

Drought and climate adaptation program

Local graziers use economics to assist business planning

Richard and Beth Judd moved to 'Hat Creek' at Baralaba in 1999. They are a family operation with their sons, Clayton and Wyatt, involved in the business.

In May 2018 Richard Judd attended the Callide Dawson Carcase Competition Field Day at Warnoah Feedlot to hear Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) scientist Dr Maree Bowen speak about 'Improving beef business performance with high quality forages'. The presentation inspired Richard to find out more about how to maximise returns from high quality forages in this area of central Queensland.

The Judd's herd is predominantly based on Brahman breeders that are joined to Brahman, Angus and Drakenberger bulls. They also use Charolais and Charbray bulls as terminal sires. The property's carrying capacity has improved over the last 20 years as they continue to extensively develop it.



Richard Judd with a Brahman breeder

The Judd's target several markets to give them the flexibility to sell different classes of cattle according to marketing trends. Breeders on 'Hat Creek' need to be quiet and of medium frame, but also have good udders, and high fertility to remain in the herd. Bulls are selected on their growth and fertility characteristics and are also medium frame to produce animals that are of sufficient weight but which mature quickly.

Paddocks are spelled on 'Hat Creek' for certain periods of time to enable the ground cover to be maintained throughout the year.

The Judd's focus is on nutrition for their herd, to retain good body condition scores throughout the year and keep their calving percentages high. The Judd's have enjoyed the benefits of crossbreeding with Drakenberger bulls, producing successfully adapted, very fertile, leaf eating, well marbling and flat backed cattle that are derived from a similar environment in South Africa and that thrive alongside the Brahman breeders in light forest country.



Drakenberger bull

The Judd's are keen to take every opportunity to learn and improve their business and after listening to information presented by DAF at the Callide Dawson Carcase Competition Field Day, requested DAF visit their property to discuss their business and new opportunities in more detail.

DAF arranged a visit to the Judd's property by a small team including an economist and a beef extension officer, to discuss the business in depth and provide insight on the types of tools that could be used in their situation.

DAF staff presented several scenarios using best practice management strategies and economically verified them to see if they would suit the Judd's business. The beef extension staff and economist worked together to give a whole-of-business approach. The economist also analysed the different markets that the Judd's target to determine profitability. One option was to establish leucaena as an avenue for growing out cull steers and heifers. The economic analysis also enabled the Judd's to assess their own business expenses to determine profitability.

Richard and Beth appreciated the assistance that they received and found the approach beneficial.



Richard and Beth Judd with one of their stud Brahman bulls DAF staff – Dana Walkington, Eloise Moir, Matt Brown

These one on one visits are available for producers in central Queensland, as DAF shares key findings from the 'Delivering integrated production and economic knowledge and skills to improve drought management outcomes for grazing enterprises' project.

A summary of the analyses from this project for the Fitzroy and northern Gulf NRM regions of Queensland, and the Katherine region of the Northern Territory are available by webinar. Producers can access the webinars using the links below:

- 1) Improving the performance of beef production systems in northern Australia: <https://futurebeef.com.au/knowledge-centre/improving-performance-beef-production-systems-part1>
- 2) Low cost strategies to build the resilience of beef production systems in northern Australia: <https://futurebeef.com.au/knowledge-centre/improving-performance-beef-production-systems-part2>
- 3) Improving beef business performance with high quality forages: <https://futurebeef.com.au/knowledge-centre/improving-beef-business-performance-with-high-quality-forages>

DAF economists and beef extension staff are available in central Queensland to conduct personalised economic analyses for producers, specific to their businesses. Please contact Matt Brown if you would like the DAF beef team to visit your property; matt.brown@daf.qld.gov.au or, for other areas call 13 25 23.

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