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Rain is causing diseases

PRODUCERS impacted by flooding are encouraged to check their livestock for unusual symptoms of illness.

A number of plants and diseases that thrive during and after rain can have serious impacts on livestock.

Three-day sickness

Three-day sickness, also known as bovine ephemeral fever, is spread by biting insects. It can cause temporary or permanent infertility in bulls, loss of body condition, decreased calf-growth rates and milk production, and abortion. In a small percentage of affected animals, it can be fatal.

Initial symptoms include signs of a fever, muscular stiffness, lameness, shivering, drooling saliva and discharge from the eyes and nostrils. Treatment with anti-inflammatory drugs has been shown to reduce the course of the disease. Consult your veterinarian for an appropriate anti-inflammatory drug, considering the withholding period of the drug for meat and milk.

Akabane

Spread by midges, Akabane affects the nervous system of a foetus in pregnant females. It causes deformities such as limb malformations and brain lesions in calves. Diagnosis cannot be made until a calf is born. There is no successful treatment or means of control. In an area known to be endemic, breeding stock should be introduced to the area at an early age to gain immunity prior to joining.

Blackleg

Blackleg most commonly affects fast-growing cattle younger than two years of age. It is caused by bacterial

spores from contaminated environments entering the animal through small wounds or being ingested. This disease may not occur immediately, and it may be some time before symptoms show.

Erosion and movement from floods provide favourable survival conditions for blackleg spores. Common signs include fever, severe depression, gassy swelling under the skin or in muscles even before death, or sudden death - usually with rapid bloating of the carcass. Vaccinations are highly effective as prevention if a full course is given.

Leptospirosis

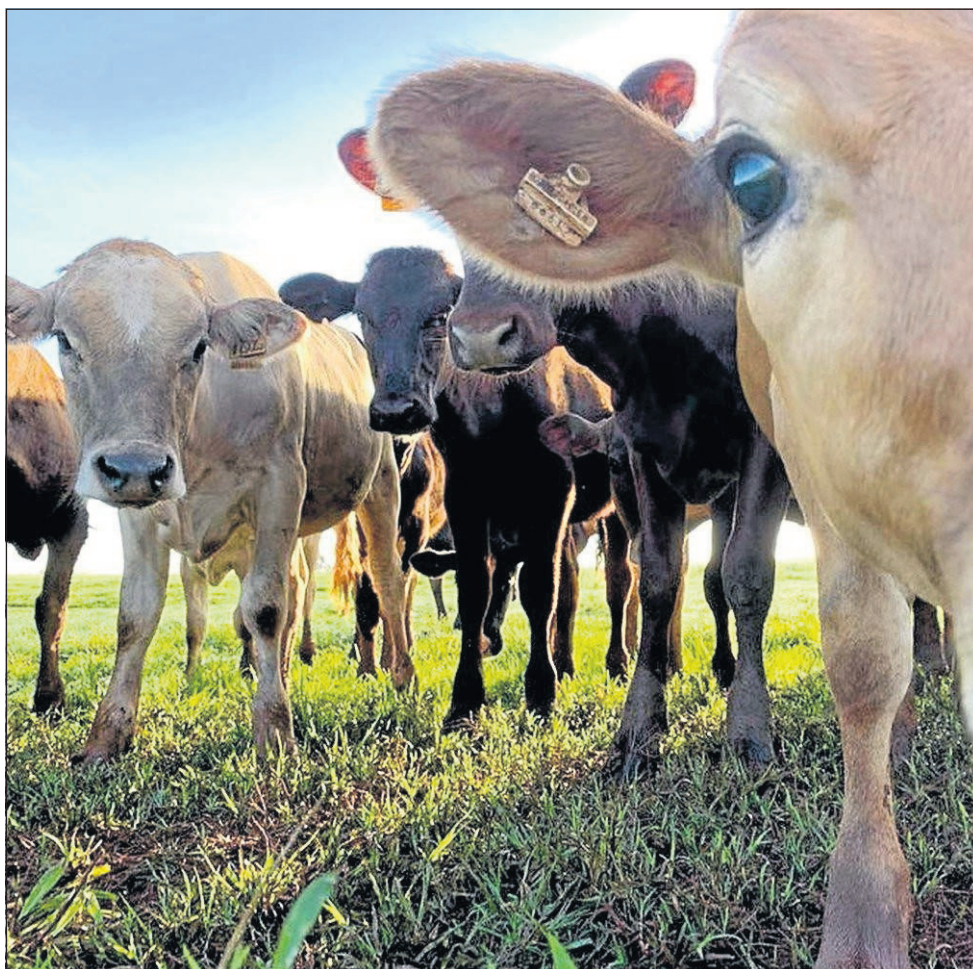
Leptospirosis is most commonly found in warm, wet climates and affects all farm animals, including dogs and horses. It is generally spread by the urine of infected animals, through ingestion or contamination of cuts and abrasions.

The disease can be fatal and common symptoms include fever, abortion, infertility and weak newborns. In young animals, disease can result in severe depression, high temperature and blood in the urine. In cattle, a specific form of mastitis known as milk-drop syndrome can occur. Horses can develop blindness due to inflammation of eye tissues.

Even if already infected, vaccination can prevent clinical leptospiral disease from developing, though the animal will remain infected and able to transmit disease organisms in reduced numbers.

Botulism

Botulism is a progressive paralysis and is generally



Producers need to keep an eye out for diseases in livestock after recent rain.

fatal to livestock. Botulism is caused by the ingestion of a toxin found in rotting animal and plant material including carcasses. Following floods, decaying vegetation and carcass materials can be a source of botulism toxin.

Animals may consume decaying material inadvertently, deliberately if hungry or when protein or phosphorus deficient. Maintaining an up-to-date vaccination program is the best approach. Phosphorus supplementation may also assist.

Plant poisoning

Toxic plant seeds can become displaced during

flooding and spread easily, prompting new growth in areas previously not infested.

Crotalaria

There are 33 species of crotalaria known in Queensland - most of which are toxic to livestock. Crotalaria predominantly cause pyrrolizidine alkaloid poisoning but are also responsible for chillagoe horse poisoning or oesophageal ulceration of horses (see *C. aridicola* or *C. medicaginea*) and Kimberley horse disease (also known as walkabout disease). While some species are not toxic, all crotalaria should be treated as potentially lethal.

Common signs of crotalaria poisoning in cattle include poor growth or wasting, jaundice, weakness and collapse, aimless walking, staggering and apparent blindness. Skin irritation and reddening (often progressing to some skin death), drooling and diarrhoea occur occasionally. Horses affected by crotalaria poisoning show similar symptoms to cattle but can also experience paralysis of the tongue and larynx and breathing difficulties. Two species of crotalaria are known to cause ulcers in the oesophagus of horses, resulting in an inability to

swallow food and water.

In most cases damage is permanent but some animals can recover with supportive therapy - including good feed and nutritional supplements - if discovered early.

Grasses and sorghum

Common plants can also become toxic during overcast conditions or if plants are stressed or wilted. Under these conditions, urochloa grass, button grasses, sorghum species and the common native couch grasses can accumulate nitrites or prussic acid that are toxic to livestock. These grasses and sorghum species can be fatal to livestock, but prompt treatment can save affected animals.

Signs of nitrite poisoning from ingesting urochloa and button grasses include rapid, gasping breathing, bluish/dark gums, convulsions and muddy brown-looking mouth and eyes. Affected livestock may also walk through fences or into objects.

Signs of poisoning from prussic acid, which can build up in native couch grass and sorghums, include rapid deep breathing, salivation, a rapid weak pulse, muscle twitching or trembling, spasms, staggering and sometimes a bluish discoloration of the gums.

If you notice any of the above symptoms in your livestock seek advice urgently. Some plant toxins can be fatal within an hour. Therefore, in many cases urgent action is the key to saving animals.

■ Megan Gurnett, beef extension officer, DAF Toowoomba, info@daf.qld.gov.au

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Support for farmers and businesses hit by floods

A RANGE of grants and loans are available to support primary producers, businesses and not-for-profit associations affected by the recent floods.

The support, which covers the period from February 22 to March 7, is being made available through the jointly funded Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) for eligible applicants in 19 local government areas in Queensland.

These include the South Burnett, North Burnett, Gympie, Somerset and Toowoomba council areas.

The DRFA assistance is in addition to assistance available for personal hardship.

For primary producers:

- Recovery grants of up to \$75,000 are available with \$15,000 paid upfront with evidence of damage and an additional payment of up to \$60,000 if needed, once proof of expenditure is provided. This grant can be used for various clean-up and reinstatement activities including salvaging crops and repairing damaged farm infrastructure and equipment. (These grants are available in 17 local government areas activated for DRFA Category B primary producer assistance. This includes the South Burnett, North Burnett, Gympie, Somerset and Toowoomba.)
- Primary producers can also apply for Disaster Assistance Loans and Disaster Assistance Loans



There are a range of grants and loans available for primary producers, not-for-profit associations and businesses affected by recent floods.

(Essential Working Capital) similar to those available for small businesses and not-for-profit organisations.

For businesses and not-for-profit organisations:

- Recovery grants of up to \$50,000 are available with \$15,000 paid upfront and the balance paid, if needed, once proof of payment is provided. This grant can be used for clean-up activities, repairs (including damage to equipment, flooring and walls), and to replace lost stock.
- Disaster Assistance Loans are available which offer up to \$250,000 for up to 10 years at a concessional rate. This loan can be

used to repair or replace damaged plant, equipment or buildings, replace stock or meet carry-on costs including rents or rates.

- Disaster Assistance Loans (Essential Working Capital) offer up to \$100,000 for up to 10 years at a concessional rate. This loan can be used to pay staff, creditors, rent or rates and purchase goods that are essential for your business (such as fuel).

For sporting and community clubs and associations:

- Sport and Recreation Recovery Grants offer up to \$20,000 for eligible clubs and associations to clean up and repair or replace damaged or lost equipment.

For councils:

- \$1 million for each of the 19 affected local governments for relief, recovery and resilience activities in their communities.

Applications for these grants and loans are managed through the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA). More information is available at qrda.qld.gov.au/business or by calling 1800 623 946.

Personal hardship financial assistance

People directly affected by the recent floods can also apply for housing assistance, including homeowners and private renters. Other assistance may also be available

for eligible applicants for essential household contents, structural assistance and reconnection of essential services. Visit www.qld.gov.au/housing/emergency-temporary-accommodation/housing-help-after-disaster.

The state government has also made grants of up to \$5000 available to help eligible clubs with immediate flood clean-up costs, including skip hire, cleaning supplies, electrical safety checks, PPE gear, and replacing damaged equipment. Applications are open until the end of May through the Level One Sport and Recreation Disaster Recovery Program. Visit www.qld.gov.au/recreation/sports/funding/disaster-recovery.

Expos to showcase benefits of GRASS program

Are you wondering what the Grazing Resilience and Sustainable Solutions (GRASS) program can do for your business?

The GRASS team is holding expos in Teebar, Thangool and Charters Towers in May and June, offering graziers an opportunity to see how they can benefit from the program.

Designed to help beef producers in the Burdekin, Fitzroy and Burnett-Mary reef catchments, GRASS delivers one-on-one support and tailored management plans to improve land that is in poor condition.

Graziers who participate in GRASS can access a wide range of resources and work with Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and local natural resource management agency staff to develop projects to improve land condition. They can also apply for incentive funding to undertake projects to improve areas of land in poor condition.

The upcoming GRASS expos will showcase landholder involvement, land condition improvement and the program's achievements since 2019.

Flyers will be posted soon. For more information or to register, contact:

- Teebar - May 17 - kate.brown@daf.qld.gov.au
- Thangool - May 19 - ryan.honor@daf.qld.gov.au
- Charters Towers - June 2 - alexandra.thomson@daf.qld.gov.au

The GRASS program is funded through the Queensland Government's Queensland Reef Water Quality Program and delivered by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Burnett Mary Regional Group, Fitzroy Basin Association and NQ Dry Tropics.

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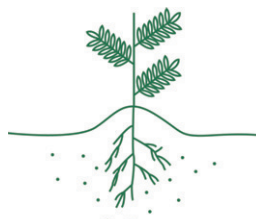
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Advancing Beef Leaders calls for interest

Huge opportunity for leaders

THE Advancing Beef Leaders (ABL) program is calling for expressions of interest from emerging producers and community leaders in Far North Queensland and the Maranoa district.

The ABL program is a tailored leadership and professional development program that helps producers, agribusiness and service providers step up and have impact and influence in their businesses, industry and community.

The 12-month program includes seven training modules, mentoring from the program's pool of ABL alumni, and a group project.

Most sessions are delivered online, and there are opportunities for members to meet for producer tours, forums and neighbour days.

These two new ABL groups are being coordinated by Department of Agriculture and Fisheries extension officers Alison Larard and Tim Emery in partnership with specialists from nationally-recognised firms.

These include Evolve AGRI (Amanda Roughan), Meridian Agriculture (Ben Reeve, Paul Blackshaw and Mike



Advancing Beef Leaders participants Beau Harrington and Lachlan Lynch discussing EBVs at a bull management day at Wynberg Station, Julia Creek.

Stephens), The Right Mind (Jill Rigney), Engage and Create Consulting (Julia Spicer) and Concise Communications (Ann Burbrook).

There is no age limit, however, applicants must be lo-

cated within 200 kilometres of Roma or within 400km of Georgetown.

Participants will be asked to make a small contribution of \$750 towards program costs and fund their own

travel, accommodation and meal expenses. Scholarships may be offered in some cases.

ABL has had great success with previously offered programs in the Charters Towers district, north-west

Queensland and central Queensland.

■ For more information about the Advancing Beef Leaders program and an application form, contact Alison Larard (Far North

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The Advancing Beef Leaders program is a tailored leadership and professional development program that helps producers, agribusiness and service providers step up and have impact and influence in their businesses, industry and community.

Queensland group) on 0467 804 287 or at alison.larard@daf.qld.gov.au or Tim Emery (Maranoa group) on 0408 707 155 or at timothy.emery@daf.qld.gov.au. Applications close at 5pm on Friday, April 29.

App makes it easy to record pasture dieback

THE Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) has created a new app that allows graziers to record pasture dieback from the paddock.

Landholders are encouraged to keep an eye out for pasture dieback, which has been reported in parts of southern, central and northern Queensland in re-

KEEP AN EYE OUT

- The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) has created an app that allows graziers to record pasture dieback.
- If you suspect you have pasture dieback, report it by using the app or calling DAF on 13 25 23.

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Pasture dieback stunts growth and kills productive pastures.

cent months.

By taking a few minutes to upload information and photos to the Pasture Dieback Survey app, landholders can help researchers learn more about the spread of pasture dieback. In areas with poor reception, data can be saved and uploaded later.

Pasture dieback is a con-

dition that stunts growth and kills productive pastures. Once affected, pastures can die within one season.

Research indicates the pasture mealy bug is a primary factor in pasture dieback, but a range of pathogenic organisms and environmental factors are likely to be involved. Diagnosis of

pasture dieback is complicated due to similarities with other conditions.

If you suspect you have pasture dieback, report it by using the app or calling DAF on 13 25 23. Meat & Livestock Australia contracted DAF to create the app, which can be downloaded free from the App Store or Google Play.

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Tool helps pastoralists manage grazing in WA

THE Pastoral Remote Sensing (PRS) tool can help Western Australian pastoralists make decisions and develop strategies to manage stock and land through seasonal variability.

The tool provides current and historical estimates of total green biomass, vegetation cover and rainfall for every pastoral lease in WA. Pastoralists can use this to monitor, compare and measure pasture condition and observe seasonal trends. Management decisions can be made based on this data such as matching stocking rates and feed budgets to total ground cover.

The PRS tool is a free online resource developed by Landgate in partnership with the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD). It is based on satellite imagery sourced from NASA and the Copernicus Australasia Regional Data Hub.

The PRS tool was developed in response to demand for a readily available planning tool after recent years of dry seasonal conditions across large parts of the WA rangelands.

DPIRD Northern Beef Development Project manager Trevor Price sees the tool as invaluable for optimising rangeland pastures, employing sustainable practices and contributing to ease of management decisions.

"The PRS tool hosts crucial information for pastoralists - including cumulative rainfall, total green biomass, total dry matter and normalised difference vegetation index



Pastoralists evaluating their pasture condition in the Western Australian rangelands.

(NDVI) for all WA pastoral leases - which can then be compared across previous years," Mr Price said.

"This new resource will be particularly useful when making stock and land management decisions in preparation for and in response to current seasonal conditions."

WA agricultural consultancy business AgKnowledge uses the PRS tool to help their clients plan for the season ahead. AgKnowledge director Peter Cooke sees March and April as the perfect time to review the PRS data to understand the feed base available for the season as rainfall decreases.

"The data helps inform our clients' planning deci-

sions such as stocking rates, mustering dates, when to rest pastures and which animals require deployment of supplementation to provide adequate stock nutrition," Mr Cooke said.

"The tool can be used to check multiple seasons and compare previous pasture levels - particularly as the north's rainfall is reduced significantly from mid-April. Pasture condition can be assessed again later in the season to compare dry matter and whether to grow out stock or take them off pastures earlier.

"There are lots of advantages to using the PRS tool such as the total green biomass feature, which individuals need to be able to interpret

to adequately understand pasture condition. The high- and low-resolution satellite imagery is also an advantage for pastoralists who have reduced bandwidth."

Mr Cooke sees new remote technology as a positive contribution to land and stock management which can be used by a diverse range of people.

"The PRS tool complements an individual's good understanding of land sustainability and acts as an eye-in-the-sky to oversee and track whole-of-property pasture and land condition," he said. "Remote sensing technology can be used hand-in-hand with an on-ground knowledge of the property and can easily be

incorporated into management strategies used by new and old property managers."

DPIRD has incorporated several resources to help first-time users take advantage of the full capability of the program.

"A series of tutorial videos are provided to help pastoralists understand and use all features in the system. DPIRD staff are also on hand to help pastoralists use the tool efficiently," Mr Price said. "The PRS tool is accessible to any pastoral manager with varying technological skills, including those with reduced internet access."

■ The PRS tool can be accessed at www.agric.wa.gov.au/pastoral-remote-sensing-tool.

Spyglass research to aid carrying capacity decisions for the north

A research project that has been running at Spyglass Beef Research Facility since 2014 will help producers make better-informed grazing land management decisions.

Producers managing grazing systems face complex decisions that require a detailed understanding of their livestock, land, pastures and the environment.

The amount of pasture that grows annually dictates stock numbers and long-term carrying capacity.

Detailed rainfall, soil and pasture measurements collected from six sites, which have been fenced to exclude all grazing, allow us to use modelling to extend that knowledge over decades and across regions.

The inclusion of site-specific data in the GRASP (grass production) model, which is designed for northern Australia rangelands, improves the quality of pasture production and carrying capacity estimations.

Further analysis and modelling will improve our understanding of pasture production of more common land types, plus or minus stylos, in the Burdekin rangelands.

Long-term carrying capacity information for lot(s) on plan in Queensland is available via FORAGE reports at www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au. Long-term carrying capacity in this report refers to the number of livestock that a property or land parcel can support on average over a long period (i.e. decades) without running down the property's land condition.

■ Giselle Whish, principal scientist, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, 3708 8455.



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Decisions based on data

Micron testing and electronic identification technology can help boost the productivity and profitability of your flock.

AN INCREASING number of Queensland sheep producers are using micron testing with Electronic Identification (eID) to make better selection decisions and improve productivity and profitability.

While it's possible to record fleece data using visual ID tags, more accurate technology-based solutions can improve efficiency and accuracy.

Department of Agriculture and Fisheries' Leading Sheep extension officer Pip Gilmore says eID tags enable producers to refine selection decisions and optimise flock performance and profitability.

Combining micron testing with eID technology gives wool producers much greater certainty about animal and herd fleece characteristics, she says.

"Wool producers are always looking for animals that suit their environment and meet market specifications," Ms Gilmore said.

"Visual appraisal is not always a reliable way of understanding an individual animal's contribution to the wool clip.

"Growers can use eID with micron testing to gain an accurate and objective measure of the individual characteristics of each animal.

"Collection and analysis of a sample of wool can give growers direct insight

into each animal's wool characteristics and how they contribute to the overall flock average.

"Producers can use this information, along with visual assessments, to make better-informed selection and marketing decisions and influence a range of profit-driving factors, such as the selection of breeding animals and the uniformity of their wool lines."

How does it work?

A small side sample is taken from the animal and sent away for testing. The laboratory measures the micron - among other things - and links these measurements to an eID tag number.

This allows producers to use an indicator or wand to identify animals with the desired fleece characteristics.

"Sheep producers can manage and analyse the data to inform and implement selection decisions across the flock," Ms Gilmore said.

"Over time, a producer may add further data points - for example, fleece weights and pregnancy scanning results - and upgrade infrastructure such as auto-drafters to streamline drafting.

"This will provide an accurate picture of the micron range, which can be combined with fleece weight and other selection indices to identify the most productive animals in their enterprise."

Ms Gilmore said growers could use the data collected to generate reports and



Technology-based decisions, such as using electronic identification, can help producers boost the productivity and profitability of their flock.



Technologies like eIDs can be used across numerous production areas in a simple, practical and cost-effective way.

Department of Agriculture and Fisheries' Leading Sheep extension officer Pip Gilmore

analyse flock performance.

With the right technology, software and services, this data can be accessed on devices in the office, shed and paddock - even without mobile coverage.

"Adopting technology such as eID eliminates

transcription errors and, once implemented, will save time in the yards, allowing a streamlined drafting process that isn't solely reliant on visual assessments - all while increasing the precision of the information," she said.

"For this reason, technologies like eIDs can be used across numerous production areas in a simple, practical and cost-effective way."

Getting started

Producers can start by sampling and tagging their youngest breeding group - often the largest section of the flock - and build the database of recorded animals from there.

"Tagging young makes the initial cost of eID tags negligible over that breeding group's lifetime and helps make the process less daunting by giving producers time to familiarise themselves with the technology," Ms

Gilmore said.

Refining herd performance

Culling decisions can be somewhat constrained in flock-rebuilding scenarios, however, growers can use data in conjunction with visual considerations to remove less profitable and productive animals when required.

This provides significant ability to refine herd performance and improve profitability on a per-head basis.

The ability to segregate animals according to wool quality enables sheep producers to extract additional value from their lower-micron animals. It can also inform management decisions later in the animals' lives when selection pressure comes back into play.

Over time, sheep producers can build a unique and customised information dataset for each animal that best serves their management decisions, goals and selection criteria. Having this data on hand also enables sheep producers to understand flock trends and plan for upcoming seasons.

"Overall, eID technology makes micron testing more accessible, faster and accurate," Ms Gilmore said.

More information

Leading Sheep's booklet 'Practical use of Electronic Identification (eID)' is available online at www.leadingsheep.com.au.

Producers considering using eIDs and micron testing should assess the value of implementation in their operation. They should also speak to their wool broker or agent about wool marketing options.

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