3-PART WEBINAR SERIES

Making profitable management decisions after the dry

Key management considerations for beef producers

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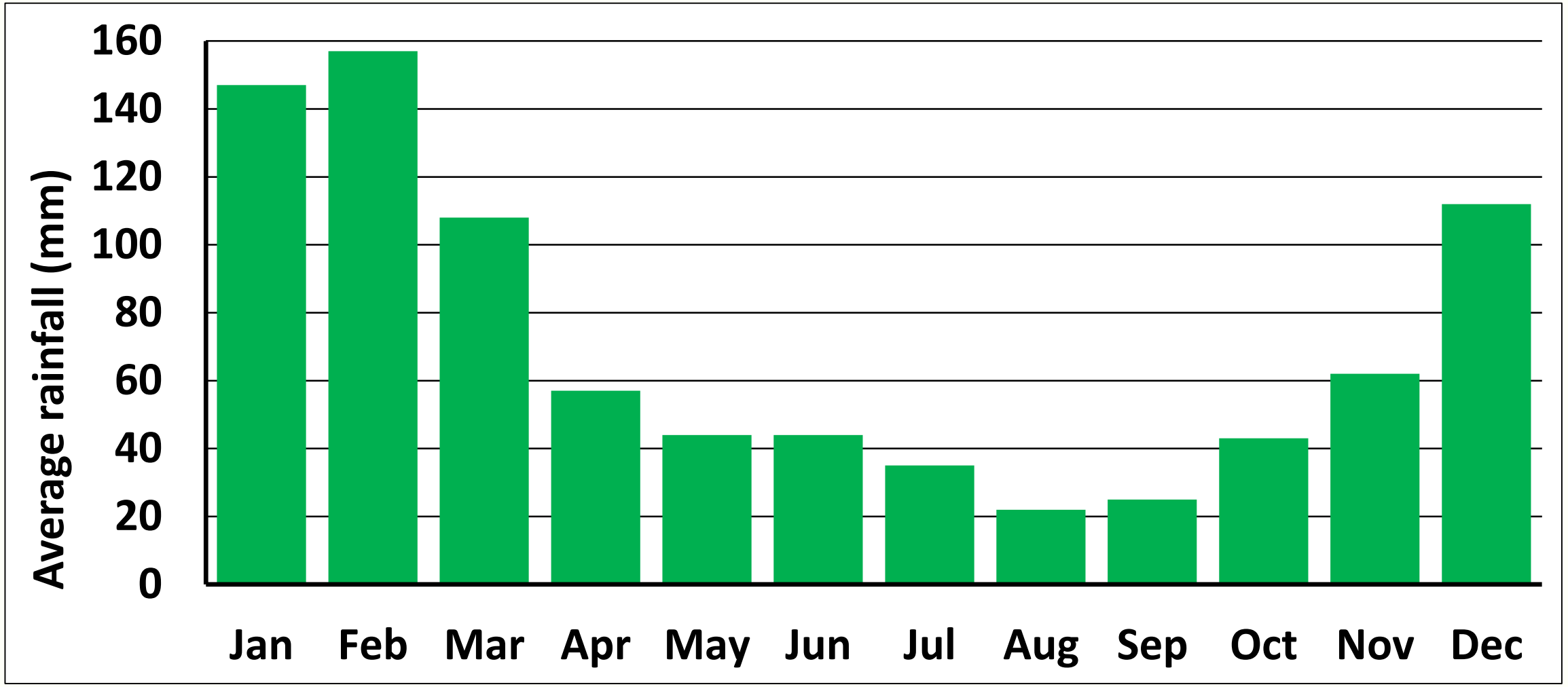
Drought management and recovery depends on having the fundamentals right

- What does climate data tell us?
- How much grass is available?
- Herd structure
- Breeder management fundamentals
- Assessing options

What does climate data tell us?



Average monthly rainfall Yaamba

When does the wet start?

Green date (Date by when 50 mm over maximum 3 days can be expected)

50% of years	**15 December**
70% of years	**11 January**

- **Early storms are a bonus, but don’t rely on them to solve a feed shortage**
- **Your grass has got to be able to last until the end of January**
- **Critical for forage budgets and time of calving**

When does the wet end?

Probability of 50 mm over a maximum of 3 days in April is 21%

- **Pasture at the end of March has to last until the season breaks**
- **Autumn and winter rain is unlikely to solve a failed summer**
- **Temperature restricts the ability of pasture to respond to winter rain**
- **Critical for forage budgeting and weaning**

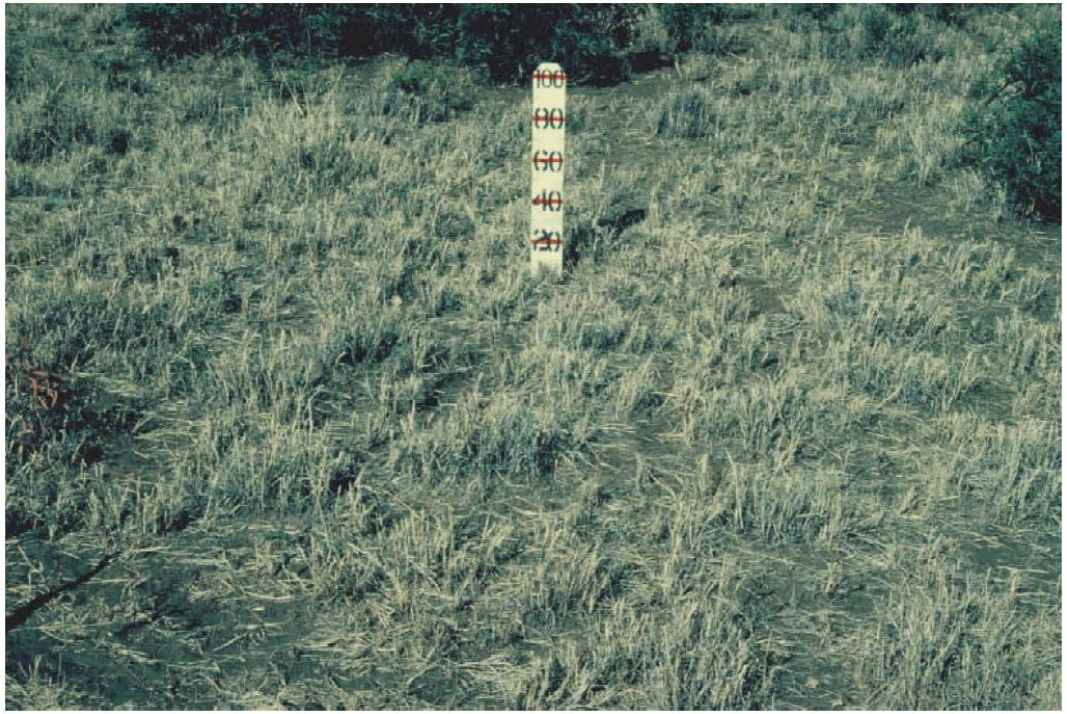
How much grass do you have now?

4,750 kg/ha

2,850 kg/ha

Photo standards available at: futurebeef.com.au search for pasture photo standards

How much grass will you have at the end of the dry season?



1,650 kg/ha

1,050 kg/ha

This is the minimum you should have at the end of the dry season

Knowing how much grass you have is critical

Pasture budgeting information and help is available from

DAF staff

FutureBeef website www.futurebeef.com.au **Search pasture budgeting**

NRM groups

Consultants

- **Need to avoid feeding hay**
- **If there isn't enough grass the cattle shouldn't be there**

Herd structure and male turnoff age

	Weaner steers	1-2 year steers	2-3 year steers
Adult equivalents	1,500	1,500	1,500
Cattle carried	1,297	1,473	1,496
Breeders mated	1,112	969	801
Breeders mated and kept	872	760	628
Calves weaned	784	684	565
Cows and heifers sold	365	318	263
Steers sold	392	337	276
GM per AE after interest	$301	$362	$379

- **Growing cattle are usually more profitable than the breeders**
- **The year following weaning is usually the most profitable steer year**
- **Breeders are work, costly and higher drought risk**

Options to reduce breeder numbers and drought risk

- Grow and or finish cull heifers
- Finish light cull cows
- Can be done on light country
- Lower pasture and supplement requirements
- Lower marketing costs

Breeder herd fundamentals

Herds with good breeder management strategies are:

- ✓ **Less affected by drought**
- ✓ **Easier to manage in droughts**
- ✓ **Have lower supplement costs**
- ✓ **Recover from droughts quicker**

Cows need to be cycling to get pregnant

Main requirement for cycling?

Weight for heifer puberty

Condition score for cows

Breeder Body Condition Scores

BCS 1 – Poor

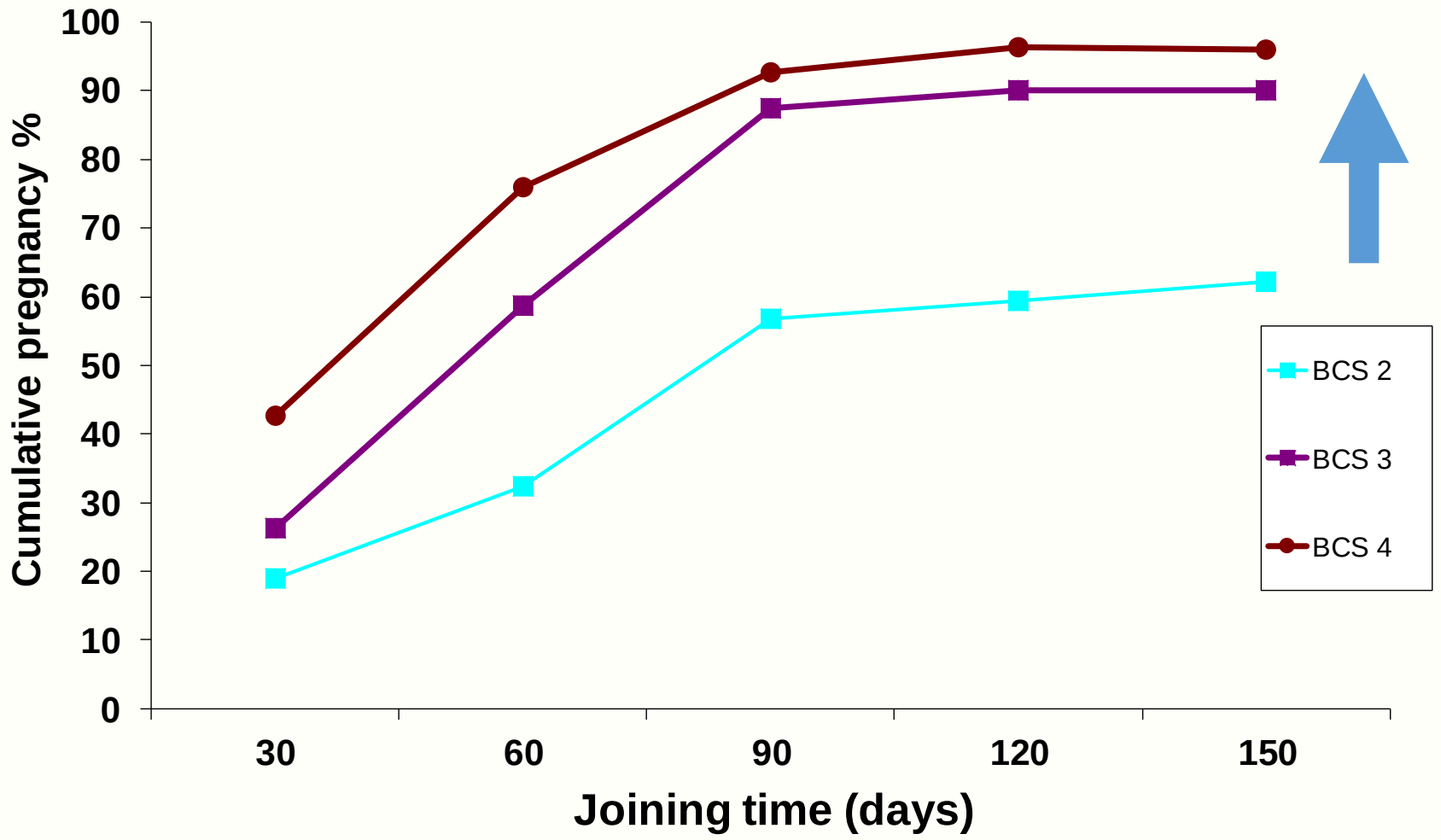
BCS 2 – Backward store

BCS 3 – Store

BCS 4 – Forward store

BCS 5 – Fat

Breeder body condition and pregnancy rates



Drought recovery requires rebuilding breeder condition and maintaining it

Life for a 450 kg breeder at the end of the dry season

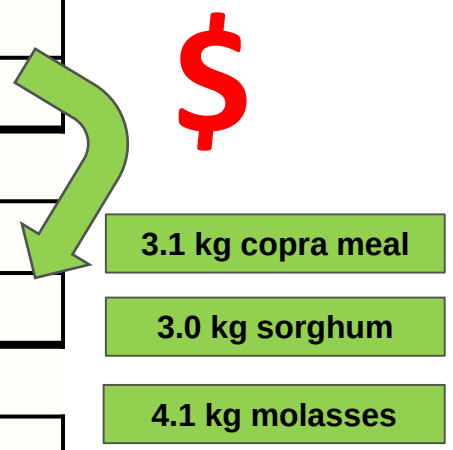
	Pasture only (7 kg/day)	
Diet quality provided by pasture: CP = 4.8% DMD = 47%	Protein (g)	ME (MJ)
Intake from pasture	333	44

How much grass does she need to eat to meet these requirements?

12.7 kg of dry season grass needed to meet the 80 MJ ME required by a 450 kg wet cow

Life for a 450 kg breeder at the end of the dry season

	Pasture only (7 kg/day)	
Diet quality provided by pasture: CP = 4.8% DMD = 47%	**Protein (g)**	**ME (MJ)**
Intake from pasture	**333**	**44**
Requirements		
Dry cow – last trimester	**570**	**60**
Lactating cow – calf to 4 months	**911**	**80**
Deficits		
Dry cow – last trimester	**237**	**16**
Lactating cow – calf to 4 months	**578**	**36**



Life for a 450 kg breeder at the end of the dry season

	7 kg dry matter	8.4 kg dry matter 150 g lick/day
	Pasture only	
Diet quality provided by pasture: CP = 4.8% DMD = 47%	Protein (g)	ME (MJ)
Intake from pasture	333	44
Requirements		
Dry cow – last trimester	570	60
Lactating cow – calf to 4 months	911	80
Deficits		
Dry cow – last trimester	237	16
Lactating cow – calf to 4 months	578	36

Breeders require good body condition to handle periods when diet is below maintenance

Remember, this happens every year!

Time of joining?

The Green date is usually December-February

How long can your cows hang on for?

Calving date	Days to 26 Jan
1 Jul	209
1 Sep	148
1 Nov	87

Decide which months you don't want calves and join accordingly

- **Need to manage grass and body condition so the cattle and country can handle a late break**

How much do management options reduce dry season breeder live weight loss?

Management option	Benefit per month	Benefit per dry season
Additional body reserves at start of dry season (e.g. P supps up to 90 kg benefit)		~½ of the additional LW
Earlier weaning	5 – 13 kg	~60 kg
Urea supplements	0 – 7 kg	0 – 40 kg
Molasses-urea supplements (M8U)	15 – 25 kg	~75 kg

Weaning is critical for managing body condition

Prevent the preventable

- Clostridials e.g. blackleg
- Botulism
- Leptospirosis
- Vibriosis
- Tick fever
- Pestivirus?
- Three Day Sickness?

- Most vaccinations can be fitted into normal handling

Management calendar

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Season	Wet	Wet	Wet	Late wet	Early dry	Early dry	Mid dry	Mid dry	Late dry	Late dry	Late dry	Early wet
Cow status	Wet	Wet	Wet	Wet	Dry pregnant	Dry pregnant	Dry pregnant	Dry pregnant	Calving & wet	Calving & wet	Calving & wet	Calving & wet
Management activity	Brand			Bulls out 4 Apr (16 weeks mating)	Weaning Pregnancy testing	Select heifers for joining at next mating				Vaccinate bulls		Bulls in 15 Dec

- **Helps planning and communication**
- **Critical for controlled mating**

Assessing drought recovery options

A range of tools to assess management options and recorded presentations explaining how to use them, are available from; futurebeef.com.au (search for improving-profitability-and-resilience-of-beef-and-sheep-businesses).

Breedcow Dynama Herd Budgeting Package

- **Breedcowplus**
- **Dynamaplus**
- **Bullocks & Cowtrade**

Breedcowplus

- Establishes a picture of current herd structure and performance
- Is there a more profitable way to manage the herd?
  - Improving weaning rates?
  - What is the most profitable age of male turn-off?
  - Female culling and marketing strategies
  - Changes in management practices e.g. supplements

Dynamaplus

Where are we now?

- **Uses the business's actual numbers**
- **Herd structure, sales, costs, & finances**

Where are we headed?

- **Herd structure, sales, cash flow, debt repayment**

Will the plan work?

- **Drought recovery**
- **Property purchase and development**
- **Business restructuring**

Bullocks and Cowtrade

Bullocks – Trading steers & heifers

Cowtrade – PTIC cows, cows & calves

- **What should we buy?**
- **How much can we pay?**
- **Forced sales – what is the best decision?**
  - **to raise cash?**
  - **to reduce numbers?**
- **Should we sell something extra when prices are extraordinary?**

Key principles

- **Understand the profitability of the herd and classes of animals – *Breedcow/Dynama package***
- **Get the turnoff and herd structure right**
- **What will this animal earn over the next 12 months and what are the risks in owning it?**
- **If your cattle are not earning agistment after running costs, can you afford them?**

Breeder management & grazing pressure

Month	Activity	No. cows	No. calves
Sep	Calving commences	200	
Jan	20 dry cows (10%) removed at branding	180	180
May	180 calves weaned	180	
May	27 empty cows (15%) culled	153	
Jun	47 heifers or cows added	200	

Grazing pressure reduced early in growing season

Cow nutritional requirements halved

Grazing pressure reduced early in dry season

Control numbers carried through the dry season

Take Home Messages

- Don’t plan on early breaks or winter rain solving a grass problem
- Adjust stock numbers to ensure adequate end of dry season pasture residue
- Do not feed hay to retain cattle
- Good breeder management minimises drought risk
- Rebuild breeder body condition
- Get the herd structure right
- There are tools to help you assess options