

Northern muster

Information for rural business in north Queensland

Producing quality food and fibre
for a healthy bottom line



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Issue 16 August 2007

editorial

Welcome to the August 2007 edition of the *Northern muster*. Most of us are faced with a different outlook as we approach spring. The unseasonal June rain has now been followed by cold temperatures, however, once things warm up we will see some pasture growth beyond the current short green pick.

This issue includes Climate outlook, Market report, Project updates, NLIS updates, Dalrymple diary and more.

I am currently involved in a Breeding Edge Workshop with a great group of producers in Cloncurry. These workshops provide opportunities for improvement in genetics and a better understanding of breeder and bull management issues.

Enjoy the newsletter and use the Business Information Centre for advice and contacting DPI&F staff, phone 13 25 23. Please complete the feedback sheet and send it in. Your feedback helps us to make this 'your' newsletter.

Thank you once again to our advertisers and support teams.

Alan Laing
Editor



New cattle budgeting software now available for beef producers

The new 'Bullocks' software program is now available for purchase by beef producers.

'Bullocks' is a calculator for steer fattening – you enter purchase and sale weights and prices, husbandry costs and start and finish dates, and it calculates gross margin per beast, per adult equivalent, GM/AE after interest cost, and GM as a percentage of livestock investment. It also does sensitivity tables showing how these measures change with different purchase and sale prices.

Each scenario calculation can be held on screen while you run further calculations, up to a total of 14. Any of these scenarios can be returned to the calculation area for revision.

'Bullocks' is intended primarily to assess steer purchase options for fattening enterprises, but it can also be used to look more closely at the steer part of a combined breeding and fattening operation, or it can be used to assess destocking options.

Related programs that are included on the CD are Destock and Splitsal. Destock calculates gross margins etc on groups of breeding cattle. It was

designed to assess breeder destocking options, but can also be used to look at short term profitability of purchased breeders. Splitsal is used to estimate proportions of a group of cattle above or below a certain weight when the average and the range are known. It also estimates the average weights of the groups over and under the cutoff. Splitsal is limited to 'normal' distributions of weights, i.e. the lead is a similar distance ahead of the average as the tail is behind it. The original purpose of Splitsal was to assess the impact on turnoff distribution of pasture improvement programs, though users have also applied it to punting the weights of the cull portion of the heifers.

Destock and Splitsal have been in the Breedcow and Dynama software package (\$495) for some time, while Bullocks is included in the current version (V5.05) of Breedcow and Dynama.

For those who don't need the financial projections provided by Dynama, or the capacity of Breedcow to assess the impact of husbandry or turnoff policy change on profitability, a smaller package, comprising only Bullocks, Destock and Splitsal, is being released separately.

'Bullocks, Destock and Splitsal' is now available as a CD including electronic copy of the manual. Price is \$99 incl GST. To obtain a copy please phone Bill Holmes at DPI&F Townsville (07) 4722 2663.

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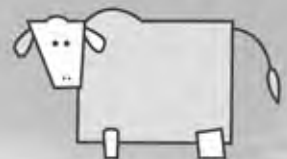
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- TBA combination implants provide superior short-term liveweight gain advantages, but these benefits can be lost unless cattle are reimplanted or marketed; and,
- Multiple-implant strategies can achieve even higher liveweight gain advantages than 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 spayed. 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.

**For more information,
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References: ¹NAPCO "Coorabulka" trial 2012. ²Elanco®, Compudose® and the diagonal colour bar are trademarks of Eli Lilly and Company. ³Compudose is a trademark for Elanco's brand of oestradiol. ⁴Trademark name: WORDSMITH250474M



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Grazing best practice management key to catchment health

A study conducted in the Bowen-Broken catchment has shown that many graziers are already using current best-management practices and that with further outreach and incentive programs more landholders would also adopt new practices. The benefits of these practices could result in reduced sediment and nutrient output from the catchment which would in turn improve the health of the Great Barrier Reef.

Dr Iris Bohnet, from CSIRO's Water for a Healthy Country Flagship, has been interviewing local graziers about the types of land management practices they use and the incentive and information sources they access. She reports that quite a few graziers have made use of incentive schemes to help pay for infrastructure costs involved in setting up cell or rotational grazing systems, and establishing additional watering points.

'This is a very positive win-win situation for the grazier, the land and the broader catchment to reef system' says Dr Bohnet.

However, not all graziers are accessing the information that's available on best management practices, or using the existing sources of funds for infrastructure improvements. Dr Bohnet believes this could limit graziers' capacity to enhance financial and environmental outcomes on their properties.

'One of the goals of the research is to identify the different ways that graziers manage their land and to tailor educational and incentives programs to suit these different groups' says Dr Bohnet.

'If the existing information sources aren't reaching all graziers, then there is a clear need to improve the services of regional organisations to enable them to reach more landholders.'

Dr Bohnet is planning a follow-up workshop for Bowen-Broken graziers to pinpoint their needs for information and funding support. The workshop will be held in late September in the local area. All graziers are invited to attend.

Dr Iris Bohnet

Ph (07) 4091 8826 Email iris.bohnet@csiro.au

The Nutrition EDGE...

Joe Rolfe, DPI&F, Kairi

Join the workshop that focuses on herd nutrition as a business strategy. This 3 day workshop will be held at Mareeba DPI&F on Sept 11-13.

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Please contact Bernie English 4091 9440 or Joe Rolfe 4091 9424 if you are interested in attending this workshop.



Beef Futures Forums in Normanton and Georgetown

(August 28 and 29)

Mark these dates in your diary to make sure you don't miss this great opportunity to hear the latest developments in the beef industry. Glen Feist and Tim Kelf from Meat and Livestock Australia will discuss Asian markets, the global outlook for beef and supply chain opportunities.

These half day forums will be held in Normanton (TAFE) on Tuesday August 28 and in Georgetown (Golf Club) on Wednesday August 29. The forums will start at 9.00 am and finish with at 1.00 pm. The program on the topics below will include time for discussion -

- Asian markets and the global outlook for beef (Glen Feist, Regional Manager - MLA, Korea)
- Economics of stocking rates (John Bushell/Peter O'Reagain - DPI&F)
- Managing woodlands using fire (Jim Kernot DPI&F, Tony Grice CSIRO and local beef producers)
- Getting the best out of your weaners (Bernie English DPI&F)
- Integrated supply chain developments (Tim Kelf - MLA 'International Market Projects')

To book your seat please contact:

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Northern Gulf Ecobeef update

Many grazing families have noted that some land types are not as productive as they once were. Sale stock take longer to reach market weights or require more expensive supplements than previously. Much of the blame can be attributed to declining land condition. The better pasture species are being lost, more erosion is noted or the woodlands are getting thicker.

The Ecobeef project is an on-property project demonstrating, at a paddock level, the economical and ecological benefits of rehabilitating degraded grazing lands from C to B condition. It uses combinations of spelling, fire and controlled grazing as appropriate to facilitate change in condition. These treatments have been successfully used to improve land condition in the Wambiana Grazing Trial and the Ecograzing experiments near Charters Towers. Herd production and profitability information (branding rates, growth rates, \$ values) will be collected and presented as well as assessments of biodiversity values.

In the Northern Gulf we have targeted 3 land types recorded as widely degraded in a regional land condition assessment. They are river frontages, Georgetown granite and decomposed granite/red duplex (goldfield soils). There is also a lower level demonstration of rehabilitation of degraded black soil on the Einasleigh town common. Baseline information for this project has been collected in the past growing season.

Georgetown granite

Bottom Aurora paddock on *Namuel Station*, 15 km west of Georgetown is primarily a Georgetown granite land type. Historically, these lands were dominated by Townsville stylo and were highly productive even though they were annual species. The legume was lost to fungal infection over 30 years ago and perennial pastures have never re-established. Productive capacity has been significantly reduced and this paddock is now part of a 4 paddock rotation using wet season spelling as a means of rehabilitating land condition and production. It was spelled for all of the 2006/2007 wet season.

Bottom Aurora is predominantly in C condition (less than half of original carrying capacity). The land has been heavily discounted on soil surface condition and poor pasture composition. Mean dry matter yield in late April was 1570 kg/ha with 3P

grasses comprising only 20% of total yield. Ground cover was high (80%) and mean tree basal area was 3 sq m/ha.



Typical Georgetown granite in Bottom Aurora paddock

Decomposed granite/red duplex

Christmas Creek paddock (1492 ha) on *Ballynure Station*, 35 km south of Kidston, is representative of the decomposed granite and neutral red duplex land types. Land condition has declined across part of this breeder paddock due to poor water distribution. Currently 220 adult equivalents are grazing the paddock. It is currently being subdivided and additional waters provided to improve evenness of grazing and so that a spelling program can be implemented.

The northern, under-utilised part is largely in A condition whereas the southern portion closer to water is in B and C condition. The main factors influencing land condition are increasing woodland density (principally currant bush) as well as declining soil surface condition and pasture composition. Mean dry matter yield is 1340 kg/ha of which 70% is 3P grasses. Ground cover averages 65% and mean tree basal area is 8 sq m/ha.



Typical decomposed granite in Christmas Creek

Black soil

The Einasleigh town common has been a communally grazed area and has been seriously degraded over time. It has lost all perennial pastures but because it is relatively flat has not been eroded. The heavy texture and self mulching nature of the soil means that woody encroachment has not been a problem. We assess that it is D condition (less than 20% of the original carrying capacity).



Typical black earth on Einasleigh town common

The area has been fenced and stock excluded. It will require introduction of sown grasses to allow rehabilitation to proceed. Stock numbers in the future will need to be managed according to available feed. Recovery from D condition will be slow and costly.

River frontage

A frontage site has yet to be selected. Usually, frontages represent small fertile ribbons adjacent to much larger areas of lower grazing value land types. Consequently they are selectively grazed and, as pasture composition declines they are invaded by woody (rubbervine, calotropis, castor oil bush) and other exotic weeds.

We anticipate that when a site is selected combinations of spelling, fire and controlled grazing will be required to rehabilitate C condition frontage country.

Future

Updates will continue as herd performance and economic data come to hand.

Kev Shaw

DPI&F Kairi Research Station

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The big news since our last report is the sale of Australia's largest beef processor AMH, to Latin America's biggest beef processor, Brazilian based company JBS, Friboi. The Brazilian's purchased USA based meat processor Swift & Co which also owned AMH in Australia.

AMH's four (4) Queensland plants purchase in excess of 1.4 m head annually. Swift & Co was the third largest processor of beef and pork in the USA.

This news was followed soon after by the sale of the Kilcoy abattoir to Singapore based Harmony Capital Investments. This Asian company also owns a Western Australian abattoir at Harvey. In recent years Kilcoy has specialised in processing high quality grain fed cattle and was owned by the Kennedy Family and other investors.

Many districts of Queensland have received useful rainfall over the last few weeks, including areas of the Northern Dry Tropics not usually blessed with useful rain during winter. Hopefully the rain is not a flash in the pan and we see the widespread break in the drought conditions further South.

Domestic market

Estimates calculated by MLA and the ABS show Australian red meat sales of beef, lamb and mutton in 2006 was a record \$8.7billion, up nearly 6% on 2005 figures. Beef's contribution was estimates at \$6.5billion. The key drivers behind this continued improvement is the strong Australian economy, consistent product quality, good promotion, and wider knowledge of the nutritional benefits of red meat in the diet.

The recent rainfall will hopefully ease the flood of cattle into the market place but on the other hand the widespread frosts and cold weather will encourage many producers to continue offloading during the next few winter months.

The feedlot industry is under economic pressure with continuing high feed prices, and the high Aussie dollar is cramping our exporters profitability on overseas markets and cattle prices for grain fed cattle have hovered on the low side for much profitability.

The new owners of AMH have been to Australia already to talk to existing management and industry leaders, with all reporting a positive outlook and business as usual. No doubt there will be changes down the track, but hopefully it will be done with industry consultation so all sides prosper.

Live export

North Queensland is again contributing to the live export trade with several large boat loads going out of Townsville including a record boat load for a Queensland port of just over 20,000 head. The lower Australian cattle price has been a key factor plus the strong demand from Indonesia. Live export numbers in the 06/07 fiscal year at 520,000 head is approximately 100,000 head more than the previous fiscal year.

Japan – Korea

The USA's move back into the Asian premium markets has been bumpy and disruptive. Earlier in 2007 Asian importers were reluctant to buy Australian beef in the usual volumes with the expectation or ready access to USA beef, but with a series of blunders with banned bone and bone fragments the USA importers are still minor players in Japan and Korea. Last month Australia imported approximately 35,000 t of beef into Japan and USA 2,500 t. The USA is still restricted to 20 month old cattle for Japanese imports and 30 month old for Korea.

Our marketing people in Japan report consumers there are not fully 100% confident of the safety of USA product.

The USA and Korea have struck a trade deal on beef which will see the import tariff on USA beef now 40% (same as that on Australian beef) reduce over the next 15 years starting in January 2008. Australia needs to push for a similar deal or be squeezed out of this market on price.

USA

The continued upward climb of the Australian dollar has eroded returns for Australian exporters into this market. Current US domestic prices are slightly higher than last year.

The feedlot industry in USA is under economic pressure with rising grain prices due to the rapid growth in ethanol production from grain.

Drought conditions in the US have eased in some areas in 2007 but cow slaughter numbers are still running 16% higher than 2006. Luckily this high slaughter rate has coincided with good 90 CL trim prices.

Canada leads the way with beef imports into the USA with approximately 120,000 t imported this year to mid June. Australia has sent in a bit under 100,000 t, New Zealand approximately 80,000 t and Uruguay approximately 60,000 t.

Bernie English

DPI&F, Kairi Research Station

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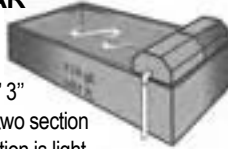
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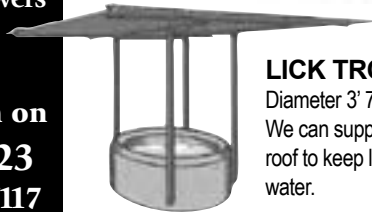
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Climate outlook

What is climate change and the greenhouse effect?

As it is getting a lot of media and political coverage I thought I'd do a brief background on climate change and the greenhouse effect.

I often get asked why we don't get our normal climate (rainfall, temperature etc). My response is 'what's normal' and that our climate has changed in the past and will continue to change into the future. The causes of these changes can be from natural variability and/or from man made causes. These changes can occur on a global or local scale and as a rapid or slow change.

Natural variability includes the annual cycle from winter to summer or dry to wet, El Niño/Southern Oscillation, Pacific Decadal Oscillation, volcanic eruptions, fluctuations in solar output, changes in orbital cycles and variations in ocean, land and polar ice.

Human induced or anthropogenic drivers of climate change include changes in land use, increases in industrial and urban areas and human sources of atmospheric greenhouse gases, aerosols and other pollutants.

The greenhouse effect is a natural phenomenon. Naturally occurring greenhouse gases such as water vapour, carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide trap some of the heat radiated by the earth's surfaces after being warmed by incoming solar radiation. Similar to the effect of a greenhouse this keeps surface temperatures higher than otherwise would be the case warming the atmosphere by about 33 degrees Celsius (from minus 18 degrees to plus 15 degrees). It is this greenhouse effect that makes earth habitable for humans.

There is though an increasing body of evidence that shows the burning of fossil fuels such as coal and

oil for energy production and transport and through changing patterns of land use (such as urbanisation) has lead to an increase in carbon dioxide levels and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. This has enhanced the Earth's natural greenhouse effect and resulted in a warming trend in many areas.

So are the recent changes in our 'normal' climate a direct result of human induced climate change? To me what is more important is to accept that our climate is changing, consider the impact climate change (regardless of the cause) will have on our businesses, agriculture and communities and work out how to adapt.

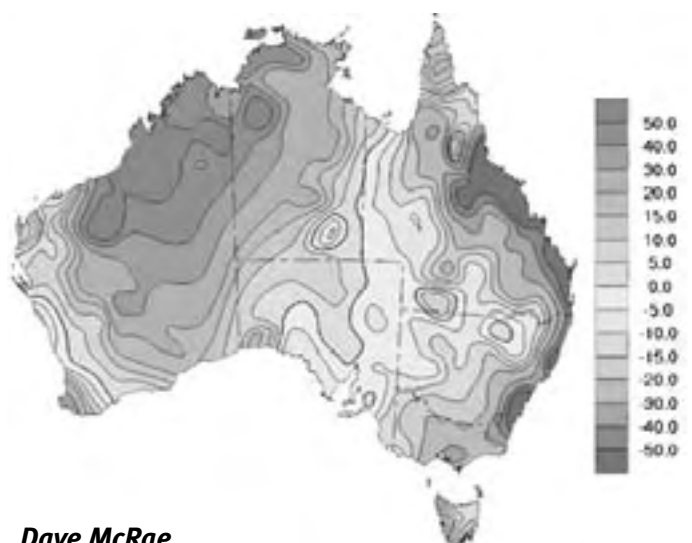
This does not necessarily mean shutting up shop. What it does mean though is that now is the time to adapt our industries and practices to handle these potential changes. As the attached Australian rainfall trend map highlights, these changes do not have to be consistent across Australia let alone globally.

New joint CSIRO and Bureau of Meteorology regional climate change projections are due to be released in October and will include projections for rainfall and temperature on a regional scale. This will hopefully provide more relevant information than is currently available.

For more information try www.climatechange.qld.gov.au or www.ipcc.ch/

Climate change projections are available at www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au or www.dar.csiro.au/impacts/consult.html

Trend in annual total rainfall 1950 – 2006 (mm/10yrs)



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The Wambiana Field Day

The Field Day to view the Grazing Trial at Wambiana, held on May 12, commenced with a welcoming cuppa in the lovely surrounds of the homestead.

We all progressed to the shed for the commencement of formalities, where Roger Landsberg (*Trafalgar Station*) welcomed the 120 plus participants. Michael Lyons (*Wambiana*) also welcomed participants and gave a brief family background dating from when his great grandfather purchased *Wambiana* in 1912. Michael stated that the Lyons family would like to see the trial go on indefinitely, saying that the longer the trial goes for, the more useful the information gathered will be.

Dr Peter O'Reagain (DPI&F Charters Towers), the Project Leader, told us that the trial has been a great team effort and he thanked the team members and also thanked the Lyons family for the great working relationship that has developed. Peter gave us an overview of the trial, which has been dealing with managing a grazing operation sustainably and profitably in a variable environment, with the practical challenges of the cost squeeze and a variable climate, while aiming to demonstrate the benefits of sustainable management. Constraints to deal with included finances, property size, perceptions and beliefs.

The trial site has been divided into 10 paddocks (each about 100 ha), all with similar balance of 55% box on duplex clay soil, 25% silverleaf ironbark on yellow earth and 20% Brigalow on black cracking clay soil.

With basic background and housekeeping covered, we climbed onto the waiting trucks and set off to check out the trial site.

The first site my group visited, Peter O'Reagain was there to guide us. We discussed quality and quantity of 3P grasses in the Light Stocking, on Box country where we identified mainly black spear grass and desert blue grass, with soil in good condition, but through the fence in a Heavy Stocking paddock the 3P grasses are obviously struggling with only annuals present.

At the next site, Bob Shepherd (DPI&F Charters Towers) had some interesting info on the use of fire to control woody weeds – noting that the use of fire as a tool has declined over the past 30 years. Current bush is increasing at 4 to 5 % per annum without fire, but on the plus side soil infiltration of water is improved where current bushes are present. We discussed the propensity of grass growing under the drip line of trees. Many of us felt this apparent improved fertility may have been due to leaf mould, and tests have shown that ironbark trees actually have the ability to make more phosphorous available in their leaf litter while Brigalow puts more nitrogen back.

On we went to our next site where Dr Alex Kutt (CSIRO Townsville) gave us an insight into how floral and faunal diversity is affected by various land uses and how this is being measured and monitored e.g. decrease in ground cover/shelter means a loss in resources (food), increased ground temperature and increased exposure, so resultant loss of fauna. It seems biodiversity conservation is not incompatible with pasture production.

At the next site, Austin Brandis and Dr Tracey Dawes-Gromadzki (both CSIRO Darwin) showed us how they have value added to the Trial by using remote systems to collect weather and soil data which is read from Darwin. One interesting item was a soil moisture probe which goes down 50 cm into the soil and measured infiltration. We also learnt how the CSIRO is using macro invertebrates such as earthworms and termites as soil health indicators (and I thought termites had no good points!). We learnt that these little critters are important for soil water infiltration.

Last but not least, John Bushell (DPI&F Charters Towers) gave us production data – kgs produced, supplements used etc. and we learnt that the stock are all sourced from *Fletcherview*, and as the older steers are turned off, the next lot take their place, meaning there are two age groups in the mob all the time. The annual economics is the total value of beef produced minus the cost of supplementation minus interest costs on cattle all divided by the paddock size = gross margin/ha. An example for the 2004-2005 season: The Heavy Stocking regime \$40-\$29-\$15 = -\$4 ha. The Light Stocking \$31-\$3-\$7 = +\$21 ha. The gross margins over the last 8 years of the trial show that Light is best, Variable next, with Heavy Stocking well down. Therefore the myth of 'more cattle means more money' is dispelled!! If that wasn't enough, the cattle in the Heavy Stocking paddock are a bit 'toey' while their brothers in the Light Stocking paddock are quiet and content!

The Strategies tested and some comments on them:-

1. **Heavy Stocking** – too little ground cover; 3P grasses are struggling; cattle are toey; costs are too high, both on cattle production costs and environmental

impacts; land condition will take quite a while to get right again because the balance has been upset and woody weeds have the upper hand now.

2. *Light Stocking* – ground cover very good; soil condition good; 3P grasses plentiful; some patch grazing because animals are able to be choosy, but cattle very content.
3. *Rotational Wet Season Spelling* – country looks excellent. Apparently had a catastrophe when burnt before drought. Result of that was the other rotational paddocks had to be used more while the burnt area recovered, but that could happen with any regime.
4. *Variable Stocking* – had trouble when drought hit. Knocked country about because too heavily stocked. Preferred species hammered; trial indicates performs well most years, but increased drought risk and increased management skills required.
5. *SOI Variable Stocking* – Trial indicates increased drought risk but was able to destock relatively early due to use of SOI. Increased management skills required.

All in all an excellent trial, with practical application. It is very important to balance economic sustainability with environmental sustainability and this trial has clearly done just that. If one takes care of the country (soil/grass/grazing pressure/woody weeds etc) the rest follows. The heavy stocking regime could be likened to holding cattle too long leading into drought, 'better to sell them than smell them', and if lightly stocked you'll probably limp through with something rather than pay dearly to keep too many. Remember we don't make money by running/having cattle that only costs, but by having a saleable product, and that often means running fewer better. Judging from all of the above, it would be hard to beat Light Stocking with Rotational Wet Season Spelling incorporated!

I believe this should be just the beginning, as the infrastructure is all in place, there is proven worth in the conduct of the trial and the longer the trial runs, the better the data and the more opportunities for various plans and theories to be tested in a realistic grazing/management trial. It is a wonderful service to producers to be able to use this trial to choose strategies they may like to use, because while most producers have admirable intent with their operation, few can accommodate trials and change unless they are fairly certain of an economic benefit.

I commend the team on a job well done, the Lyons family for their support, MLA for its funding, DPI&F and CSIRO for their support (staff etc) and anyone else who has helped this trial and I urge all parties to keep up the good work!

Adie Bode

'Woura Par' Torrens Creek

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Livestock owners to get increased \$ rebates for NLIS scanners

Livestock owners are now eligible for increased rebates of 50% of the purchase price of tag scanning and reading equipment up to a maximum of \$1200 plus GST under the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS).

The increase in the rebate level is available to cattle producers, lot feeders and live cattle exporters.

Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F) general manager of animal biosecurity Dr Allison Crook said the increase in rebate was proposed by the DPI&F and endorsed by the Queensland NLIS Implementation Committee (QNIC) and the National Review Committee.

'QNIC made changes to the NLIS funding business plan for Queensland to reflect the increased level of rebate because of the lower than anticipated level of uptake of the rebates.

'Slaughterhouses and abattoirs will have their rebates increased to 100% of the purchase price of NLIS readers but they will also continue to be capped to a maximum of \$1200 plus GST,' she said.

Dr Crook said many producers appear to have held back from purchasing a scanner due to the capital investment required and the increase was aimed at getting greater use of scanner technology.

'We hope that by increasing the level of rebate, producers will be encouraged to purchase a reader and to use electronic data capture and notification of the NLIS database.

'Electronic notification of the database would remain free while paper based transfers would move to cost recovery in 2008.'

The effective date for the increase in reader rebate level will be backdated to 1 February 2005.

'Those producers who have already claimed and received their rebates will automatically be eligible for the increased rebate and the balance will be paid to the claimant without them having to reapply.'

Dr Crook encouraged producers and others eligible to claim for a rebate to act promptly before the termination of the joint Australian and Queensland Government funding arrangements in June 2008.

NQ hobby-farmers reminded of livestock registration obligations

Rural residential property owners who have livestock on their land must register with the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries.

DPI&F Biosecurity Queensland inspector Ted Vinson said many people who kept small numbers of livestock

did not realise that they were required by law to register their property.

'To be able to respond quickly and effectively to disease outbreaks, we need to know where every single animal is located, so it is vital that we can track even a single animal,' Mr Vinson said.

Properties with one or more head of cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, deer, buffalo, camelids (camels, llamas and alpacas), or 100 or more poultry (including any species of aviary birds) need to register. Horse owners are not required to register their property.

Hobby bee keepers are also reminded of the need to register and identify hives under their control.

'Many people living in town with pets such as pigs, poddy calves or goats do not realise that this requirement applies to them,' Mr Vinson said.

He said registration was free of charge, and should occur within 14 days of obtaining an animal. Fines could be issued for property owners who failed to register.

'The easiest way to find out more information about how to register your property is by phoning DPI&F on 13 25 23. Alternatively, property owners can contact a biosecurity inspector at their closest DPI&F office,' Mr Vinson said.

'Properties can also be registered on-line at www.dpi.qld.gov.au/extra/nlis/picapplication,' Mr Vinson said.

Andrea Corby

DPI&F Media Officer Ph (07) 4722 2648

NLIS cattle

All phase-in provisions for NLIS (cattle) will cease on 30 June 2007.

All cattle owners are urged to ensure they have sufficient NLIS devices available on hand now to prevent cattle movement difficulties or potential prosecution.

NLIS (Cattle) Implementation dates

For Cattle - From 1 July 2007;

- All cattle moving to an abattoir for slaughter or to a live export depot will have to be tagged with an NLIS device.
- All bulls, including feral or micky bulls that have been captured and sent to sale or slaughter will require an NLIS tag.
- Livestock used in sporting events must be fitted with an NLIS tag and the forward and return movements reported to the database upon completion of the event.
- All cattle moving between properties with different property identification codes (PIC) must be fitted with an approved NLIS electronic device.
- The movement of the cattle must be reported to the NLIS database within 48 hours by the receiver or person responsible for the stock at the destination

Innovation grants set to bring NLIS tag prices down

National Livestock Identification System tag prices are set to fall as a result of innovation grants totalling \$2.55 million being awarded to five tag and bolus manufacturers.

Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries Tim Mulherin said the grants were a major factor in bringing new players, new efficiencies and new technologies into the manufacturing sector producing NLIS devices.

'One manufacturer has been assisted to enter the market as a result of the 'Innovation Grant' scheme and other existing companies are developing new systems that should enhance production efficiencies and result in tag price reductions in the coming months,' Mr Mulherin said.

Speaking in State Parliament, Mr Mulherin said one company has already reduced the price of NLIS tags by 10 cents and another had indicated they will be announcing a sixty cent drop in the price of their tags in coming weeks.

Mr Mulherin said the grants would enable the price of tags to move closer to the \$3 mark.

'One new tag to be released will have additional benefits of combining a numbered management tag that allows easier visual identification plus electronic reading capabilities. This will save producers the extra costs of having to apply additional visual management tag.

'In the future a new generation of NLIS tags with read/write capability will allow producers to further integrate NLIS into their routine on-farm management practices.

'Read/write tags will be capable of storing data that could include information on vaccinations, worm drench history, supplements fed, and genetic history.'

The innovation grants are part of a \$6.79 million funding plan developed by the Queensland NLIS Implementation Committee and the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries.

The funding plan also covers producer rebates for NLIS readers, saleyard infrastructure rebates and livestock agent rebates which have already been released.

This funding was made possible through joint arrangements with the Queensland Government, Meat and Livestock Australia and the Australian Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

The grant recipients include:

- Drover's Ay-one - \$975,000 to set up an automated production system for the manufacturing of NLIS ear tags with a read/write capability.
- Rumitag Australasia - \$300,000 to set up an automated production facility in south east Queensland for the production of bolus and ear tags.
- Zee Tags - \$575,000 to set up automated production at it's facility in south east Queensland for the production of NLIS ear tags.
- Leader Products - \$200,000 to set up a recycling process for the removal and reuse of transponders from used ear tags. The recycled transponders are presently used in non NLIS devices for sheep and goats.
- Allflex Australia - \$500,000 to automate and integrate their Capalaba tag production facility.

'The NLIS 'Innovation Grant' will be the catalyst to provide long-term benefits and cost savings to primary producers in the years to come,' Mr Mulherin said.

More information on NLIS is available from the DPI&F Web site www.dpi.qld.gov.au/NLIS or by calling the DPI&F on 13 25 23.

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

The second year of the National Landcare Programme SPIRAL project has now drawn to a close. Year two has yielded some amazing results, with a total of twenty on ground projects being completed. Of these projects a range of on-ground activities have been completed.

Interestingly, during years one (05/06) and two (06/07) of the SPIRAL project the importance of smaller lot holders has been highlighted. A total of nine rural blockholders (<330 ha) were involved in year two of the SPIRAL project. Prior to the SPIRAL project, many of these participants had not been previously involved with the landcare movement. However, blockholders tend to face similar issues to larger lot holdings and commercial sized properties and are emerging as an important group of members for the Dalrymple Landcare Committee.

As I write this report, year three of the SPIRAL project is fast approaching and is due to kick off in early July 2007. Again the SPIRAL project will operate as a devolved grant project for a period of twelve months through to June 2008. Applications for this third and final round of SPIRAL project will be available in early July by contacting myself on either 07 4754 6120 or john.nicholas@dpi.qld.gov.au

2007 SPIRAL Good Land Management Awards highlight success and achievements across the Dalrymple Shire

The 2007 SPIRAL Good Land Management Awards were held on Friday the 22 June on an unseasonably rainy day in Charters Towers, at the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries building.

After the success of the awards in year one of the SPIRAL project, a four fold increase in funding for the event was realised with a total of \$20,000 being offered across four categories. This year, a total of six winners were awarded for the efforts towards managing and improving their land, as listed below.

Rural blockholder category:

Barry Cook: During his seven years on the property, Barry has made significant advances towards improving the value of the land resource; removing woody weeds, fencing the property into cells, installing watering points and carrying out significant ripping and re-seeding works.

Tom and Lorraine Carter *Tarinda Park:* Tom and Lorraine have worked hard in both years one and two of the SPIRAL project to tackle the huge problem of woody weeds on their property. Their innovative approach to tackling rubbervine and bellyache bush thickets using a front end loader with a modified stick rake attached to the bucket has seen them quickly turn around their property. After removing the bulk of the weeds, they have turned to follow up and reseeding work.

Innovative landholder award

Mike and Noeline Dore *Cuba Plains:* Mike and Noeline have worked hard for several years to fight off the spread of parthenium on *Cuba Plains*. After searching for an effective spraying method, they found the TeeJet boomless spray nozzle, which when mounted to the back of a Toyota can deliver upwards of six metre coverage either side of the vehicle. Mike and Noeline worked closely with Joe Vitelli from Tropical Weeds Research Centre and Marie Vitelli from the Dalrymple Landcare Committee and last year held a field day at *Cuba Plains* to highlight the effectiveness and success of the TeeJet system.

Effective weed management category

Bryan and Marilyn Landsberg – *Homeview and Carrol Park:* Bryan and Marilyn have worked extremely hard to remove chinnee apple and rubbervine thickets from their two blocks. After spending over \$5000 a year for twelve years on chainsaws and poisons, they now are the proud owners of two very different looking blocks. In more recent years they have also worked hard to improve the pasture resources on the block and address erosion problems with contour banks and ripping and seeding works.

Landcare group activity awards

70 Mile Range Landcare Group: Accepting the award on behalf of the group was Col Healing, current chair of the group and owner of *Warrawee*. The Seventy Mile Range group consists of around twelve properties who over time have demonstrated the effectiveness of Landcare groups. The members of the groups have been involved in a suite of activities, including herbicide *Barter Days*, Natural Heritage Trust Funding, Envirofund projects, SPIRAL projects, Producer Demonstration sites and have also worked with research groups and a host of educational institutions.

Three Rivers Landcare Group: The Three Rivers Landcare Group, (Star River, Burdekin River and Clarke River) award was accepted by Mick Kingham from *Spyglass* and *Allensleigh*. The group received their award this year for the long standing goal of furthering knowledge, understanding and education of its members in a range of subject areas, not specifically relating to grazing. Since mid 2006, the group has worked hard to bring Natural Sequence Farming identity, Peter Andrews to the north to find out more about his ideas, and what producers might be able to use in their own circumstances. Carol Ross of *Starbright* was instrumental in bringing Peter Andrews to the north along with the other members of the Three Rivers Landcare Group.

As part of this years awards, I have put together a series of photoslide shows with the Placestories software. These short stories include a narration of the award winners achievements are viewable on line now at: www.placestories.com under the Digital Dalrymple Landcare section.

Dalrymple landcare achievements viewable online

The Dalrymple Landcare Committee has been working with Feral Arts in Brisbane to put together a series of stories about what achievements landcare is making in the Dalrymple Shire. As part of this work, both June Brundell and John Nicholas are searching for potential stories that can be put together and posted online. These short stories require a brief narration, and a series of photos relating to the story. If you have an idea for a story or would like to find out more, please contact either June Brundell (07) 4754 6112 or John Nicholas (07) 4754 6120. As mentioned above, winners of this years awards have their stories available for viewing online now at: www.placestories.com

Clarke River and East Burdekin project 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 now finalised all of the budgets and contract arrangements for the 28 approved projects.

A total of 28 projects have received approval. Interest in the project was very strong. A total of \$1.2M of funding was applied for the \$825,000 available for on-ground works. Approved works included over 200 km of fencing and 73 new watering points. We look forward to seeing the results of the first on ground works in the very near future.

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



Award winners from a recent ceremony
 Front L to R: Noeline and Mike Dore Cuba Plains, Barry Cook, Sue Bennetto (DLC Chair), Lorraine and Tom Carter Tarinda Park
 Back L to R: John Nicholas (DLC SPIRAL Project Officer), Col Healing (70 Mile Range Landcare Group), Norm Bray Elders Charters Towers, Ken Springall Dow Agosciences Australia, Merilyn and Bryan Landsberg Homeview and Mick Kingham Three Rivers Landcare Group

Dalrymple Landcare Committee thanks two of its key reps in the area

During the Good Land Management Awards, two Appreciation Awards were handed out to two people who have been a huge help to the Dalrymple Landcare Committee and its members.

Norm Bray, Merchandise Manager for Elders Charters Towers retired on Friday 15 June this year. During his seven years in Charters Towers Norm has worked with Dalrymple Landcare to deliver advice and support to the committee and its members. Taking over from Norm in the Charters Towers branch of Elders is Sarah Brabon.

The second appreciation award was given to Ken Springall and Dow-Agro Sciences Australia for their ongoing support and technical advice on their product range. Ken has been with Dow-Agro Sciences Australia for over twenty years, and has been working in the north Queensland/Northern Territory region for the past 18 months. During this short period of time, Ken has organised and delivered a 400 lt QUICK SPRAY herbicide unit (valued at over \$9000) to the Dalrymple Landcare Committee and its members to assist in the fight against woody weeds. (reported on in *Northern muster* issue No. 15 Dalrymple Diary) Ken Springall can be contacted on 0409 871 141 or springall@dow.com

John Nicholas
 Project Officer – SPIRAL
 Dalrymple Landcare Committee Inc.
 P.O. Box 976 Charters Towers QLD 4820
 Ph (07) 4754 6120
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Chromolaena odorata Siam weed

The problem

Siam weed has been described as the world's worst weed. It is a major weed in Africa, India and south-east Asia. It is still spreading through South Africa, the Philippines, south-west China, eastern Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. Siam weed forms dense thickets, which smother other plants. It is very invasive and can out-compete pastures, crops and native vegetation. Siam weed thickets burn easily increasing fire hazard. The weed has been reported as poisonous to stock and as a risk to human health as a result of dermatitis and related problems.

Distribution and potential spread

Chromolaena odorata is native to Central and South America. It was first identified in Australia in 1994 at Bingil Bay near Mission Beach in far north Queensland. Since then, it has been discovered in six other local government areas in north Queensland, as far south as Townsville and as far north as Mossman. Siam weed has been found in Australia along roadsides, along creek banks, in cane fields, along the edge of rainforests and in rainforests where there has been sufficient filtered light.

Siam weed is suited to areas with a rainfall which exceeds 600 mm per annum. The areas at risk in Australia include most of the coastal areas of New South Wales and Queensland and parts of the coasts of Northern Territory and Western Australia. Grassland and conservation areas in the wet and dry tropics are particularly vulnerable to invasion by Siam weed.

Description

Siam weed is a rambling perennial shrub with a growth habit very similar to lantana. In the open, Siam weed grows as a dense, tangling shrub up to 3 metres high, however, in dense vegetation, it can grow to 20 metres high, climbing up through other plants.

Siam weed can live for more than 10 years and during this time the base of the plant becomes quite hard and woody. Multiple stems grow from the enlarged crown or basal ball, which develops at the junction of the stem and root.

Siam weed produces clusters of lilac-white flowers during two flowering events; June/July and September/October.

Current status

A national, cost-shared eradication program run by the Department of Natural Resources and Water, began in 1994. Staff from local government and the Environmental Protection Agency also contribute to control of the infestations in their areas.

Declaration details

In Queensland, Siam weed is a Class 1 declared pest plant under the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002. As a result, it is a serious offence to introduce, keep, supply, or sell this plant without a permit.

Further information

If you think you have found this plant, please contact:

Jodie Bocking
Land Protection Officer
Ph (07) 4064 1144

Dr Kylie Galway
Project Coordinator
Ph (07) 4064 1185



Sapling highlighting undersides of leaves

***Miconia calvescens* – the purple plague!**

Description

Miconia calvescens is a small tree (4-15 m) native to tropical America. Leaves are iridescent purple on the undersides and have three prominent veins. The flowers are small (4-5 mm), white to pink, and the fruits (6 mm diameter) are purple to black when ripe.

The problem

Miconia is considered to be a major weed in many countries, where its aggressive growth habit forms dense thickets in rainforest understoreys, displacing native flora and fauna. This aggressive characteristic has led to the plant being commonly referred to as the purple plague. In Australia, Miconia poses a significant threat to the Wet Tropics rainforests, including World Heritage listed areas.

Distribution and potential spread in Australia

Miconia was first introduced into Australia in 1963 (Townsville Botanic Gardens). At present, active infestations are found only in northern Queensland; however, there is potential for Miconia to establish in northern regions of Western Australia and Northern Territory and the northern and coastal regions of Queensland and New South Wales. Miconia has been present in botanical gardens across Australia (Melbourne, Sydney, Mt Tamborine, Mt Cootha/ Brisbane and Townsville), highlighting its potential to grow over a large range of environmental conditions. Miconia, in Australia, has been spread by birds and gardeners.

Current status

A national cost share eradication program commenced in 2001. There are currently 11 active infestations of *Miconia calvescens*. Four of these are defined as key infestations (Kuranda, Whyanbeal Valley, Innisfail and El Arish) and seven are defined as isolated occurrences (Julatten, East Palmerston, Mission Beach, Tully, Barratt Creek, Daintree, Mossman and Millaa Millaa). Seven infestations have already been defined as eradicated. These are largely from botanical gardens (listed above) and two nurseries in northern New South Wales.

Declaration details

In Queensland, all Miconia species are Class 1 Declared plants 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

(07) 4064 1185

More information is available online at:

www.nrm.qld.gov.au/pests/weeds/declared_plants



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Sorghum, maize and pulses science leader appointed



The Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F) is pleased to announce the permanent appointment of a new Plant Science leader, who will lead Queensland research and development for sorghum, maize and pulses.

Rex Williams has been appointed as the DPI&F science leader for Product Innovation (Sorghum, Maize and Pulses). Dr Williams joined the DPI&F in 2006 as a senior plant breeder (feed wheat), and has been acting in the science leader role for the past six months.

DPI&F Plant Science general manager, David Hamilton, said this science leader position provided scientific leadership and direction to the research and development activities for the Sorghum, Maize and Pulses Unit to deliver crop improvement outcomes which would improve the profitability of primary industries in Queensland.

'This position will contribute to a culture of Smart Science that delivers high quality, innovative and effective research, development and extension,' Mr Hamilton said.

'Outcomes will be delivered through projects related to the use of advanced plant breeding, biotechnology, crop physiology and agronomy technologies to maintain the competitiveness of current and future agricultural products and enterprises.'

The Sorghum, Maize and Pulses Unit specialises in using modern molecular technologies, relevant computer modelling capabilities and new genetic approaches.

Dr Williams is responsible for identifying new and emerging research trends and technologies and implementing genetic solutions in crop plants.

Prior to joining the DPI&F, Dr Williams led the Lucerne Improvement Program for New South Wales Department of Primary Industries for over 18 years.

'During this time, this program developed into the largest and most successful breeding program for lucerne in Australia,' Mr Hamilton said.

'As a plant breeder, he had an extremely strong

record of achievement – he was awarded a PhD, published 23 refereed papers, bred four highly successful lucerne varieties and become a national authority in plant breeding and agronomy.'

'I am sure Rex will make an outstanding contribution to the leadership of Plant Science.'

Dr Williams said he was passionate about great science and delivering innovative outcomes that made a real difference.

'I'm thrilled and excited to have the chance to help harness the great skills and creativity of our talented staff to strategically position our research, development and extension for the future,'

Dr Williams said.

Louisa McKerrow

Regional Media Officer, Toowoomba

Ph (07) 4688 1277 or 0419 781 530



Plant Science visit at Walkamin Research Station November 2006 (from left) scientific assistant Fred Kilpatrick, scientist Kendrick Cox, science leader Rex Williams, technical officer Nilla Scrivener, senior plant pathologist Peter Trevorrow and Plant Science general manager David Hamilton.

Students assist in unlocking the secrets to why cattle graze on poisonous gidgee

Staff and students from the Longreach campus of the Australian Agricultural College have assisted the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries solve the costly problem of stock grazing on poisonous Georgina gidgee.

Organised by Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries research and extension officer Desiree Jackson, the 10 day study concentrated on plants

from the Georgina River system in north-west Queensland and the eastern region of the Northern Territory.

In this system, approximately 200,000 cattle have access to both *Acacia cambagei* (Common gidgee) and *Acacia georginae* (Georgina gidgee) that grow on properties that produce significant quantities of herbage.

'For a large portion of the year the Georgina gidgee contains fluoroacetate which is highly poisonous, particularly when flowering. Cattle need only consume a small amount of leaf or pod to receive a lethal dose of the poison,' Ms Jackson explained.

'It is not known what triggers animals to begin browsing leaves from Georgina gidgee, however, it is thought that it occurs when the dietary protein levels in animals grazing in these areas become deficient.'

It is estimated that cattle deaths due to Georgina gidgee poisoning cost between \$1.7 million and \$4.1 million annually.

The ten day study on penned animals looked at developing a Faecal Near Infrared Reflectance Spectroscopy (F.NIRS) profile to determine when cattle begin consuming gidgee leaves.

F.NIRS is a technology that measures diet quality of grazing cattle on tropical pastures through the analysis of faeces.

The study used leaves from the non-poisonous Common gidgee tree as well as sorghum hay for five days, followed only by sorghum hay for the following week to make a comparative study of the faecal NIRS profiles.

'Identification of when cattle start grazing gidgee will enable managers to remove stock from areas where Georgina gidgee grows. It will provide a foundation for researches to identify possible reasons why cattle begin browsing Georgina gidgee so that the problem can be addressed, making it possible for managers to safely graze cattle in these paddocks for longer periods.

'At present, stock in some paddocks with Georgina gidgee, can only be grazed for 3-6 months a year.'

The Australian Agricultural College students, supervised by DPI&F research officer Desiree Jackson, learned more about the F.NIRS technology and were responsible for preparing leaves for feeding to the cattle, which was a highly labour-intensive process.

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DPI&F Mareeba
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Poisonous plants risk to stock after rain and cold

Livestock owners should be aware of the risk of stock deaths from plant poisonings after the recent rain and predicted cold winds to follow.

DPI&F Biosecurity Queensland principal veterinary pathologist Dr Ross McKenzie said the cold, wet weather conditions and hungry drought-affected cattle could be a fatal combination.

'The recent rain followed by cold weather may cause cattle that are already hungry from the drought, to eat toxic plants they would usually ignore,' he said.

'Herbage or succulent weeds tend to respond faster to winter rain than more palatable grass species.

'If animals are forced into corners of paddocks, put in stock yards or small holding paddocks, or if they seek shelter under trees due to cold weather or floods, they may eat these toxic weeds in preference to going out into paddocks to graze normal grass.'

Dr McKenzie said during prolonged cloudy weather following on from drought conditions, fodder crops such as sorghum and oats accumulated nitrate at higher and potentially hazardous concentrations.

'During winter, mother-of-millions plants flower and become more poisonous. Cold weather may tempt cattle to eat them,' he said.

'Other plants such as pigweed, button grass, liverseed grass, small-flowered mallow can thrive in stockyards in response to winter rain and can be lethal if hungry stock are put into the yards.

'Rain following dry conditions can make mulga fern respond ahead of other pasture plants. Cattle grazing it in large amounts can develop a bleeding disease for which there is no treatment. Serious stock losses can occur.

'Other poisonous plants that respond to winter rain are darling peas and fireweeds.'

Dr McKenzie said winter rain also promoted the growth of pimelea plants. Graziers in the St. George disease regions of southern Queensland should check out any Pimelea growth to assess the likely risk to their cattle in the following summer, especially if good spring-summer rains do not occur.

'Where ever possible, hay should be fed to stock to dull their appetite before putting them into yards or holding paddocks that are known to have toxic weeds,' he said.

'Producers should also provide hay or other supplements to stock that are sheltering out of the wind to reduce the chance that they will eat poisonous plants.'

More information on poisonous plants is available on the DPI&F website at www.dpi.qld.gov.au/health/18132.html or by phoning 13 25 23.

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Study begins into the Burdekin to Brisbane pipeline

Premier Peter Beattie and the Minister for Water recently announced that a scoping study for the Burdekin to Brisbane pipeline has begun.

'The construction of a Statewide Water Grid would be an engineering and economic challenge, but we owe it to future generations to test the science and the technology,' Mr Beattie said.

'Engineering consultants GHD Pty Ltd have been

appointed to prepare the concept plan for the pipeline from the Burdekin to Brisbane.'

The plan will investigate:

- Whether a pipeline linking key water infrastructure over the 1200 kilometres between the Burdekin and south-east Queensland is feasible; and
- What other centres would potentially benefit by linking the regions.

The Premier said this year there has been extensive flooding of north Queensland rivers while south-east Queensland continues to be gripped by drought

'Although it may not be feasible to pipe water from the State's north to the south east in 2007, population growth and climate change may make it necessary in coming decades,' Mr Beattie said.

Minister for Natural Resources and Water, Craig Wallace said the Concept Plan was expected to be completed later this year and will cost \$350,000.

'GHD will also need to consider whether the pipeline should be able to move water in both directions - so the State's north could also receive water if it was in drought and there was a surplus in the south,' Mr Wallace said.

The Concept Plan will examine:

- Options for providing long-term emergency water supply for communities and industries from the Burdekin to south-east Queensland.
- The long-term availability of water from the Burdekin.
- The critical water needs of future south-east Queensland communities during worst-case drought. Cost estimates for piping water over the long distance involved.
- The most obvious route for the pipeline.
- The size of the pipeline and pumping stations and power supply needed.
- Preliminary environmental, social and cultural assessments.

'The needs of the current and future populations of the Burdekin Basin including Townsville and Thuringowa will be a vital consideration,' the Minister said.

The heart of the State Water Grid will be the regional water supply strategies currently being developed by the Beattie Government.

Water infrastructure developed as part of the regional strategies will form the building blocks of the grid, which will provide the necessary storages and pipeline links between them.

The main water source for the State Water Grid would be the Queensland's largest dam, the Burdekin Falls Dam.

The Burdekin Falls Dam has an annual inflow of more than 5 million megalitres and it has sufficient unallocated water to supply other regions without jeopardising the water security of the Burdekin region.

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Will the colours on your regional ecosystem map change when the new version is released in late 2007?

Did you know that regional ecosystem (RE) maps are updated every two years? This may result in changes on property RE maps, especially where there is advanced regrowth of woody vegetation in previously cleared areas. Irrespective of freehold or leasehold tenure, when native woody vegetation reaches 50% of the original canopy cover and 70% of the original height and consists of the same species as uncleared land, this vegetation can be rezoned as remnant vegetation. The Version 6 maps to be released in 2007 will be based on 2005 satellite imagery. The current version is based on 2003 imagery.

AgForward suggests to landholders with advanced regrowth in any previously cleared areas on their property to consider 'locking in' their white areas on the RE map through the PMAV process (property map of assessable vegetation). The 'Lock in PMAV' application process to the Department of Natural Resources and Water is quite simple. Five items are required:-

1. One page application form (available from the NRW website www.nrw.qld.gov.au/vegetation or contact AgForward).
2. A copy of a 1:100 000 regional ecosystem map which depicts the property (available from www.epa.qld.gov.au/REMAPS or from AgForward). Alternative property maps depicting the regional ecosystems and cleared areas can be submitted. Consult the PMAV Application Kit guidelines on the NRW website for specifications of alternative maps.
3. Five GPS points scattered across the property that can be sighted on a 1:100 000 satellite or topographic map. For example a paddock corner, dam, homestead or a track or road intersection.
4. Payment of the PMAV application fee of \$306.60 (As of 1 July 2007)
5. If leasehold tenure, evidence to confirm the white areas have been cleared since 31 December 1989. For example, a copy of old tree clearing permits, invoices, satellite imagery or aerial photos demonstrating the area was cleared since this date. Areas cleared before 31 Dec. 1989 will be classified as 'Category 4' regrowth on the PMAV. An ongoing tree clearing permit is required to clear Category 4 areas.

If a landholder does not totally agree with the zoning of regional ecosystem types across their property, it is often best to do a two-step PMAV process. Initially lock in the existing white areas and then lodge a map modification (i.e. a complex PMAV). Contact AgForward on (07) 3238 6039 if you require more information.

How should a GPS be set up to provide five or more coordinates for vegetation management applications?

It is important to check that the GPS is set up correctly, otherwise positional errors up to 180 metres can occur. In the 'Setup menu' of the GPS, check that the location units are UTM- UPS (for metric readings of easting and northing). Check that the 'Datum' is set on GDA94 or WGS84. These are the mathematical formulas that use the centre of the earth as the reference point for the GPS and satellites to calculate location. There are many alternative datum and this is where error readings can occur. Also check the 'Time Offset' is set for Australia. Select 'Other + 10.00'. If using metric easting and northing coordinates, remember to record the Zone (54, 55 or 56) as part of your location recording.

AgForward has developed 'GPS Essentials' training for landholders requiring basic GPS skills for property use. The training day can be offered to groups of 10 producers where there is demand and where no other GPS training service providers are available. Cost of the 5½ hour training session is \$50, with a rebate available to AgForce members.

AgForward is a four-year \$8M initiative of AgForce with sponsorship from the Queensland Government to help producers understand the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*. The rural extension program is available to all producers. For more information visit our website www.agforward.org.au or call (07) 3238 6039.

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correspondence program still remains a popular choice for Queensland producers to maintain their accreditation. This program covers chemical application including both agricultural and veterinary application and meets the needs for quality assurance programs such as CattleCare, FlockCare, GrainCare and FreshCare and for the purchase of registered and restricted chemicals. On successful completion of the program, you will receive a 'Statement of Attainment' that is valid for life and a SMARTtrain card renewable after five years.

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correspondence program gives you the tools to safeguard your family and employees. Content of the program includes: The cost of farm injury and death; Obligations of the employer and employee; Risk assessment; Implementing farm safety; Emergency plans; Staff Induction and training - why and how; Legislation, regulations and codes of practice. On successful

completion of the program, you will receive a 'Statement of Attainment' that is valid for life.

Both programs are great value for money at only \$270 per person (AgForce Member receive a \$20 discount).

Kate Scott

AgForce Training Coordinator

Ph (07) 4699 5520

Email katescott@agforceqld.org.au



DPI&F FutureCane tour promotes modern farm practises

The success of modern, profitable and environmentally-friendly farming practices in southern cane-growing regions will encourage far north Queensland to adopt these techniques.

Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries FutureCane senior agronomist Derek Sparkes said a recent Sugar Research and Development Corporation-funded tour of cane farms in southern Queensland and New South Wales encouraged far northern farmers to look more closely at these methods.

Mr Sparkes accompanied a group of 11 growers from Tully to Gordonvale to get a first-hand look at how modern practices could reduce costs and prevent soil erosion.

'FNQ with its unique wet tropical climate will benefit greatly from the use of less tillage, use of water-tolerant fallow legumes and controlled traffic on farms,' Mr Sparkes said.



This Crop Optics Weedseeker boom sprayer inspected on a Maryborough cane farm features infra-red to detect weeds and to accurately apply chemical spray specifically on weeds. Past practices included spraying the whole paddock. Weedseeker technology can significantly reduce chemical usage and benefiting the environment and the bank balance.



Far northern cane growers on tour of southern cane businesses, from left: Gabriel Camilleri, David Cecchi (Innisfail), Ken Clarke (Gordonvale), Paul Cecchi (Innisfail), DPI&F senior agronomist Derek Sparkes, Brian Dore (Tully), Barry Stubbs (Mirriwinni), Greg Dore, Nick Stipis, Ray Arcidiacono (Tully), Robert Brooks (Innisfail), Warren Mitchell (Tully).

'Zero-tillage legumes are becoming more common, but exposure to technology such as double-disc opener cane planters, which plant cane without tillage, has given our growers confidence in looking at these systems.

'Planting with double-disc openers has proven to be a cost-effective way of planting because it allows farmers to keep costs to a bare minimum while maintaining soil health at a maximum.

'We inspected controlled traffic over 2 m rows, new spray technology, soil ameliorants such as treated effluent and mill mud spreaders, Community GPS and other cane technology at Maryborough.

'In NSW we looked at cooperative harvesting groups, the development of Best Management Practices, contract planting and whole-of-crop harvesting for mill co-generation.'

Mr Sparkes said northern growers were keen to look at value-adding to their cover crops such as soybeans although our weather provides unique challenges.

One of the participants said he would research the new spray systems seen on the trip to improve the antiquated equipment he used now.

Another valuable outcome of the tour was the development of networks between southern and northern growers.

'Some of the southern farmers we met on the tour caught up with us again at the recent Australian Society of Sugar Cane Technologists conference and they had the opportunity to visit a number of our farms,' Mr Sparkes said.

'The tour laid the foundations of cooperation between northern and southern growers.'

David Anthony

Senior Media Officer Ph (07) 4044 1676

Value in Beef in NQ

On 19 June, a group of beef producers met at Australian Agricultural College Corporation Burdekin Campus to hear more about the DPI&F Value in Beef project.

The Value in Beef project is a beef supply chain project initiated in NQ in response to beef industry issues and is a 'whole of beef supply chain' project.

The project is influenced by the following beef industry issues:

- Australia in the future will not be able to compete on quantity alone and will need to compete on quality. Meat quality is impacted at all stages of the supply chain.
- Significant changes have occurred in the northern Australian beef industry in development of industry sectors particularly in relation to backgrounding, feedlotting, processing and marketing and associated supply chains.
- Consumer demands for improvement in the consistency of eating quality of beef, by adopting new technology and marketing approaches. The technology underlying MSA (Meat Standards Australia) grading has been widely adopted by the large supermarket supply chains and some processors
- There has been a growing movement in producing premium quality beef off pasture in Queensland. At the same time consumers (both domestic and overseas) are becoming increasingly interested in regional products, brand names, environmentally sustainable and ethically produced products while still seeking consistency of eating quality.

In north Queensland changes are being made in supply chains in response to consumer preferences for a higher quality beef product with consistent eating quality. This has resulted in importation and distribution of King Island, Tasmanian and West Australian MSA beef to supply consumers, including

restaurants, resorts, mining camps and visiting ships.

The broad purpose of the Value In Beef (VIB) project is to develop, facilitate, and support systems and activities for development and growth of beef supply chains, and associated supply chain businesses.

Target Audience includes Beef Supply Chain businesses, (producers, processors, distributors/retailers and food service), Industry consultants and agribusiness, Consumers and Collaborating Service Providers.

The project includes, but is not limited to:

1. Facilitate and support the development and consolidation of beef supply chains which aim to produce, process and retail premium quality beef.
2. Improve integration, networking and co-operation of businesses in beef supply chains.
3. Stimulate accelerated business growth through fostering and facilitating investment networks and business opportunities and partnerships in beef supply chains which begin in Queensland.
4. Build the capacity and adaptability of beef production businesses to meet increasingly tighter market specifications, while remaining productive, cost efficient and profitable.
5. Build the capacity of post farm supply chain businesses to process and retail premium quality beef.
6. Capitalise on, ground truth and validate applicable Research and Development outcomes, such as that of the Beef CRC and R&D projects, to assist beef producers to adopt strategies to improve the profitability of their beef businesses through producing a higher value product.
7. Demonstrate beef produced, processed and delivered to MSA protocols is possible and viable in Queensland beef supply chains, and work towards the development of MSA Grass-fed.
8. Undertake regional market macro scoping to determine beef supply chain issues, business relationships, and market and business opportunities, how these may be addressed, and how this information can be utilised by beef supply chain businesses.

There are three VIB producer groups in NQ (Dalrymple, Burdekin and Atherton Tablelands).

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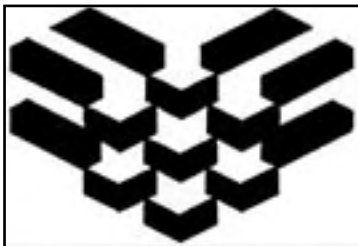
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