Queensland **the Smart State**

Northern muster

Information for rural business in north Queensland

Producing quality food and fibre for a healthy bottom line

in this edition

Issue 15 April 2007

editorial

Welcome to the latest 2007 *Northern muster*.

For many this season has been a famine or a feast, too much rain in some areas and not enough in others. These cycles are inevitable, and it is crucial to plan and manage these variables. The DPI&F Business Information Centre is there to assist for the price of a local phone call. Phone 13 25 23.

This year appears to be one where weaning, weaner management and reducing stock numbers sooner rather than later, will be required.

This issue of the Northern Muster includes an update on the Gulf Fire Project (some really great work), Market Outlook, Climate Outlook, NLIS Updates, Dalrymple Diary and more. Is your herd protected against Tick Fever? Find out more in this Issue.

We thank our Advertisers for their support and encourage you to look at their services and products.

Enjoy the Newsletter, use the Business Information Centre for advice and to contact DPI&F staff. Please take time to complete the Feedback Sheet and send it in.

Thanks are due as always to the Editorial support team in Mareeba, Ayr and Rockhampton.

Alan Laing
Editor

Queensland Government
Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries

Wild rivers

In February 2007 Queensland Parliament passed legislation to preserve the natural heritage of the State's first six wild rivers.

The Wild Rivers and Other Legislation Amendment Act declared the Settlement, Morning Inlet, Gregory, Staaten, Hinchinbrook and Fraser Wild River Areas. The first four are catchments located in the Gulf of Carpentaria and the other two cover Hinchinbrook and Fraser Islands.

The Wild Rivers Code was also approved by this Act. The Code is a tool for assessing new development in a wild river area to ensure the development does not adversely impact on the wild river's natural values. For example, the Code requires proposed developments to minimise the risk of pollutant run-off into waterways. The Code is flexible about how this and other required outcomes are achieved by the developer, as long as the outcome is met.

With these declarations in place, landholders, governments, indigenous communities and interest groups in the wild river areas now have certainty when it comes to planning a range of activities. Also these communities can now explore the unique opportunities which have arisen by having these rivers declared wild.

The Department of Natural Resources and Water consulted with a range of interest groups and individuals over the 13 months that the six wild river declaration proposals were under consideration.

The declarations are not retrospective in any way. Developments and authorisations existing at the time of declaration are not subject to wild river requirements. The declarations only apply to new developments and do not affect day-to-day activities that do not require development permits, such as recreational fishing, baling hay, boating and mustering stock.

Landholders seeking to undertake development in future must comply with the declaration or seek to have the declaration amended accordingly. Any proposal to amend the declaration in this circumstance must be supported with a property development plan. Such a plan must cover all proposed developments and any enhancement works on the whole property over the next 10 years.

If the Minister is satisfied that the plan provides a net benefit to the wild river's natural values, based on advice from an independent panel of science experts, he may propose the declaration amendment for public scrutiny. Based on formal submissions on the proposal, the Minister must decide whether to amend the declaration or not.

For details: www.nrw.qld.gov.au/wildrivers

If you know of anyone who would like to receive the *Northern muster* drop us a note at:

Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries
PO Box 15
Ayr Qld 4807
Telephone: 07 4783 0400
Facsimile: 07 4783 3193

Email : Debra.Hanfling@dpi.qld.gov.au
Tanya.Firth@dpi.qld.gov.au
Alan.Laing@dpi.qld.gov.au

ISBN 1441.7804

Which implant is best?

Differences between implants

There are a number of important differences between various implants, including their mode of action, formulation and length of payout. Compudose 400 contains 43.9 mg oestradiol-17ß, a naturally-occurring oestrogen (female hormone) in a medicated silicone rubber matrix that slowly releases the active ingredient over 400 days. Compudose-G and revalor†-G both contain 60 mg trenbolone acetate (TBA), a synthetic androgen (male hormone), and 12 mg oestradiol-17ß in a compressed pellet formulation that has a payout period of about 100 days.

A recent large scale trial conducted in Queensland[1] conclusively demonstrated that:

- Compudose 400 provides superior long-term liveweight gain advantages and economic returns compared to TBA combination implants;
- TBA combination implants provide superior short-term liveweight gain advantages, but these benefits can be lost unless cattle are reimplanted or marketed; and,
- Multiple-implant strategies can achieve even higher liveweight gain advantages than single-implant strategies.

There is no simple answer to the question, "Which is the best implant?", but rather which is the correct implant and strategy to use in a particular situation.

Choosing the correct implant and strategy

When developing the most suitable implant strategy for your operation, consideration should be given to the following factors: implant type, gender, pasture availability/quality, anticipated time to turn-off and target market. If implanting heifers, further consideration must be given to the stage of sexual maturity and whether the animal is entire or speyed. Heifers to be retained for breeding should not be implanted. Producers seeking to maximise growth rates from branding right through to turn-off may also consider multiple, or whole-of-life, implant strategies.

Compudose 400 is the first choice when sustained growth is required:

- Maximises growth rates for at least 400 days
- Superior long-term performance and profit
- Proven average liveweight gain advantage of 16.1%[2]
- Implant at branding or 400 days before anticipated turn-off
- 200 and 100-day formulations also available

Compudose-G is the first choice for finishing grassfed cattle on good pastures:

- Functional life of less than 100 days
- Short-acting - may require additional muster to implant
- Two active ingredients for maximum growth
- Implant 90–120 days before anticipated turn-off
- Should only be used under good pasture conditions

The implant specialists

No matter what your target market, the strategic use of Compudose implants can maximise the profitability of your beef operation. Your nearest Elanco Animal Health representative can help you to determine the best implant strategy, including "whole of life" strategies, for your target market.

For more information, contact Elanco Animal Health on 1800 226 324

ELANCO*
Compudose® 400*
It works

References: [1]NAPCO "Coorabulka" trial [2]BF6912 *Elanco®, Compudose® and the diagonal colour bar are trademarks of Eli Lilly and Company. ®Compudose is a trademark for Elanco's brand of oestradiol †Trademark name WORDSMITH25047NM

Production feeding field day at Kairi

The deep north DPI&F beef team presented final feeding results at a successful field day at Kairi Research Station on 14 February, 2006. As well as feeding results from the Research Station and commercial producers, major NLIS equipment suppliers had an extensive display of equipment and software.

The aim of this MLA supported PIRD 'Production Feeding for Profit' project was to compare different feeding systems during the 2006 dry season to look at cost kg gain figures.

Some feeding results are presented below with other cost per kg gain figures gathered including irrigated rye grass, grass- nitrogen, grass- legume and silage feeding systems.

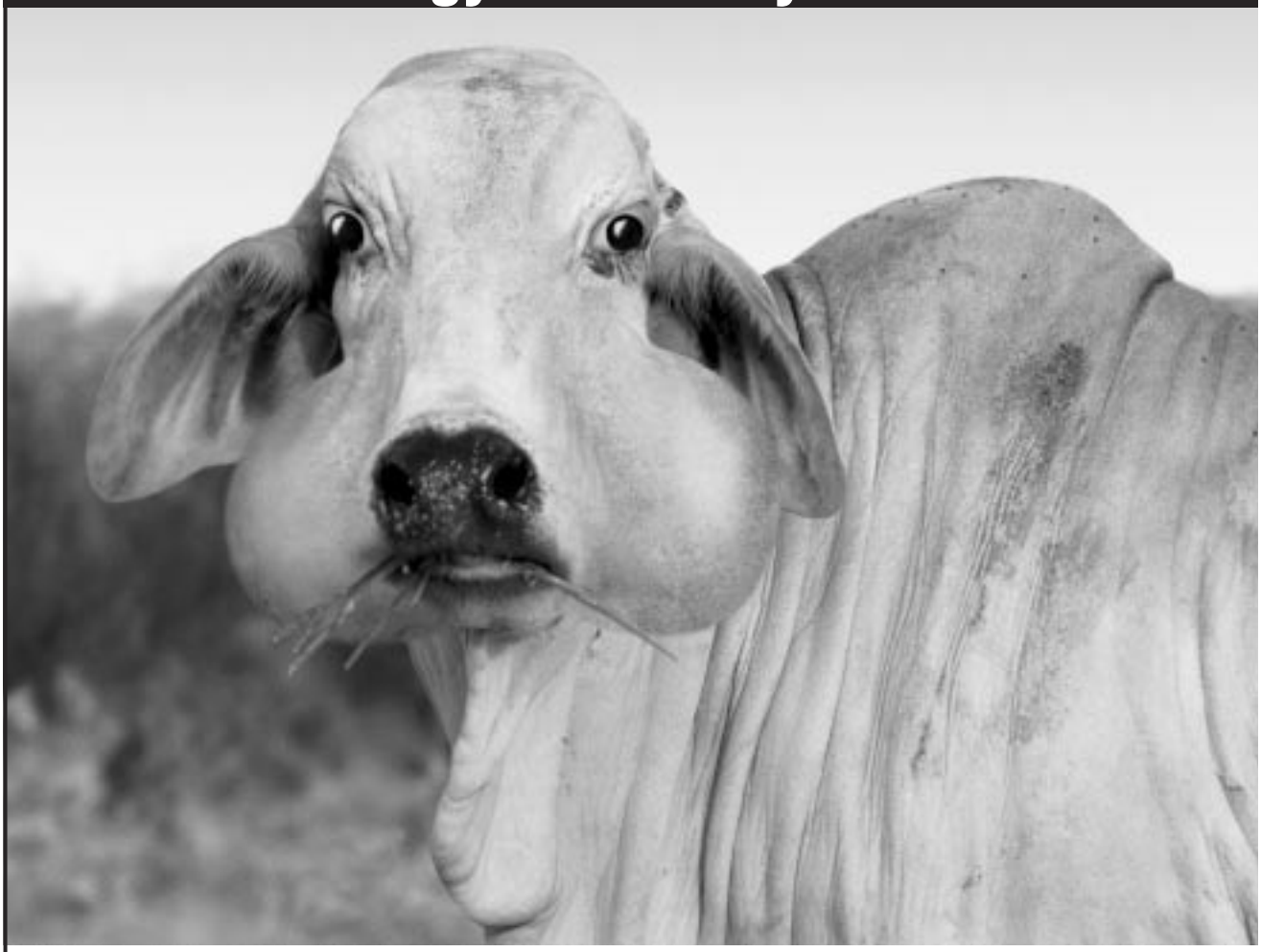
Key points

- Ensure a good supply of pasture is available for production fed cattle by using correct stocking rates. Poor supply of paddock feed will dramatically lift trough feed intake levels and costs.
- Maximise live weight gain per day by using HGP's and vaccinate for 3 day fever. Use a balanced protein, energy and minerals ration.
- Have a market targeted before feeding starts and ensure cattle have the right age and start weight by calculating expected live weight gain per day times days on feed. Be realistic with your expected daily LWG figure.
- If purchasing cattle to feed, the buy in price per kg landed at home is a critical part of the profit equation.

Bernie English, Kev Shaw, Joe Rolfe and Jim Kernot

	Kairi Research Station			Commercial producers figures				
	Ridley TSS Tropical Molasses Concentrate	Stocklick Trading M3U	M3 + 11% maize	Property 6 M3U	Property 7 No copra M3U + lupins + oil	Property 9 Molasses grain oil minerals	Property 10 M1.8U +copra + maize + lupins + oil	Property 12 Grain based feedlot
Mean live weight	533 kg	552 kg	582 kg	207 kg	501 kg	492 kg	451 kg	511 kg
Trough Feed Intake day as fed	6.26 kg	7.69 kg	9.14 kg	3.5 kg	4.6 kg	6.5 kg	9.5 kg	14 kg
Feed cost day	$1.08	$1.25	$1.60	$0.60	$0.65	$0.88	$1.81	$2.83
Paddock feed cost day ($3/ week)	$0.42	$0.42	$0.42	$0.42	$0.42	$0.42	$0.20 Hay only	$0.65 Yardage cost
Total Cost/Day	$1.50	$1.67	$2.02	$1.02	$1.07	$1.30	$2.01	$3.48
LWG / head / day	0.98	1.11	1.36	0.78	0.83	0.69	1.35	1.6
Cost kg gained	$1.53	$1.50	$1.48	$1.30	$1.29	$1.88	$1.48	$2.17

More energy from every mouthful



Rumensin helps your cattle to digest their food more efficiently, giving them more energy from every mouthful of pasture consumed. In fact, Rumensin is *scientifically-proven* to:

- improve feed efficiency
- improve growth rates
- improve reproductive performance
- and prevent coccidiosis.†

If your molasses or lick doesn't contain Rumensin, then you're not getting the most out of your investment in dry season supplementation. For more information, contact your local feedmill or Elanco Animal Health toll free on **1800 226 324**.

ELANCO*
Rumensin®
*

†Rumensin is registered for improved feed efficiency and as an aid in the control of bloat in feedlot cattle; for improved feed efficiency and weight gain and reproductive performance in heifers; and as an aid in the prevention of coccidiosis caused by *Eimeria zuernii* and *Eimeria bovis*. *Elanco®, Rumensin® and the diagonal colour bar are trademarks of Eli Lilly and Company. Rumensin® is a trademark for Elanco's brand of monensin sodium. WORDSMITH26043NM

Climateoutlook

Despite the rise in monthly SOI values from minus 8.9 for January to minus 2.8 for February the SOI is still in a 'Consistently Negative' phase. The probability of receiving above median rainfall for the next three months (March – May) across north-east Queensland ranges from 10% - 50% (see Figure 1). Other years that have had a 'Consistently Negative' SOI phase at the end of February were: 1900, 1903, 1915, 1919, 1941, 1942, 1952, 1958, 1959, 1969, 1970, 1983, 1992, 1993 and 1998.

As the autumn predictability gap approaches it will be interesting to see what direction the SOI takes. At this time of year consistently negative values are not of major concern. However, if the SOI does not return to consistently positive values during autumn it would be a warning sign for a likely dry winter/ spring.

Probability of exceeding median rainfall
for March / May based on consistantly negative phase during January / February

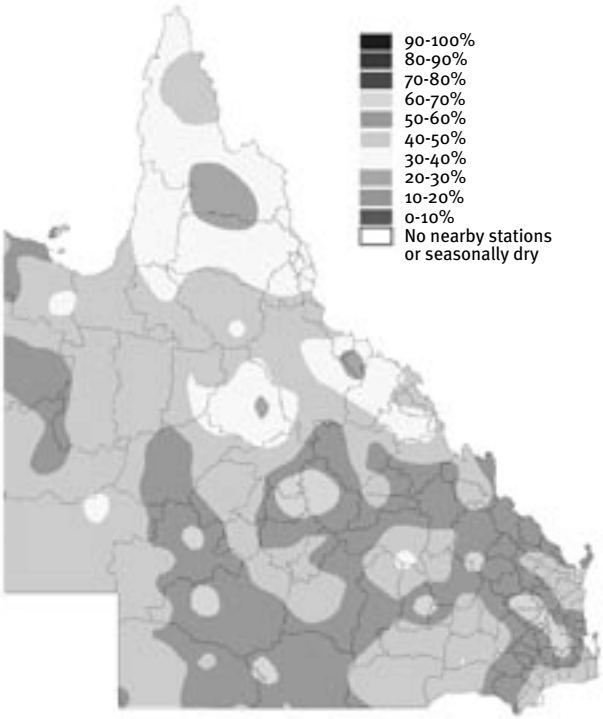


Figure 1: Probability of exceeding median rainfall for the March-May period

The MJO is currently crossing northern Australia (1st week of March) and is next due in mid April. Research has shown the MJO to be a useful indicator of the timing of potential rainfall events but not amounts. Widespread rain is still needed in many regions promote pasture growth. Rainfall to date for the state compared to long-term records is shown in Figure 2.

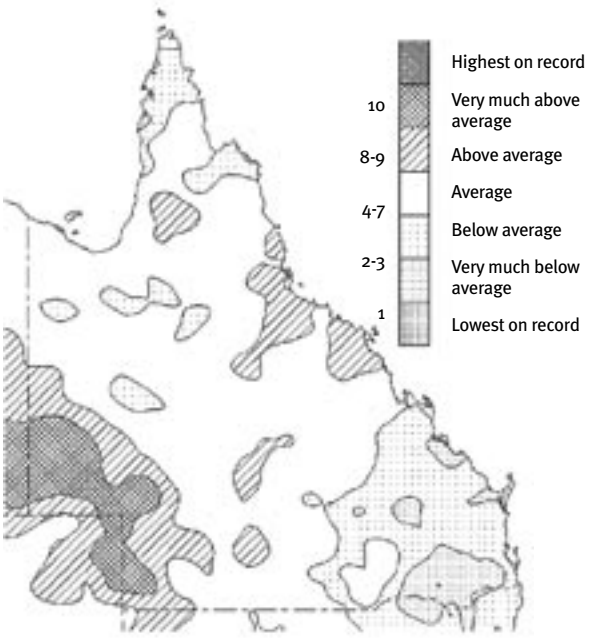


Figure 2: December – February rainfall compared to the historical records (Bureau of Meteorology)

Information on ocean temperatures in the central Pacific (running eastward along the equator from the international dateline) indicate that the sea-surface temperatures are cooling rapidly and the characteristic El Niño pattern has now broken down. Computer models indicate further cooling in the Pacific, with a La Niña in the coming year not out of the question (http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/enso/).

The chance of specific rainfall events for a number of locations in the region are shown in the table below. For similar data on your area purchase a copy of Australian Rainman available from the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (phone 13 25 23).

Location	Chance of 200 mm	Chance of 300 mm	Chance of 400 mm	Chance of 500 mm
Ingham	100%	95%	75%	53%
Atherton	85%	70%	43%	30%
	100 mm	**150 mm**	**200 mm**	**300 mm**
Mareeba	70%	60%	35%	18%
	60 mm	**100 mm**	**140 mm**	**190 mm**
Charters Towers	85%	55%	40%	30%
	40 mm	**80 mm**	**120 mm**	**170 mm**
Mt Isa	65%	40%	30%	20%

Daily updates of the SOI are available on 07 4688 1439 and climate updates are on the web at http://www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au or call DPI&F on telephone 13 25 23. Free fortnightly updates are available from the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries via email or fax. If you would like to subscribe to this service please contact Jacqueline Balston 07 4044 1619 or Dave McRae 07 4688 1459.

There's Protection

And there's Protection

It's that simple...

SingVac® 3 Year

Longest Lasting, Fast Acting.

Simply the Best Botulinum Vaccine in the World.

SingVac® 3 Year Single Shot Bivalent Botulinum Vaccine for Cattle provides protection of cattle against botulism after an initial dose

- ✔ within 35 days (Longrange™ takes on average 3 to 6 months)
- ✔ for 3 years (Longrange™ only protects for 6 to 9 months following the initial dose)[1]

SingVac® 3 Year

Fort Dodge Australia Pty Limited ABN 64 000 074 902 Tel: 02 9899 0444 Fax: 02 9899 2151

SingVac® Cydectin® are registered trademarks. Longrange™ is a trademark of Pfizer Animal Health.

1. A single dose of Longrange will give protection on average within 3 to 6 months of an initial dose, and should confer protection for 12 months.

FORT DODGE®

Fort Dodge Australia Pty Limited

The Gulf Fire project results after five years

The Gulf fire project has tested a range of fire treatments to manage significant thickening of woody vegetation in the Gulf savannas. The fire project commenced in the 2002/03 wet season and has now been through five wet seasons. While the first four years had well below average rainfall the 2006/07 storm burns had large fuel loads due to heavy rain associated with Cyclone Larry and Monica. Despite the cool fires associated with the first four years there have been some very encouraging fire impacts. Four core sites and five satellite sites were burnt between November to December 2006.

Background

The Gulf Fire project was conducted under the umbrella of the Tropical Savannas' Management CRC and as a collaborative effort between the DPI&F, CSIRO, MLA, the Northern Gulf Resource Management Group and landholders.

The issue addressed was the significant increase in tree, shrub and woody weed thickening in recent decades. This thickening has reduced grass production and therefore decreased carrying capacity as well as making cattle mustering more difficult. The cause is thought to be a reduction in the frequency and intensity of fire as well as the use of stocking rates that have not allowed the tree/grass balance to remain in balance. The timing of fire is also critical with storm burns essential to address thickening. The strategic use of appropriate fire has reduced woody vegetation cover and helped restore pasture production.

The Gulf savannas are made up of a range of vegetation, soil and land types distributed across thousands of square kilometers. The two species that were most commonly identified as being problematic were breadfruit (*Gardenia vilhelmii*) and gutta percha (*Excoecaria parvifolia*). Other thickening species included Eucalypts, wattles (*Acacia* spp.), Cooktown ironwood (*Erythrophleum chlorostachys*), tea-tree (*Melaleuca* spp.), whitewood (*Atalaya hemiglauca*), yellowberry bush (*Maytenus cunninghamii*), yellow-wood (*Terminalia platyptera*), and the introduced rubbervine (*Cryptostegia grandiflora*) and mimosa (*Acacia farnesiana*).

Hot, storm burns with high fuel loads were used to target key woody species. Grazing management was also an integral component of the project. Light grazing and/or spelling was used both before the fires to build up fuel loads and after the fires to enhance the recovery of preferred pasture species.

Two types of trial sites were conducted across the Gulf, namely core and satellite sites. The five core sites were from Georgetown to Normanton, namely Abingdon Downs, Oakland Park, Foresthome, Woodview and Delta Downs. Intensive measurements were established at the core sites to document the changes in tree and shrub populations before and after burning. Fuel loads were measured as well as scorch height, char height and death rates of woody species. The woody species counted after the fires were percentage deaths, percentage top-kill (surviving from 0-50 cm) and percentage completely recovered after fire. Fuel loads immediately prior to burning at core sites were in the range 1025-4900 kg/ha. Two of the cores sites had four fires during the five years of the trial, while two properties were burnt three times with one site only burnt twice.

Eleven satellite sites were selected across the northern Gulf, namely – Prestwood, Beverley Hills, Blanncourt, Springfield, Tabletop, Narrawa, Shady Lagoon, Riverview, Huonfels, Foresthome and Rocky Springs. They were less intensively measured than the core sites, relying solely on visual assessment using fixed photo points of fuel loads and fire effectiveness. With low fuel loads there were only seven properties burnt during the first four years of the project and all only received one burn. Five properties were then burnt in the fifth year of the trial (one property for the second time) following the heavy rain of Cyclone Larry and Monica. While it had not been possible to impose useful fires at several sites during the first four years there were a number of properties still unable to burn in year five. Reasons included heavy grazing pressure, concerns about a prediction for an El Niño year and heavy rain in December resulting in excessively greening the fuel load prior to burning.

Results to date

A number of the graziers involved in the Gulf fire project have already been asked a number of questions relating to the project. The remaining graziers will be questioned in the near future. All the comments are being recorded and will be documented in a fire report accompanied with before and after fire photos.

The first question was what has caused the problem of timber thickening on your property?

While the responses were not uniform - overgrazing and lack of fires were clearly the most common causes.

The second question was how big an issue is timber thickening on your property?

- How widespread is thickening?
- Which landtypes are thickening?
- How many years has thickening been a problem?
- Which woody species and weeds have been a major thickening problem?
- What impact has thickening had on carrying capacity?

The figures varied, but all graziers spoke of highly significant impacts associated with thickening. One grazier spoke of a 1000 acre paddock, thickened with Breadfruit, that now has no grass and is fully destocked.

The key impact from the first two questions was the following

Timber thickening is largely due to overgrazing and ineffective fires.

While fire can be successful, there are the following problems

- Large woody trees (greater than 3 m) and certain species are not killed by fires
- Fire resistant areas will require some mechanical intervention
- The ideal fuel load is at least 2500 kg/ha
- Spelling before and after the fire are essential.

If there is not a thickening problem then fire is in most cases not necessary. The basalt soils are typically heavy grass country and are rarely thickened. Equally if there is a thickening problem and grazing pressure is not reduced before fire to ensure a large fuel load and grazing pressure is also not reduced to allow grass to compete with woody species after fire then there is no point starting a fire program. The solution to thickening is not the fire itself; the true solution is the grazing pressure before and after the fire.

The subsequent four questions asked to graziers were

1. What management practices have been used?
2. What fire management practices are involved?

   What fire intensity and what fuel load?
   What is the optimal burning time?
   What is the ideal fire frequency?

3. What is the grazing management before and after the fire?
4. How do you address fire management on very large paddocks?

Again the opinions of the landholders asked about these questions varied but there were a number of similar responses. The fire intensity and burning time were critical. The fire had to be on the hottest day available, with a moderate wind and low humidity. It is not effective to select a date in the future when you want to burn a site. The suitability for fire will vary from day to day and can only be selected to burn on a particular day with ideal conditions.

The fire should also be as close as possible to the onset of season breaking rain. Mid year burns can be catastrophic as grass under mid year burns will not grow for up to 6 months. Woody species will reshoot after the mid year burn and have a 6 month head start over and above the pasture. Ideally the fire should be only a week or two before pasture has season breaking rain.

Fires are normally started back-burning from the down wind end. Significant fire breaks are essential and fire can be guaranteed to change direction during a fire.

Two of the core sites had three fires in five years and two had four fires in five years. The increased fire frequency was far more effective than the single fire used on the satellite sites. Results from Abingdon Downs showed 34% of Breadfruit was killed after 3 fires but 96% of Breadfruit was either dead or less than 50 cm high. Plants less than 50 cm were mostly mature plants reshooting at the base but being held in check by the greatly increased body of grass. At Foresthome the breadfruit is 62% dead and 95% either dead or less than 50 cm. Similarly the Gutta Percha at Woodview has a 75% death rate after 4 burns.

While some of the satellite sites were not very effective due to inadequate fuel loads there were also a number of good initial results. However all sites with good fires will need a second hot fire, ideally next year, or all the benefits will count for nothing.

While small paddocks with serious thickening problems can be locked up and burnt several times, it is not practical to destock a very large breeder paddock. Burning only one small area within a large paddock will see cattle concentrate on the burnt area after the fire. This is clearly not a good outcome and what is needed is to burn a significant area and try and shut down water and supplements if possible to minimize over grazing after the fire.

Summary

The fire trial has shown some encouraging results. In particular Breadfruit and Gutta Percha have shown successful control strategies. It is proposed to continue monitoring the fire project until the end of 2007. The CSIRO and DPIF staff involved in the fire project want to try and continue fire research to determine the long term optimal fire strategies for a wider range of woody species. We would also like to determine the ecology of germination of thickening species.

Jim Kernot
DPI&F Mareeba
Ph: (07) 4048 4628

NLIS sheep identification necessary for NSW and Vic sheep moving to Queensland

Sheep moving from southern states into Queensland require either a vendor NLIS tag fitted, or a new NLIS 'Import Tag' once they arrive at the destination property in Queensland.

Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F) National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) relationship manager Haydn Counsell, said as seasonal conditions in western areas of Queensland improved with recent rains, many producers were looking to restock with sheep from NSW and Victoria.

'The two options available for producers seeking to introduce sheep into Queensland cater for either stock purchased on a private paddock sale basis or those purchased from saleyards at auction,' he said.

'It is preferable for sheep purchased privately from a vendor in NSW, that they are fitted with the interstate vendor's NLIS PIC tag prior to moving to Queensland as this is required once they reach the border. Queensland buyers or their agents may need to negotiate this NLIS tagging with the vendor at the time of the purchase of the sheep.

'Alternatively, sheep from interstate that are not fitted with any NLIS tag, can be tagged with a unique 'Import Tag'. This may be applied prior to the sheep moving from the vendor's PIC or the saleyards in NSW, or they may be moved across the border into Queensland untagged, as long as they are fitted with the 'Import Tag' upon their arrival and before release at their Queensland destination property,' he said.

The Import Tag was introduced to facilitate interstate trade in sheep in addition to ensuring the maintenance of full traceability. It bears a unique PIC code (QIMP9922) plus a serial number for each tag.

Mr Counsell said producers that use Import Tags must record on the interstate health certificate/ waybill that accompanies the sheep, the range of serial numbers stamped on the tags fitted.

'When purchasing interstate sheep, special care must also be taken to comply with the Queensland's requirements for Ovine Johne's Disease as a recent case of the disease in introduced sheep had required a costly eradication program,' he said.

Order forms for NLIS 'Import Tags' can be obtained from your nearest DPI&F office or by calling 13 25 23.

National Vendor Declaration – 10 years on and still crucial

In marking the 10th anniversary of the National Vendor Declaration (NVD) today Meat & Livestock Australia Managing Director David Palmer stressed the critical role the NVD has played in helping Australia secure access to international red meat markets.

Mr Palmer was speaking at the launch of a Livestock Production Assurance (LPA) NVD industry awareness campaign at the Gunnedah, NSW, weekly livestock sale, and described NVDs as the industry's safety guarantee for red meat.

'The NVD is even more important now than it was 10 years ago when it was first used,' Mr Palmer said.

'There is widespread agreement across all sectors of the industry that the NVD program contributes invaluably to market access and international trade.

'Livestock producers, transporters, agents and processors must all be thanked for their commitment to the use of NVDs over the past 10 years and hence the role they've played in maintaining market access and bolstering our food safety claims.'

Australia's domestic and overseas red meat markets are valued at $15 billion. It is well known that in some international markets the paperwork that accompanies red meat is as important as the taste of the product.

Mr Palmer reiterated to producers, transporters, stock and station agents, buyers and processors the value that customers place on good paperwork, describing it as red meat's passport to international markets.

'Around the world Australian red meat has a strong reputation for quality and safety, and the value of the paperwork that goes with products cannot be underestimated,' Mr Palmer said.

Mr Palmer was involved in the development of the NVD process and has seen it evolve over 10 years to become an integral part of the buying and selling of red meat.

'As domestic and international markets become increasingly focussed on the integrity of the entire food chain, from paddock to the plate, a correctly completed NVD is the best guarantee producers can provide,' Mr Palmer said.

'Producers invest heavily in getting animals to the right level before selling and the NVD is the report card that producers use to demonstrate their good on farm management practices.'

Meat & Livestock Australia continues its work with red meat producers, transporters, stock and station agents and processors to ensure the NVD program continues to provide a valuable contribution to market access and

international trade.

As part of the LPA NVD industry awareness campaign, a series of advertisements, case studies, fact sheets and posters have been developed and will be distributed to the industry in 2007.

Market Report – February 2007

The bad news for beef producers in the deep north is the Innisfail abattoir is not opening at all in 2007 and has an unsure future. The lack of competition in the market place and the extra freight to AMH in Townsville will reduce cattle returns for many producers.

We've had some heavy rain in areas of north Queensland which shut the AMH abattoir in Townsville for a short period. The break in the season didn't come until the New Year for many northern areas, but at least it's raining unlike many districts to our south still in drought. The late rain in the far north's grain growing areas has prevented the usual area of maize and sorghum plantings to go ahead, which will add to the State wide grain shortage and upward pressure to the price.

Domestic market

The run into Christmas saw a flood of cattle onto the market from droughted areas and downward pressure on beef prices. Markets have opened up in 2007 with around $3.40 for 4T Jap grass bullocks and $3.60 for grain Jap.

Our feedlots in Australia had over 900,000 head on feed in December 2006, and with high feed costs and ordinary fat cattle prices it put many feeders in a high loss per head situation. The grain supply and price is not looking to improve much in 2007 with large areas of our summer cropping districts missing out on planting rain. So feedlotters may be reluctant to pay exorbant prices for replacement stock.

Australian beef exports in 2006 of 953,932 t were valued at A$4.9B with Japan taking 46%, USA 25% and Korea 17% on value. Our slaughter figures were up 4% to 7.96m head producing 2.19 million tonnes of beef. Average carcass weight of adult cattle was a record 270 kg dressed weight, up from 202 kg in the 70s to 240 kg in the mid 1990s. Queensland abattoirs processed 3.83 m head or 48% of the total Australian figure.

Many areas to our south are still in a bad way with drought, but we have had a lot more rain about the State this wet season than last and what happens with the cattle demand and prices will hinge on the season over the next few months. Fat cattle prices should stay firm but as always supply numbers, value of our dollar and export demand will determine price levels. Despite rising retail prices, Australian domestic consumers have continued their good demand for our beef ensuring its our best market by value and volume.

Live export

The boat trade has taken very few cattle from our neck of the woods for several years due to our high cattle prices but it continues to be an important market for the Northern Territory and Western Australia.

In the first 11 months of 2006, 596,000 head were exported with 360,000 going to Indonesia, 76,000 to Israel and 56,000 to Malaysia. This is well down on the peak years of 1996-97 and 2002-03 when over 900,000 head were exported annually.

Japan-Korea

It's been over 6 months since the import ban on USA beef has been lifted, but volumes of USA beef into Japan have stayed low. Japan imported 460,620 t of beef in 2006, a slight increase on 2005. Australia supplied 88%, NZ 8%, and USA 1.6%. Japan has recorded 32 cases to date of mad cow in their domestic herd, so the disease risk will still be in their press, and food safety an important issue. A large proportion of our feedlot beef has been heading to Japan. Future prospects for our beef look good here unless animal age and inspection restrictions are suddenly lifted from the USA exporters. Korea allowed USA boneless beef back into its market last year as well, but 3 shipments have been turned away because of bone fragments, and USA beef operators have only exported low volumes to date.

USA

The USA beef industry has had its own drought problems in 2006 and their resulting beef production for 2006 was up 6% on 2005 to 11.8m tonnes. Numbers in feedlots in January 2007 at 11.9m head is 6% higher than the 5 year average, no doubt due to the drought as well. With the high turnoff numbers because of dry conditions in North America, it is surprising that our exporters are receiving prices on a par with returns a year ago. If the drought breaks in Australia there are good prospects that cattle numbers will tighten and prices for this market could rise rapidly. Canada has just recorded its 10th mad cow case which will dent their push to get their industry back onto its rails. As always the low cost beef producers from South America are on our heals in the USA, but there has been another foot and mouth out break close to the Brazilian border which could cause more hiccups for them.

Bernie English,
DPI&F, Kairi Research Station Ph: (07) 4091 9440
Greg Brown,
Meadowbank Station

Tick fever – beware the breed!

Discussions between DPI&F and some of the larger players in the cattle industry indicate **a trend towards increasing infusion of *Bos taurus* genetics** into their herds. Staff also report more movement of composite, crossbred and purebred *Bos taurus* bulls going into the north. Apart from the traditional *Bos indicus* infused breeds like Santa Gertrudis and Droughtmaster, examples have included Belmont, Charbray and Brangus with Senepol, Charolais, Angus, Shorthorn, Limousin and Simmental genetics and certainly there will be other composites thrown into the mix.

It is worth revisiting some information pertinent to breed and susceptibility to tick fever.

- **There are three organisms involved in tick fever:** Babesia bovis, Babesia bigemina and Anaplasma marginale
- ***Bos taurus* cattle and crosses with a low *Bos indicus* infusion are much more susceptible to tick fever than pure *Bos indicus* cattle.** This is especially the case for the Babesia organisms, but *Bos indicus* cattle are also quite susceptible to *Anaplasma*, as shown in the tables below. This shows the number of cattle severely affected or needing treatment in trials conducted by staff of the Tick Fever Centre

a) Number of cattle needing treatment after artificial infection with two virulent tick fever organisms

Breed	Number requiring treatment	
	Trial 1 *B. bovis*	Trial 2 *A. marginale*
Pure *B. indicus*	0/10	5/10
Half *B. indicus*	3/10	7/10
Quarter *B. indicus*	2/10	8/10
Pure *B. taurus*	8/10	10/10

b) Affect of natural infection with Babesia bovis according to breed

Breed	Category of reaction		
	Unaffected	Mild to moderate	Severe to needing treatment
Half *B. indicus*	25%	56%	19%
Pure *B. indicus*	63%	37%	< 1%

MAIN POINT 1:

Once you start diluting the *Bos indicus* blood in northern cattle herds, susceptibility to tick fever will increase.

- Serological surveys show variable exposure to the tick fever organisms across the north Queensland shires. Samples were collected from weaners in 1996 from herds across NW Queensland shires. The shires represented were Burke, Carpentaria, Croydon, Cloncurry, Dalrymple, Etheridge, Flinders, Mt Isa, McKinley and Richmond. Most activity was detected in Burke and Carpentaria shires:

	Average percentage of weaners exposed to tick fever in each property (range)		
	Babesia bovis	Babesia bigemina	Anaplasma marginale
Burke Shire	22% (0-65%)	39% (0-88%)	50% (0-97%)
Carpentaria Shire	10% (0-52%)	34% (0-82%)	44% (0-93%)
Other shires (average only)	1%-3%	2%-14%	1%-10%

Smaller follow-up surveys as recently as 2005 on some properties in NW Queensland show that little has changed. This information tells us that tick fever organisms are present and circulating in the north Queensland cattle and tick populations; and that a large number of cattle remain susceptible to tick fever after weaner age.

In an ideal world, most cattle in tick infested country would become infected with tick fever organisms as weaners ensuring they are immune later in life. There are many reasons why this doesn't occur in north Queensland:

1. Tick numbers are too low because of dry weather, because it is marginal tick country or due to effective tick control strategies
2. Yearly variation in tick numbers due to season and even individual paddock effects
3. High content *Bos indicus* cattle which cause tick numbers to remain low.

MAIN POINT 2:

There are a lot of weaners in north Queensland not exposed to tick fever organisms, and therefore susceptible to serious disease as adults.

What else is important with regard to tick fever?

- **Vaccination against tick fever is the most reliable method of ensuring adequate immunity to tick fever across the herd**
- **Weaners (especially in the 3-9 month age group) have a natural resistance to tick fever.**

Calves exposed to tick fever when the age resistance is at its peak rarely show clinical symptoms and develop a solid long-lasting immunity. If this happens to **all** your calves, tick fever will not be a problem on your property. On the other hand (see the serological survey in north Qld shires mentioned above), if cattle are not exposed to tick fever as calves, the age resistance gradually wanes with time and these animals will become very susceptible to tick fever. If exposed to tick fever later in life, they are likely to develop a severe life threatening infection. This has implications both on the home property and for the movement of cattle that are not immune to properties where tick numbers may be much higher and tick fever more prevalent.

- The tick fever vaccine is a live attenuated vaccine which causes a mild form of the disease. Occasionally we can get quite severe reactions to the vaccine. **The natural resistance of weaners makes this an ideal age at which to vaccinate against tick fever with very little chance of reaction.**
- **It takes 2 months for immunity to develop to all three tick fever organisms after vaccination**
- **Non-immune bulls of any breed (but particularly Bos taurus infused breeds) coming into tick infested areas may suffer severe clinical disease** resulting in marked weight loss, reduced fertility and even death in some cases. If you regularly bring bulls into ticky areas, then encourage the bull breeders to vaccinate the sale bulls at least 2 months prior to movement; best of all, encourage them to vaccinate the bulls as weaners.

MAIN POINT 3:

Many producers are keen to capitalise on the benefits obtained across a range of breeds to meet their breeding objectives. Tick fever is most reliably prevented by vaccination of weaner cattle. All bulls coming onto tick infested properties must be vaccinated against tick fever. If the *Bos indicus* content of the herd is also reduced, consider vaccinating all introduced cattle and all homebred weaners.

NB The selection of breeds suitable for the rigors of the north Queensland climate and for meat production is quite a separate issue. DPI&F beef extension staff are able to assist with this. Tick resistance and susceptibility to tick fever is just one consideration which assumes much more importance as the *Bos indicus* content decreases.

dalrymplediary

Highlights from the SPIRAL project ('Strategic Partnerships Incentives for Revitalising Active Landcare') in the Burdekin Rangelands

After four months in the job as Project Officer for the Dalrymple Landcare Committee Inc. I have come to appreciate the impact of my predessor, Marie Vitelli. However, having taken the reigns, I have had an exciting few months and have established a good foothold in the job.

The SPIRAL project is continuing very well in its second year, with some 20 year two projects currently underway. The majority of the on ground work has started and results of individual projects are starting to filter back to the office. The welcome arrival of some storms and rain across much of the Dalrymple Shire has seen the full extent of some projects start to shine through.

In late December, official approval was handed down from Hon Peter McGauran MP (Minister for Agriculuture, Fisheries and Forestry) that funding through the National Landcare Programme for year three of the SPIRAL project (07/08) has been approved. Year three of the SPIRAL project will officially open on the 1 July 2007. Information and project submission forms will be available after this date.

Queensland State Landcare Co-ordinator visits the Dalrymple Shire in January of 2007

In Novemeber 2006, the QLD State Landcare Co-ordinator position changed hands to the newly appointed Rick Kowitz. In December 2006 I was lucky enough to catch up with Rick in Brisbane and show him some background information on the Dalrymple Landcare Committee and more specifically the SPIRAL project. After discussing the current successes of the SPIRAL project Rick decided to fit in a visit to the region on a trip through NQ in mid January 2007.

On Monday 22 of January Rick along with myself and fellow project officer – June Brundell and Burdekin Dry Tropics staff Kate Masters and Gale Duell, were able to visit a few projects around the Charters Towers region.

Rick was keen to see the results of longer term projects and the how projects new to Landcare and SPIRAL were progressing. Tom and Lorraine Carter of *Tarinda Park* on the Broughton Road south of Charters Towers welcomed the visit and were keen to show the team the results of his work through SPIRAL to tackle rubbervine and belly ache bush. Through both herbicide application and mechanical control using a modified front-end loader with a bucket mounted stick rake, a large number of weeds have now been removed from the 80 acre block. For Tom and Lorraine, the next step in their management plan will be to re-establish a solid pasture cover of buffel grass and urochloa as well as continued follow up control of the belly ache bush and rubbervine re-growth.

After a brief smoko, Rick and the team travelled to Bob and Beryl Johnston's property *Mileston* on Jesmond Road west of Charters Towers. Having been on the property for over 20 years, the results of the improvement plan for *Mileston* were clearly noticeable. Having more or less completely eradicated rubbervine and chinee apple from the property, the impact of the dedication to weed management was obvious. Funding through the SPIRAL project in year 1 (05/06) has allowed Bob and Beryl to install a series of unique contour banks designed to disperse and pond run-off water and sediment, as well as installation of series of watering points throughout the property.

Improvement of the pasture resource through ripping and seeding in combination with fencing of the property into smaller paddocks for rotational grazing impressed Rick. Likewise the innovative use of a solar pump and tanks to deliver water to a series of watering points on the property demonstrated to the visitors the value of programmes such as SPIRAL.

At the end of the day Rick said that despite being one of the lowest annual rainfall areas of the state, productivity and profitability objectives seemed to be realistic and sustainable. The role of Landcare in the region was also identified as one of the foremost important issues for the region, especially in regards to addressing the issues of woody weeds. However, the level of innovation and dedication to cleaning up properties as demonstrated in his site visits gave Rick great enthusiasm for establishing strong ties for the future with the Dalrymple Landcare Committee, the landholders of the Dalrymple Shire and the region in general.

Rick continued his tour through the northern part of Queensland moving north through the wet tropics towards Tully before visiting the Mackay Whitsunday Region on his way back down to his Toowoomba base.

400 Lt spray unit donated to Dalrymple Landcare Committee by Dow-Agro Sciences.

Dow-Agro Sciences have kindly donated a 400 litre spray unit to the Dalrymple Landcare Committee. Featuring a 100 metre heavy duty hose and adjustable spray handle, the unit is ideal for foliar application of herbicides such as Hotshot, Grazon, Tordon 75 D and Starane 200 for controlling the common weeds throughout the Dalrymple Shire such as belly ache bush, parthenium, rubbervine and lantana.

With the recent rains which have fallen over much of the shire, the next few months present the ideal time to attack woody weeds while they are in their most vigorous growth phase. Valued at well over $9000, the donated spray unit will no doubt go through its paces in the first few months.

The unit can be mounted in either a large trailer or on a flat bed tray of a 4WD vehicle. Featuring a remote controlled retractable hose reel and Honda 5.5 horsepower engine and pump and electric start makes the unit a reliable and well built piece of equipment. Hire of the unit is at no charge but will require a $200 security and damage deposit and is available through Elders in Charters Towers. For more information or to book the spray unit please phone Norm on 07 4787 2500.

Clarke River & East Burdekin rroject progressing well

The Clarke River and East Burdekin project running under the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAPSWQ) is progressing well. Project Officer June Brundell has spent much of the first two months of the year participating in a busy schedule of field trips and site visits to assist the landholders in their design and set up of new projects.

Applications for projects closed for the project on 2 March 2007 and contracts for approved projects are expected to reach landholders in early April. A wide range of applications for the project were received. Landholders must be congratulated on the innovation and detail of their applications.

For further information, contact June Brundell at the DPI&F offices in Charters Towers on ph: 07 4754 6112 or june.brundell@dpi.qld.gov.au.

John Nicholas
Project Officer – SPIRAL
Dalrymple Landcare Committee Inc.
PO Box 976 Charters Towers QLD 4820
Ph: (07) 4754 6120
john.nicholas@dpi.qld.gov.au

Plain English guide to native vegetation clearing now available

On 31 December 2006 broadscale tree clearing in Queensland ended, setting an environmental achievement of great significance in what is one of the world's largest states, by land area.

This end of clearing followed a two-year phase-out period established by the Government in 2004. Before the commitment was made, up to 500,000 hectares of native vegetation was being cleared annually. Queensland's vegetation management laws are the single greatest contribution that has been made in Australia to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. NRW recognises that landholders still need to clear vegetation for management purposes and has developed a plain English guide to help them in the application process. Landholders can apply to clear vegetation for purposes such as building infrastructure, controlling weeds, clearing regrowth or harvesting fodder.

The Landholders' Guide to Vegetation Clearing Applications explains whether landholders need a permit to clear vegetation, how to apply and how NRW assesses the applications. The guide helps landholders to know what they can do on their property, rather than what they cannot, all in an easy-to-understand format.

The guide takes a common-sense approach to the application system. It is intended that the guide will make it easier for landholders to prepare and lodge their applications and assist landholders in complying with the *Vegetation Management Act*. The Act aims to preserve what remains of Queensland's original vegetation and prevent land degradation.

The guide covers the process from beginning to end, dealing with topics such as:

- Do I need to apply for a permit;
- Applying for a permit;
- Regional ecosystem mapping;
- Property maps of assessable vegetation;
- The application process;
- The decision-making process; and
- Illegal clearing.

The guide also contains a range of useful information such as locations and telephone numbers of NRW Service Centres, a list of common exemptions and, importantly, completed examples of the application forms.

While the guide contains a lot of useful information regarding the Vegetation Management Act and the application process, NRW does encourage landholders to make contact with their local NRW centre for any further assistance they require. For *Northern muster* readers these centres are located in Mareeba and Townsville.

The Landholders' Guide to Vegetation Clearing Applications is available from NRW Service Centres and online at www.nrw.qld.gov.au/vegetation.

Daniel Gillinder
Senior Vegetation Management Officer, North Region
Ph: (07) 4799 7444
Katrina Anderson-Dreisig
Regional Media & Communications Officer, North Region
Ph: (07) 4799 7552
Email: katrina.anderson-dreisig@nrw.qld.gov.au

Limnocharis flava

Description

Limnocharis flava, native to South America, is an anchored aquatic weed. It is an erect clump-forming herb that can reach 1 meter in height. Limnocharis has rounded leaf blades on fairly thick triangular stems. The stunning yellow 3 lobed flowers occur on an octopus – like inflorescence, with up to 15 flowers, on a triangular shaped stem. The spherical capsules produced after flowering split into crescent-shaped pieces which contain numerous small brown seeds. Both the mature fruit and individual segments float for some time and are able to be distributed by running water.

Limnocharis has the ability to act as a perennial where there is a year round supply of water or an annual where a distinct dry season occurs. It can also reproduce both vegetatively and by seed. Vegetative plantlets develop from the central inflorescence and break off and either float away or root down in the mud near the base of the plant

The problem

Limnocharis colonises shallow wetlands and margins of deeper waterways. This aquatic plant is considered to be a major weed in many countries. In Asia, Limnocharis hinders agricultural production

by infesting rice paddies, irrigation channels and drainage ditches. In the United States, Limnocharis threatens the biodiversity of the Florida Everglades by displacing native flora and fauna. Limnocharis also possess serious agricultural and biodiversity threats to Australia.

Distribution and potential spread in Australia

Limnocharis was first introduced into Australia in 2001. At present, infestations are found only in northern Queensland. However, there is potential for Limnocharis to establish in northern regions of Western Australia and Northern Territory and the northern and coastal regions of Queensland and New South Wales. Limnocharis, in Australia, has been spread by gardeners.

Current status

A national cost shared eradication program commenced in 2001. There are currently 17 recorded infestations of Limnocharis, although only three are defined as active.

Declaration details

In Queensland, Limnocharis is a Class 1 Declared plant in under the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002. Similarly, in NSW, they are listed as W1 (notifiable weeds). These declarations mean it is an offence to spread and sell these plants and they must be destroyed where found.

Further information

If you think you have found this plant please contact

Travis Sydes
Land Protection Officer
Ph: (07) 4064 1144
Mobile 0428 111 713

Dr Kylie Galway
Project Coordinator
Ph: (07) 4064 1185

More information is available online at:
www.nrm.qld.gov.au/pests/weeds/declared plants

Baymec® Pour On for Cattle

Available now at

CPA

TGT

Save on your drench bill with Baymec

For every 10ltrs or 22lt pack of Baymec Pour-On for Cattle purchased

Receive a FREE Bubba Keg 12lt Water Cooler & 2lt Drink Bottle unit valued at $90.00*

TGT Rural
13 Reynolds Street, Mareeba P: 4092 2444
17 Albrecht Street, Tolga P: 4095 5164
8 Aerodrome Road, Tully P: 4068 3704

Causeway Produce Agency
250 Charters Towers Road, Hermit Park
P: 4725 3111
25 Brodie Street, Hughenden P: 4741 0000
32 Burke Street, Julia Creek P: 4746 7666

CPA

*Limited offer while stocks last

BAYER Bayer

IVERMECTIN Baymec POUR-ON FOR CATTLE

®Baymec is a registered trademark of Bayer AG Leverkusen Germany

Burdekin region volunteers keep an eye on the 'Big Wet'

During February's 'Big Wet' highly trained volunteers collected water samples from the major waterways of the Burdekin Dry Tropics Region, including the Burdekin River and its tributaries, as well as the coastal catchments between Giru and Bowen.

Because the majority of sediment and nutrients are transported during major flood events, volunteers collect samples from the rising, peak and falling stages of river flow.

The data collected will identify sub-catchments within the Burdekin Region that contribute the highest concentrations and loads of sediment and nutrients. This will assist Burdekin Dry Tropics Natural Resource Management (BDTNRM) to prioritise funding for on-ground actions to address the loss of vital soils and nutrients within the catchment.

'Graziers and cane farmers from the Burdekin are currently working with BDTNRM to identify best management practices that will deliver water quality improvements' said Dr. Ian Dight, BDTNRM's Coastal Catchments Initiative Program Manager. 'Data from water quality monitoring and the Best Management Practices Guidelines will inform the development of BDTNRM's Water Quality Improvement Plan, to be released later this year', he explained.

Researchers from the Australian Centre for Tropical Freshwater Research (ACTFR), James Cook University have been working with grazier and cane farmer volunteers to collect samples over the past four wet seasons. The recent rains have caused the largest river flows in the region since the commencement of the project, with major flooding causing roads to be cut throughout the catchment.

'The volunteer network consists of over 30 sites throughout the sizable Burdekin catchment, from Greenvale in the north to Alpha in the south. Volunteers have successfully sampled this catchment-wide rainfall event, with many of them remarking that the resulting river flows are the largest seen in over a decade' said Zoe Bainbridge, Project Coordinator.

Volunteer Keith Atkinson said that, 'Camel Creek (located near Greenvale) had its largest flow since the major floods in 1991', while volunteer Cath Bettridge reported that, 'the intense rainfall of the Mingela region triggered two walls of water to thunder down the Kirk River'.

In the more intensive land uses of the lower Burdekin, pesticide samples were collected from the Haughton River and Barratta Creek systems, as well as some of the smaller irrigation channels.

According to Ms Bainbridge, 'The extent of these pesticides in the estuarine and marine zones was also monitored in the flood plumes generated by the major waterways of the Haughton River and lower Burdekin region. Despite rough conditions, flood plume monitoring was undertaken along the gradient of mixing of the fresh and marine waters from the mouth of the Burdekin River to Magnetic Island'.

ACTFR's Dr Stephen Lewis said that, 'samples were collected from the Burdekin River flood plume to investigate the biological, physical and chemical make up of the river discharge over this gradient. From this data we can understand the extent of terrestrial materials being transported from the Burdekin River into the Great Barrier Reef lagoon'.

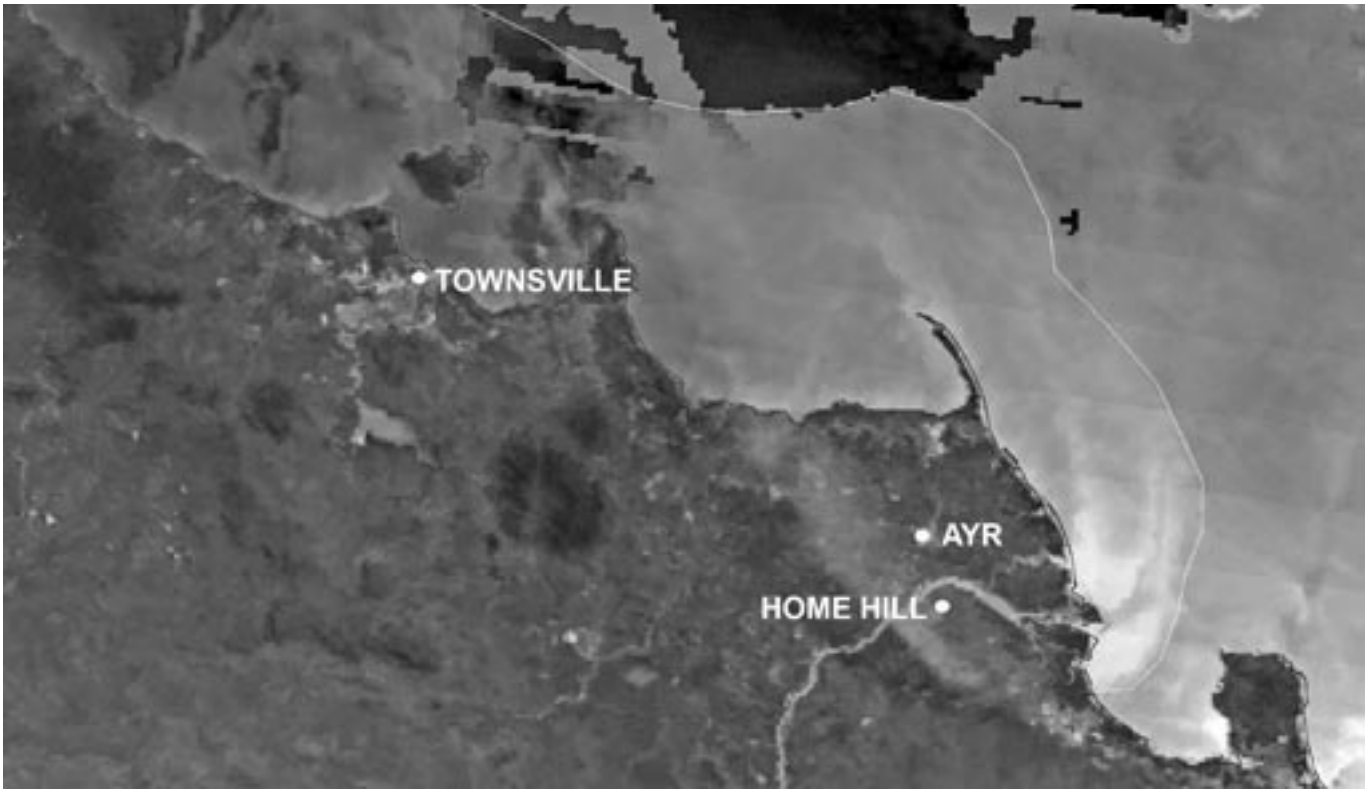
Dr Lewis went on to say that, 'satellite imagery of this recent flood plume shows the plume extending as far north as Hinchinbrook Island. In the 80-year historical record for the Burdekin River, this year's flow event was of moderate size, with larger events in the past known to have caused flood plumes reaching as far north as Cairns'.

The 'Burdekin Community Water Quality Monitoring' project was established in 2002 by the Burdekin Dry Tropics NRM and the project is being undertaken by the ACTFR.

The Region's major rivers are the Belyando, Black, Bowen, Broken, Burdekin, Cape, Clarke, Don, Haughton, Ross and the Suttor.

Zoe Bainbridge
ACTFR, JCU Ph (07) 4781 4595

Dr. Ian Dight
Burdekin Dry Tropics NRM www.bdtnrm.org.au
Ph: (07) 4724 3544



(Image sourced from MODIS LP DAAC website (www.edcdaac.usgs.gov/modis), and modified by Leo Lymburner, ACTFR, JCU).

A MODIS satellite image taken on the 9th February shows the extent of the Burdekin River flood plume in the Great Barrier Reef Lagoon. The majority of suspended sediments being transported by this river water plume do not travel far beyond the river mouth, however dissolved substances travel much further. These substances, particularly dissolved nitrogen and phosphorus compounds produce algal blooms, which are observable as green in the image. The image does not show the extent of pesticides in the plume, however results from thorough monitoring of the recent plumes between Innisfail and Mackay will provide a better indication of this extent.

Tablelands industry forum an asset for Agribusiness

Attracting and maintaining a skilled workforce was a challenge tackled head-on on the Atherton Tablelands in February.

Primary Industries and Fisheries Minister Tim Mulherin was speaking at the opening of the Tablelands Futures Corporation's Industry Forum at Walkamin on February 13. The Tablelands Futures Corporation hosted the forum as an opportunity to collate the major issues facing the Atherton Tablelands' primary industries sector.

The corporation's charter is to identify and pursue opportunities for development, enhancement and diversification across the region.

'A quick glance at DPI&F's Global Footprints Export business profiles for the Atherton Tablelands reveals the thriving businesses as diverse as the iconic mango, avocado, timber and dairy industries, stock horse breeding for domestic and export markets, through to wineries, beef and cattle genetics, aquaculture and tropical grass and legume seeds,' Mr Mulherin said.

'The formation of the Tablelands Futures Corporation is very important to local industries and I note that one of its first activities was to launch a training and mentoring program to develop the skills of the Atherton Tablelands workforce.

'Like the corporation, DPI&F recognises that attracting and retaining a highly skilled workforce is essential to maintaining a bright future for Queensland's $11 billion primary industries sector.

'We are working closely with the Department of Education, Training and the Arts and have developed the strategy in line with the Queensland Skills Plan launched by the Premier in 2006.

'By logging on to the Skills Telegraph at www.dpi.qld.gov.au/skillstelegraph/ or by calling DPI&F on 13 25 23 and telling us their skill needs, individuals in agriculture can help us identify what training is needed and provide advice to DETA's in relation to its programs and spending on training.'

Mr Mulherin took time to review the Tablelands Futures Corporation's recently launched website, www.tablelandsfutures.com

'This website is a really useful tool for all Tablelands agribusinesses, as it is a gateway to services available to them,' Mr Mulherin said.

DPI&F helps producers to be better armed for future cyclones

Primary producers are in a better position this year to protect their lives, properties and businesses in the event of a cyclone, thanks to lessons learned from Cyclone Larry.

Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries Tim Mulherin said the Department had prepared a cyclone fact sheet to help producers take preventative action against a cyclone disaster and to respond more effectively in its aftermath.

'The cyclone fact sheet outlines how producers can provide better personal, property and business protection as well as protection for their livestock and crops,' Mr Mulherin said.

'Of course there are no guarantees in a major natural disaster, but Cyclone Larry showed us that preparation can save lives and mitigate against cyclone damage and financial losses.'

Mr Mulherin urged all primary producers to access the fact sheet by visiting the Department's website at www.dpi.qld.gov.au

'Planning can include assembling disaster kits, clearing trees and shrubs from around buildings, backing up computer files of records, ensuring identification for stock and pets to facilitate their return and maintaining drains and waterways to minimise flood damage to crops,' he said.

The fact sheet gives a step-by-step guide on what to do when a cyclone warning is issued, including a suggestion to act early if you plan to move or turn out livestock.

'Priorities during a disaster must focus on human safety first and then animals and crops,' Mr Mulherin said.

'When the cyclone strikes follow all safety procedures, stay indoors until the cyclone is over and listen to updates on the battery operated (or portable) radio in your disaster kit.

'After the cyclone, please listen to all official advice before going outside or, if you were evacuated, return home to your property.

'When it is safe, assess the damage to your home, property, crops and livestock.'

If required, phone your local disaster coordination centre, and then DPI&F on 13 25 23 for specialist primary production recovery advice, including Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority (QRAA) assistance. Fact sheets can also be ordered from this number.

Take care when purchasing alternative feeds during drought

Producers are urged to exercise care when purchasing drought feed or other fodder to ensure they are not contaminated with chemical residues.

Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F) general manager of chemical use and food safety Sandra Baxendell said the current drought is putting pressure on the supplies of the usual stock feeds used by graziers.

'Producers are being forced to look to sources of new and alternative feeds for stock,' she said.

'These stockfeeds are often by-products from agricultural and horticultural crops, which have an inherent risk that they carry chemical residues'.

Dr Baxendell said many graziers may not be familiar with the way the new feed is produced or the range of chemicals that may have been used to grow the crop.

'Livestock can accumulate some chemicals in to their body and the residues detected in export abattoirs could threaten international market access,' she said.

During drought periods, it is important that graziers ask questions about chemicals used on the crop from the stockfeed supplier prior to purchasing them.

To minimise the risk of introducing residues in stockfeed, graziers should request that the supplier provides a Commodity Vendor Declaration (CVD) or a By-product Vendor Declaration (BVD) with the stockfeed.

This declaration is a voluntary statement from the supplier that specifies what chemicals have been used in the production of the crop from which the stock food has been sourced.

Dr Baxendell said graziers can then make an informed decision when purchasing stockfeed to minimise the risk of residues in stock.

'Information supplied on the CVD or BVD may include compliance with of any required withholding periods between the final use of chemicals on a crop and its harvest to produce the stockfeed material.

'While a CVD and BVD's are not legally required, it is a legal requirement for graziers who use these alternative feedstuffs in livestock rations to ensure National Vendor Declarations (NVD) are completed accurately,' she said.

Residue risk information is required on the NVD with questions about the types and sources of by-products that have been fed to stock, and the grazing of stock on treated pastures or crops.

The person making the declaration must identify those animals that have been fed by-products within 60 days of slaughter.

This allows the purchaser of the stock to manage the cattle and the associated chemical residue risks.

'Graziers are reminded that heavy penalties apply for producers making false and misleading statements on an NVD. In Queensland, these fines may be up to $7500,' Dr Baxendell said.

Copies of the Commodity Vendor Declaration are available from the Meat & Livestock Australia website www.mla.com.au or by phoning 1800 635 445.

Rod Thompson
Account Manager, Biosecurity Communications
Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries
Ph: 0409 725 452

Producers need to comply with drought assistance restocking credits

Livestock owners returning stock from agistment or restocking after recent rain should be aware of the requirements for restocking credits and the effect that revoking a drought declared status can have on their eligibility for financial assistance.

Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries biosecurity inspector Ted Vinson said to be eligible to claim restocking credits, a grazier's property must first be revoked from its drought status before stock can be returned to the home property.

'To revoke an Individually Droughted Property (IDP), the producer must consider if they have they had enough rain, to promote sufficient pasture growth to permit stocking at 'normal' or 'near normal' carrying capacity.

'This really depends on the time of year that that the rain falls and its effectiveness for pasture growth.

'An assessment of the property feed supply is needed to ensure that it will maintain the normal stocking rate and the adequacy of stock water supplies until the next expected wet season' he said.

If a property is restocked before the drought status has been revoked then access to all freight subsidies

will be suspended while those animals remain on the droughted property.

Once those animals, or an equivalent number of animals have been removed from the property, then a period of 16 weeks must pass from the date when the last animal was removed, before a producer will be entitled to make an any new claims.

This suspension can only be lifted if the drought declaration is revoked.

Mr Vinson said if an IDP is revoked, no new application for reinstatement of IDP status can made for a minimum of twelve months.

'This does not apply to breeder cattle or weaners however; if they are genuinely forced off agistment and have prior approval from the Local Drought Committee to return to the home property.

'If non-breeders are forced to return home, they can only remain on the home-property for a four week staging period, in which the owner must find new agistment for the non-breeders.

'If new agistment is not secured, and the non-breeders remain on the property after the 4 week staging period, then access to subsidies will cease for an additional 16 weeks from the date when the last of those animals, or an equivalent number of animals of that class was removed.'

Mr Vinson suggests that graziers should contact their local biosecurity inspector in regards to the Drought Relief Assistance Scheme prior to any stock returning their property.

More information is available from the DPI&F website at: www2.dpi.qld.gov.au/business/645.html or by calling 13 25 23

Acting Director-General of the DPI&F, Rob Setter, introduced the Skills Telegraph at the launch of this initiative.

DPI&F launches online database for rural workforce training

A new online tool to identify what training is needed, and where, for Queensland's rural industries was launched at Tolga on the Atherton Tablelands on Monday, February 12.

The Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries Tim Mulherin launched the initiative following the Community Cabinet held at Atherton.

'The Skills Telegraph is an innovative web-based database that will collect information on training and skilling needs to target investment in training,' Mr Mulherin said.

'The launch is a key initiative in an industry engagement strategy focusing on workforce development for primary industries.

'The information we gather will be used by the Department of Education, Training and the Arts in the development of priority skilling and training for delivery by registered training organisations.

'Our intention is to assist industry attract, retain, develop and access a skilled workforce.'

The DPI&F Rural, Skills, Training and Labour Strategy supports the Queensland Skills Plan launched by the Premier in March 2006. The Skills Plan seeks to address skill shortages in partnership with industry.

'We are focused on the development of industry-owned and sustainable solutions,' Mr Mulherin said.

'This initiative for skills and labour identification is an opportunity for producers, staff, and all stakeholders to tell us their needs now for future planning.'

This is just one of the initiatives that DPI&F has launched to link with industry to promote and support the great variety of agricultural careers in Queensland.

'We are collaborating on projects such as the School to Industry Partnerships, Gateway Schools Program, the horticulture skills strategy in Bundaberg, and FarmBis which subsidises training,' Mr Mulherin said.

'These programs support DPI&F's Blueprint for the Bush initiatives to develop a sustainable workforce with industry for rural communities.'

'I encourage any person in, or associated with rural industries, to tell us their training needs by logging on to the Skills Telegraph at www.dpi.qld.gov.au/skillstelegraph or by calling DPI&F on 13 25 23.'

DPI&F facilitates global interest in Tablelands business

Overseas interest in a Tablelands stock horse breeding venture is an early indicator of the potential of the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries export initiative, Global Footprints.

Australian stock horse stud breeders Steve and Ursula Keating of Dimbulah have received enquiries from the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia in recent weeks and are planning to meet contacts in those countries later this year.

Wedgetail Exports, a joint venture between the Keatings' Warregold Australian Stock Horse Stud and Simon Knight's Warrenbri stud in south-east Queensland, is one of many Queensland agribusinesses to seek contacts through DPI&F's Global Footprints export-profiling service.

Global Footprints provides a catalogue of export profiles of agribusinesses to foreign embassies and overseas clients seeking to source services and products from Queensland.

The Keatings and Mr Knight believe they have a competitive edge because they have access to the genetics of one of Australia's most prestigious stock horse and sire, Warrenbri Romeo (deceased).

Through Wedgetail Exports, they sell horses and frozen semen collected meeting export requirements from stud sires. They provide technical information on breeding, stud animal selection, artificial insemination, semen collection, stud management and nutrition.

'In the past international interests have tended to go straight to southern areas of Australia for stock horse services,' Mr Keating said.

'Queensland breeders and service providers have been missing out despite the high quality and versatility of our horses and services.

'Stock horses are bred to endure the harshest of climatic conditions and terrain which makes them ideal for the desert climate of the Middle East.

'There is no equestrian sport that the Stock Horse will not excel at, given equal opportunity and training.

'The breed has many excellent proven bloodlines for eventing, showjumping, dressage, endurance, polo, sporting, recreation riding and working – all areas of interest within the Middle East.'

The Keatings are grateful to the Global Footprints program for bringing its services to the attention of Middle East interests.

'This will give us the opportunity to test the waters,' Mr Keating said.

'Ursula and I started off with stock horses 10 years ago with the assistance of the University of Queensland and have been in business for about five years.

'It has been a long-time aspiration of ours to export and we are now on the move with progeny ready for sale overseas. We have built excellent business relationships with other equine service providers in the state so that we can offer a complete equine package to international clients.'

DPI&F principal project officer Roger Kaus, who developed Global Footprints, said the profiling initiative was in its early stages, but was already assisting Queensland businesses to make overseas contacts.

'Not only is this good for business in Queensland, it is an opportunity for overseas customers to tap into our expertise here in Queensland,' Mr Kaus said.

David Anthony
Media Officer
Ph (07) 4044 1676

Steve Keating
Wedgetail Exports
0429 961 257

*Dimbulah stock horse breeders Ursula and Steve Keating, with son Johnathan, are pictured with one of their rising colts "*Warregold Ambrose*".*

Breedcow and Dynama software training

The next Breedcow and Dynama training workshop ('Better Decisions in the Business of Beef') will be held in Townsville in July, probably the week of July 16-20.

At this stage we are interested in hearing from anyone who would like to attend a workshop in Townsville at that time. Just an expression of interest is all that is required for now – we can get serious about registrations once we get closer to the date, which will also mean we will have a chance to test the suitability of that date and some near alternatives.

Breedcow and Dynama software is used to find more profitable ways of running the cattle business, and to project future herd structure, cash flow, profit and net worth. BC&D is also used to evaluate property purchase or improvement investments, including the calculation of return on additional capital invested in the change. The package now comprises 11 separate software programs, including the new 'Bullocks' program that compares the profitability of alternate steer fattening options, with a sensitivity analysis for a range of purchase and sale prices.

The Breedcow and Dynama package includes a hard copy manual (145 pages) covering the software and its application. Further support is per telephone (me). Upgrades of the programs you already have are available free off the web. The BC&D software package costs $495 incl GST and the workshop is $600. The workshop (but not the software) is registered with Queensland FarmBis.

Breedcow and Dynama software can of course be purchased and used independently of workshop training. Some people prefer to do the training and then start on the software, others prefer to get started then come to a workshop to find out more, and quite a few just buy the software and get stuck into it.

To lodge a tentative expression of interest in this workshop, please contact:

W.E.(Bill) Holmes
DPI&F Townsville
Ph: (07) 4722 2663 or 0419 646 919
Email bill.holmes@dpi.qld.gov.au

The ecology of grader grass in the spotlight

The Department of Natural Resources and Water, Tropical Weeds Research Centre at Charters Towers is conducting a two year research project into the ecological aspects of grader grass to improve management techniques of this invasive weed. The project is funded by a consortium of north Queensland natural resource management groups for which invasive weeds are a significant issue.

Grader grass (*Themeda quadrivalvis*) a native of India, is a significant and increasing weed problem in northern Queensland.

Grader grass forms tall thickets which may cover large tracts of land, smothering native plants, reducing biodiversity and increasing fire hazards.

'Grader grass has the potential to change biodiversity, reduce conservation values and reduce grazing animal production of large areas of the tropical savannas', Dr Vogler said.

Dr Vogler added that Grader grass is a high priority pest for several shires including Etheridge and Dalrymple and that the funding provided by the Burdekin Dry Tropics, Northern Gulf and Southern Gulf Catchments resource management groups will improve understanding of the ecology and management of grader grass.

The project will run for two years and is currently being led by the Department's Dr Wayne Vogler, in partnership with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, landholders and the Department's Fire Management Unit.

'Key components of the project include seed longevity, effect of fire, pasture quality and seed germination requirements' Dr Vogler said.

This project will provide both economic and environmental benefits through the development of management recommendations so that land managers can reduce the economic and environmental impacts of this weedy grass.

Dr Wayne Vogler
Ph: (07) 4761 5707
Email
Wayne.Vogler@nrw.qld.gov.au

Do you need tools and information to better manage your property and vegetation?

AgForward can help

AgForward training provides assistance to help you understand the requirements of the Vegetation Management Act 1999 (VMA) and is open to ALL Queensland primary producers and rural landholders, not just AgForce members.

With project officers located in the key areas of Charleville, Roma, Emerald, Longreach and Townsville, AgForward can offer you one-on-one service for any ongoing vegetation issue and assist you with preparing ongoing vegetation permits including regrowth, thinning, and weeds. Assistance is also available for preparing permits for fodder harvesting and encroachment in specific bioregions. This service is organised on an as needs basis. An AgForward project officer can come to your area, if there are a number of enterprises requiring one-on-one service. Organise a group of neighbouring properties in your district and register your interest by contacting your AgForward on (07) 3238 6039 or visit the website www.agforward.org.au

During 2007, AgForward will continue to deliver the successful Foundation Vegetation Management (PMAV) and Computer Mapping Workshops and will soon add GPS training to the list of services.

At the Foundation Vegetation Management Workshop you will receive relevant maps and work through the application for lodging a Property Map of Assessable Vegetation (PMAV). You will gain help an understanding in validating regional ecosystem maps and an explanation of the clearing exemptions such as fire breaks, hazardous fuel load burns and fence lines. Computer skills are not essential for the PMAV workshops.

The Computer Mapping workshop covers fundamental computer mapping concepts. You learn how to use and display satellite imagery, regional ecosystem maps, property boundaries and how to digitally map farm infrastructure.

Both workshops run for one day (9am to 4pm) and cost $100 per enterprise. Training can be held at a location of your choice, if ten or more enterprises form a group. Alternatively, lodge an individual expression of interest for a workshop to be held throughout most regional areas in Queensland during 2007.

Since its inception in 2005, AgForward has helped more than 2000 primary producers to better understand the Vegetation Management Act including introducing more than 400 producers to the fundamental concepts of computer mapping. An independent review has found more than 97 per cent of those landholders found the workshops to be useful, very useful or extremely useful.

AgForward is a four-year $8 million initiative of AgForce with sponsorship from the Queensland Government. This flexible, dynamic project is developing tools and training for profitable primary production into the 21st century, helping to promote good land management and helping to meet future expectations from markets, government and the wider community.

For more information visit our website www.agforward.org.au or call (07) 3238 6039.

AgForward
AN INITIATIVE OF AGFORCE QUEENSLAND
"21st Century Farming"

Charleville
Project officer - Janet Snars
0427 694 771
Part time project officer - Mandy Cartwright
0418 485 501

Emerald
Project officer - Lyndal Rolfe
0429 123 099

Longreach
Project officer - Genevieve Nash
0428 730 553

Townsville
Part time project officer - Julie Clarke
0427 941 647

Roma
Project co-ordinator - Katrina Warman
0427 577 116
Project officer - Alina Barkla
0427 139 295

Brisbane - (07) 3236 3100
Project officer - Marie Vitelli
0429 062 852
Technical leader - Graeme Bell
0428 157 086
Partnerships co-ordinator - Brenda Walhain
0427 114 088
Mapping assistant - Sandra Sypiena
(07) 3236 6039

Value in beef project for northern beef producers

Australia's love of red meat continues to strengthen, with preliminary estimates released by Meat & Livestock Australia showing that consumer expenditure on red meat in Australia grew by a massive $480 million last year. (MLA press release 2 March 2007).

At the World Meat Congress held during 2006 it was concluded that consumer consumption of beef was expanding and that consumers of premium quality beef will increasingly demand:

- Consistently great tasting, affordable products
- Of impeccable safety and integrity
- That are convenient to identify, buy and prepare.

The Value in Beef open forum at Jupiters Casino on 28 November 2006, attended by over 100 industry participants, identified that within the northern beef industry there are opportunities and challenges to producing premium eating quality beef in northern Australia.

The Value in Beef (VIB) project aims to increase the potential for northern beef producers to capitalise on these opportunities and address the challenges that limit them.

The VIB project team will focus on the latest research and development from the Beef CRC, MLA and DPI&F to improve the profitability of northern beef businesses, small processors and distributors. The project team will also work with local supply chains to create and strengthen opportunities for northern beef products.

The VIB team are currently working with producer groups on the Atherton Tablelands and near Charters Towers with another planned around the Ayr/Bowen District. Outcomes of these groups will be the focus of future communication to the industry.

Those that attended the forum and expressed an interest in further participation with the VIB project will have ongoing opportunities to link with VIB activities.

Expressions of interest are now being called for a full day beef wholesale, retail and food service tour of Townsville where participants will get to talk to some of the best in Townsville's beef business. The tour is being planned for the week of 30 April to 4 May. Contact Vic O'Keefe 4722 2689.

Chris Greenwood (Morganbury Meats) and Cameron Dart (MSA) at the Value in Beef forum

Don Heatly (MLA) speaking to participants that attended the Value in Beef open forum at Jupiters Casino on 28 November 2006

Stocklick Loose Lick

Specializing in Custom Loose Mixes
Standard Range of Loose Mixes for all classes of Livestock

UREA BASED PROTEIN & PHOSPHOROUS MIXES & MOLASSES MIXES

Wet Season Loose Mix

High phosphorous supplement for Breeders and Dry Stock in the Wet Season.

Analysis:

Min Total Protein	41.00%
Maximum Salt	24.50%
Urea Equivalent	13.36%
Min Phosphorus	10.09%
Min Sulphur	2.90%
Vitamins A, D & E	
Essential Trace Minerals	

Daily Intake:- 50 to 100 grams

M8U+R+P Molasses Blend

High energy liquid supplement for All Seasons

Analysis:

Min Total Protein	27.84%
Urea Equivalent	8.26%
Min. Phosphorus	0.31%
Min. Sulphur	0.66%

Daily Intake:- 1 to 2 kg / head / day

"It's not just a lick... it's a promise!"

Call Stocklick Trading today for enquiries

CHARTERS TOWERS OFFICE
Lot 6 Flinders Highway
Charters Towers Qld 4820
Ph: (07) 4787 7007
Fax: (07) 4787 7008

Contact Craig Cook 0428 646 916
Scott Adams 0408 880 593
Goscelyn Smith 0408 773 157
Belinda McMillan 0428 970 081
Adam Brahim 0429 723 865

MT GARNET OFFICE
Lot 1 Battle Creek
Mt Garnet Qld 4872
Ph: (07) 4097 0081
Fax: (07) 4097 0082

Contact Steve Flett 0429 970081

0026C