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Up to date info on tap for our beef industry

Drought aid, pastures, on-farm management issues in focus

Make suggestions with online survey

WELCOME to the first Beeftalk – a Queensland Country Life feature that aims to keep all sectors of the beef industry up to date on issues and practices – and ensure Australia stays at the cutting edge.

Unfortunately, dry conditions prevail and just over 50 percent of Queensland has been declared drought stricken.

Producers wanting to apply for the Drought Relief Assistance Scheme (DRAS) including the emergency water infrastructure rebate and land rent rebate should contact the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry on 13 25 23.

DRAS claim forms and ID applications can be accessed at www.daff.qld.gov.au.

This issue looks at tips for bringing new bullocks and western-bred cattle home, including the new online waybill system.

Where the season has been kinder it is timely to consider pasture establishment options and using high-quality seed to increase the chances of success.

Check out the five goals for profitable herds on page 6, and the practical electrical fencing example for flood recovery from Mick Steeney on page 8.

Dow AgroSciences Australia Ltd.

The winner of the Beeftalk 35 edition Grazon prize was Eoin McAllister from Toogoolawah.

Online versions of Beeftalk are still available for download or email. To receive the online version, please subscribe on the FutureBeef website www.futurebeef.com.au/sign-up

Happy reading!

The Beeftalk team

Meet the team

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Damen O’Sullivan, Roger Sneath, Felicity McIntosh, Rebecca Farrell (DAFF) and Carli McConnel representing the South East Queensland Regional Beef Research Committee.

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BEEFTALK 26 September 2013

Beeftalk feedback ... ‘we want you to have your say’

Please spend a minute to let us know your thoughts on Beeftalk as a way of keeping you up to date on current issues in the beef industry.

Do you find Beeftalk useful?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

Your comments

We use your feedback ideas and suggestions when planning the articles for Beeftalk. If you have any questions about beef production or pasture management, suggestions for topics you would like covered or novel ideas you’d like to see investigated, please list them below and we will endeavour to cover them in future editions of Beeftalk.

Win 5L Grazon Extra!

To go in the draw send feedback at www.surveymonkey.com/s/Beeftalk36

Winning entry drawn on 1st November. Grazon Extra kindly donated by Dow AgroSciences. Grazon Extra is registered for control of a range of environmental and economic weeds as specified on the label.
**Tick fever vaccine – the facts**

There has been some misinformation circulating recently about tick fever vaccine. The facts are:

- **Vaccination gives the most reliable and predictable control of tick fever.**
- **The vaccine is available directly from DAFF’s Tick Fever Centre or through agents and veterinarians.**
- **The vaccine price was increased on July 1, 2013, to $4.27 per dose.** In addition, there is a freight charge and a processing fee for orders fewer than 100 doses. It is important to consider that, unlike most other vaccines, the tick fever vaccine generally only needs to be given once (i.e. there is no need for an initial booster four weeks after the first dose or annual booster, so the cost is spread over the life of the animal).
- **The vaccine is available all year round.** It is produced every Tuesday and Thursday. On a few occasions, due to increased demand this winter (mainly due to drought movements), we have reached the maximum amount that we can physically produce per day (19,000 doses), and some orders had to be delayed until the next production day. This should be less of an issue now as we move away from the traditional busy season. There is no backlog or nine-week waiting period.

**FutureBeef harnesses latest technology**

A world of information at your fingertips

Did you know you can sit in the comfort of your home or office and summon a world of beef information delivered electronically to your computer, iPad or smartphone? This is just one way the FutureBeef Program brings the latest research-based information to beef producers. FutureBeef regularly runs webinars, distributes eBulletins and publishes material at www.futurebeef.com.au, and through social media channels, as well as working directly with producers at training workshops, information days, demonstration sites and field days. Webinars are a great way to hear the latest information from anywhere in the world, plus they allow you to engage with the speakers through online polls and by submitting questions that can be answered by the presenters.

You can participate in a webinar using a computer (Mac or PC), iPad, tablet or smartphone. To do so, you just need to register by going to the event’s web page and entering your contact details. A personalised email will then be sent to you by a FutureBeef regular, John James, DAFF, Toowoomba.

**FutureBeef regularly runs webinars, distributes eBulletins and publishes material at www.futurebeef.com.au, and through social media channels.**

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Bringing your new bull home

WHEN purchasing a bull, care and handling after the sale can be as important as the purchase itself. Looking after your bull properly during the initial stages of its working life may ensure longevity and success within your breeding herd.

PURCHASE

Temperament is an important characteristic when selecting a bull. A lightly or aggressive bull will make handling difficult.

Note which bulls continually push to the centre of a mob, run around, or are unnecessarily nervous, aggressive or excited.

At the sale, note any changes of temperament by individual bulls. Some bulls that are quiet in the yard or paddock may not like the pressure and noise of the auction and become excited.

Others that were excited beforehand get much worse in the sale ring and can really perform. Using the yard or paddock behaviour as a guide, rather than the temperament shown in the ring, may be your best guide.

Ask if the bull has been fertility tested. The Bull Breeding Soundness Evaluation (BBSE) is a nationally accredited test available from vets.

DELIVERY

When transporting your new bull, insurance against loss in transit, accidental loss of use or infertility is sometimes provided by vendors. Where it is not, it is worth considering.

AFTER- PURCHASE TIPS

- When purchasing, ask which health treatments they have received.
- Treat and handle him quietly at all times – no dogs, no buzzers. Talk to him and give him time and room to make up his mind.
- Unload and reload during the trip as little as possible. If necessary, rest with water and feed. Treat bulls kindly – your impatience or nervousness is easily transmitted to an animal unfamiliar to you.

When the bull or bulls arrive home...

- Never jump them from the back of a truck directly into a paddock – it may be the last time you see them.

Look after new bulls right from start

When the bull or bulls arrive home, unload them at the yards into a group of house cows, steers or herd cows.

Never jump them from the back of a truck directly into a paddock – it may be the last time you see them.

Bulls from different origins should be put into separate yards with other cattle for company.

Provide hay and water; then leave them alone until the next morning.

The next day, bulls should receive routine health treatments.

If they have not been treated before, all bulls should be vaccinated with:

- 5-in-1 vaccine.
- Vibriosis vaccine.
- Leptospirosis vaccine (in areas where leptospirosis exists).
- Three-day sickness vaccine (if in areas where three-day sickness is a problem).

Pay particular attention to preventing new bulls bringing vibriosis into a herd. Vibriosis, a sexually transmitted disease, causes infertility and abortions, and is most common introduced to a clean herd by an infected bull. These bulls show no signs of the illness. Vaccinated bulls are free from vibriosis, so vaccinating bulls against the disease should be a routine practice.

Vaccination involves two injections, four to six weeks apart, at the time of introduction, and then a booster shot every year. Complete the vaccinations four weeks before joining.

Consult with your veterinarian and draw up a policy for treating bulls on arrival and then annually. Bulls should be drenched to prevent parasites and, if necessary, should be treated for lice.

Homed bulls should be well tipped to allow easier working through yards and runs. Plan to give follow-up vaccinations four to six weeks later.

Leave the bulls in the yards for the next day or on feed and water to allow them to settle down with other stock for company.

A bull’s behaviour will decide how quickly he can be moved out to paddocks.

MATING NEW YOUNG BULLS

Newly purchased young bulls should not be placed with older herd bulls for multiple mating.

The older, dominant bull will not allow the young bulls to work much, and will knock them around while keeping them away from the cows.

Use new bulls in either single-sire groups or with young bulls of their own age. If a number of young bulls are to be used together, run them together for a few weeks before joining starts.

They sort out their pecking order quickly and have few problems later. When the young bulls are working, inspect them regularly and closely.

MANAGING OLDER HERD BULLS

Older working bulls also need special care and attention before mating starts. They should be checked every year for physical soundness, testicle tone, semen quality and serving capacity or ability. All bulls to be used must be free-moving, active and in good store condition.

Working bulls may need supplementary feeding before the joining season to bring up condition. All bulls should be drenched, treated for lice, and vaccinated with 5-in-1 and for vibriosis annually.

They may need vaccinating against leptospirosis and three-day sickness in some areas.

Ensure success with appropriate bull care

NABRC Medal Winners committed to northern Australian beef industry

NABRC Medal Winners display depth of commitment to northern Australian beef industry

THREE beef industry contributors were presented with medals recently at the Northern Beef Research Update Conference held in Cairns. The medals acknowledge the achievements of men in North Australia who excel in three fields: communication/extension – John Bertram

- research and development – Dr Stu McLennan

- production (producer medal) – Paul Smith

John Bertram has devoted the past thirty nine years to the northern beef industry in the fields of practical genetic improvement and bull selection.

John joins past extension medal winners Bernie English (GOADF Mitsubishi) and Bob Shepherd (GOADF Charters Towers) in honour for their contributions to the beef industry.

Dr Stu McLennan has dedicated his career to beef nutrition research for northern Australia. Research highlights include being part of the team that developed MBU and supplementing regimes for urea which now underpins the northern beef industry.

The recipient of the Producer medal, Paul Smith of “Teyton Station”, Alice Springs, also acknowledges the extension efforts of John Bertram who worked with his father during the late 80’s on station AI programs as a catalyst for his being involved in research, development and extension activities.

Amongst many achievements Paul is highly committed for his role in the ground breaking heifer research that was carried out at Teyton Station from 2005 through to 2012.

Source: NABRC

DURING MATING

Check bulls at least twice each week for the first two months. Get up close and watch each bull walk; check for swellings around the sheath and for lameness.

Have a spare bull or bulls available to replace any that break down. Replace any suspect bull immediately. Rotate bulls in single-sire groups to make sure that any bull infertility is covered. Single-sire joining works well but it has risks.

The bulls must be checked regularly and carefully, or the bulls should be rotated every one or two cycles.

Bulls are a large investment for breeding herds and they have a major effect on herd fertility. A little time and attention to make sure they are fit, free from disease and actively working is wise.

TAKING SOUTHERN BULLS NORTH

Ensure bulls are in good condition and allow them to adapt to their new environment before commencing their working life. It is possible, a break of three months is advisable before you set your bull to work.

The cooler months are an ideal time to purchase and introduce bulls, allowing them plenty of time to acclimatise.

CHANGE OF FEED SOURCE

When inducting new bulls into your herd, consider their feed source.

Have you taken an animal which has been supplemented on grain straight to a dry pasture? Animals should be gradually changed over to their new feed to ensure they do not lose condition.

This may involve using supplements, which could include dry lick/urea blocks.

MANAGING CATTLE TICKS

For ticky areas, bulls should be vaccinated prior to transport and given another booster afterwards. Remember males are more susceptible to ticks than females.

www.qdaff.qld.gov.au and

www.angusaustralia.com.au

Sources: www.qdaff.qld.gov.au and

www.qdaff.qld.gov.au
Quality and purity counts

Purchase only high-quality seed

Why pure live seed (PLS) analysis is vital

A DENSE pasture sward cannot be established if a high proportion of the seed sown will not germinate. It is essential that producers know the germination rate and purity of the seed purchased.

All commercial seed should have an independent laboratory analysis of percentage germinable seed, percentage hard or dormant seed (seed that is viable but will not germinate immediately) and percentage impurities (impurities are weed seeds and other vegetable matter that may be present). You can test seed yourself, especially if it is your own stored seed or if purchased from other farmers.

Grass seed sample A
Costs: $15/kg; Germination: 20%; Purity: 80%
PLS% = (20 x 80)/100 = 16%
You need 6.25kg to give 1kg PLS (100/16 = 6.25)
Real cost = $15 x 6.25kg = $93.75/kg PLS

Grass seed sample B
Costs: $18/kg; Germination: 40%; Purity: 90%
PLS% = (40 x 90)/100 = 36%
You need 2.78kg to give 1kg PLS (100/36 = 2.78)
Real cost = $18 x 2.78kg = $50/kg PLS

When purchasing seed from other producers and there is no lab analysis, be aware that germination could be good or bad, and the sample could contain weed seeds that you don’t want on your property.

Using the information from the seed analysis, you can determine the ‘pure live seed’ percentage (PLS%) of the batch of seed you are purchasing. This will help you choose the best value seed available and work out the required planting rate. If germination and purity are low, then higher sowing rates are needed and vice versa. Aim to sow about 1kg of PLS/ha. To determine the percentage of pure live seed in the sample, use the formula: PLS% = (%Germination x %Purity)/100.

In some cases, the cheapest seed to purchase may end up being the most expensive.

About the table

Germination: To self-test germination, place a minimum of 100 (preferably two or three lots of 100) randomly selected seeds on moist cotton wool or between the layers of moist paper towels, folded hessian bag or equivalent and keep moist.

After five days in warm conditions (longer in cool conditions), count the numbers germinated. Although there are no minimum standards legislated for pasture seed, grass seed germination should range from 20 to 50pc, and the germination of legume seed should be 30 to 60pc for small seeded legumes and 75 to 90pc for large seeded legumes and medicas.

Purity: Seed samples will always contain impurities such as straw, chalk, other seeds and soil. The purity of the sample is the percentage of the sample that is seed of the chosen species, and is determined by weight after physical separation of seed from other components. Impurities range from as low as 1pc for some of the legumes to as high as 40pc for some of the grasses.

To determine the real cost of pasture seed, the results of germination and purity tests can indicate the amount of seed required for successful pasture establishment. Without this information, costs can be high and success minimal.
Lift heifer fertility, grow profit

**Give your heifers the best start**

### Setting lifetime goals

GETTING heifers off to a good start has lifetime reproductive benefits. Conversely, a bad start has lifetime consequences.

- Select the right females, growing them well and getting them bred early in their first breeding season improves lifetime calf production and profitability.
- General goals for heifers are to:
  1. **Reach puberty at an appropriate time for your country.** That is, by 12-14 months of age for two-year-old calving or 24-26 months for three-year-old calving.
  2. **Be in good condition and structurally large enough** (weight, frame, pelvic area).
  3. **Have a high conception rate in a short time frame** (i.e. 8-12 weeks).
  4. **Raise a good calf to weaning.**
  5. **Rebreed in a timely manner.**

**HEIFER SELECTION, GENETIC IMPROVEMENT**

Good management of the replacement heifer begins with having her mother in good condition at calving. This is achieved with appropriate stocking rates, strategic supplementation and weaning management. The cow in good condition provides more colostrum and milk for a healthy growing heifer calf, and she will go back in calf earlier.

WEANING TO BREEDING

Good growth during this period is critical to improve conception rates, to reduce calving difficulties (dystocia) and for long-term reproductive performance. Liveweight at mating has the greatest effect on heifer fertility. Conservative stocking and good pasture in heifer paddocks are the cheapest ways to achieve good nutrition from weaning to joining is also essential to maximise pelvic growth. If heifers receive a nutritional setback at this stage, they may not recover with respect to pelvic area. For more information on managing dystocia, see Beeftalk 35, pages 22-26, available on the FutureBeef website.

**BREEDING TO CALVING**

In regions with high annual growth, consider mating the largest and oldest heifers will usually reach puberty earliest and are from dams that conceived early in the breeding season. Beware extremes in mature size. Heifers with higher mature size often need to be heavier and older to reach puberty and will have higher maintenance requirements throughout life.

Care is needed with bull selection. An unbalanced focus on high growth rate can increase cow mature size with higher weights to reach puberty. Instead select for high early life growth rate but moderate mature size.

Also balance bull selection by using fertility EBVs, ensuring high sperm motility, high percent normal sperm, above average pelvic circumference for their weight and breed, and selecting bulls from dams with good reproductive records.


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**Good management of replacement heifers begins with having mothers in good condition at calving. ** — Photo courtesy: TIM EMERY, QDAFF.
THE chance of successful pasture establishment is greatly improved by treating sown pastures like a crop. While we have little or no control over variables such as follow-up rain after sowing, observing the following checklist will increase success rates.

- Sow with good quality seed and know the percentage germinable seed.
- Don’t skimp on the sowing rate to reduce costs.
- Sow small pasture seeds into the soil but no deeper than 5-10 mm.
- Use press wheels to improve soil-seed contact.
- Loose seeds also dry more quickly and often result in poor establishment. Small pasture seeds are best sown no deeper than 5-10 mm. Exceptions include the larger-seeded purple pigeon grass, bambatsi and kowmungo, which can be sown about 20-25 mm deep.
- Plan at the correct time - tropicals in mid-late summer, temperate in autumn/early winter.
- Avoid early grazing.

PADDocking CONDITIONS
Planning should start at least 12-18 months ahead. Which paddocks to be sown, what is the soil type and fertility. What is the chance of waterlogging or flooding. How bad are the weeds, are there any residual herbicides with a plant-back period? If the soil is hard-setting or it is re-cultivation, you may need to rip 10-15 cm deep on 60-90 cm centres to increase water infiltration, and then grow a crop that leaves a good stubble cover.

If annual weeds are a problem, you may need to grow grain or forage crops for two to three years to reduce the weed seed bank. Store water before sowing the pasture. For a good chance of success, accumulate at least 30-50 cm of moisture (mean field capacity) in the top 60 cm of soil, with the top of the moisture band being within 5-7 cm of the soil surface.

WEEDS
Annual weeds quickly take up moisture, nutrients and smother young pasture seedlings. Weed seed banks in the soil can be reduced by more than 90% in two to three years with cropping if no new seed is allowed to fall and if the seed remains in the top 2 cm of the soil. Herbicides are better than cultivation.

Herbicides also reduce water loss through evaporation, and minimum tillage leaves crop stubble. Post-emergent herbicides will control some weeds, although options to control broadleaf weeds in legume pastures are limited and generally expensive. Consult agronomists.

Grazing can control or reduce more palatable weeds and slashing can be used to limit seed set of weeds. However, grazing controlled by other means.

SOWN PASTURES FOR SUSTAINABLE LAND USE
Growers should grow a grass plus a legume or a legume alone (for a short pasture phase) to achieve high animal production or soil fertility restoration and maintain soil organic matter. A grass alone will have a positive effect on soil organic matter, but it cannot increase the amount of nitrogen in the soil, a legume alone is better controlled by other means. A legume plus a legume is needed if a dormant or hard seed.

SEED SPECIES AND QUALITY
Check which grass and legume species are best adapted to your conditions. Don’t plant unsuitable species just because it is cheap or the only one currently available.

Buy high-quality seed with a current germination certificate that lists the purity, percent germinable, dormant or hard seed.

SOWING RATE
Pasture grasses are generally sown at 2-5 kg/ha depending on germinability (aim for 1 kg of pure live seed/kg of bare grass seed (uncoated) and legumes at 1-2 kg/ha). The lower sowing rates are not easily achieved with crop planters, and pastures are often mixed with grass and legume seed should not be left in contact with fertiliser overwinter.

If sowing a mixture of grasses, the minimum for any individual species should not be less than 20% of the total seed rate. Seed coating reduces the number of seeds per kilogram by at least two-thirds (with a 2:1 coat ratio).

PELLETING AND OTHER SEED TREATMENTS
Pelleting results in poor establishment. Pelleted seed is supposed to provide more favourable conditions for germination, but growers often balance this against the increased cost of higher sowing rates. Seed can be treated with insecticide to deter seed-harvesting ants.

GRAZING MANAGEMENT
Grazing should be withheld until seedlings have developed a strong crown and secondary roots, and set some seed. When it is time to graze, a quick grazing using a reasonably high stocking rate is preferable to a long grazing with few stock. With a bigger herd the effect of grazing is spread over most of the plants in the pasture, and this will benefit the more palatable plants such as lucerne. Both sown and native pastures can remain productive with good management.

Weed season rest or spell the pasture on a regular basis and do not use more than 30-40pc of the annual pasture growth. Feed budgeting will help reduce overgrazing.

Grasses are most susceptible to overgrazing when they are actively growing in spring or after a drought, allow 10-15 cm of new leaf before grazing. The plants are less susceptible when dormant during winter, but overgrazing then reduces ground cover and water infiltration when it does rain.

More grass and legume are sown, the easier it is to achieve good seed-soil contact. Pelleting and other seed treatments improve nodulation if sown after the coat is applied.

SUCCESSFUL PASTURE ESTABLISHMENT ON FARMING LANDS

Sowing rates are not easily achieved with crop planters, and pastures are often mixed with grass and legume seed should not be left in contact with fertiliser overwinter.

If sowing a mixture of grasses, the minimum for any individual species should not be less than 20% of the total seed rate. Seed coating reduces the number of seeds per kilogram by at least two-thirds (with a 2:1 coat ratio).

SOWING TIME
- Sow grass and legume seed should not be left in contact with fertiliser overwinter.
- If sowing a mixture of grasses, the minimum for any individual species should not be less than 20% of the total seed rate.
Innovative fencing for floods

Mary Valley farm shows way

ELECTRIC fences are changing the fencing landscape on our Mary Valley farm, Benrin. Situated 20 kilometres north-west of Gympie at Section, the farm consists of 80 hectares (200 acres) of prime river flats and 60ha (150 acres) of undulating country which is invaluable in the floods. The farm has a 3km frontage to the Mary River.

With the help of my wife Donna and my youngest son, Ben, we run Benrin as a small cattle operation, carrying around 100 breeders and 15 replacement heifers. We purchased the property 11 years ago. It was previously run by my parents and comprised of Tim Emery (Roma), Kiri Broad (Roma) and Roger Sneath, (Toowoomba). The team is currently working on a number projects aimed at increasing the profitability and sustainability of beef businesses.

In the Climate Change Better Beef project, which is part of the High Output Forage Systems Project project, was assessing the relative profitability of oats, forage sorghum, leucaena and buffel grass to finish cattle near Taroom.

The solution was a hot wire – electric fencing consisting of only one wire, and steel posts were easily and quickly constructed along the river and for some parts in the water. This worked a treat. The neighbour’s cattle only needed one hit and a half respect. We ended up running electric fencing the length of the river, criss-crossing it from one side of the river to the other. We have had four major floods, which means between 120 and 160 acres going under water each time. What a mess this makes of the traditional barbed wire/steel post fencing. Rubbish, trees, mud and the occasional old fridge find their way into the barb. The posts are lucky to stay upright, often ending up at a 45-degree angle.

Electric fencing may not be pretty, but plays a valuable role – particularly when pastures on a property are recovering after floods.

Electric fencing on Benrin consists of either one or two wires with 1.7m (5’6”) steel posts as supports and wooden slats as a base to construct miles of fencing.

When we purchased Benrin, the fencing was mainly four-bar, 5-metre spaced, wooden post fencing. Electric fences were used, but mainly for strip grazing associated with basic tools – crow bar, shovels and axes – to construct miles of fencing.

From this beginning we were looking more towards cooler fences for colder areas. We were hesitant to put the time and expense into new electric fences on the flood plain. Over the past three years we have had more than eight major floods, which means between 120 and 160 acres going under water each time. What amazes me is how the traditional hot wire/wooden post fencing. Rubbish, trees, mud and the occasional old fridge find their way into the barb. The posts are lucky to stay upright, often ending up at a 45-degree angle.

We’ve found that electric fencing speeds up the recovery after a significant flood. In high-flow areas we install only one wire and posts are only driven 150mm into the ground. As soon as we know a flood is possible, we cover all the wire (200m) on the ground and walking along and removing the posts. With minimal clean-up and a little sweat, the fence can be standing again in no time after the water recedes.

Cattle learn to respect electric fences very quickly. We do little in terms of specific training to teach cattle about the hot wire – they seem to learn themselves.

Cattle that are born here learn respect for the hot wire as calves and maintain this respect for life.

Brought-in cattle are also induced into the paddocks where fences are highly charged and with two wires. I find that keeping the electric fence with the comet charge eliminates any problems with cattle walking through a comet. I carry a digital voltmeter with me and check the fence regularly.

Even with all the benefits of electric fencing on our farm, I am still little partial to the aesthetic appearance of the barb wire traditional fencing. From my early years on those large pastoral properties I learned to picture traditional fences as part of a farm’s landscape. But over the years this picture has slowly been losing its appeal as it comes to the crunch electric fencing will win out.

As the old traditional fences here need replacing, electric fences will become our major form of fencing.

Smart form system benefits

LIVESTOCK owners can now take advantage of a new electronic waybill. It is a legal requirement that a completed waybill or an equivalent document, for example National Vendor Declaration (NVD)/Waybill or PigPass, accompany travelling livestock. A waybill identifies the owner of the stock, describes the stock being moved, and provides details of the movement.

Up until now, livestock owners have manually filled out forms in a printed waybill book purchased from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) or requested single waybills.

Biosecurity Queensland has moved to an online smart form system, which will be a more convenient option for accessing, filling and distributing waybills.

The electronic waybill is part of the Queensland Government’s ongoing commitment to reduce red-tape benefits include:

- Round-the-clock access for users
- Cost savings compared to purchasing hard-copy waybill books
- Electronic storage of movement records
- Up-to-date forms in use at all times.

All livestock owners are encouraged to move to the new online process.

It’s important to note that producers will be able to access the Livestock Production Assurance (LPA) program still require the NVD/Waybill to maintain LPA accreditation.

This is an industry requirement for livestock sales. The electronic waybill can be found on the Australian Business Licence and Information Service (ABLIS) and is available online at https://forms.business.gov.au/abl/dgv/2ewaybill.

ABLIS is an online service that helps you find the government licences, permits, approvals, registrations, codes of practice, standards and guidelines you need to know about to meet your compliance responsibilities from all levels of government.

An account can be created by a current business owner or someone intending to set up a business.

Account holders can take advantage of completing the waybill online, pre-filled with the details. Where all parties have the appropriate technology, for example email, the waybill can be electronically transferred to the necessary parties as opposed to having a hard copy of the waybill, a paper copy for record keeping purposes.

Hard copy waybills are still available by calling the customer service centre on 13 25 27 or by visiting your local Biosecurity Queensland office.

For more information on livestock movement requirements and waybills, visit www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au or call 13 25 27.

Biosecurity Queensland on Facebook and Twitter (BiosecurityQld).

South-west beef team here to help

DID you know the FutureBeef South-West Beef Team is comprised of Tim Emery (Roma), Kiri Broad (Roma) and Roger Sneath (Toowoomba). The team is currently working on a number projects aimed at increasing the profitability and sustainability of beef businesses.

In the Climate Change Better Beef project, which is part of High Output Forage Systems Project project is assessing the relative profitability of oats, forage sorghum, leucaena and buffel grass to finish cattle near Taroom.

Although the Finishing Systems Producer Demonstration Site (PDS) at Bannockburn Beef officially wraps up in October, the numbers have been crunching providing some key findings for producers to consider.

The Testing Management Options (TMO) workshop helps graziers better understand the economics of their current business position and alternative enterprise and management options. The Stocktake workshop supports landholders in grazing land management through monitoring — we’re more than happy to give you a rundown of the new StocktakePlus smartphone App.

EDGEnetwork® workshops (Business, Nutrition, Grazing Land Management and Breeding) can be organised locally according to demand.

If you’d like to find out more about these projects and workshops, be in the loop about upcoming events, or simply want to chew the fat about anything beef related, please give us a call or email.

You can also find great beef information at www.futurebeef.com.au, or on our Facebook page: South-West Queensland Beef Team.

Tim Emery on 0408 707 105; E: timothy.emery@daff.qld.gov.au
Kiri Broad on 0428 102 841; E: kiri.broad@daff.qld.gov.au
Roger Sneath on 07 4688 1244; E: roger.sneath@daff.qld.gov.au
Drought aid available

The Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry Queensland (DAFF) offers primary producers a range of drought services, including financial assistance, livestock nutrition and animal welfare information and business management strategies. More information is available on 13 25 23, email callbeef@daf.qld.gov.au or visit the website at www.daff.qld.gov.au/drought.

Financial Assistance
- Rural Financial Counselling Service: 1800 696 175 for free rural financial counselling.
- QNA: 1800 623 946 for farm finance, concessional loans, productivity loans.

Drought Relief Assistance Scheme (DRAS): 13 25 25 provides freight subsidies on fodder and water transport during drought and transport of animals returning from restocking and animals purchased for restocking after drought. DRAS also gives a rebate on water infrastructure purchased for emergency animal welfare needs.


Legal Aid Queensland: Contact 13 10 46 for drought relief rebates or concessions.

Ergon Energy: Contact 13 10 46 for drought relief rebates or concessions.

Federation of Australian Beef Exports (FABEx): 1300 731 349 for farm finance, concessional loans, productivity loans.

For more information on drought services, including financial assistance, livestock nutrition and animal welfare information and business management strategies, visit the website at www.daff.qld.gov.au/drought.

Services offer business, personal and family help

Incentives to help young people into agri-industries

Ten $10,000 scholarships on offer

Young people aspiring to a career in agriculture can apply for a $10,000 scholarship to be offered through two of Queensland’s agricultural training colleges.

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, John McVeigh announced 10 scholarships of $10,000 each would be available under the new program starting in 2014.

“Our agricultural industries are crying out for graduates,” Mr McVeigh said.

“The sector offers a whole range of career opportunities in cropping, livestock, horticulture, conservation and land management.

“This generous scholarship scheme will particularly help students to secure a place in the residential training program at the Emerald Agriculture College and Longreach Pastoral College.

This $100,000 funding announcement from the Newman government represents a solid investment in the future of Queensland’s agri-industries.

“This is seed money and we will be seeking industry support to continue funding the scholarships in future years.”

Executive Director Brent Kinnane said applications were now open and would close on Monday, October 28, 2013.

“We want to help those students who are committed to the industry,” Mr Kinnane said.

“As part of their application, students will need to provide an explanation of their career plans.

“We’re looking for those young people who have the will and the passion to make a real contribution to Queensland agriculture.

“Applications will be assessed by a selection panel made up of the two college directors, an education expert from the college, and an industry representative.

“The panel will make recommendations to the college boards for their approval.

“Successful applicants will be notified by mid-November.”

To apply for the scholarship visit www.agriculturalcollege.qld.edu.au, call 1800 888 710 or email enquiries@aac.edu.au.

Next issue: December 2013 Bookings close December 5, 2013

Advertising enquiries:
Sally Inslay 07 4633 9903
E: sally.inslay@fairfaxmedia.com.au
A very expensive gamble judging a bull by its looks

Driving herd profitability

Each time you make a bull selection or purchasing decision, the bull you put in the herd today drives the direction of the herd and the profitability of your beef business well into the future.

Purchasing a bull on looks only is outdated and can be an expensive gamble. Many of these good-looking bulls are outperformed by bulls supported by documented objectives.

Over the past 15 years, significant gains have been made in measuring the current and future ability of a bull to produce calves and, predicting the value of a bull relative to other bulls in the genetic merit of their progeny, in traits of economic importance.

This is particularly true in matters of fertility which can be expressed as:
- Call output per 100 breeders per year.
- Call output per breeder per 365 days of breeding life.
- Call output per bull mated per year.

Your business is driven by the number of animals it can sell, their weight, and the price as achieved within the same time parameters of interest and tax paid.

Every beef manager needs to focus on the areas that will drive profit. Fertility is a big profit driver, particularly in northern Australia, and improving it will improve financial gains.

MEASURING THE CURRENT AND FUTURE ABILITY OF A BULL TO PRODUCE CALVES

From 1992 to 2003, there was a major bull-fertility research project called the Bull Power project conducted across northern Australia.

About 1000 bulls, mainly two to four-year-old Santa Gertrudis, Brahman, Brahman and Belmont Red indicus-cross herds in northern Australia.

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Brahman heifers in spotlight

RESEARCH into fertility traits has been carried out by the CRC for Beef Genetic Technologies (Beef CRC) over 12 years up until late 2011. The research involved 1027 Brahman heifers by 54 sires and 1132 tropical composite heifers by 51 sires. The heifers were studied from weaning through to weaning of their sixth calf.

A total of 3648 young bulls of the two tropical genotypes were evaluated for a comprehensive range of reproduction and reproduction traits up to 24 months of age.

Genetic correlations of young bull and heifer puberty traits with measures of lifetime female reproductive performance were estimated in the two tropical beef cattle genotypes.

**Beef CRC OUTCOMES**

Soin-to-be-published results showed the following:

- Scrotal circumference at 12 months was found to be highly heritable in Brahman and moderately so in Tropical composites.
- Scrotal circumference at 12 months in Brahman and at six months in Tropical composites were correlated with heifer age at puberty – that is, larger-tested sire daughters reach puberty earlier.
- A critical finding was the large influence of sires on heifer age at puberty. Brahman sires differed by up to 5.6 months in the average age at puberty of their daughters.
- Younger age at puberty tended to be genetically associated with increased lifetime reproductive performance.

The Beef CRC found a large genetic variation between sires in the interval between calving and the first oestrus cycle after calving of their daughters. That is, sires have a large effect on the time taken to return to cycling after calving.

**Scrotal circumference is mostly influenced by weight and breed.**

Regular cattle breeding evaluation systems normally measure bull fertility by weight of bull can be sought. Professional interpretation of scrotal circumference at 12 to 13 months for both genetic improvement in the progeny and carcase compliance.

**SUMMARY**

Recent research has shown female reproductive traits in tropical genotypes are heritable and that genetic progress can be made through selection of sires.

- Use bulls with above 70pc normal sperm at 24 months for both genetic improvement in the progeny and for bulls that are either to be single-sire mated and or used for semen collection for processing.
- Use carcase EBVs to improve carcase compliance and market achievement. Set minimum standards. Do not forget to find out breed average for each trait.

**Phenotypically, bulls should have above average scrotal circumference at 12 months and again at 750 days of age. The recommended minimum scrotal circumference is the bottom 5pc value, at any age within breed.**

**VETERINARY BULL BREEDING SOUNDNESS EVALUATION**

Veterinary Bull Breeding Soundness Evaluation (BBSE) is an indicator and selection tool to address economic traits of our beef business. The Beef CRC has been instrumental in making real progress with pre-mating BBSE for the weight of bull within breed.

**Information in the spotlight:**

QUEENSLAND BLUEGRASS

QUEENSLAND bluegrass (Dichanthium sericeum) is one of the desirable 3P (palatable, perennial, productive) native grasses to have in our pastures. It is a widespread plant in eastern Australia and favours heavier black clay soils.

It is commonly grazed out in many pastures due to its palatability while green and the fact that the whole plant can easily be up rooted under severe grazing pressure.

It is good quality feed with up to 10 percent crude protein, 0.2pc phosphorus and 62pc digestibility. However like most tropical grasses protein levels drop significantly once the grass has gone to seed.

The grass grows from wetter coastal regions through to drier regions with 500mm annual rainfall.

Queensland bluegrass grows to 80cm tall with a slender stature and leaves being only 2-4mm wide. Most leaves grow from the base and can range from deep green to grey green in colour.

It has a distinct seed head with 4-6 branches, each spikelet is covered in silky hairs.

The most distinguishing feature of the plant is a ring of hairs around the node on the stem. There are three sub-species and a number of ecotypes all which vary in size and leaf colour.

Queensland bluegrass (Dichanthium sericeum) can be readily identified by the presence of these hairs. Its oil content is high enough to be considered a potentially valuable oil source.

Queensland bluegrass is one of the most common weeds in Australia. It has very few natural enemies and can therefore become a serious pest in some areas.

Queensland bluegrass is one of the few grasses that can persist through very dry conditions.

Queensland bluegrass grows to 80cm tall with a slender stature and leaves being only 2-4mm wide. Most leaves grow from the base and can range from deep green to grey green in colour.

In this book Ross describes an amazing number of poisonous plants including blue-green algae, grasses, weeds, shrubs and trees from across Australia.

The beautifully clear, informative photos of each species help make plant identification easier. Ross’ introduction to understanding plants and plant poisons and explanation of different types of poisoning (e.g. oxalate “big head of horses” and nitrate-nitrite poisoning) tells the whole story in a straightforward, easy read.

Read more about this book at CSIRO Publishing


WEED APPS

WEEDS of Southern Queensland 3rd edition app.

New available from the Google Playstore

http://www.wsp.org.au/iW50s%20app.htm

Weeds Ute Guide app by GRDC.

‘Getting your house in order’

**BREEDING**
- Assess breeder condition for mating. First-calf cows may need extra care with supplements.
- Vaccinate maiden heifers for leptospirosis if a problem has been diagnosed (two vaccinations four weeks apart).
- Check calving cows, especially heifers, regularly. If possible keep calving cows, especially heifers, in paddocks that are readily accessible and fairly close to a set of yards.
- Make up a calving kit (call pulling gear, chains, buckets, clean water, antiseptic, gloves, boots and overall). Have all calving gear clean and ready to go.
- If you have to assist a cow giving birth, make sure you wear appropriate safety gear (long gloves etc). Have all calving gear clean and ready to go.
- Vaccinate all breeding cattle, including bulls, for pestivirus if it’s a problem in your area, noting that the initial vaccination can cause a fever, so vaccinate bulls well before needing them.
- Obtain cattle dip analysis and adjust chemical level if necessary.
- Check early calves (late winter) for ticks.
- Start tick control program.
- Check weaners for worms (send faecal sample for testing) one month after season has broken.

**NUTRITION**
- Review dry season managament plan and climate forecasts. Reassess pasture quantity and quality in relation to ground cover and feed values at the end of the dry season.
- Feed energy and protein supplements to breeders that are heavily pregnant or lactating and to weaners to maintain liveweight.
- Evaluate effectiveness and cost-benefit of a winter supplementation program.
- Re-order molasses, grain supplies or supplements for the next dry season. If you are buying in hay for weaning, check prices and buy when hay is plentiful and at the right price. If you make your own hay lock up paddocks when there is sufficient feed for the cattle in other areas and let those paddocks grow until you can make the hay.

**PASTURES**
- Check pastures at the spring break:
  - Is there enough ground cover?
  - Consider spelling pastures early in the growing season for a positive impact on pasture composition. Prolonged heavy grazing of fresh growth will have a serious detrimental effect on the desirable species of grasses.
  - Consider burning native pastures to maintain good pasture condition and control woody weed growth.
  - Check and control weeds before they seed.
  - Actively patrol known ‘hot spots’. Check areas used by animals to travel horses and other stock movement, visit www.daff.qld.gov.au or phone the customer service centre on 13 25 23 or the Queensland Police Stock and Rural Crimes Investigation Squad.
- Review breeding program; assess whether it is producing animals suitable for market requirements. Consider burning eucalypt woodlands and grasslands to manage land condition.
- Watch long-range weather forecasts for suitable time to plant pasture.
- Check firebreaks and fire-fighting equipment.
- If pasture development is a part of your overall plan, sow pastures if seasonal conditions are favourable. If you can’t get the pasture in by the beginning of October it is best to wait until the New Year. This reduces the risk of failed establishment due to heatwave and drought conditions or a very good, cool, flood conditions.
- Vaccinate all breeding cattle, including bulls, for three-day sickness.
- Vaccinate for footrot.
- Vaccinate for three-day sickness.
- Vaccinate all breeding cattle, including bulls, for leptospirosis if a problem in your area, noting that the initial vaccination can cause a fever, so vaccinate bulls well before needing them.
- Obtain cattle dip analysis and adjust chemical level if necessary.
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**PARASITES AND DISEASES**
- Vaccinate all breeding cattle, including bulls, for pestivirus if it’s a problem in your area, noting that the initial vaccination can cause a fever, so vaccinate bulls well before needing them.
- Obtain cattle dip analysis and adjust chemical level if necessary.
- Check early calves (late winter) for ticks.
- Start tick control program.
- Check weaners for worms (send faecal sample for testing) one month after season has broken.

**PROPERTY MAINTENANCE**
- Meet with all staff to discuss progress of the business and to plan for the future, including retirement and succession planning.
- Get information on training programs and budget to allow attendance at those applicable to your business.
- Review overall property management and any changes that may be necessary.
- Review breeding program; assess whether it is producing animals suitable for market requirements.

**Horse transporters need certificate to enter tick-free zones**

A REMINDER for people transporting horses to the Queensland cattle tick free zone. Any person moving a horse(s) into the Queensland cattle tick free zone must be in possession of a fully completed waybill and either an Inspection and Treatment Certificate issued by one of the stock clearance centres or a livestock travel permit issued by a government biosecurity inspector. You must have these two documents including, but not limited to, travel to a show or race meeting or returning home after a competition in the cattle tick-infected zone. Correct documentation and treatment of animals helps prevent the spread of cattle ticks and saves losses from cattle mortality due to tick fever. For further information on your legal requirement to travel horses and other stock movements visit www.daff.qld.gov.au or phone the customer service centre on 13 25 23 or the Queensland Police Stock and Rural Crimes Investigation Squad.

- Before end of dry season look for green patches in paddocks that might indicate water leaking from underground piping.
- Maintain fire fighting equipment, extinguishers etc., and ensure staff are fully trained in their use. Clean around buildings and check gutters are free of leaves.
- Ensure fire breaks are maintained and servicable, slash around houses, sheds and yards so if a fire does get away it will be easier to control on short grass.
- If you have the time also slash the tracks around the paddocks to make getting around them easier and safer.
- Initially it is often easy to slash along cattle tracks which also makes mustering easier as the cattle will follow the pads so long as they end up where you want them to.

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