


NORTHERN MUSTER

Information for rural business in North Queensland



Self herding hits jackpot

DURING the dry conditions of 2019, Lyndavale and Mount Ebenezer station owners Ross and Joanne Stanes opened up previously ungrazed areas and installed a lot of new watering points.

Located 260 kilometres south-west of Alice Springs, the properties carry 7000 cattle over 5300 square kilometres. A major challenge of grazing this country is cattle spend most time within 3km of the watering points.

The Stanes decided to try self herding using attractant stations to encourage cattle to graze pasture around the new watering points rather than returning to familiar watering points.

Attractant stations use visual, sound and scent cues associated with variable food rewards to attract cattle. The stations are placed in a familiar location until the cattle learn to associate an attractant with a food reward.

The food rewards vary and are offered semi-randomly so they do not become predictable for the cattle.

They use a wind chime made out of an old metal road sign with a chain and piece of poly pipe attached.

"The sign provides a visual cue and the poly pipe works as a wind-catcher so the chain bangs against the steel to create a sound cue," Mr Stanes said. "Raspberry cordial is sprayed around the attractant station to create a scent cue. We have achieved good results using two drums containing food rewards - one with a supplement (usually phosphorous) and the other a jackpot."

Jackpots are highly desirable rewards that are paired with their own unique sound cue and intermittently provided to the cattle. This varia-



Lyndavale and Mount Ebenezer station owner Ross Stanes says his cattle are so drawn to the attractant stations that they run towards them while they are being set up.

bility encourages a high level of anticipation.

"A splash of molasses attracts a strong response," Mr Stanes said. "One of the keys of self herding is to regularly change the reward and to offer it sparingly so it retains its novelty value. Once they are familiar with attractant station, they will follow it to new locations, making it easier to manage grazing pressure."

Mr Stanes sets up an attractant station in an area with no cattle activity and returns several days later.

"Using attractant stations has decreased the time involved in familiarising cattle with a new watering point," he said. "Previously, once

Cattle learn to associate the attractant station with the food reward and regularly visit.

the cattle were moved to new water, they would often head back to the old watering point. It could take up to a week to familiarise cattle with a new watering point but now it takes one day.

"We have integrated self herding techniques into our current supplementation program, so there has been no significant increase in

workload - and we save time and money associated with moving cattle back to new watering points."

Mr Stanes believes self herding techniques are an investment in the future.

"I understood how using the attractant stations could work but I wasn't expecting the response. It has amazed me how well it has worked."

The Stanes plan to make more wind chimes for the supplement drums near each of their watering points and turn them into static attractant stations. They believe their cattle have a better response to a mixture of reliable and predictable stationary placements and dynamic stations that are moved around the property.

■ For more information about Central Australian Self Herding project, visit futurebeef.com.au and search for 'self herding' or contact Northern Territory Government pastoral technical officer Lakota Taber on 08 8951 8144 or lakota.taber@nt.gov.au.

Getting cattle ready for feedlot

WHAT do feedlots look for in backgrounded cattle? Sarah Donovan, of Donovan Cattle Co, shares some advice with FutureBeef.

We maintain a commercial breeding operation and buy in weaners to fully stock our backgrounding block. We operate a small feedlot which allows the finishing of our cattle, the buying in of feeders when the market allows, and the custom feeding of outside cattle.

The preconditioning of feedlot cattle is paramount to good performance. Early vaccinations and follow up boosters, tick/worm control, and a low stress weaning program prove highly favourable to good average daily gains (ADGs).

Maintaining good rumen health via solid nutrition is also important. Feedlots obviously chase consistency in performance and will pay a premium to acquire cattle from proven suppliers.

We get a variety of animals into the feedlot and those that are drought affected have a much slower start than those that have had good nutrition. It can take these animals two to three times longer to move on to a finisher ration - therefore, overall ADG can be greatly impacted. We've seen variances in ADGs from 0.4 to 0.8+ kilograms and higher mortality rates, mainly due to impacts of prior nutrition and lack of handling. Genetics play a role as well.

■ Contact Byrony Daniels, beef extension officer, DAF, 0427 746 434.

THE BRAHMAN ADVANTAGE



CHALLENGED BY NATURE • BACKED BY SCIENCE • PROVEN BY PERFORMANCE


ABBA
AUSTRALIAN BRAHMAN BREEDERS' ASSOCIATION LIMITED

 P 07 4927 7799 F 07 4922 5805 E abba@brahman.com.au www.brahman.com.au



NORTHERN MUSTER

Information for rural business in North Queensland



Hitting optimum weight

Cattle weighing units play big role in accuracy

KURT Mayne is busy: when you background cattle, farm 3000 hectares and do some contracting on the side, it's going to be that way.

So when he came across the Optiweigh in-paddock weighing units, he was keen to give them a try.

"We turn off a heavy feeder at 480 to 500 kilograms," Mr Mayne said.

"As soon as they go over 500kg we lose \$150. It's a minimum of four to five weeks between when you book cattle into the feedlot and send them. To be able to weigh cattle in the paddock with no labour and get accurate data is a game changer.

"I estimate the accuracy is probably enabling us to put on an extra 20kg per beast because I can make better decisions about when cattle need to be sold. It stops the weights blowing out over the top of the feeder market and I no longer have a bull-neck paddock. Feeders make more for us than bullocks, plus it's saving me six months of feed on these animals."

Mr Mayne says younger cattle are run in mobs of 600 to 700. When they are almost ready to go to the feedlot, the mob size drops to 300 to 400 - and that's when he uses Optiweigh units.

"It takes twice as long to draft a mob of 600 as it does



Weaner cattle stay in the yards as long as necessary, with access to plenty of hay. Weaner training is also an important part of this time in the yards.

300 and curfew is a massive consideration for us. When we go to sell cattle, they're on hay as soon as they hit the yards. We'll get them in at daylight the day before and have them drafted by 10am. By midday, they've been through the plunge dip and from then until 4am they're in the yards on a hay feeder.

"We'll truck them in the dark while they're calm and they're at the feedlot off the weighbridge by 11am or 12pm. The feedlot is 500km away. We budget for them to lose three to five per cent of their bodyweight in transit.

"We have 2800ha of Leucaena. It's the only crop you can grow once and reap re-

wards from for years and it's the only crop you can inherit. We've just fertilised every row on one side with mono-ammonium phosphate (MAP): its first expense in 30-plus years. I estimate it has given us an extra 0.2kg a day in that time. It allows us to background cattle all year and helps us handle droughts. Our paddocks are rotationally grazed."

Mr Mayne said he didn't use HGPs. "We blood (tick fever vaccine), Dectomax and use the plunge dip. We cross the tick line into clean country on route to the feedlot. Cattle are cleared on-farm."

The only supplements Mr Mayne feeds are blocks

to entice cattle onto the Optiweigh units. Currently, a trace mineral block, but when the feed dries off he'll use Uramol.

The cattle use the Optiweigh units well. Mr Mayne puts this down to the fact that they are always tipping cattle into the mobs using the units and the original cattle teach the others. If the units have weighed 50pc of cattle in the paddock, Mr Mayne is comfortable that it's reliable data.

"Even at 30pc of the mob using the units we're getting good data," he said.

"We use a buying agent but sell direct to the feedlot. Lately we've bought from Gracemere, but we use Auc-

tionsPlus and paddock sales when we can find them."

Mr Mayne employs a man who is happy to spend a bit of time weaner training.

"They'll stay in the yards just as long as they need to," he said.

Mr Mayne hires a consultant to analyse his own weight data, along with data from the feedlot including the kill sheets.

"I'm going to be able to work out where I get the best 10pc of my cattle from and I'll be happy to pay an extra 10 cents if I know they are going to perform better."

Byrony Daniels, beef extension officer, DAF Emerald, 0427 746 434.

Monitor your land with help of app

WHEN monitoring land condition, the best technique is repeat photography accompanied by detailed notes. The Stocktake GLM app can help you achieve this and more.

"When selecting a monitoring site, the most important thing is to select a location that best represents the area you want to monitor," Department of Agriculture and Fisheries senior beef extension officer Greg Bath said. "Pick a spot that is typical of the pasture species, tree density and slope in your paddock. If you have multiple land types in a paddock, you might like to choose several monitoring sites."

"The Stocktake GLM app has been designed to take out the guesswork of what to record each year. Once the site is set up, the templates prompt the user to record key information such as pasture and soil condition, and ground cover and tree coverage. There is also the opportunity to record pasture species, weeds or other anomalies (e.g. fire)."

Stocktake GLM also features a forage budgeting tool for all grazing systems. The app does not require internet connectivity and is compatible with Android and iOS devices. Download it for free by searching for 'Stocktake GLM' in your app store or visiting www.stocktakeglm.com.au.

DAF hosts regular Stocktake workshops. Email info@futurebeef.com.au to register or for help creating monitoring sites or forage budgets.

Maximise your productivity with Australia's #1 Desmanthus



Hard seed suitable for faecal seeding



Add to your dry lick or molasses

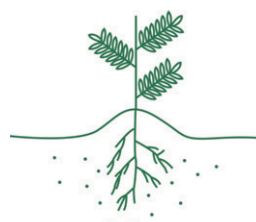


Extend your pasture season

Progardes® Desmanthus
Persistent | Palatable | Productive | Perennial



Deep tap rooted legume
Nutritious, high protein
Drought tolerant
Good water use efficiency



Summer growing
High biomass production
Adds pasture diversity
Neutral to alkaline soil pH

www.agrimix.com.au

AV7213060



NORTHERN MUSTER

Information for rural business in North Queensland



New drought grants and loans open to producers

GRANTS and loans are now available to help eligible Queensland primary producers prepare for drought or assist with carry-on finances during drought.

Part of the drought reform package undertaken by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, these programs will help producers better manage future droughts.

Grants

Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA) Natural Disasters and Drought manager Sheree Finney says two types of grants are available.

Ms Finney said the Farm Management Grants offered primary producers a 50 per cent rebate on the cost of eligible professional advice and up to \$2500 to produce a Farm Business Resilience Plan for their property.

"These plans are intended to assist primary producers identify risks associated with production, including climate and weather (such as drought), as well as biosecurity and natural resource management and business risks including financial and market factors," Ms Finney said.

She said the Drought Preparedness Grants offered up to \$50,000 as a co-contribution grant to assist primary producers undertake on-farm capital improvements that will improve the drought preparedness of their property.

"This grant can be used on a range of infrastructure such as pipes, water tanks, dam construction, storage and



Grants and loans are now available to help eligible Queensland primary producers prepare for drought or assist with carry-on finances during drought.

■ Contact your local Department of Agriculture and Fisheries beef extension officer for assistance in developing a personalised drought resilience plan to help prepare for and manage future drought risks in your business.

feeding equipment for grain or other supplements," Ms Finney said.

Loans

There are three loan options - ranging from \$50,000 to \$250,000 - to help producers mitigate future impacts of drought on their enterprise or assist with carry-on expenses if they have been

significantly financially impacted by drought.

Ms Finney said the Emergency Drought Assistance Loan was an interest-free loan of up to \$50,000 to help primary producers meet working capital expenses.

These include paying employee wages, creditors, rent and rates or buying goods such as fuel to carry on the business.

The Drought Ready and Recovery Finance Loan offers up to \$250,000 to help primary producers improve the drought resilience of their enterprise.

The loan can fund important on-farm development projects such as improving water infrastructure, feed storage, vaccinating or

drenching new stock.

It can also cover contractor costs or non-salaried employees and costs directly associated with implementing the drought preparedness project.

Ms Finney says producers do not need to be drought-declared to access the Drought Ready and Recovery Finance Loan.

"This loan gives producers the opportunity to undertake drought preparation activities on their enterprise to mitigate future impacts of drought - which is why they do not need to be drought-declared to access the loan," she said.

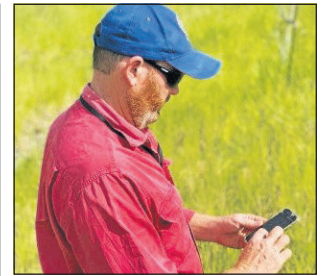
She said the Drought Carry-on Finance Loan was a concessional loan of up

to \$250,000 to help primary producers meet carry-on finance, including paying employee wages, creditors, rent and rates or buying goods, including food.

"QRIDA has a network of regional area managers based across Queensland who are ready to help eligible producers through the application process, so don't hesitate to reach out and ask questions if you have them," Ms Finney said.

■ For more information, phone 1800 623 946 or visit www.qrida.qld.gov.au/drought-support.

■ For more information on other drought assistance available, search 'drought' online at www.futurebeef.com.au.



New app makes it easy to record pasture dieback in paddock

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) has created an 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 recent 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 condition 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, please 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 for free from the App Store or Google Play.

Australia's Favourite Tags

Easy application, reliable readability and excellent retention, identifying more Australian cattle than any other tag.

When you need to know it's "All Right", it's "All Good" with Allflex®.



www.allflex.com.au
1300 138 247

® Registered trademarks. Copyright© 2022 Allflex Australia Pty. Ltd, subsidiary of Merck & Co., Inc., Kenilworth, New Jersey, U.S.A. All rights reserved.





NORTHERN MUSTER

Information for rural business in North Queensland



Plenty of options to help combat pasture dieback

PASTURE dieback remains a serious issue for graziers in eastern Queensland and north-eastern New South Wales. However, new research by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) is shedding light on the best ways to manage affected pastures.

DAF senior agronomist Stuart Buck said results from 10 research and demonstration trials had helped DAF develop management options, which had recently been presented at Pasture Dieback Management Workshops across Queensland.

"Depending on the situation, an area of country might benefit from a combination of management strategies," Mr Buck said.

"For example, a grazier might decide to burn an affected pasture, sow it to a forage hay crop for a few years, then return the area to a diverse legume-grass pasture.

"There is a larger range of options for arable country, particularly if machinery is available."

Grazier Warren Luhrs is hosting a trial on his Moura property Wonga, which has been badly affected by pasture rundown, Indian couch and dieback.

"The country where the trial is located on Wonga was originally planted to Gayndah buffel grass and had since become quite run-down," Mr Luhrs said.

"We first noticed dieback in 2013-14 after we had a good season. After the buffel died in large patches, the Indian couch was able to get away and take over the area.



Warren Luhrs, Ridgedale and Wonga, Moura, is hosting a trial on his property which has been affected by pasture rundown, Indian couch and dieback. He recently hosted a pasture dieback field day.

Management options for pasture affected by dieback:

- manage for recovery
- improve pasture (e.g. through introducing legumes)
- sow a break crop
- treat a pathogen.
- Learn more at www.futurebeef.com.au



going through the process of establishing the trial area, I have decided to establish new pastures in other dieback-affected areas on Wonga and my other property Ridgedale.

"I will be choosing the more tolerant grasses and lots of legume species and following the same regime

that we used in the trial."

Recently, Mr Luhrs hosted a field tour of the trial area, enabling 19 attendees to see the growth of various pasture species in the previously dieback-affected area.

The field tour followed a pasture dieback management workshop. The workshop group also visited

Torsdale - owned by Will Wilson at Biloela - to inspect another trial site. The Torsdale trial was showing signs of dieback in control plots (no treatments) while plots replanted to new grass and legume species were green, dense and healthy.

For more information about pasture dieback - including fact sheets, an identification guide and upcoming events - search 'pasture dieback' online at www.futurebeef.com.au.

DAF acknowledges Meat and Livestock Australia's funding support for these activities.

■ Kylie Hopkins, beef extension officer, DAF Rockhampton, 0467 726 349.

Legumes are handy in the mix when it comes to pasture dieback

Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) researchers have been testing tropical grass and legume species to see how tolerant they are to pasture dieback.

DAF senior agronomist Stuart Buck said findings from these trials - along with observations from researchers and graziers across Queensland - were used to compile a list of species and their relative tolerance to pasture dieback.

"Grass species like Biloela buffel, purple pigeon, panics and the native grasses, black speargrass and forest bluegrass are generally at the more tolerant end of the scale," Mr Buck said.

"Gayndah and American buffel, bisset bluegrass, pangola, paspalum and sabi grass are consistently heavily affected by dieback.

"This list is a generalisation - and we do see exceptions - however, the more tolerant species tend to be the last affected."

He said species diversity in a pasture was critical when it came to dieback.

"The impact of dieback can be severe in monoculture pastures as total paddock productivity can be lost," he said.

"We are seeing the importance of legumes in a pasture.

"When grasses are killed off by dieback, legumes provide high quality feed for cattle.

"When establishing a new pasture - irrespective of a dieback situation or not - legumes should always be included in the seed mix," he said.

■ Kylie Hopkins, beef extension officer, DAF Rockhampton, 0467 726 349.

australiancoupons.com.au

SEARCH 1000'S OF AUSTRALIAN COUPON CODES & SAVE!