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Develop a management plan

WHEN Justin and Bronwyn Tait of Palmtree at Canal Creek near Rockhampton, heard about the Grazing Resilience and Sustainable Solutions (GRASS) program, they jumped at the opportunity to participate.

They said the program complemented their goals for long-term sustainability and provided a financial incentive for work that was on their 'to do list'.

Justin and Bronwyn purchased the property in 2007, and run 130 Droughtmaster breeders. The 1650 hectare property comprises coastal Eucalypt forest woodlands, loamy alluvial, and river gum flats land types. Cattle selectively graze the river gum flats along the creek system, and particularly in the wet season.

Since purchasing Palmtree, Justin and Bronwyn have been passionate about improving land condition and productivity with a focus on off-stream watering points, land type fencing and managing vegetation regrowth.

Through the GRASS program, they have worked with Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) staff to develop a Land Management Plan.



Justin and Bronwyn Tait, Palmtree, Canal Creek near Rockhampton.

In April 2020, DAF extension officers assisted them with a plan to fence the riparian areas and develop watering points away from the riparian zone.

Justin and Bronwyn applied for funding to assist with implementing their Land Management Plan

under the incentives program available to GRASS participants in the Burdekin, Fitzroy and Burnett Mary regions.

Their application was successful, and they have completed fencing and water infrastructure to protect the riparian zone and enable

better control of grazing pressure across other land types.

They have continued to work with DAF on other areas in their beef operation.

They and other program participants have undertaken pasture budgeting training to assist them better manage grazing pressure.

Following the DAF wet season phosphorus workshop at Henderson Park, Barmoya in November 2020, Justin and Bronwyn commenced wet season phosphorus supplementation and are constructing supplement sheds to prevent spoiling of supplement and

ensure it is available even if paddock access is restricted by wet conditions.

For more information on the GRASS program, contact Matt Brown on 0428 104 248.

■ Cindy McNaught, Beef extension officer, DAF Rockhampton, 0467 801 673.

Impacts of bare ground

LOSS of ground cover results in low water infiltration and poor soil health, which affects grass growth and therefore cattle performance.

Advantages of high ground cover include:

- reduced run-off and higher water retention
- healthier soil biology
- plants ready to respond to rainfall

- higher carrying capacity
- greater profitability.

Disadvantages of bare ground include:

- high run-off and low water infiltration
- higher soil temperature and less soil biology activity
- high weed infestation threat
- limited feed and reduced

- carrying capacity
- lower profitability.

Generate ground cover reports for your property on the Long Paddock website at longpaddock.qld.gov.au/forage.

For more information visit futurebeef.com.au.

- Bec Clapperton, Beef extension officer, DAF Townsville, 0477 345 843.



The effect of long-term overgrazing on pasture composition and ground cover near Charters Towers. Photo courtesy of Bob Shepherd.

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Graziers invest in 'grass'

GRASS program waters 1500 hectares

GRAZIERS Matt and Kristie Lisle purchased the 4000 hectare Moonkan Park at Bushley near Rockhampton in 2020 for their breeding and trading operation.

They had plans to increase the productivity and sustainability of the property and their business, and quickly set to work to increase the number of watering points on a large, under-utilised part of the property.

The Grazing Resilience and Sustainable Solutions (GRASS) program gave them the opportunity to have some of their planned work subsidised, allowing for faster access to more pasture for their breeders.

The southern end of Moonkan Park was already mostly fenced to land type, with four large paddocks making up more than 1500 hectares.

These paddocks largely comprise a narrow-leaved ironbark woodland ridge, with foothills of silver-leaved ironbark on duplex soils.

The paddocks had no permanent water source, with cattle walking back to a laneway or yards to drink.

Over time, this had caused the foothill country to be heavily grazed and dominated by annual grasses and weeds, whilst further up the ridge, preferred black spear-



Kristie Lisle standing in Moonkan Park buffel pasture responding well following infrastructure project.

grass and buffel grass were largely untouched.

Matt and Kristie contacted the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) to enquire about any projects or services available to assist with property management and sustainable grazing practices.

"We knew there was under-utilised pasture on the ridge, but also the low ground cover on the foothills was posing a huge erosion risk for a land type with a sodic subsoil," Matt said.

"It was a priority for us to stop the degradation of the lower country.

"We had already invested in a large solar pump

for a new bore, so had next planned to put several water tanks and gravity-fed troughs in the ridge country to more evenly distribute grazing."

DAF staff prepared a property map to assist with planning.

A successful application for an incentive project with the GRASS program allowed part of this work to be subsidised.

"We have used the GRASS funding to assist with laying several kilometres of poly pipe, some tanks and troughs, and strategically placing woah boys on our new tracks," Kristie said.

"Now we can allow the lower country around the

original watering points to recover, while cattle can happily graze the large body of feed up the slope.

"It's important to us to maintain the condition of the country, particularly on the ridge, and these new watering points allow us to do that sustainably."

The GRASS program has helped to strengthen the existing relationship that Matt and Kristie had with DAF extension staff.

"We know that we can ring Kylie with all sorts of questions, and she will always pick up the phone and point us in the right direction," Kristie said.

"We've talked a lot (with

Kylie) about property planning, pasture management and weed control."

The GRASS program is funded by the Queensland Government Department of Environment and Science and has funding available for graziers in the Burdekin, Fitzroy and Burnett Mary regions to implement land management practices that promote good ground cover.

For more information on the GRASS program, please contact GRASS program leader Matt Brown (DAF) on 0428 104 248.

■ Kylie Hopkins, Beef extension officer, DAF Rockhampton, 0467 726 349.

See you at our Beef 2021 displays

BEEF Australia recently announced that Beef2021 is going ahead in Rockhampton May 2-8, 2021.

As a principal partner of the event, the Queensland government is thrilled to hear that Beef2021 is on!

We'll have booths at the Sidney Kidman Pavilion and in The Ken Coombe Tech Yards, showcasing regional initiatives, innovative ag tech workshops and pop-up chat sessions.

Our Drought and Climate Adaptation Program (DCAP) team will be there to talk about ways to build resilience to drought and climate impacts that can help you manage financial risks, while making important decisions around droughts and climate variability.

We'll also show you a range of tools and strategies to help you manage land condition and improve pasture production, plus we have seminars that offer up-to-date information around issues such as new legume varieties for grass-fed beef production that are currently being developed and tested.

The latest pasture dieback research and management options will also be presented.

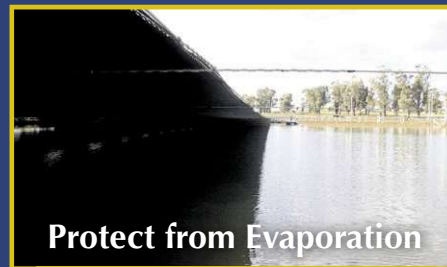
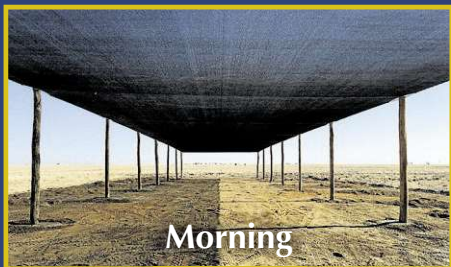
A full program of all the seminars, workshops and pop-up chat sessions offered by the Queensland government will be available closer to the event, so keep your eyes peeled.

Tickets are on sale now, so start planning your visit to Beef2021 now.

Visit beefaustralia.com.au.
- DAF

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New faces join the beef team

THE Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development's (DPIRD) Northern Beef Development Project II (NBD II) will enter 2021 with a team of three development officers delivering extension services across the Kimberley and Pilbara regions of northern Western Australia.

Established NBD project manager Trevor Price will be joined by new development officers Rach Darwin in Broome and Leah Sackville in Karratha, while Kununurra-based Clare Atkins will return to support phase two of the long running program.

The NBD program, formally known as Northern Beef Futures, aims to enhance the sustainability and resilience of the WA northern beef industry by driving profitability and economic growth and facilitating industry modernisation and diversification.

The WA government announced in June 2020 a further \$8.3 million in funding to support the second phase of the program, which will be invested over four years from 2020 to 2024.

The development officers'



Development officers Rach Darwin and Leah Sackville in Broome, WA.

role entails delivering extension and adoption services to increase the uptake of current best-practice by the northern beef industry.

Additionally, the positions serve as the point of contact

for local pastoralists. As part of NBD II, the three development officers will coordinate an extension and adoption program to meet a broad spectrum of producer needs across eight key focus areas.

NBD representative for the West-Kimberley region Rach Darwin, will be the lead development officer for the Animal Welfare and Herd Management extension packages.

"I am looking forward to working alongside pastoralists to enhance the productivity and sustainability of the WA northern beef industry," she said.

Pilbara development

officer Leah Sackville will be the lead on the Nutrition and Growth, Business Management, and Industry Professional Development extension packages.

"I'm excited about how Northern Beef is helping our diverse and vast cattle industry to explore avenues to improve production and business efficiencies, alongside others across northern Australia," she said.

As the East-Kimberley development officer, Claire Atkins will lead the Sustainable Grazing Systems, Technology and Innovation, and Data and Record Management extension packages.

"I am looking forward to implementing the learnings from the data and industry input collected in phase one, to take phase two of the program forward," she said.

"All the small changes to enterprises add up to big changes that can transform production and business outcomes that lead to profitable, holistic rangelands management."

For information, email northernbeefdevelopment@dpiird.wa.gov.au.

THE TWILIGHT EFFECT: DPIRD'S STRATEGY FOR PASTORAL ENGAGEMENT



THE Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development's (DPIRD) Northern Beef Development team will be hitting the road again in 2021 to host another round of Twilight Forums.

Previous Twilight Forums have proven to be a highly successful extension tool.

These tailored events deliver regionally specific and timely information to local producers and provide an opportunity for pastoralists

to access industry leading speakers, engage with their peers and facilitate knowledge sharing.

Rather than a single large event at a major regional centre, DPIRD repeats the same forum multiple times on stations throughout the Kimberley and Pilbara regions in northern Western Australia and aims to attract producers within a three-hour radius of each event to attend.

The general format is a

workshop held from 2-6pm followed by an evening meal to facilitate discussion and provide an opportunity to socialise.

Each forum involves theoretical and practical sessions including an agency update from DPIRD and presentations from industry renowned guest speakers.

Past forums have included sessions on forage budgeting, using satellite imagery to inform pasture and stock management,

the Northern Beef Development (previously known as Northern Beef Futures) Business Improvement Grants (BIG) and more.

Keep an eye out for details of forums in 2021 or for more information, email northernbeefdevelopment@dpiird.wa.gov.au.

Photo: Trevor Price (DPIRD) addressing pastoralists and staff at the inaugural Twilight Forum on Pardoo Station, Port Hedland, WA.

FORUM FACTS

So, what is the concept?

- Twilight forums are an excellent opportunity to catch up with fellow pastoralists and DPIRD extension staff in an informal evening setting.
- The flexible, locally focused format means that pastoralists don't have to give up hours travelling to and from the events.

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Take steps to mitigate heat stress in your rams

AS WE approach the autumn joining season in Queensland, it's critical that sheep producers consider the impact of heat stress on ram fertility.

Effective ram management in the seven to eight weeks prior to joining is important to maximise ram fertility and productivity.

Due to husbandry advantages, industry has widely adopted shorter joining periods of approximately six weeks or less, making optimum ram fertility an even greater priority.

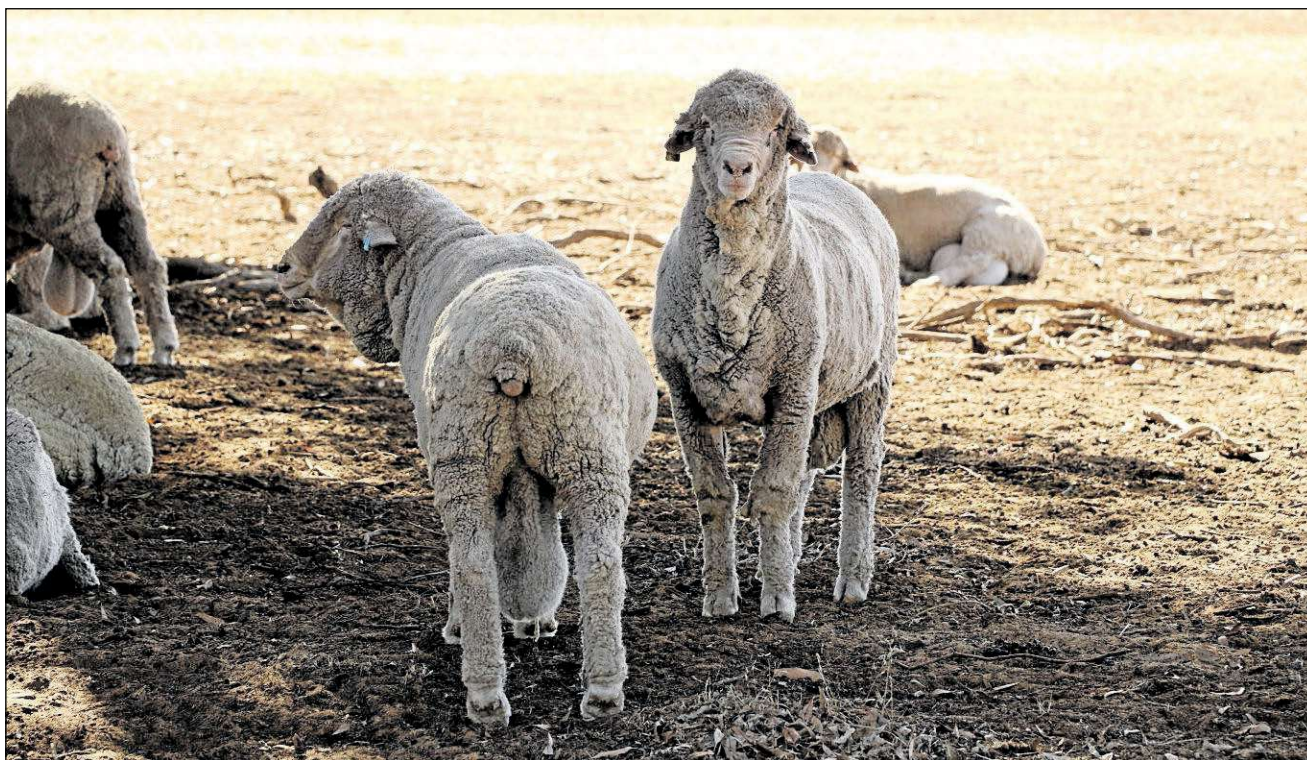
Veterinarian and Leading Sheep regional coordinator for the south region Dr Noel O'Dempsey, said that if overheated, rams can be rendered infertile for seven weeks.

"A ram that has suffered from heat stress before joining could successfully serve ewes for up to three weeks with stored mature sperm, as it's less likely to be affected than sperm in the early development phases," Dr O'Dempsey said.

"However, there will be a seven-week timeframe before new viable sperm is produced, which in shorter joining periods can create significant productivity problems for producers.

"Even if rams are joined at 2 per cent for maiden ewes, on average, they must find, tease and breed with approximately 50 ewes in the first cycle, so effective ram management leading up to joining is essential."

As both a producer and veterinarian, Dr O'Dempsey said there are several ram



Rams in a paddock located only a short distance from the yards.

Signs of heat stress

- Mild - mild to fast panting, but with a closed mouth.
- Moderate - fast panting, with rapid chest movements progressing to mouth slightly open, but the tongue is not extended beyond the lips.
- Severe heat stress - rapid, open-mouth panting, the neck extended, head held up and tongue extended.



Research shows increased heat stress can impact flock productivity.

management practices that should be implemented to maximise the chance of successful joining.

"Rams should be palpated

at least twice annually, well ahead of joining. As some rams age, they develop varicoceles above the testicle which can interfere with heat exchange and cooling. These rams should be culled and replaced," he said.

"To further protect rams from heat stress, they should be shorn at least one month ahead of joining to mitigate the impact of handling stress on the ram and to offer some wool for insulation and protection from heat. Optimum

insulation is only seen when the fleece length reaches 30 to 40 millimetres. Shearing is critical to reducing flystrike as well, which in severe cases can render a ram infertile.

"Keep your ram paddock for rams only to avoid unnecessary mustering. When taking rams out for joining, consider trucking them or if walking, go slowly and be vigilant in monitoring for signs of heat stress.

"Watching breathing is the most effective way to monitor this, as 65pc of heat loss in sheep occurs through panting."

For more information and to subscribe to the Leading Sheep monthly 'Around the Camp' eNewsletter go to leadingsheep.com.au.

Managing ewes in the hot months

HEAT stress on ewes can significantly impact lambing success.

An increase in metabolic heat production during gestation can predispose ewes to heat stress, which in early pregnancy can result in abortion or reabsorption of the foetus.

Leading Sheep regional coordinator Dr Noel O'Dempsey, said ewes should be mustered and handled gently in the heat.

"Lambs are also highly susceptible to heat," he said.

"It's critical that lambs and ewes have easy access to water, but be sure to place bricks or blocks in troughs so lambs can easily get out if they fall in."

Help guide the future of Qld's sheep

WHAT does the Leading Sheep Producer Advisory Panel (PAP) offer you as a Queensland sheep and wool producer?

You get to meet with other forward-thinking industry leaders from right across the state, gain access to the latest sheep and wool industry findings and help guide the future investment and direction of Leading Sheep.

PAP membership is a small commitment. The panel meets only two to three times a year, using a mix of face-to-face meetings and teleconferencing.

To nominate, submit your short, no more than one page, expression of interest at leadingsheep.com.au.



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