

Drought and climate adaptation program

This webinar is to provide practical and current information in regards to earlier weaning.

The goal of a breeder is to have one calf per cow per year.

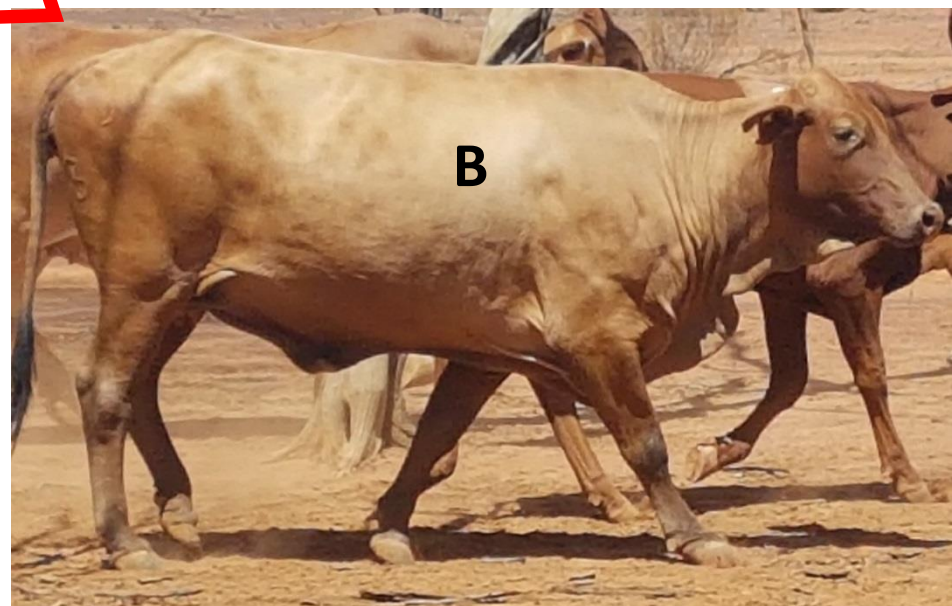
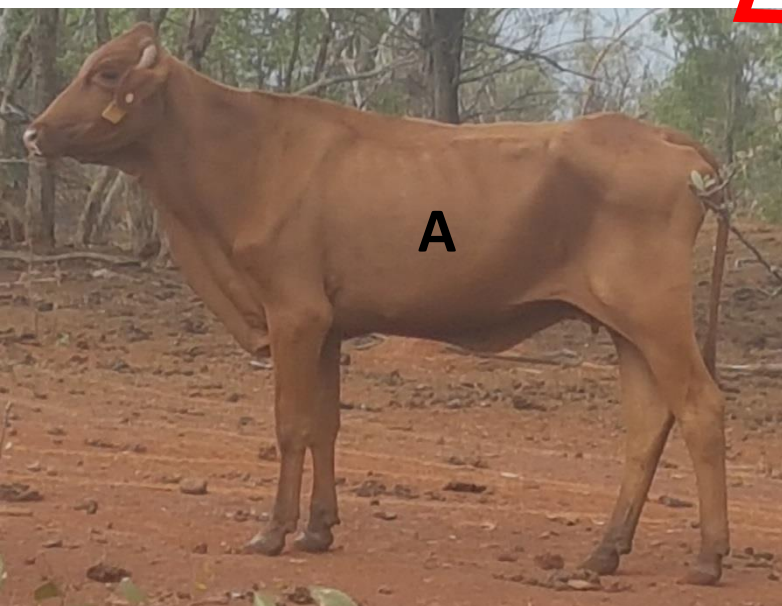
This means that your cows need to have a high enough body condition to cycle, conceive and calve every year.



Earlier Weaning.

- How many kgs of hay does this cow need for maintenance?
- How many kgs of hay does this cow need after the calf has been weaned?
- How does body condition score (BCS) impact on pregnancy percentage?
 - What happens if your wean 30 days earlier?
- Tips, tricks and lessons learnt from producers who have carried out early weaning.

Poll Question



Which cow is more likely to cycle, conceive and raise a calf?

These two cows are both getting the same type and amount of feed as well as the same type of lick.
Yet they are in very different condition.
What do you think is the main reason?

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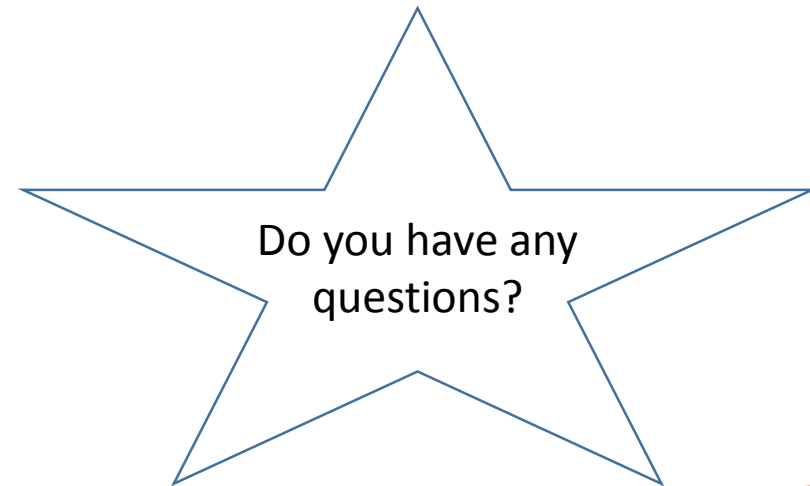
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries



To make this webinar as relevant to as many people as possible, I will use hay as a standard type of fodder. There are many different types of feed that I could use for this webinar Buffel, Mitchell, Rhodes grass or Mulga to name a few.

While there are different nutrient levels for each of these sources of energy & protein, the process stays the same.

- 1) How much do they need?
- 2) How much is this costing me?
- 3) What happens if I wean?
- 4) Is it worth it?



How much do they need?

Poll Question

How much average quality hay does a cow/calf unit need for maintenance?



8kg of hay.

10kg of hay.

13kg of hay.

Average Rhodes grass hay - 7% CP and 9MJ/ME kg of DM.

Requirements of a 350kg lactating cow - 814 grams of CP and 69MJ/ME/day.

She will need to eat approximately 13kg of this hay.

Poll Question

How much can they consume?

How much average quality hay can a cow physically consume in a day?

But can only eat this much



8kg of hay.

She needs this much



10kg of hay.

13kg of hay.

The answer depends on the size of the animal and the type and quality of feed.

$$350\text{kg} \times 2.5\% = 8.75\text{kg}.$$

How much does this hay cost you?

This example we are hand feeding them straight hay. There are a number of ways which you can put a value on your fodder. While one of the more common is the agistment value of the paddock, for the purpose of this webinar and time constraints I am using \$1/kg of hay.





This cow needs
to eat 13kg of
hay/day for
maintenance.

BUT

She is unable to
physically eat
that much and
therefore will be
losing weight.

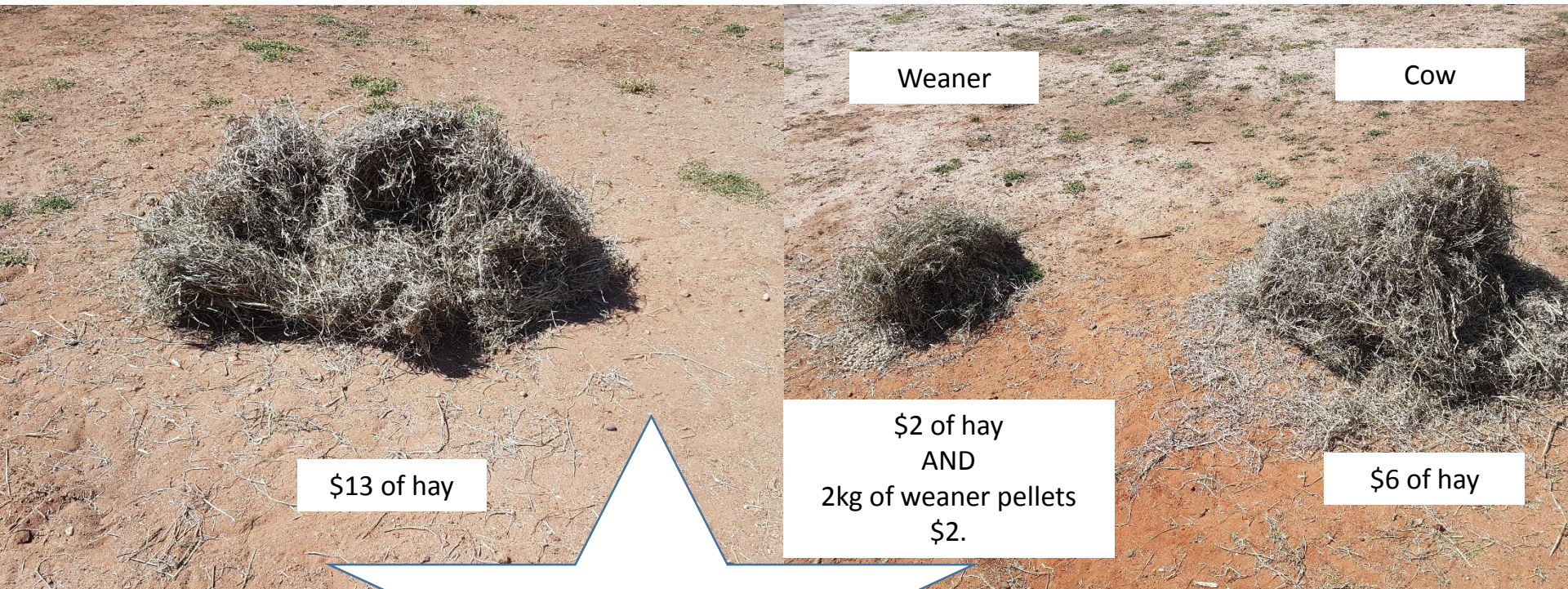
What happens if you wean earlier?

Cow and Calf

13kg of hay for maintenance.

Cow and Weaner

Amount to eat for maintenance.



Do you have any
questions?

What happens if you wean earlier?

How many extra calves will I have next year as a result of weaning earlier?

That is the \$64,000 question.

The idea of weaning early is to look after your cow and next years calf. Due to the number and variety of factors which have an impact on the conception and calving rate of your cows, it is very hard to gauge the impact that one activity has on the calving percentage next year.

It is a judgment call.

To provide you with information to help you make this decision have a think about the following.

Do you want 1 calf per cow per year? You have **75-85 days** to get the cow pregnant after having a calf.
What do you think the calving percentages of the following cows would be? Which BCS do you think would have the most number of calves?

Poll Question



Average calving percentage of the different BCS are:

Score 1 = 20%

Score 2 = 35%

Score 3 = 60%

Score 4 = 75%

Score 5 = 87%

These images come from <https://futurebeef.com.au/knowledge-centre/body-condition-score-for-beef-cattle/>

These two cows are in the same paddock.



This cow with a BCS of 2 has a 20-50% chance of getting back in calf or an average of 35%.



This cow with a BCS of 3 has a 40-80% chance of getting back in calf or an average of 60%.

It doesn't take much of a change in BCS to have a big impact on the percentage of cows that get back in calf.

A score 3 cow is, on average, nearly twice as likely to get in calf than a score 2 cow.

The difference between a score 2 and 3, is about 12-14% of the liveweight of the individual animal.

These percentages and more information are available from <https://futurebeef.com.au/wp-content/uploads/Managing-the-breeder-herd-Practical-steps-to-breeding-livestock-in-northern-Australia.pdf>

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These two cows are in the same paddock.



← Less cows that look like this.

More cows that look like this. →



The is one of the main reasons why this cow is BCS 2.

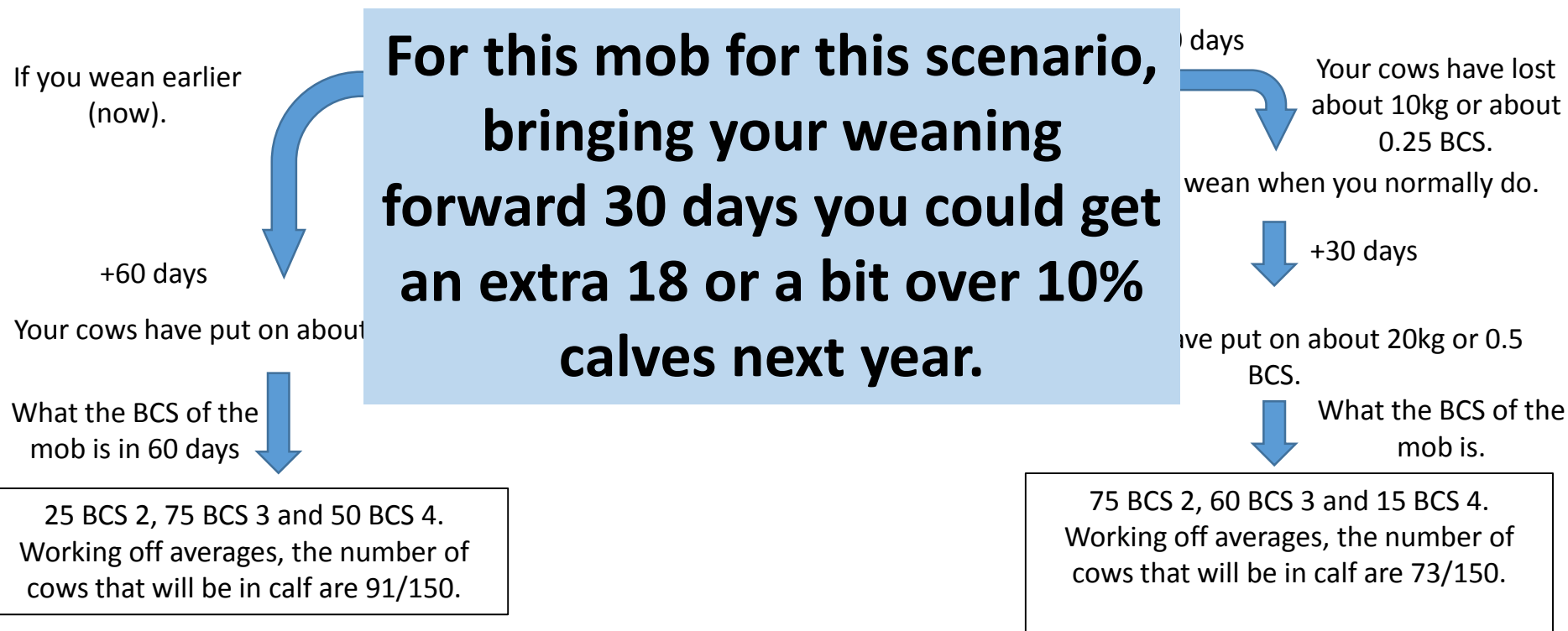
Do you have any questions?

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What does it take to go from a score 2 to a 3 or increase bodyweight by 12-14%.

Wean your calves 30 days earlier.

I realise this sounds simple and there are a lot of other factors that need to be taken into account, if you do or are able to wean 30 days earlier. This is an example of what it looks like for the mob of cows that I took the photos of.



ASSUMPTIONS

That all 150 cows have a calf now.

Average calving percentage of the different BCS are BCS1 = 20%, 2=35%, 3=60%, 4=75%, 5=87%

Summary



If you wean earlier, it's easier to take cows from this ← to this →.

Cows like this →, on average have an extra 30% in calf.

The more you can get like this →, or better, the more cows you'll get in calf.



Tips, tricks and lessons learnt from other producers who have weaned earlier.

- Think about it early, do your prep work. This will make it easier in the long run.
- Work out where your highest returns will come from (e.g. feeding cows and calves tonnes of feed vs feeding calves to a minimum sale weight/selling straight away vs feeding calves to a heavier sale weight)
- High quality roughage is worth the investment.
- Ask for and use independent advice.
- Split weaners into two mobs, large/small (three is better if possible).
- Plan to vaccinate them for 5in1.
- Do a forage budget. How many kg/day will they eat X number of weaners = total kgs of hay or pellet needed.
- Other people have done it before, talk to them.

Reminder for next weaning.

As a reminder for next year, everyone who has registered for this webinar will receive an email on Monday the 20th of January 2020 reminding them about the advantages of weaning earlier.



Poll Question

In the mean time, if you would like to take advantage of asking question or talking to other producers about early weaning there is a closed Facebook group which you can be part of.

This Facebook group is only for people who have attended this webinar.

If you are interested in being part of this group please answer the following poll question.



Poll Question

Do you have a specific question about your property or would like more detailed information.

Visit us at www.futurebeef.com.au to find your local extension officer or email info@futurebeef.com.au