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Working towards a carbon neutral future

Keeping graziers informed

REGISTRATIONS are now open for the Carbon Neutral Grazer Network.

The network will provide the latest tips and information on positioning your business to take advantage of the rapidly evolving world of environmental markets and certification schemes.

Participants will receive quarterly updates on the latest research findings, links to relevant and scientifically verified articles and the opportunity to be involved in research projects.

Group members will be encouraged to share their experiences, ask questions and learn from each other.

Aims of the Carbon Neutral Grazer Network are:

- Identify business records that enable the calculation of current and historic emissions from livestock businesses
- Help participants identify their current environmental position by improving their knowledge of available tools and technologies
- Provide a central location for articles on international red meat carbon policies
- Identify graziers who



The Carbon Neutral Grazer Network offers graziers the opportunity to participate in data collection to support the development of remote sensing tools and technologies in their region.

are interested in being involved in future on-farm carbon neutral and biodiversity orientated projects

■ Answer members' questions about

environmental markets.

What's in it for you?

- The latest on targeted research helping to cement the foundations for graziers to participate in globally recognised 'low

carbon', 'carbon neutral' and 'biodiversity friendly' red meat markets

- Resources to help your business become low carbon or carbon neutral
- Have your questions about

environmental markets answered

- Learn about other graziers' experiences
- The opportunity to participate in data collection to support the

development of remote sensing technologies in your region.

Members of the Carbon Neutral Grazer Network must:

- Be interested in the implications of carbon and environmental policies
- Be a constructive and active participant
- Be willing to ask questions via the network email
- Be willing to share their experiences as 'Grazer Submissions' in the quarterly newsletter - assisting peer-to-peer learning.

How to apply

To apply to be a part of the Carbon Neutral Grazer Network, go to surveymonkey.com/r/T2JWMRR.

The Carbon Neutral Grazer Network is brought to you by the From Method to Market project team.

The project is funded by the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Queensland government's Land Restoration Fund, CIBO Labs and Meat & Livestock Australia.

For more information email carbon@daf.qld.gov.au.

Top tips to manage a reproductive disease

WITH the start of mating approaching, now is the time to ensure your herd is protected against vibriosis.

Effective vaccination programs are one of the easiest ways to ensure your herd's productivity and profitability is maintained.

Vibriosis is a cattle venereal disease caused by the

Campylobacter fetus bacterium. It causes embryonic losses and results in poor pregnancy rates in herds with no bull vaccination program. Maiden heifers are the most vulnerable females, with a 10-30 per cent reduction in pregnancy rates common.

Infected bulls carry and transmit the disease with no

effect on themselves. Cows also show no signs of infection. Most females recover and can reconceive, but conceptions are delayed. Some infected females can become persistently infected and act as disease reservoirs. Pregnancy testing and culling cows which fail to conceive removes potential carriers.

As bulls age, the lining of their sheath develops folds, which can harbour the vibriosis bacterium. Consequently, it is recommended that maiden bulls are joined to maiden heifers. Culling bulls at seven years is a good risk management strategy. These strategies also reduce the risk of trichomoniasis,

another fertility disease for which there is no vaccine.

In most situations vibriosis can be controlled by bull vaccination. Maiden bulls require two initial vaccinations before mating to ensure they have effective immunity.

A significant number of sale bulls are not vaccinated, so it is critical to determine

their vaccination status and vaccinate accordingly. An annual booster is required.

Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) beef extension officers or veterinarians can offer assistance.

■ Matthew Richardson, Beef extension officer, DAF Rockhampton, 0467 801 673.



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Laying foundations to go carbon neutral

Reducing emissions on-farm

THE From Method to Market project team is committed to helping Queensland red meat producers go carbon neutral.

Eight beef businesses have been busy collating their cattle records including carcase feedback sheets, stock sale and purchase invoices, branding numbers and cattle numbers at year's end.

Purchased inputs (e.g. fuel, fertiliser, electricity, etc.) are also included in the analysis.

This data from the past four financial years is being used to calculate how much carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) each business emits per year.

"The next step will be to model on-farm abatement options to halve or neutralise these baseline emissions," project leader Dr Hayley McMillan said.

"The abatement options we are modelling in collaboration with Integrity Ag and Environment have been tailored to each individual business.

"They include legume establishment, voluntary retention of relatively small areas of native regrowth, rem-



From Method to Market project participants Col and Joan Seiler's property Killara near Durong, Queensland.

nant vegetation, and carbon sequestration by pastures where producers are maintaining pasture biomass at, or above, the average for the region."

While these are the most

likely on-farm offsets to achieve the red meat industry's carbon neutral goal, it is important to note that some are not yet formally recognised by Australia's public carbon market, The Emis-

sions Reduction Fund. "However, public and private carbon markets are rapidly evolving to accommodate carbon neutral product certifications for a range of industries," Dr Mc-

Millan said. "Real-life red meat case studies like these will help to ensure that relevant and affordable methods are available to the red meat industry to achieve globally recog-

Public and private carbon markets are rapidly evolving to accommodate carbon neutral product certifications for a range of industries.

Dr Hayley McMillan

nised low carbon and carbon neutral red meat products."

Equally as important is the opportunity to demonstrate to livestock producers what 'going carbon neutral' is likely to look like at the family farm level.

The From Method to Market project is jointly funded by the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, The Land Restoration Fund, CIBO Labs and Meat & Livestock Australia.

For more information contact Dr Hayley McMillan on 0429 019 988.

Guide to year-round crops in the rangelands

A FIVE-YEAR project to support agriculture and pastoral diversification in the Western Australian northern rangelands has culminated with the release of a comprehensive guide to growing irrigated crops and pastures.

The project has paved the way to better exploit tropical irrigated agriculture through

the use of sustainable water resources in the Pilbara and west Kimberley.

'Mosaic agriculture - A guide to irrigated crop and forage production in northern WA' has been produced for WA pastoralists, agronomists and agribusinesses.

The project evaluated a range of irrigated forage

crops for productivity and feed quality. Management packages were then developed taking into account the specific climate, soils, regulatory environment, irrigation, pests and diseases.

WA Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) senior research scientist Dr Clin-

ton Revell said the development of mosaic agriculture was creating opportunities for pastoralists to grow a broader range of high-quality forage for up to 12 months of the year.

"Irrigated forage for use on-station can provide a valuable feed source to manage cattle during dry periods

and target cattle for alternate markets outside traditional selling periods for forward selling or price premiums," Dr Revell said.

"There are challenges with any form of agriculture in remote areas and this will be a valuable guide to inform pastoralists, agribusiness, potential irrigators and the

broader community about the successful management of irrigated forage production in northern WA."

The guide is available from DPIRD's Broome, Karra and Kununurra offices or online at agric.wa.gov.au/pasture-management/northern-beef-development-mosaic-agriculture.

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Steps to safeguard your farm

BIOSECURITY plays a critical role in safeguarding your property from threats such as plant and animal pests and diseases.

Farm Check-In has been launched to help property owners implement better biosecurity practices to minimise risks and establish communication channels with visitors.

Properties that may benefit from using Farm Check-In include those with limited visitor entry requirements or those that have unauthorised visitors.

Some benefits of using Farm Check-In on your property include:

- Electronic records, with both owners and visitors receiving a copy of the submitted form as a record of entry and acknowledgement of the visitor meeting their general biosecurity obligation. This electronic copy could replace hard-copy visitor entry logs.
- Provides visitors with practical tips on how to practice good biosecurity. This will help visitors understand their biosecurity responsibilities to minimise the introduction, spread or establishment of pests and



Farm Check-In helps visitors understand their general biosecurity obligation through a series of questions, prompts and links.

diseases on your property. Farm Check-In helps visitors understand their general biosecurity obligation through a series of questions, prompts and links. Visitors will need to acknowledge they have taken the appropriate steps to minimise the risk of pests and diseases

from entering your property. This may include the visitor acknowledging any biosecurity management plans on the property, ensuring gates are left how they are found and taking all reasonable steps to ensure anything brought onto the property is clean.

For properties with limited or no internet coverage Farm Check-In has offline functionality. Visitors will need to install the app on their device while in mobile coverage, by visiting daf.qld.gov.au/farmcheckin before arriving at the property. The visitor can access the form

and complete it offline, then submit it once they are back in mobile coverage.

How to use Farm Check-In on your property

- Download and print a sign from daf.qld.gov.au. Add a phone number and email

- address on the sign
- Attach the sign to your property gate or appropriate entry point
- Encourage visitors to scan the QR code and complete the form to check in.
- For more information, visit daf.qld.gov.au/onfarmbiosecurity or call 13 25 23.

Simple tool has many insights

BREEDER body condition at calving is the most important factor determining a cow's likelihood of reconceiving.

Assessing body condition can provide insights into the productivity of the herd over the coming year. At any muster, the number of weaners taken off and calves returned are known and feed availability and quality can

be assessed. Body condition scoring breeders can help assess the likelihood of them being in calf now or cycling while lactating in the coming months.

Combining body condition scoring with pregnancy testing, foetal ageing and lactation status can highlight opportunities to improve breeder cow productivity.

Body condition score photos are available at futurebeef.com.au (search 'body condition score for beef cattle'). Assistance with body condition scoring is available by calling the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) on 132 523.

- Roxanne Morgan, Beef extension officer, DAF Mackay, 0436 826 211.



Good reconception rates can be expected from cows calving in store to forward store good body condition.



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Gross margin budgeting

Understanding the profitability of your livestock operation.

CHALLENGING market and seasonal conditions are a reality for many Queensland sheep and wool producers, but effective planning and evaluation strategies can help mitigate the business risks they pose.

Gross margin budgeting can help producers enhance profitability and maximise financial returns within their business, regardless of the season.

With many Queensland sheep producers operating multiple livestock or production activities, gross margin budgets can track how each activity contributes to overall profitability.

By assessing the income and variable costs associated with each activity, owners and farm managers can better understand which activity contributes the most to covering their overheads and which may need to be improved, removed or replaced.

Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) and Leading Sheep extension officer Phillipa Gilmore, who is based in Longreach, said it was important for Queensland sheep producers to consistently evaluate the profitability of their businesses.

"Many Queensland livestock businesses have two or more livestock activities operating concurrently, for example, self-replacing Merino ewes complemented by a wether flock or self-replac-

ing Merinos and cropping activities," Ms Gilmore said.

"Just like a ewe needs to earn her place in the flock, each activity needs to earn its place in your business, and gross margin budgets can help producers better understand that."

Gross margin budgets are simple tools that can become the cornerstone of business planning.

They enable producers to compare different activities and understand sensitivity to risks such as price fluctuations and reduced lambing rates.

"Gross margin budgets are easy to prepare," Ms Gilmore said.

"There are many templates out there that cover a diverse range of sheep-based enterprises, as well as other livestock classes and activities."

Variable costs depend on the number of stock run, for example, freight, selling costs, shearing, husbandry costs and supplement or feed costs. For this reason, they are fairly standard from business to business, which makes gross margins easy to prepare.

"Taking away variable costs from expected income provides you with a net gross margin, which can then be used to produce gross margin per dry sheep equivalent, per hectare or per livestock unit, and this is where you really see what's pulling its weight," Ms Gilmore said.



Gross margin budgeting can help producers enhance profitability and maximise financial returns within their business, regardless of the season.

“Just like a ewe needs to earn her place in the flock, each activity needs to earn its place in your business, and gross margin budgets can help producers better understand that.

The ability to use gross margin budgets to benchmark against previous years and similar businesses in other regions enables producers to better identify where productivity and

profitability gains can or have been made. "As well as helping identify improvement and growth opportunities in mixed enterprise businesses, benchmarking allows for

evaluation of key management decisions," Ms Gilmore said.

"With many producers looking to restock following decent rains across parts of Queensland and strong lamb prices, it is an important time to be evaluating the profitability and growth potential of an enterprise before undertaking a significant capital outlay.

"Gross margin budgeting and benchmarking are useful tools to do just that."

By maximising efficiencies and profitability across farming operations, producers will be able to implement strategies to help ensure a

more sustainable business.

"If you don't understand the financial impact your various farming activities are having in your overall business, developing a gross margin budget for each is a good place to start," Ms Gilmore said.

"While they are an incredibly beneficial tool, gross margin budgets should not be the sole determinant of enterprise mix.

"Ultimately, the type of country, infrastructure, machinery and available labour inputs need to be considered as well.

"The good news is there is a wealth of resources available to help you get started and make sure you're covering all your bases."

DAF recently published the 'Rangelands of central-western Queensland: Building resilient and diverse livestock production systems' report, which assesses livestock enterprises for profitability and resilience. The report is available online at futurebeef.com.au.

A number of other state government agricultural departments provide gross margin budgets, including NSW Department of Primary Industries and Primary Industries and Regions SA. Go to dpi.nsw.gov.au and pir.sa.gov.au and search for 'sheep gross margin'.

Queensland producers who would like one-on-one support to compile gross margin budgets are encouraged to contact Ms Gilmore by emailing phillipa.gilmore@daf.qld.gov.au or calling 0428 102 841.

Leading Sheep is a partnership between DAF and Australian Wool Innovation, supported by AgForce.

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