



BEEFTALK
Taking stock of your future

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Get bang for your buck in the wet season

Phosphorus proves profitable

ON PHOSPHORUS (P) deficient country, the wet season is when the biggest benefit from phosphorus supplementation will be seen.

P deficient cattle have a reduced appetite which means they cannot make use of the high energy and high protein pasture available in the wet season. Supplementing deficient cattle with P results in higher growth rates, higher weaning rates and lower mortalities.

New findings from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) shows that supplementing P deficient cattle is a very profitable business decision.

There are several ways to supplement cattle with P. It is important to consider cost, infrastructure required and the logistics of delivering the supplement to cattle in the wet season when accessibility can be difficult.

SUPPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

Loose lick

MDCP or DCP mixed with salt and or protein meal

■ Pros: Low cost per kilogram of P; can be home mixed or custom

mixed; and the recipe can be adjusted to achieve target intakes.

■ Cons: Shelters are required to protect supplement throughout the wet season.

Class of animal	Weight (kg)	Target weight gain ¹ (kg/day)	Recommended supplementary P intake (g/hd/day) for three levels of phosphorus deficiency		
			Acutely deficient	Deficient	Marginally deficient
Steers & heifers	200	0	2	1	Nil
Steers & heifers	200	0.3	4	3	1
Steers & heifers	200	0.6	6	4	1
Steers & heifers	200	0.9	8	5	2
Steers & heifers	200	1.2	10	7	2
Steers & heifers	400	-0.3	2	Nil	Nil
Steers & heifers	400	0	3	2	1
Steers & heifers	400	0.3	5	4	1
Steers & heifers	400	0.6	7	5	2
Steers & heifers	400	0.9	9	6	2
Steers & heifers	400	1.2	11	8	3
Pregnant breeders ²	400	-0.3	3	2	1
Pregnant breeders ²	400	0	5	3	1
Pregnant breeders ²	400	0.3	7	4	1
Pregnant breeders ²	400	0.6	9	6	2
Lactating breeders ³	400	-0.3	7	5	2
Lactating breeders ³	400	0	9	6	2
Lactating breeders ³	400	0.3	11	7	2
Lactating breeders ³	400	0.6	12	8	3

¹ Target weight gains are the potential daily weight gain based on the diet quality when P is not limiting

² Late pregnant breeders, last three months of pregnancy.

³ Lactating cows, producing 5 kg milk/day.

TABLE 1: Recommended supplementary phosphorus intakes for different classes of country and cattle. Source: Meat & Livestock Australia.

Wet season blocks

■ Pros: Weather resistant; and easy to distribute before the wet season starts.

■ Cons: High cost/kg of P; composition cannot be changed; and target P intakes are often not achieved.

Water medication

■ Pros: Uniform intake across the mob.

■ Cons: Alternative watering locations in the wet season can make achieving target intakes difficult; and water quality can cause problems with medicator operation. It is important to consider

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

the cost of the supplement and how much P it contains. Higher phosphorus percentage supplements are usually the most cost effective.

Target weight gains are the potential daily weight gain based on the diet quality when P is not limiting.

Supplement palatability is an important consideration in achieving target P intakes. Achieving target intakes in the wet season can be challenging, so time must be invested in identifying the most suitable phosphorus source and lick mix, and training animals to eat supplements.

Good supplement intake records are critical to ensuring target phosphorus intakes are achieved and for managing the feeding costs.

A free lick intake calculator is available from the FutureBeef website and can be downloaded as an Excel file or a printable document. For more information, visit futurebeef.com.au and search for 'phosphorus supplementation'.

Farmers urged to apply for \$1000 rebate

NORTH Queensland farmers and graziers can apply now for a share of a \$10.1 million rebate scheme, to assist producers in the Great Barrier Reef catchments to meet water quality requirements.

Sugarcane, banana and beef cattle farmers in reef catchments can apply for a rebate of up to \$1000 each for seeking agronomic advice.

Eligible graziers and growers can apply for funding for farm-specific advice on how they can meet the new regulations.

The Farming in Reef Catchments Rebate Scheme follows legislation passed in the Queensland Parliament in September 2019, aimed

at improving water quality in the Great Barrier Reef.

To be eligible for a rebate, applicants must be a primary producer of sugarcane, bananas or beef cattle grazing located in the Great Barrier Reef regions including Wet Tropics, Burdekin, Mackay Whitsundays, Fitzroy and Burnett Mary.

Applicants must have sought advice from an Accredited Agricultural Adviser (AAA) and not have received any financial assistance from Australian or Queensland government programs around managing nutrient and sediment run-off on a commercial agricultural property.

Advice must be from an AAA listed on the Queensland Rural and Industry Development (QRIDA) website.

AAAs are qualified and experienced professionals that undergo a rigorous assessment and application process managed by QRIDA. This is to ensure the agronomic advice provided to primary producers is compliant with environmentally relevant activity (ERA) standards for the sugarcane, banana and beef cattle grazing industries.

For more information and to apply, visit qrda.qld.gov.au/current-programs/farming-in-reef-catchments-scheme.




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Determine your 'green date' in the wet season

THE wet season is a good time to review key decision dates that may trigger management decisions.

The onset of the growing season varies across northern Queensland; therefore, it's important to know when is typical for your area.

The start of the growing season is known as your green date - the date at which there is a 70 per cent chance of having a rainfall event of 50 millimetres over three days.

Once you have received sufficient rainfall to promote plant growth, and provided your country is in good land condition, it can take four to six weeks for enough bulk to be grown to sustain live weight gain.

This point in time is known as your production date.

The first key decision date is halfway through the growing season.

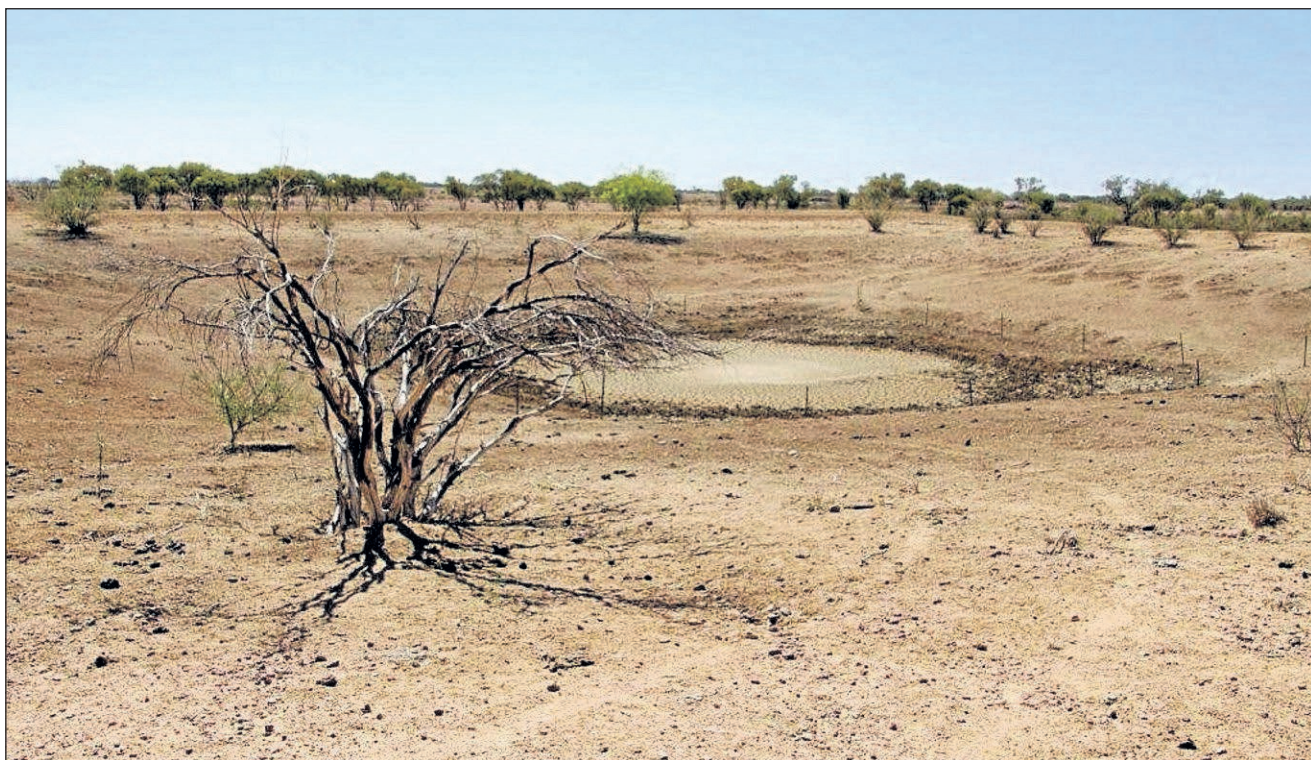
In some years, there won't be adequate rainfall and if you haven't reached your production date by this point, management decisions will need to be made.

A late season will result in less time for plants to grow before seasonal conditions become cooler and therefore, a smaller biomass of pasture will be available.

When you muster, consider lightening your stocking rates to accommodate for less available pasture.

This may be an opportune time to sell cattle rather than waiting until the dry and selling alongside the masses.

The second key decision date is at the end of the growing season. This is an ideal



With such high seasonal variability, it is not worth placing all hopes on an early break of season.

If you estimate that there is not enough pasture to carry all the stock until next summer, what are the critical questions then? What will happen to:

- pasture and water reserves?
- supplementary feed availability and prices?
- stock condition, value, losses?
- labour and infrastructure requirements, repairs and maintenance?
- finances?
- future rainfall infiltration, storage, runoff and erosion?
- pasture response and productivity?



When you muster, consider lightening your stocking rates to accommodate for less available pasture.

time to complete a forage budget to determine whether the available pasture in each paddock will meet animal demand and sustain your livestock, while meeting performance targets through to your next production date.

The third decision date is half way through the non-growing season.

Review stocking rates and pasture supply to determine if the current number can still be carried until the next production date. With high

seasonal variability, it is not worth placing all hopes on an early break of season.

Ensuring that you have a good body of feed in the dry season will reduce the requirement and expense of energy supplementation.

By setting key decision dates, reviewing the situation at each point and making appropriate stocking rate adjustments, you can avoid a decline in land and animal condition as well as costly supplementation.

To work out your green date, visit climateapp.net.au for more information about identifying key decision dates for your property or alternatively, contact your local beef extension officer via futurebeef.com.au.

Remember, it doesn't rain grass

IT IS generally several weeks after useful rain, before sufficient pasture becomes available for animals to satisfy their hunger and nutrient requirements.

Cattle often stop eating supplement and 'chase' the green pick, causing severe weight loss and death because animals use more energy walking than they get from the grass. To overcome this problem, confine animals to holding paddocks where practical, and continue supplementary feeding until there is sufficient paddock feed available.

Pastures that have been heavily grazed during a drought may take several years to fully recover.

Reducing weed risks from fodder

FODDER brought in from other districts can bring new weeds onto your property.

The Queensland Herbarium has produced the *Reducing weed risks from fodder* guide, to help producers recognise the risks of introducing or spreading weeds from fodder.

The guide provides information on how to manage fodder weed risks, including how you can reduce the risk from transport and on-farm storage.

Ongoing monitoring for new weeds is recommended. This guide explains easy steps to monitor your weeds and have them identified. Download the guide at <https://bit.ly/30FilBQ>.



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Get a grip on reef protection

HOW do the recently introduced Reef Protection regulations affect you as a commercial grazer?

The regulations address agricultural and industrial sources of nutrient and sediment pollution from all six reef regions - Cape York, Wet Tropics, Burdekin, Mackay Whitsunday, Fitzroy and Burnett Mary.

Most of the requirements do not apply to existing producers in the Cape York as the region has met its water quality targets.

When the reef protection regulations apply for beef cattle grazing:

Burdekin

■ Record keeping requirements: Dec 1, 2019

■ Minimum practice agricultural standards: Dec 1, 2020

Fitzroy

■ Record keeping requirements: Dec 1, 2019

■ Minimum practice agricultural standards: Dec 1, 2021

Wet Tropics, Mackay Whitsunday and Burnett Mary

■ Record keeping requirements: Dec 1, 2019

■ Minimum practice



agricultural standards: Dec 1, 2022

Under the regulations, commercial graziers in reef regions are required to:

■ Keep general records, e.g. of fertilisers applied to land.

■ Comply with three

minimum practice agricultural standards, which are rolled out over three years across different regions, including: for land in good or fair condition, continue using measures to maintain the land in good or fair condition; for

land in poor condition, implement measures to improve land condition towards achieving good or fair condition; and for land in degraded condition, implement measures to improve land condition towards achieving good or

fair condition or prevent areas of degraded land condition from further degrading or expanding.

Land condition is measured by the amount of ground cover at September 30 each year.

Paddocks with less than

50 per cent ground cover are considered to be in poor condition, and less than 20pc considered degraded condition.

However, it is recognised that:

■ Some land types may not be able to achieve 50pc ground cover even when taking all reasonable steps, especially if affected by natural disasters or drought.

■ It may be impractical and cost prohibitive to improve some areas of very degraded land, e.g. severe gully erosion or scalded areas. If so, measures must be taken to prevent these from further degrading.

A range of programs and support tools can help you identify opportunities to improve your farming practices.

For information, call the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries on 13 25 23 or your regional Natural Resource Management organisation.

Alternatively visit www.qld.gov.au/environment/agriculture/sustainable-farming/reef/reef-regulations/producers.grazing.

REEF REGIONS' GRAZIERS INVITED TO JOIN SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS PROGRAM



GRAZIERS from the Burdekin, Fitzroy and Burnett Mary regions are beginning to participate in the new Grazing Resilience and Sustainable Solutions (GRASS) program.

This program provides resources and support to graziers to assist with improving land condition, productivity and profitability and meet their obligations under the new reef protection regulations. The regulations that

commenced on December 1, 2019 will be rolled out in the Burdekin, Fitzroy and Burnett Mary catchments over the next three years. Under the regulations, graziers are required to document and record activities that are being carried out in accordance with minimum practice agricultural standards.

Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) staff will assist graziers with one-on-one property visits

and customised mapping to identify areas of poor land condition and develop Land Management Plans (LMP) to improve land condition.

Tailored to each property, the LMP provides strategies to better manage areas of concern. Potential strategies include land type fencing, erosion control, water distribution, pasture establishment and stocking rate adjustment. Participation in the GRASS program will enable graziers to

receive extra personalised support such as nutrition programs and economic analysis.

Eligible graziers can apply for funding to assist in implementing the strategies detailed in their LMP.

The GRASS program is funded through the Queensland Government Reef Water Quality Program and is being delivered by DAF, Burnett Mary Regional Group, Fitzroy Basin Association and NQ Dry Tropics.

For more information please contact your local DAF extension officer:

■ Burdekin: Megan Willis, 0467 801 777, Megan.Willis@daf.qld.gov.au
■ Fitzroy: Matt Brown, 0428 104 248, Matt.Brown@daf.qld.gov.au
■ Burnett Mary: Roger Sneath, 0429 721 926, Roger.Sneath@daf.qld.gov.au

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Do research before you build

IF YOU are considering upgrading your shearing shed, or building a new one, it's important to do your research by looking at different sheds and talking to people in the industry.

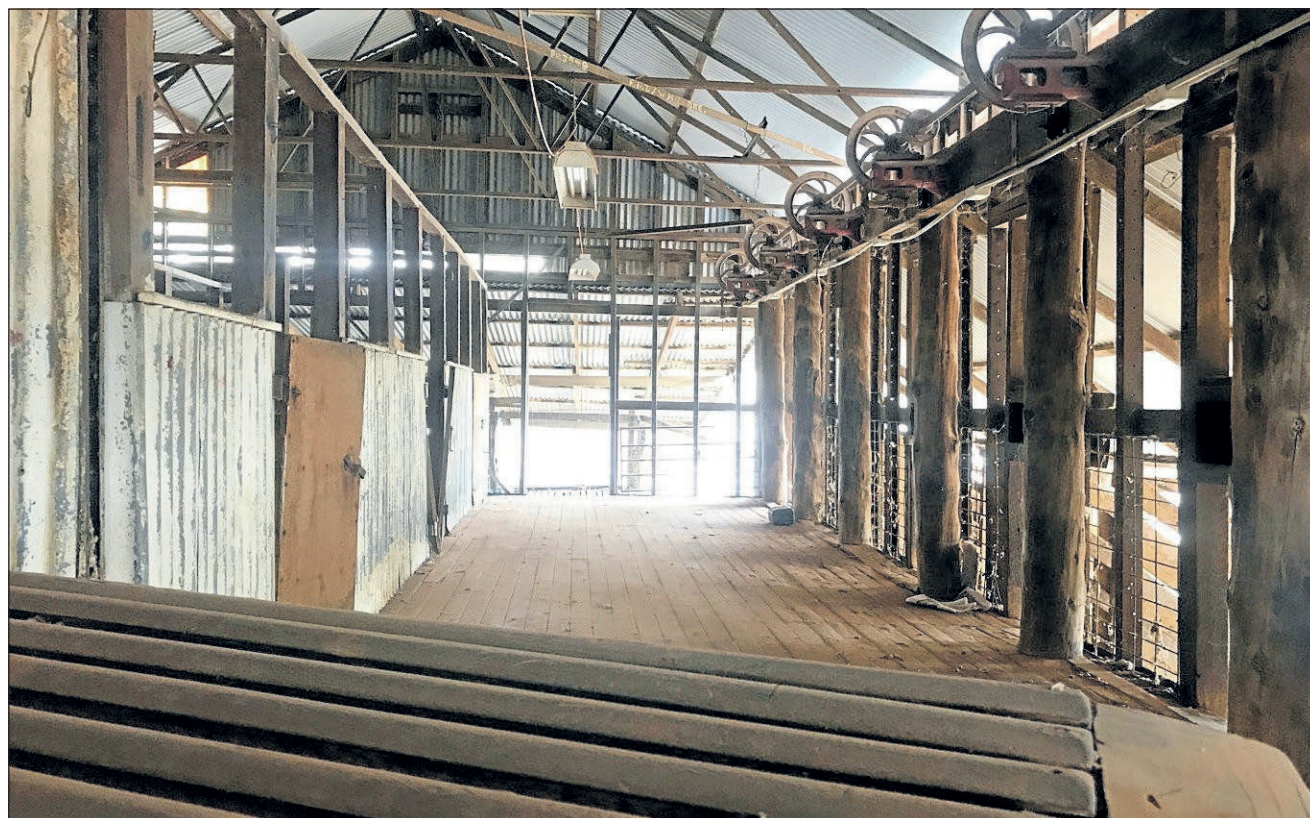
That was the key tip for the 40 attendees of the Leading Sheep shearing shed efficiency and design workshop, held in Longreach in December.

The workshop gave attendees the opportunity to hear from experienced wool growers and industry professionals, including builders, shearing contractors, and representatives from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Leading Sheep project coordinator, Jed Sommerfield, presented various design approaches to new sheds and shed upgrades, and said feedback from the workshop was very positive.

"Nearly 80 per cent of attendees rated the workshop as highly satisfactory, with many indicating their intention to make changes to their own sheds," he said.

"Producers left the workshop full of ideas about



The Leading Sheep shearing shed design workshop, held in Longreach, highlighted the numerous considerations for wool growers when contemplating upgrades or changes to their shearing sheds.

ways to upgrade catching pens, review their shed safety, upgrade smoko facilities or improve general shed facilities, like lighting and ventilation."

The workshop highlighted

the numerous considerations for wool growers when contemplating upgrades or changes to their shearing sheds, including the safety impacts of various design aspects, how to finance up-

grades, and the importance of planning thoroughly before starting to build.

"We heard from a Longreach based contractor, Marty Smith, who emphasised the critical importance

of thorough planning before building, and getting out and looking at different shed designs in action before making big decisions," Mr Sommerfield said.

"We also heard from the

owner of a shearing contracting business, Raeleen Bowden, who gave us insight to shed design from a shearers' perspective.

"At the end of the day, it's the shearers and wool handlers who are directly impacted by shed design, so things like safety, comfort and functionality are very important to them.

"With safety such an important element of shed design, it was great to see so many attendees take home a Shearing Shed Safety Signage Kit, supplied by Australian Wool Innovation."

The kit contains 36 safety signs, printed on UV-stabilised material with pre-drilled holes for easy installation.

The signs meet Australian standards and legislative requirements nationally, and are a great tool for woolgrowers wanting to improve and meet their health and safety obligations in the shed.

To view the large selection of resource material and the first Around the Camp podcast visit the Leading Sheep website - leadingsheep.com.au.

IT'S IMPORTANT TO HAVE A PLAN, BUT EQUALLY IMPORTANT TO BE NIMBLE



MOST people in agriculture will tell you there's no such thing as a perfect plan.

In an industry where things are constantly changing, be it the weather forecast, wool price or fodder availability, it's important to understand that the best plan is a flexible one.

As wool growers, there are numerous opportunities to make and change plans throughout the year.

From shearing, to joining, to lamb marking, weaning,

and buying or selling, it's important to have a plan but equally important to be nimble and able to adapt if you need to.

As we know, the importance of planning is no more obvious than in times of drought.

Navigating decisions about feeding, selling and managing your resources in dry times can be complex; but flexibility, learning from experience, and incorporating these experiences into

your approach next time around is an important skill.

There are numerous tools available to sheep producers to help plan a wide variety of activities for their business.

For tools on planning, everything from drought planning to restocking contact leadingsheep@daf.qld.gov.au. To hear more from the Leading Sheep project, subscribe to our monthly *Around the Camp* e-newsletter, follow us on Face-

book @LeadingSheep, and tune into the bi-monthly *Around the Camp* Podcast by visiting leadingsheep.com.au.

Leading the way for a more profitable Queensland sheep and wool industry through new technology knowledge and skills, Leading Sheep is a joint initiative of Australian Wool Innovation and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, with support from AgForce.

Four tools for planning

■ Four tools that are free, easy to use and provide accurate information are The Lambing Planner, Feed cost calculator, automatic text message wool market report and WoolCheque. For more information and links to these four tools visit the Leading Sheep website leadingsheep.com.au or their Facebook page.

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