

# Drought and climate adaptation program

## GrazingFutures Narrative

### What are my options? – Breedcow and Dynama Workshop Julia Creek

In June 2019, GrazingFutures extension staff, economist Fred Chudleigh and nutritionist Dr. Maree Bowen, collaborated with Southern Gulf NRM and producers in their Profitable Producer Group (National Landcare Program) to deliver a Breedcow and Dynama workshop.

Breedcow and Dynama is a herd budgeting software package designed to be used to plan, evaluate and improve the profitability of extensive beef cattle enterprises by allowing users to model different scenarios for their cattle enterprise. The workshop focused on providing an overview of the Breedcow and Dynama program and its applicability for comparing and assessing the profitability of different herd management strategies within the business. In addition, over the course of the two days, through producer contributions, an example beef cattle enterprise file was developed that reflected typical Northern Downs production parameters. This data was used to support the preparation of the Northern Downs report on drought resilience.

Participants could input their own business data or use the representative beef cattle enterprise to understand the impact of adopting different management strategies on their business. Average growth paths, husbandry costs, sale prices and production ratios were calculated and used to consider various scenarios in the beef business e.g. converting from breeding to trading over time, the influence of yearling mating or optimal age of turnoff in the business.



Figure 1: Cattle grazing on the Mitchell Grass Downs

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Feedback for the days was overwhelmingly positive (overall usefulness 6/7; information provided 5.8/7). All participants indicated that they would make a change in their business, with the most common response being consider changes to herd structure and to consider trading different classes of cattle e.g. *“determine if selling dry cows directly is an economically viable option.”* When asked whether they felt they had learned a new skill, all participants were positive about new skills learned *“how to run the numbers and look at options”*, although confidence with using the spreadsheets by themselves was not as high (4/7).

Each of the participating businesses received the option of a one on one follow up visit with agricultural economists Fred Chudleigh, or Vivian Finlay in conjunction with Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) Beef Extension Officers Lindsey Perry and Eloise Moir. These visits were conducted between July and November 2019 and 80% (4/5) of the workshop beef business received one on one follow up. Strategies considered by businesses were expansion into new properties, succession, trading steers, production feeding and targeting different classes of cattle for market specifications.

*“We really liked our Breedcow experience, found it a very valuable resource, the follow up session went into more specifics, which helped a lot. It is good to be able to continue using the program down the track if the opportunity presents itself. Maybe if we were looking to alter or expand operations, we will see how the numbers stack up for different scenarios.”*

*“It has certainly been a good way to check our current business model.”*

The Breedcow and Dynama Herd Budgeting Software is available online at [breedcowdynama.com.au](http://breedcowdynama.com.au), or by contacting Principal Agricultural Economist, Fred Chudleigh on 13 25 23.

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