



BEEFTALK
Taking stock of your future

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Get the facts on climate

Climate Mates improve the use of weather and climate forecasts through training and engaging with graziers and advisers.

DO YOU get frustrated with the weather forecast?

Do you know how to correctly interpret chance of rainfall?

Do you know the difference between an average and a median?

Questions like these are the ones that Climate Mates are here to help with.

Climate Mates are a collective of rural people located across northern Australia, from South East Queensland to the Pilbara in Western Australia.

We are employed as part of the Northern Australia Climate Program (NACP) and our aim is to improve the use of weather and climate forecasts through training and engaging with graziers and advisers, and support the broader extension network across northern Australia.

Initially the project supported eight Climate Mates across northern Australia, however the success of this program has seen this recently extend to an additional eight Climate Mates, therefore 16 Climate Mates representing areas of northern Australia.

It is one of nine current projects under the \$21 million Drought and Climate Adaptation Program that brings together the best climate scientists, climate advisers, and cutting-edge researchers in the state, nationally and globally to help Queensland primary

producers better manage drought and climate impacts.

What this means for you

We Climate Mates deliver workshops disseminating regionally specific climate and forecast information as well as gathering feedback on research and product development.

We also run a couple of Facebook pages 'Climate info for southern Queensland' and 'Climate info for northern Queensland'.

Through these channels we aim to help you, the producers, better navigate and understand the immense library of climate information available.

We work closely with the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM), which gives us a foot in the door for you to ask questions to the people who can provide forecasting information for your area.

Did you know that approximately seven out of 10 producers who attended our workshops were not reading the BOM weather forecast accurately?

We realise the sheer quantity of climate information available can make it very confusing and difficult to decipher.

We challenge you to test your knowledge and maybe learn something you didn't know yesterday.

Go to the NACP website (nacp.org.au).

Click 'Outreach' and find



Elsie Dodd helps producers better navigate and understand the immense library of climate information available.



We have found through online surveys, workshop feedback and general discussion that 70 per cent of producers are reading the weather forecast incorrectly.

Elsie Dodd

'Climate Training Course' - it is free and easy to navigate.

The quiz at the start is there for you to test your knowledge and to give us an idea of which topics we need to focus our attention on.

Once you've completed

the course, we want to have a chat about how you found it and answer any further questions you may have.

We are more than happy to pay you a visit, have a cup of tea and walk you through what we consider to be the

most useful climate tools online.

Now to answer your questions!

The climate forecast is always wrong because we're interpreting it incorrectly.

If the forecast says there is an 80 per cent chance of rain 10-20 millimetres, that means there is 80pc chance of over 0.2mm of rainfall.

There is also 20pc chance of receiving nothing!

Further to that, there is a 50pc chance of receiving 10mm, and there is a 25pc chance of 20mm.

We're not sure how anyone was supposed to know

how to interpret that, but every day is a school day and now we all know something we didn't know yesterday.

Aren't average and median the same thing?

As you've probably guessed by now, no they're not.

Average is the mean of all rainfall in the specified data. The median is the middle value of the specified data.

The median does not take into account abnormal weather events such as no rainfall in the wet season or a freak rainstorm like Toowoomba saw in 2011.

This makes the median a more accurate way to measure rainfall probabilities.

Look up your area on ClimateARM and check out the difference between the average (mean) and the median.

It is important to know the difference between average and median because climate statistics are commonly presented as the probability of exceeding the median.

This can be deceiving if you don't know your median.

For example, if Burketown, Queensland is forecast to receive above median rainfall in July, those who are informed will know that the median rainfall for that location at that time of the year is a big fat zero. Know your median.

For more information please visit Nacp.org.au for the Climate Training Course and to look up your local Climate Mate.

Please also look up and follow 'Climate info for southern Qld' on Facebook.

■ Elsie Dodd, Climate Mate for south-central Queensland.

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Journey to regeneration

Sixty years of innovation in land management at Woodgreen Station in the Northern Territory.

FOR 60 years Bob Purvis has been developing and applying innovative approaches to improve land condition and the performance of his property.

Woodgreen Station is located about 250 kilometres north-east of Alice Springs in the Northern Territory.

The region has an extremely variable climate, characterised by low rainfall, long hot summers and short, sunny winters with frosty mornings.

This region is often referred to as the desert, but it doesn't have to be a barren desert.

Bob recalls that when he took over the management of Woodgreen 60 years ago it was like a "mini desert" - a legacy of the previous 30 years' management.

Since taking over the station, Bob has worked hard to restore the property's productivity, and now it lives up to the name Woodgreen.

Early in his agriculture journey, Bob sought the help of scientists, advisers, government representatives, and just about anyone he could find that could contribute knowledge, experience, or research to the giant land management puzzle he was trying to solve.

He took the time to understand the research and management techniques of the various advisers.

Not only did he observe, he got involved, asked questions, and posed alternative

solutions to them.

He couldn't have done what he's done without interacting and adapting those solutions to his place and situation, because no one knows a pastoralist's place better than they do.

Bob's willingness to share his knowledge and experience has led to him educating and helping other graziers, researchers and extension officers to identify and implement new approaches to land management.

Bob's management is built on the recognition that the desert soils are fragile and prone to erosion from wind and water if not protected.

Keeping healthy grass tussocks in the paddock is key to having good land condition.

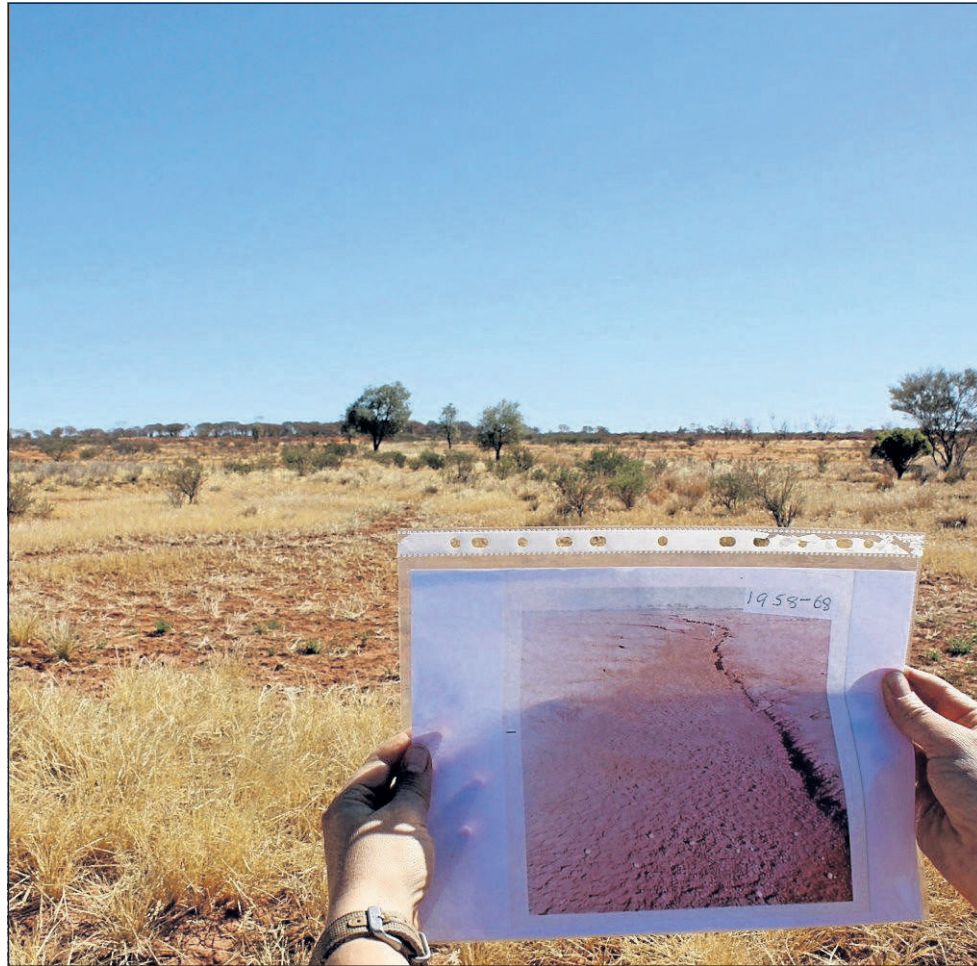
The grass butts hold the soil together, help water infiltrate rather than run off and give the landscape a better starting point to resume growth after rain, using stored energy in the butts to resprout.

For Bob, the most important thing above all else was to get the stocking rate right.

Too much grazing pressure hinders the maintenance and improvement of land condition and its ability to reach its maximum productivity.

The extra mouths to feed, in a highly variable climate, were also a great risk to him.

The right stocking rate maintains and builds productive capacity.



This area was very degraded in the late 1950s to early 1960s as shown in the old photo. Reducing stock numbers and building banks have helped perennial grasses return.

“Bob's willingness to share his knowledge and experience has led to him educating and helping other graziers, researchers and extension officers to identify and implement new approaches to land management.

Bob has built over 1200 banks over the past 60 years to slow rainfall runoff and manage overland flow.

He has used two different

types of banks, modifying designs from elsewhere to discover what worked best on Woodgreen.

The first banks are what

are referred to in most places as ponding banks.

Bob says they work by capturing the 'fines' (topsoil) - the ponding of water is just a bonus.

The second type of banks are used to prevent soil erosion associated with station roads and fence lines.

By using well placed 'whoa boys' he was able to manage the flow of water over and along his roads.

His fences are easy to maintain due to the space between the ground and the first wire being just high enough for a grader blade to run underneath and clear any vegetation that comes

up without disturbing the soil. Bob uses fire a lot for land management.

Over the last 50 years, planned burning of thick mulga area has created a more biodiverse open ghost gum grassland.

Healthy pastures with a diverse range of grasses and forbs are much more nutritious for cattle.

Herd management has also been critical in the Woodgreen story. By turning off older, heavier bullocks Bob has a more drought resilient herd because breeders are a lower proportion of the herd.

This strategy combined with good herd management ensures a productive herd, low cattle losses and a reliable turnoff of quality animals each year.

Land, livestock and business management in a highly variable environment is extremely challenging, but Bob has shown that managing the whole system, observing, trialling, evaluating and tweaking are all part of finding what will deliver the desired outcomes.

Because money is generally a limitation it is important to be confident that actions taken will be of financial benefit to the business.

Pick your battles and identify where change will have the biggest impact.

It may not be possible to do it all, but you need to start somewhere.

Read more about the Woodgreen restoration journey at futurebeef.com.au.

■ Meg Humphrys, pastoral extension officer, Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade, Alice Springs, (08) 8951 8144.

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- **First Start Loans** to help you establish your first primary production enterprise.

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Our team is ready to talk when you are. Contact us on **Freecall 1800 623 946** to speak with your local Regional Area Manager or visit www.qrida.qld.gov.au for more information.

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Management decisions now made easier

FORAGE is an online decision support system that generates and distributes information for rural lots on plan greater than one hectare in area for grazing properties in Queensland.

The reports are delivered by email as easy to understand PDF property-scale reports, to help decision-making in grazing land and environmental management.

FORAGE reports include:

■ Long-term carrying capacity report

Long-term carrying capacity information can help with planning for property improvements, estimation of long-term herd numbers, property purchasing and selling decisions and determining changes in carrying capacity associated with changes in land condition. The report provides an objective estimate of the number of livestock that a property will run safely for "A" through to "D" land condition.

■ Pasture growth alert

The FORAGE Pasture growth alert provides an assessment of future pasture growth and pasture resilience risk, thereby assisting in management decisions to increase property resilience to drought and help identify pasture recovery opportunities.

■ Groundcover report

The FORAGE Groundcover report now offers a monthly satellite map for your property. Around the 10th day of each month the page one map will display an image from the previous month, showing a range of ground cover classes for property assessment.

■ Fire scar report

You can see the fire frequency on your property for the past 10 years, to find out whether it has been burnt too much or not enough, and in what months fires have occurred and where.

■ Indicative land type report

The FORAGE Indicative land type report shows the current version of Grazing Land Management land type mapping (updated February 2019) and the approximate area of each land type within the selected area.

■ Rainfall and pasture report

Provides historical rainfall, pasture growth, total standing dry matter and pasture cover information for a selected lot(s) on plan. Rainfall is estimated from surrounding rainfall stations, pasture cover from satellite imagery and modelling, and pasture growth from modelling alone.

In addition to the customised reports, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (Queensland) has created a number of short animated videos and recorded many explanatory webinars, visit futurebeef.com.au. To request FORAGE reports visit longpaddock.qld.gov.au/forage.



The FORAGE Ground cover report now offers a monthly satellite map for your property.



Production is enhanced when pain relief is used as animals suffer less pain, and as a result, return to normal feeding and other activities much faster.

Choose the right pain relief

THE benefits of pain relief for painful procedures such as castration, dehorning and disbudding are widely acknowledged and supported by field trials.

In recent years the number of pain relief options available for use in commercial cattle operations has grown significantly.

Producers making deci-

sions on which pain relief strategy to use in which circumstance now have a useful guide to draw on, developed by the Cattle Council of Australia (CCA).

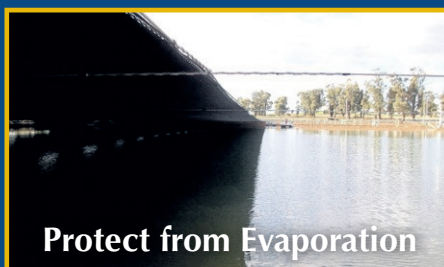
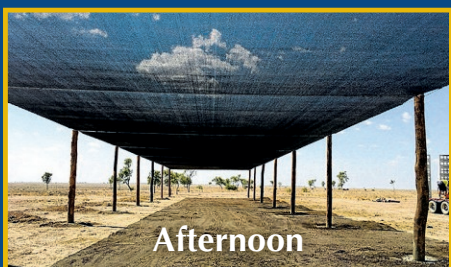
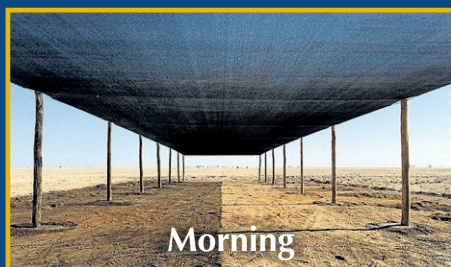
The Pain Relief Guide recently released by the CCA provides guidance to help producers match planned procedures with the most relevant product/s.

The guide provides a summary of registered pain relief products, a guide to the indicative price per head of each, and lists pain relief options for procedures such as castration, dehorning, spaying, branding and ear marking.

Download a copy of the guide at the CCA website: cattlecouncil.com.au.

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Are you storing wool?

Taking stock of your wool options

IT HAS been a tumultuous 2020 for the global economy and therefore also Australia's wool industry.

Exacerbated by COVID-19, the dramatic fluctuation in market value for wool is reducing the urgency for some producers to send wool to the market.

When the market moves as much as it has this year, storing wool has become an option for producers, this is causing a growing amount of the 2020 wool clip to be stored on-farm and in brokers' warehouses.

Before storing wool on-farm, it's important that woolgrowers take stock of their wool, options and associated risks.

Bruce McLeish, Queensland wool manager for Elders, said given the current market conditions, storing or holding wool is something Australian producers are currently considering as an option.

"Before making a final decision on how to store your wool either on or off-farm, it's critical that producers know storage costs," Mr McLeish said.

"There's a big difference between brokers on free storage time and the daily cost of storing after this period."

According to Mr McLeish, it's important to consider



Though wool is one of the easiest products to store, a growing stockpile on-farm could pose significant risks to Australian woolgrowers.

deterioration of grab samples, when looking at the type of wool producers are storing.

"Generally, the wool from younger sheep and wool with colour, either scourable or unsourable, will deteriorate quicker and will need regreasing to maximise competition at a considerable cost, especially small lot sizes," he said.

"Woolgrowers should consider what type of wool to store, low-value wool types against high-value wool.

"For example, a carding wool (wool shorter than 45 millimetres, typically locks and crutchings) increases by 10 per cent is approximately 30 cents per kilogram increase or \$55 per bale, compared to a 10 per cent in a fine fleece resulting in a 150 cents per kilogram

STORING WOOL

- The decision to store or hold your wool should not be made lightly.
- Discounts, additional cost and other risks can have a significant impact on the cents per kilo you receive.
- Examples of the impacts are not being able to react to market spikes, grab sample degradation, rodent damage, oxidation of wool grease leading to an increase in colour in bales.

increase or \$280 per bale.

"It's important to consider the potential monetary gain and the associated risk with storage.

"But if you decide to keep your wool on-farm, be sure

to check with your wool broker on their insurance terms and if not covered contact your insurance company."

Another key consideration is to look at the vegetable matter (VM) before deciding whether or not to store.

Mr McLeish said circumstances such as wet winters will dramatically increase amounts of VM and larger discounts at point-of-sale.

So, holding onto high VM wools in this circumstance would have less potential for a large increase in price.

When storing, Mr McLeish recommends holding larger lots over small lines to maximise competition.

Jed Sommerfield, extension officer with the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries said it's imperative that

woolgrowers know their options and are vigilant if holding wool on-farm.

"For example, always set a target price you want to achieve and consider setting a reserve, especially when selling electronically on Wool Trade or WoolQ. This way you don't miss rallies and spikes in the market," Mr Sommerfield said.

"Though wool is one of the easiest products to store, a growing stockpile on-farm could pose significant risks to Australian woolgrowers, creating a greater need for security precautions to protect their stored clip.

"But insurance premiums for storing wool on-farm can be high, and often it's cheaper to store with brokers.

"Producers are often more inclined to send their wool straight to their wool broker

and get it tested and then make a selling plan."

With a growing number of wool bales stored on-farm, producers must be aware of the increased risk of wool theft and adopt strategies to mitigate this risk.

Mr Sommerfield said woolsheds are often challenging to both secure and monitor, often positioned in more remote parts of the property.

"The longer your wool is stored on-farm, the greater the risk of theft. Producers may consider storing their bales in a locked shed and installing security cameras to monitor sheds with adequate signage on the property to deter thieves from entering," he said.

"Clearly brand your stored bales of wool and keep stock of what you have on-farm by formally recording and taking photos of your inventory.

"Do not leave tally books, wool books, and classers specifications in your shearing shed. Forward copies of these documents to your broker or insurer.

"Though this will not increase your on-farm security, it will increase the chances of identification later.

"Beyond this, producers should always be aware of the risks to farm security and implement measures towards mitigating risk, whether that just be something as simple as locking farm gates."

Leading Sheep is an important partnership between the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (Queensland) and Australian Wool Innovation and is supported by AgForce.

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