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## Barfield Road neighbours join forces

# Strength found in numbers

DEPARTMENT of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) beef extension staff have been working with graziers and farmers on Barfield Road at Banana to develop a neighbourhood producer group.

The 'Barfield Road Group' is made up of several multi-generational family businesses committed to the long-term sustainability of beef and grain production in their area.

The group has drafted a strategic plan that details the following six themes: environmental sustainability, animal health and welfare, business, people and community, innovation and new technology, and marketing.

"We can see that forming this group will not only help us all make productivity and profitability gains in our businesses but will build trust and confidence in our product from the wider community," Barfield Station's Melinee Leather said.

"We are listening to consumers about ethical beef production. It is important to us that our industry is transparent about the way we manage our land, our an-



Barfield Road group members inspect pastures at a DAF Legume Workshop.

imals and our business."

Since May 2019, members have participated in activities for forage budgeting, pasture legume establishment, and dry season supplementation. On the agen-

da for the next 12 months are activities covering workplace health and safety, biosecurity, supply chain, soil health, business management and animal health.

Alastair and Melanie

Shannon hosted first aid training at their property 'Wirra' in October.

"The Barfield Road Group has provided a great opportunity to network with like-minded landholders

within the industry," Melanie said.

"It has provided me with numerous opportunities to increase my skills and knowledge within the agricultural industry."

### HOW WAS THE GROUP FORMED?

DAF beef extension staff have a long and productive history of working with producers in the Barfield Road district.

In recent years, Stuart Buck, Joanna Gangemi, Carly Johnstone and Eloise Moir have worked on a wide range of topics including diet quality and nutrition, forage budgeting and grazing management, pasture legumes, animal health and welfare, and business analysis.

In early 2019, Eloise Moir and grazer Melinee Leather formed a working group for the Barfield Road community to streamline access to DAF's resources.

Working in neighbourhood groups allows peer-to-peer learning and support amongst producers, but also enables extension staff to offer training specific to the group's needs.

If you are interested in forming a group, contact your local beef extension officer at futurebeef.com.au.

■ Kylie Hopkins, Beef extension officer, DAF Rockhampton, 07 4843 2615.

# Crunch the numbers on liquid supplements

LIQUID supplements are widely used by beef producers for the purpose of dry season and drought supplementation.

The range includes home-mixed roller drum and dunder mixes, commercial products based on molasses or dunder and fortified molasses mixes.

Fortified molasses supplements have a high molasses content (i.e. no added water and not based on dunder).

They are either molasses and urea mixes such as M8U (molasses plus 8 per cent urea by weight of molasses) or MUP mixes (molasses, plus urea, plus protein meal).

Unlike most other liq-

uid supplements, they can supply significant amounts of energy.

The first number to know with liquid supplements is the specific gravity measured as the weight of 1 litre (kg/L).

A roller drum mix will have a low specific gravity (1.16kg/L, where as pure molasses is typically 1.35kg/L).

The specific gravity is required to calculate the weight of product fed, which is the first step in determining the nutrient intake.

If a total of 100 head consumes 1L of product per day with a specific gravity of 1.16kg/L, then they are consuming 1.16kg of product per day.

It is critical that producers know whether the nutrient analysis of a product is expressed on a dry matter basis or as fed basis.

A liquid supplement with 27 per cent dry matter (which contains 73 per cent water) and a protein content of 20 per cent on a fed basis, has a protein content on a dry

matter basis of 75 per cent.

High intakes are required to achieve target nutrient intakes, when products have a high water content and low nutrient concentrations on a fed basis.

■ Mick Sullivan, Beef extension officer, DAF Rockhampton, 07 4843 2623.



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# Pastoralist's pain relief story

**THE Brockhurst family from Larrawa Station in the East Kimberley has used pain relief for yard husbandry procedures since 2017 and this is their experience as told by Stephen Brockhurst.**

We used a WA state government Business Improvement Grant (BIG) to trial the pain relief product Buccalgesic.

Our main reasoning behind trialling pain relief was the welfare of our weaners - some of our necessary husbandry procedures do cause pain, and if we can, we want to minimise that.

Our family is also aware that animal welfare is increasingly becoming a focus in this industry and we wanted to take that into account. We wanted to see what impact pain relief would have on our weaners during branding, particularly if there could be further benefits such as a decrease in time off feed.

When processing weaners, we orally apply Buccalgesic to the side of their gums. It usually takes around about



Stephen Brockhurst, Larrawa Station, East Kimberley has used pain relief for yard husbandry procedures since 2017.

10 minutes before it kicks in and the cattle start responding to it.

We used Buccalgesic when processing both heifers and steers, but our main priority was using it on

young bulls when they were being castrated.

We trialled Buccalgesic on our weaners in 2017 through the BIG program and then decided to continue using it through our own funds.

The decision to continue using the product was based on the response we saw in our cattle - namely that the weaners were not sulking and returned to normal behaviour (eating, drinking

etc.) quicker than those not treated.

One issue we are mindful of with the product is that it can fall out of the animal's mouth if not applied correctly.

We found that applicator guns with a hook-shaped tube, instead of a straight tube are better suited.

I would recommend using Buccalgesic if it can be worked into the program and budget. It works very well for us with our early weaning program, where the weaners are kept in the yards.

For other stations that turn weaners out into good-quality pasture immediately after processing, the benefits may be subtler.

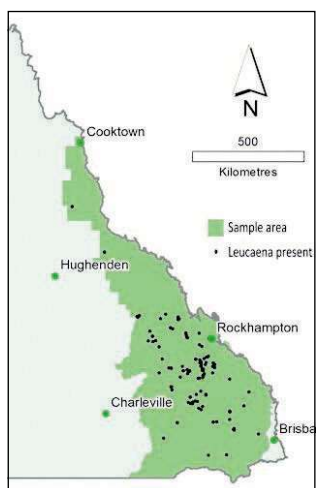
It's important for each owner and manager to measure up the pros and cons, and make sure they choose the type of pain relief that is right for their operation.

Either way, I think using anything that results in good animal welfare outcomes is good for our business.

If you wish to gain further insight into how pain relief can be used in your management system, please contact your local veterinarian.

■ Mariah Maughan, Development officer, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Broome, (08) 9194 1442

## DEPARTMENT MEASURING CHANGES IN QUEENSLAND'S CULTIVATED LEUCAENA



LEUCAENA is one of the most valuable sown pastures available to Queensland's beef industry because of its ability to profitably increase live-weight gain.

Until now there's been limited quantitative information about the area of leucaena pastures in Queensland.

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries' Rockhampton team of Terry Beutel, Deb Corbet,

Madonna Hoffman and Stuart Buck have developed and published a quantitative method for assessing the extent and location of cultivated leucaena by using high resolution satellite imagery to identify its characteristic four to eight metres alley cultivation pattern.

They recently extended the area sampled by this method, concluding that there is currently about 139,000ha of cultivated leucaena in their 470,000km<sup>2</sup> sample area (see map on left).

This was based on data from 16,884 sites, with leucaena cultivations strongly concentrated in central Queensland and almost completely absent from northern Queensland.

The work included re-sampling 133,000km<sup>2</sup> in central and southern Queensland. This marked the first time their method has been used to monitor

change in leucaena coverage. The team hope to continue this monitoring effort in the future, using it to inform industry and government.

For more information contact Senior scientist Terry Beutel on (07) 4843 2632 or [terry.beutel@daf.qld.gov.au](mailto:terry.beutel@daf.qld.gov.au).

You can also read the Rangelands Journal paper via DAF's eResearch Archive at [era.daf.qld.gov.au/id/eprint/6224/](http://era.daf.qld.gov.au/id/eprint/6224/).

### RESEARCH

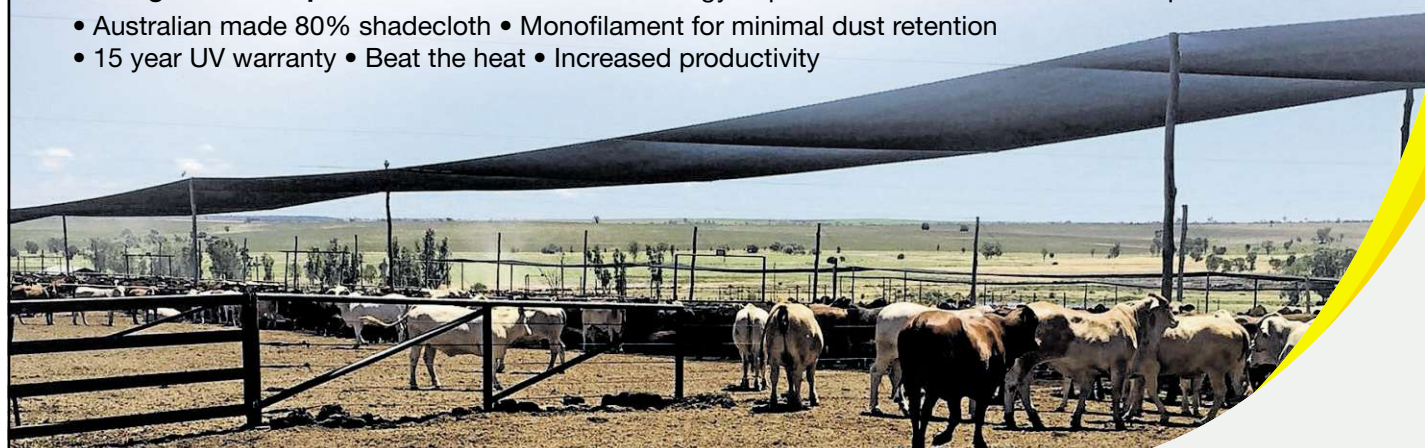
#### Measuring Leucaena

- Leucaena is a highly valuable pasture in Queensland.
- The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries has developed technology to estimate the area of leucaena from satellite imagery.
- There is currently 139,000 hectares of leucaena in Queensland.

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# ASF on Australia's doorstep

WHETHER you own one pig or feral pigs are present on your property, you have a role to help protect Australia's pig herd, and the 36,000 jobs and regional communities that rely on the pork industry, from the deadly African swine fever (ASF).

Since arriving in China, where ASF is now considered endemic - meaning it's there to stay - ASF has spread throughout south-east Asia, making a jump to Timor Leste in October, a mere 700 kilometres from Australia's northern border.

With close to 100 per cent mortality rate for pigs and no vaccine available, ASF is currently the most pressing disease threat to the Australian livestock sector.

ASF is spread by direct contact with an infected pig or carrier, biting insects and soft-shelled ticks, or via contaminated clothing and equipment. The virus can survive extreme temperatures (hot and cold) and persist in meat products for months at a time, even after it has been cooked. Pigs can also remain carriers of the disease for quite some time.



With close to 100 per cent mortality rate for pigs and no vaccine available, ASF is currently the most pressing disease threat to the Australian livestock sector.

If you keep pigs, simple biosecurity measures will help minimise the risk. These measures include ensuring clothing is washed and boots are thoroughly cleaned with detergent if you or a guest

has had any recent contact with pigs in Australia or overseas. This is equally important if you have feral pigs on your property.

Swill can be a significant pathway for ASF and cannot

be fed to pigs. It should not be discarded where feral pigs or livestock can access it. Swill is anything that contains meat or has come in contact with meat. This means if you had a t-bone for dinner and

didn't finish your vegetables, the vegetables on your plate are considered swill because they had contact with a meat product.

Australia has a blanket ban on feeding swill to pigs, due

to the potential of spreading diseases like foot and mouth disease (FMD) and ASF. While we do not import pork or pork products from known ASF or FMD infected countries, there's always a risk that something is imported illegally or is accidentally brought into Australia by a visitor. Never accept a shipment or gift of meat you suspect has been brought in illegally.

If you notice multiple dead pigs or pigs displaying signs of high temperatures, breathing difficulties, diarrhoea, vomiting, or blotchy skin report this immediately to the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline on 1800 675 888.

If hunters assist you with culling programs on your property, ensure they know the signs of ASF and know to immediately report suspicious signs.

Learn more about on-farm biosecurity for pigs at [farmbiosecurity.com.au/industry/pigs](http://farmbiosecurity.com.au/industry/pigs) and African swine fever at [qld.gov.au/AfricanSwineFever](http://qld.gov.au/AfricanSwineFever)

■ Article supplied by Animal Health Australia.

## ECONOMIC MODELLING TOOLS TO ASSIST DROUGHT RESPONSE AND RECOVERY



NEW tools are now available which can help producers assess options when responding to drought or recovering from drought.

The tools have been developed as part of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries' (DAF) project, *Delivering integrated production and economic knowledge and skills to improve drought management outcomes for grazing enterprises*.

The project aims to

improve the profitability and drought resilience of grazing businesses and is funded by the Queensland government's Drought and Climate Adaptation Program.

The tools are available at [futurebeef.com.au](http://futurebeef.com.au) (search improving profitability).

A total of nine presentations explain the use of spreadsheets to assess either de-stocking or re-stocking options during drought response and

recovery phases.

The spreadsheet tools, with examples, can also be downloaded from the project page.

Users can enter their own numbers while they listen to the explanation in the presentations.

The presentations are delivered by DAF Principal agricultural economist, Fred Chudleigh (pictured).

The project led by DAF Principal research scientist, Dr Maree Bowen has com-

pleted economic analyses for the Fitzroy, Northern Gulf and Central West Mitchell Grasslands.

Analyses are underway for the Northern Downs and Mulga Lands regions.

Completed project reports, recorded webinars and other products are available from the project website.

■ Maree Bowen, Principal research scientist, DAF Rockhampton, [maree.bowen@daf.qld.gov.au](mailto:maree.bowen@daf.qld.gov.au).

### TOOLS

#### Assessing options for drought response

- Introduction and overview
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- Mortality risk and early weaning
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- Assessing forced sales from within cow, heifer and steer groups
- Send sale steers to agistment or sell early

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# Condition scoring pays

## Physical exam can boost ewe fertility

**W**OOL growers wanting to boost both ewe fertility and productivity are encouraged to make body condition scoring a regular part of their management practices.

Condition scoring is a simple physical examination that assesses the fat and muscle over the loin area of the animal.

While condition scoring and the information it generates is useful across all classes of sheep, it is highly beneficial when used on ewes before joining to help determine their nutritional wellbeing and preparedness for reproduction.

Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries extension officer Jed Sommerfield said the body condition score (BCS) assessment was a quick way for wool growers to get a better understanding of how to manage their ewes through joining and into lambing.

"Condition scoring is a quick way of assessing the flesh cover over the sheep's spine and short ribs, and the eye-muscle area between them," Mr Sommerfield said.

The BCS scale runs from 1 to 5, with 1 being the poorest condition and 5 being the fattest condition.

Generally speaking, the better the BCS prior to joining and lambing, the higher



Condition scoring is a simple physical examination that assesses the fat and muscle over the loin area of the animal.

the conception rate and the greater the likelihood of lamb and ewe survival (although over-fat ewes can pose some risks).

"The chances of ewes with a BCS of less than 2 being able to conceive, carry and successfully lamb down are low," Mr Sommerfield said.

"It is recommended ewes be joined with a BCS of 3, and lamb with a BCS of at least 2.5."

Wool growers are encouraged to condition score ewes two to four months before joining.

"By assessing ewes a few months prior to joining, wool growers will have time to manage their flock accordingly and build up the nutrition of animals with a lower BCS in time for joining," Mr Sommerfield said.

### TARGET SCORES

Source: Geoff Duddy, Sheep Solutions

- Joining: Minimum condition score 2.5, target condition score 3+
- Pregnancy: Minimum condition score 2.5, target condition score 3+
- Lactation: Minimum condition score 2.5, target condition score 3+
- Rams at mating: Minimum condition score 3, target condition score 3.5 to 4
- Weaners (wool): Weighing preferable, but generally >2.5
- Lambs (meat): Assess growth targets to meet market specifications

"To improve lamb survival, it's important to either

maintain or increase a ewe's body condition from day 90 to day 150, particularly for multiples."

According to Sheep Solutions consultant Geoff Duddy there is a direct correlation between ewe body condition and mortality rate, and condition scoring is a simple way to both reduce the risk of losing valuable ewes, and increase lamb survival and, ultimately, weaning rates.

"With mutton, wool and lamb prices the way they are, ewe mortality can have a big impact on your bottom line," Mr Duddy said.

"Production is largely driven by nutrition. Lamb survival will depend heavily on ewe body condition.

"Every business is different, but generally, a 10 per cent improvement in

weaning rates will increase profit margins from 13 to 25pc.

"A breeding ewe may be worth between \$800 to \$1500 over her lifetime in terms of lamb, wool and mutton values. Costs associated with monitoring body condition and strategically feeding ewes according to their stage of production can quickly be recouped and productivity and profit increased."

Condition scoring gives producers the valuable ability to be targeted in their feeding regimes and limit the risk of wasting feed on already healthy ewes. It makes the process of condition scoring well worth the small amount of additional labour.

"The beauty of condition scoring is that you can sort a

mob and manage a feeding regime based on their condition, meaning you might only end up needing to supplementary feed 200 ewes in a mob of 1000," Mr Duddy said.

"While condition scoring requires some extra labour, it's simple, quick and well worth it.

"The eye muscle is a very good indicator of the short-term nutritional status of a sheep, and a hand is the only tool you need to condition score your sheep.

"While many producers in western and southern Queensland don't bring sheep in that often, it's worth that small extra effort at key production times like joining and before lambing, to make sure nutrition is managed at the right time, particularly for higher risk multiple pregnancies and poorer sheep."

Body condition scoring is an important practice for people wishing to increase their lambing percentages.

There is training available to assist you in incorporating body condition scoring into management decisions and actions for your enterprise.

*Picking Performer Ewes* and *Lifetime Ewe Management* are two great courses.

For more information email [leadingsheep@daf.qld.gov.au](mailto:leadingsheep@daf.qld.gov.au).

There are also many resources on the Leading Sheep website, including case studies, and even a phone app.

To hear more about Leading Sheep, subscribe to our monthly *Around the Camp* e-newsletter at [leadingsheep.com.au](http://leadingsheep.com.au) or like or follow us on our Facebook page @LeadingSheep.



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