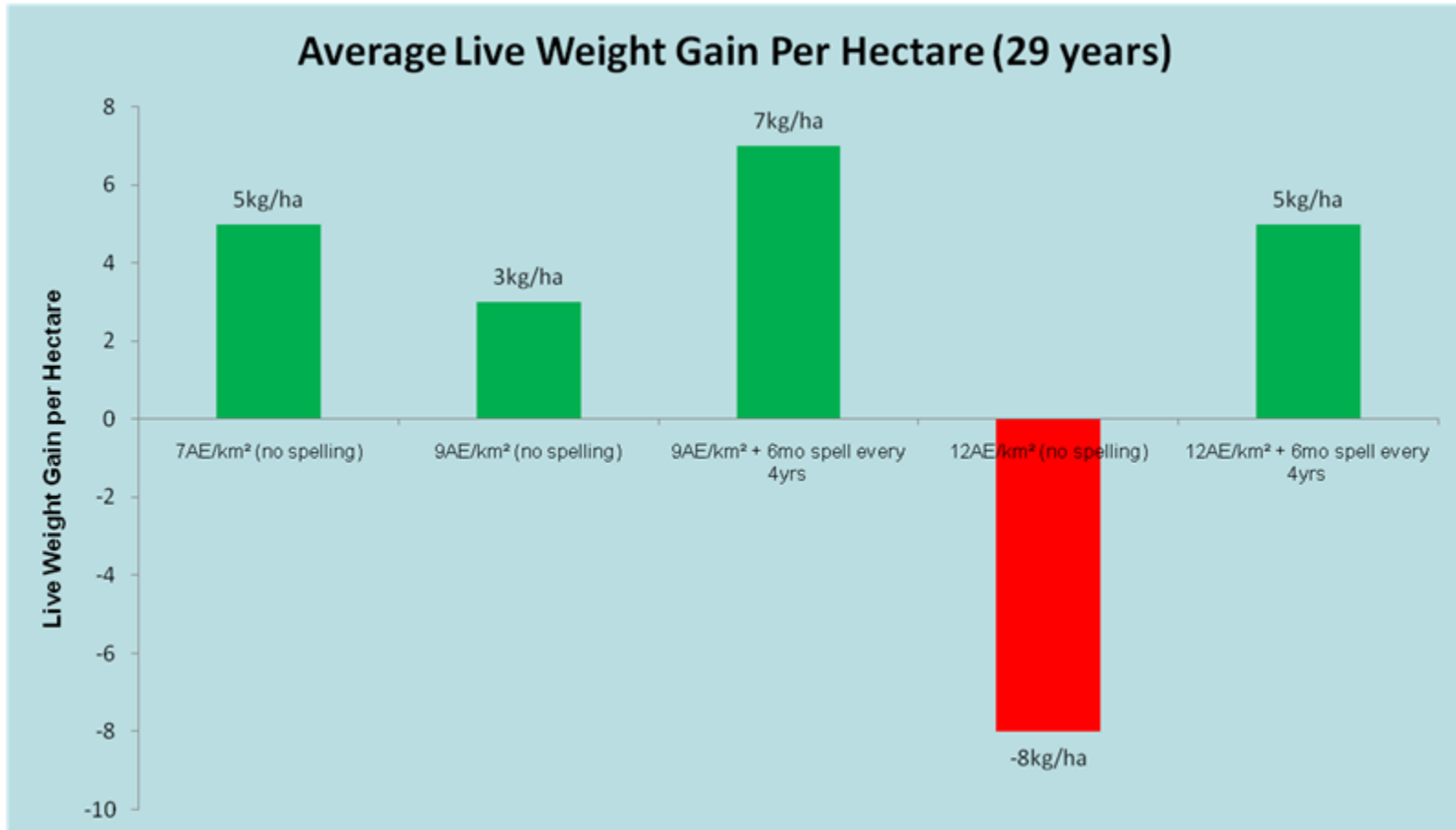
Pasture growth and carrying capacity Mitchell Grass Downs



The values in this figure relate to the central Barkly region of the NT.

Good reason # 2

Increase live weight gains per hectare



The values in this figure relate to productive black soils in the central Barkly region of the NT.

Good reason # 3



Will not hurt the hip pocket

	Total Profit (1981-2006)	
	No Spelling	Spelling
Average	\$2,432,235	\$2,652,384
Minimum	-\$4,025,154	-\$4,122,540
Maximum	\$7,332,784	\$7,375,689
No. Years Negative	5	5
Net Present Value @ 4%	\$32,615,166	\$36,498,846

	Gross Margin per AE (1981-2006)	
	No Spelling	Spelling
Average	\$139.61	\$153.99
Minimum	-\$22.03	-\$11.95
Maximum	\$754.25	\$798.55
No. Years Negative	3	3
Net Present Value @ 4%	\$2,113	\$2,354

Source: Northern Grazing Systems Project 2009-2011, modelling done by Neil MacLeod, CSIRO

The values in these tables are model output based on a hypothetical property in the central Barkly region of the NT.

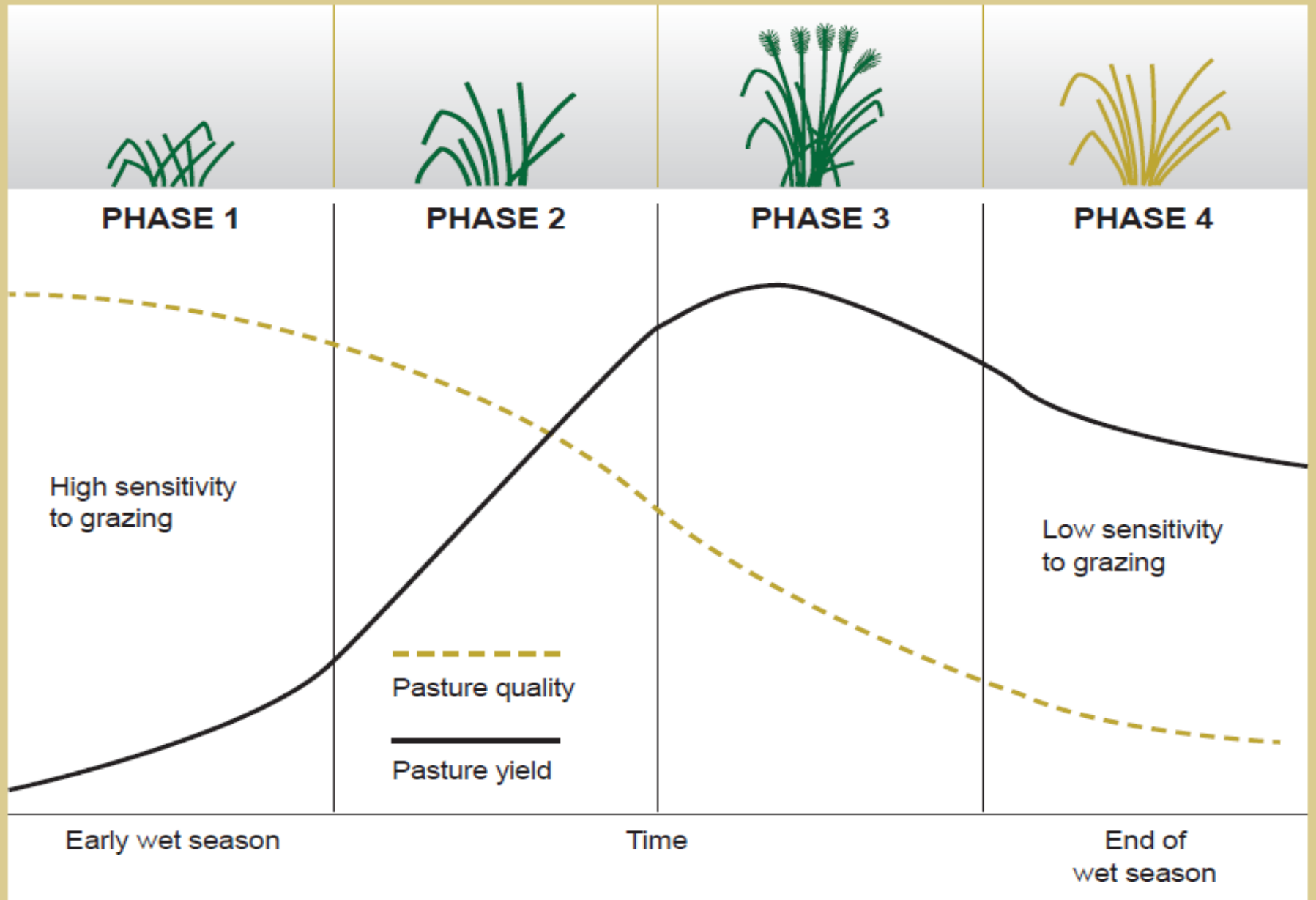
How does it work?

- Lots of anecdotal experience
- Surprisingly little scientific “proof”
- Plenty of biological reasons why it should



Image courtesy of Ecograzo Project

Four phases of pasture growth

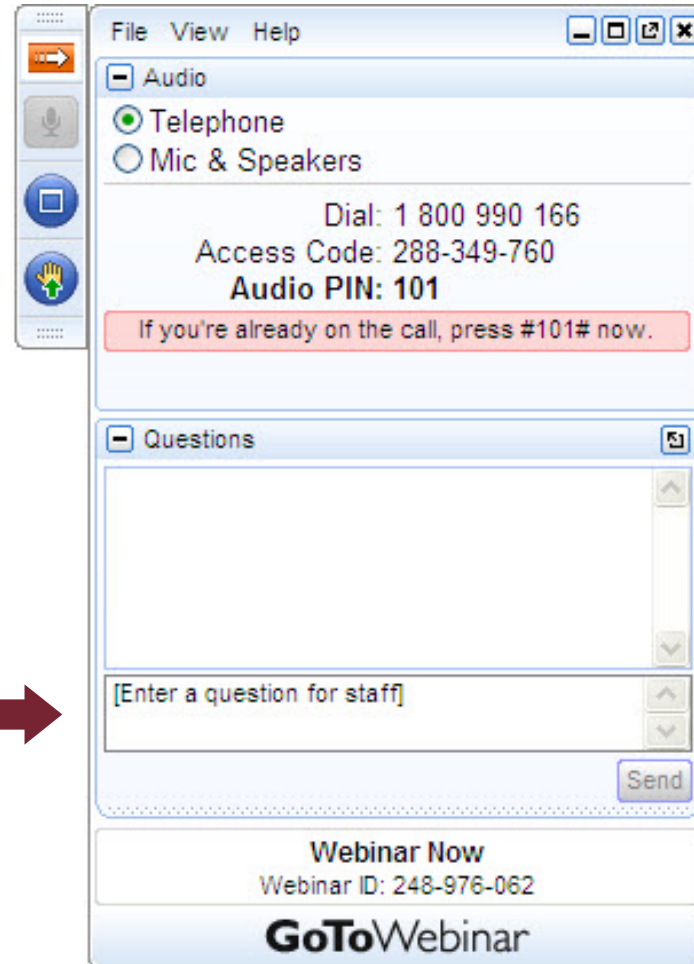


Grasses

Grasses are very sensitive to grazing in the first 6 to 8 weeks of the wet season



Questions, comments?



Type your questions
here anytime



Do you currently do wet season spelling or rotational grazing?

- (1) None at all
- (2) Only the holding paddocks/ laneways
- (3) Yes, but fairly informal system
- (4) Yes, a formal system

The practice – Ross Peatling



- Barkly Tablelands NT
- Alexandria, Adder, East Ranken & Soudan >16,000 km²
- Climate, major land types
- Enterprise and markets



Spelling at Alexandria

- Not done in isolation
- How I got started
- How I decide what to spell
- How long to spell
- Indicators I look at
- Traps and tricks



Alexandria trial



- Evaluating land condition and production benefits
- Started in 2010 – for at least 10 years
- Focus site for industry information days



Alexandria trial

- East Ranken paddock (700 km²)
- Pasture measurements at 3 bores of different ages
- Production measures

250 metres from bore drilled in 1910



250 metres from bore drilled in 2004



250 metres from bore drilled in 2010



Photos taken June 2011

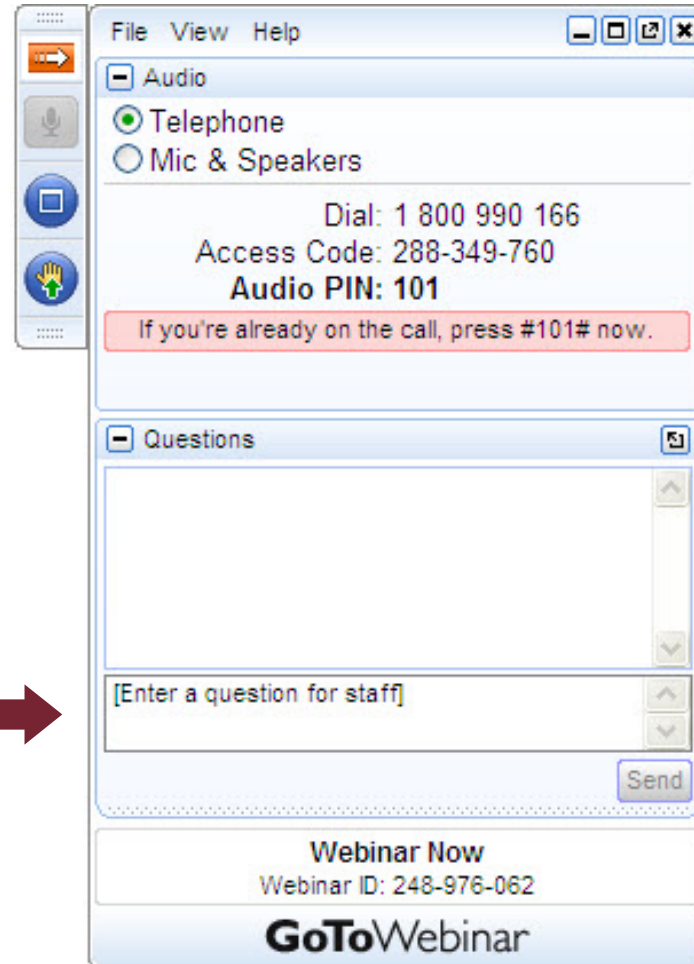
Results so far...



- Watered area increased
- Development created opportunities to sell
- Sustainable stocking rates
- Palatable species



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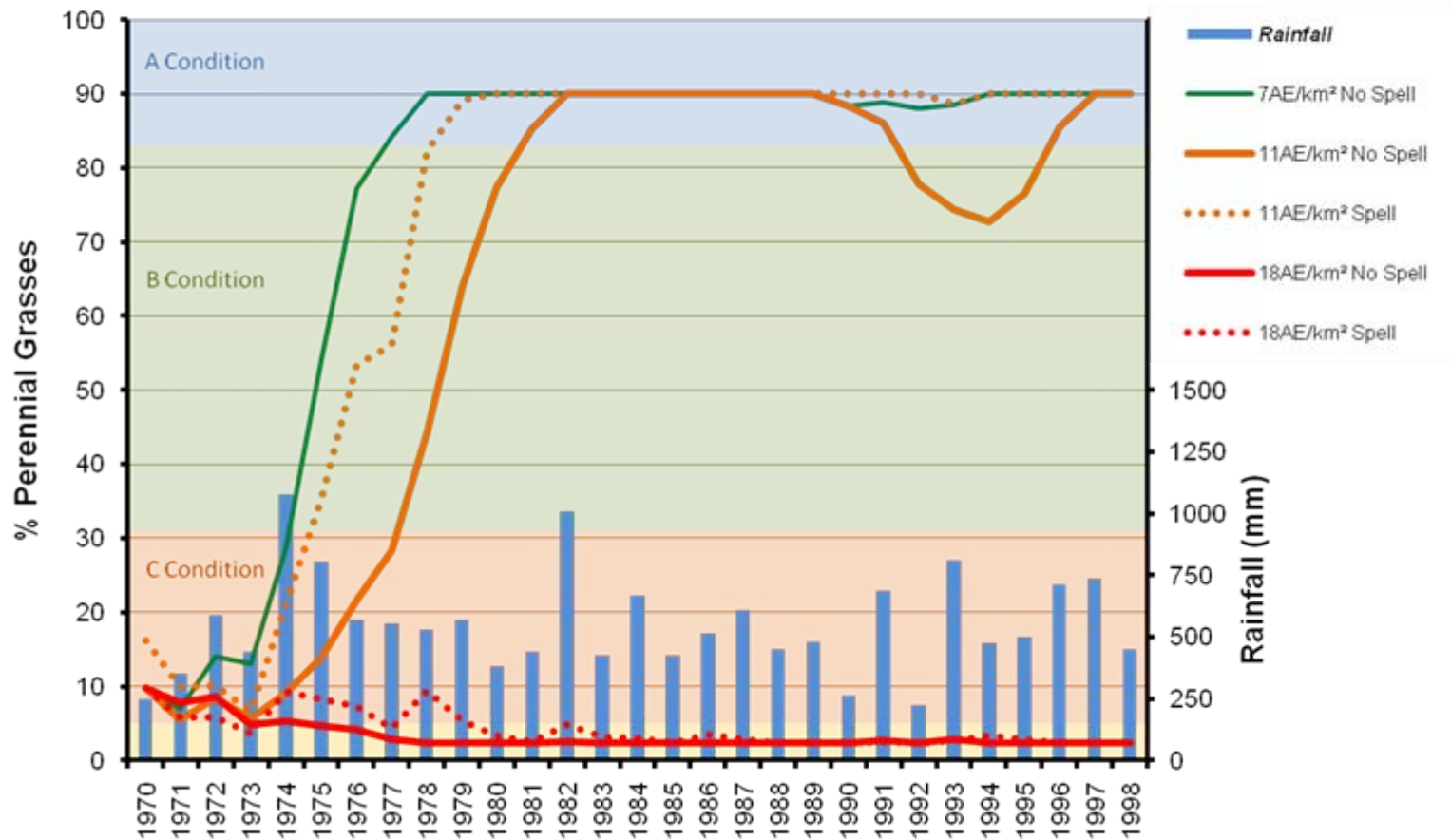


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A cautionary tale...

Interaction between stocking rate and spelling – VRD example



Take home messages



- Spelling can improve business performance
- Grasses are very sensitive early in the wet season
- Spelling is only effective if stocking rates are right



Take home messages



- Spelling to **maintain** land condition
- Spelling to **improve** land condition
- **Flexible** approach



More information



- Spelling case studies and fact sheets – Qld & NT
- QDAFF and MLA spelling experiment
- Delamere (NT) burning and spelling demo
- Alexandria spelling and stocking rate demo
- Katherine Rural Review, Alice Springs Rural Review, Barkly Beef newsletters

Contacts

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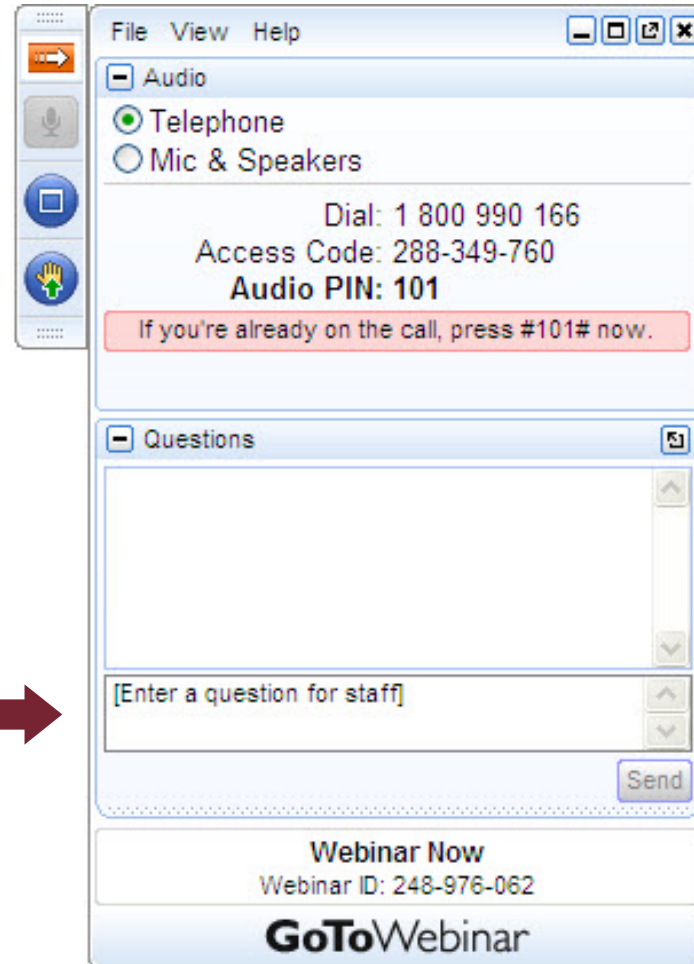
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