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Timely Tips for Winter

Lead poisoning (continued)

Estimating diet quality with dung samples

Fireweed

Planning supplementation

Economics of sown pastures

Weaning and educating calves

Feeding licks to cattle
Drought strategies, preparing for El Niño

WELCOME to Beeftalk 39. In this issue, there is a warning for impending El Niño conditions which occur, but not always, bring drier than normal conditions.

The impact of El Niño is more relevant to some areas than others, such as far northern Queensland. A list of drought strategies and considerations is given, including the all-important adjustment of stock numbers to match paddock feed and water supplies. Supplementation of stock on pastures is still important, especially to help breeders hold condition. Several articles discuss assessing pasture quality (dung samples), animal requirements, supplementation needs and options.

While management of the business is important, Liveline reminds us that “YOU and your family” are the most important part of the business also needing attention. New landholders in particular are not always clear on their responsibilities for managing land and livestock. Several articles provide an overview and refresher of responsibilities for landholders big and small. Observing these responsibilities is so important to maintain clean landscapes and food to keep our export and domestic customers buying Queensland beef.

The update on the 2013 Northern Beef Situation Analysis reminds us that things are difficult. It also highlights that some businesses are managing for consistently better profits. Please provide your feedback and suggestions for future issues using a short survey at www.surveymonkey.com/beeftalk39. Online versions of Beeftalk are also 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

IN 2011, a producer group at Richmond in North West Queensland started trialing two remote technologies as part of a MLA Producer Demonstration Site (PDS). The project, coordinated by Cloncurry-based FutureBeef extension officers Rebecca Gunther and Emma Hegarty, demonstrates using remote equipment to automatically collect animal weights, draft animals, and photographically monitor waters, livestock in the yards, and pastures.

The automated weighing and drafting unit, supplied by Precision Pastoral, allows livestock to be monitored remotely in the paddock. Cattle are weighed every time they walk over the weighbridge to exit the main water yard. Each animal’s NLIS tag is scanned with an Affix panel reader and matched to their live weight, date and time by a Tru Test XSS3000. This information is then sent to Precision Pastoral’s online weight reporting software via mobile phone coverage using Observant telemetry. Satellite and UHF frequency equipment is also available to use with the system if mobile coverage is not sufficient.

A drafting unit adjoins the weighing unit and can be used to automatically draft stock on live weight or NLIS tag number into different yards. This enables drafting on sale weight specifications or weighting or even to compare stock with or without a treatment or supplement in the yards.

The remote weighing and drafting technology has allowed pin point timing of key management practices with the equipment through monitoring whether live weights are gaining, levelling or dropping. The group has been able to specifically target the introduction of dry lick supplementation when live weights began to plateau. The live weight data can then be used to see if there is a response to the supplement. Significant cost saving can be achieved by not supplementing too early and minimising weight loss over the dry season.

Analysing the data has shown some interesting animal behaviour with some animals only watering every second or third day in cooler months of the year, despite the relatively small 1500ac paddock. The system also sends an alert when an animal’s tag hasn’t been read for several days. It also discovered that one animal in particular would go missing periodically, jumping the fence to return later.

The project has been very beneficial in demonstrating the practical application of the system, its potential, and its limitations. Importantly livestock need to be trained to use the spear traps which are an integral part of the system, as well as being trained to become accustomed to walking over the weigh bridge and waiting for their gate to open in front of them. Since large paddocks in extensive grazing operations have multiple waters, it may be necessary to set the system up in a large holding paddock with controlled water, or accept monitoring of just a percentage of livestock in the paddock.

uSee Remote monitoring cameras, supplied by Harrington Systems Electronics, were the second remote technology demonstrated. One camera was set above the ‘in’ spear to monitor the water trough and tank levels in the main water yard, while a second camera was located two kilometres from water to monitor pasture condition.

Both cameras are programmed to take a set number of photos a day that are uploaded via mobile phone coverage to the uSee website at www.usee.com. The cameras can be instructed to take a photo on demand, via a button on the website. Satellite cameras are available for areas outside of mobile coverage.

The remote camera was found to be an excellent tool in decreasing the amount of water runs required in day-to-day management.

The ability to check the water trough levels daily on the way through reduced the number of times required to check the trial paddock in person, saving a one hour drive round trip to the trial paddock each time. It was estimated that such savings in labour and fuel could pay for the system in as little as three months. A satellite camera would take slightly longer, but payback time still measured in months, not years.

With labour costs at a premium, the project has been successful in demonstrating the potential of remote technologies to improve management efficiencies in beef enterprises. The technologies and applications will only improve in time.

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Roger Sneath, Damien O’Sullivan, Kiri Broad, Felicity McIntosh, Rebecca Farrell (DAFF) and Carl McGregor representing the South East Queensland Regional Beef Research Committee.

Trialling two remote technologies at MLA Producer Demonstration Site, Richmond

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Roger Sneath, Damien O’Sullivan, Kiri Broad, Felicity McIntosh, Rebecca Farrell (DAFF) and Carl McGregor representing the South East Queensland Regional Beef Research Committee.
The Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) has been rolling out a new weather forecast system that provides more information to help you make important weather related decisions on your property.

The new system provides simple, interactive weather maps that will give you more detail, at a local level, up to 7 days ahead.

As well as providing forecasts for specific locations, the maps make it easier to understand how the weather is changing across your region over the coming week.

The maps allow you to zoom into your local area and view maps of wind speed and direction, and get temperature information seven days in advance. Looking at the forecast overnight temperature, you’ll be able to anticipate and prepare for a period of frosty nights, well before the bureau issues an official frost warning.

As well as providing forecasts, the maps make it easier to understand how the weather is changing across your region over the coming week.

The BOM has recently trialed a pilot heatwave forecast service. The success of the pilot service is under review and pending a satisfactory review, it will restart sometime in spring 2014. The heatwave forecast is a set of graphical maps of heatwaves, severe heatwaves and extreme heatwaves for the current day extending out for the next four days which is planned to be made available through MetEye.

The BOM issues warnings to sheep graziers a day prior to these conditions occurring, however by analysing the maps you will be well prepared days in advance for harsh weather conditions that could significantly impact on your stock.

In another development for agriculture, a new evapo-transpiration tool has been included in the BOM’s website. With easy access to information about daily reference (standard) evapo-transpiration combined with rainfall totals at a number of BOM weather station locations you will be able to make better informed decisions about your water requirements.

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Through MetEye you can access maps and graphs showing extreme events. Extreme climate events such as heat waves, cold snaps, floods and dry spells can have a significant impact on your property or livestock.

The new extreme monitoring products will allow you to examine how extremes in your area have changed over time. For example, you can check how the number of extreme hot days or extreme cold nights has changed.

For more information visit the Bureau’s website: www.bom.gov.au/meteye.
CLIMATE forecasts are indicating that an El Niño may develop by spring 2014 (Figure 1). Generally speaking this is often associated with below average rainfall across large parts of Queensland.

**HOW DOES AN EL NIÑO OCCUR?**

**Normal or non-El Niño conditions**
The southern part of the Pacific Ocean circulates in an anti-clockwise direction. Cold water from Antarctica moves up the South American coast, and assisted by trade winds moves westward at the tropics. As this occurs the water becomes warmer so the sea surface temperatures become higher in the western Pacific than the eastern Pacific. This warm water north of Australia helps low pressure systems to develop as warm moist air expands and rises producing rain over northern Australia. Cool water in the tropical eastern Pacific causes the air above to contract and become dense, producing high-pressure systems and dry conditions. With cold water (and high pressure) in the east, surface air flows westerly across the Pacific (trade winds) picking up moisture, and in areas over northern Australia it rises producing rain (Figures 2a and 2b).

**El Niño conditions**
El Niño conditions occur when warm water from the north or west Pacific Ocean (forced by westerly wind bursts) penetrates the cold water in the tropical eastern Pacific. This can produce low pressure in the east and corresponding high pressure in the west Pacific, which weakens the trade winds, and causes a reversal of the circulation pattern. The weaker trade winds slow the westerly ocean currents and the water north of Australia remains cooler than normal. High pressure systems prevail, producing lower than normal rainfall (Figures 3a and 3b).

The southern oscillation index (SOI) is a measure of the difference in air pressure between Darwin (western Pacific) and Tahiti (eastern Pacific). A positive SOI indicates low pressure at Darwin (high in Tahiti) while a negative SOI indicates high pressure at Darwin (low in Tahiti). It’s a useful indicator of the ENSO pattern mentioned above.

**WHAT DOES AN EL NIÑO MEAN?**
An El Niño is likely to develop by spring 2014 and by all indications its strength may well be classified as ‘weak to moderate’ as measured by the degree of warming in the central tropical Pacific Ocean. Generally speaking, but not always, an El Niño is associated with below average rainfall across Queensland, but the strength of the El Niño is not always associated with a similar impact on rainfall. For example, the 1997-98 El Niño was classed as ‘very strong’ but the impact on rainfall in Queensland was weak (Figure 4a) (www.bom.gov.au/climate/enso/enlist/index.shtml), however the 1982-83 El Niño was classed as ‘very strong’ and the impact on rainfall was ‘very strong’ with drought conditions widespread across Queensland. For Queensland’s farmers and graziers it means that the threat of below average rainfall in spring and summer is high.

**What does El Niño mean for spring and summer rainfall?**
A look at the the climate forecasts for Queensland
What's been the impact of El Niño conditions on Queensland locations in the past?

For the locations in Queensland surveyed the chance of receiving median rainfall in spring ranged between 18-33 per cent during El Niño like conditions (SOI less than -5) (Table), and the chance of receiving median rainfall in spring and summer was less than -5 (El Niño conditions) Taroom only received median rainfall in approximately one out of four years.

What can you do?

Continue to monitor the situation on the BoM website www.bom.gov.au/climate/extreme/model-summary. Sttimi and be prepared for drier than normal conditions in spring and summer if El Niño conditions develop.


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Surviving the dry: workshops to give graziers the nutrition edge

Central Queensland graziers are being urged to arm themselves with the latest information and strategies in beef nutrition as dry conditions persist.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry’s (DAFF) FutureBeef team has organised a three-day Nutrition Edge Workshop in Emerald on 19-21 August, presented by leading nutrition, reproduction and livestock management specialist Désirée Jackson.

The workshop is an approved training activity under the Fitzroy Basin Association’s Training Reimbursement Program. Under this program property managers and managers can be reimbursed up to 70 per cent of the cost of approved training.

The cost of the workshop is $1760, and there are discounts for additional business attendees.

To register for the workshop, or for more information, visit www.futurebeef.com.au, FutureBeef’s Facebook page or call DAFF’s Customer Service Centre on 13 25 23.

Byrony Daniels said.

“Forecasts for an El Niño summer season are firming, and cow body condition and fertility have already suffered from late breaks in the last couple of years. If we are looking at a similar situation this year, the learnings from the Nutrition EDGE course will be invaluable,” FutureBeef extension officer Byrony Daniels said.

“It’s a fact that this year’s cow body condition will determine next year’s fertility. Now is the time to take steps to ensure the best use of available pastures, make sure your supplementary feeding plans provide value for money and seek advice from the experts.”

Topics to be covered throughout the three days include better understanding the nutritional requirements of cattle, estimating the feed value of pasture and related animal production, and identifying and managing nutritional deficiencies. The development and implementation of cost effective supplementary feeding and drought management strategies will also be covered.

The workshop is $1760, and there are discounts for additional business attendees.

To register for the workshop, or for more information, visit www.futurebeef.com.au, FutureBeef’s Facebook page or call DAFF’s Customer Service Centre on 13 25 23.

NLIS refresher: Transfers - when and how?

When?

All cattle movements must be recorded on the NLIS database with the exception of cattle moving between properties with the same property identification code (PIC). These transfers must occur within 48 hours of the cattle movement.

The type of movement determines who is responsible for recording the movement on the NLIS database. The following table outlines the type of movement and who is responsible for the transaction.

How?

With internet access: The NLIS database is managed by NLIS Ltd on behalf of the industry/ government organisation called SAFEMEAT. To access the database and carry out livestock transactions you need a PIC, email and you need to open an internet account with the database. If you only trade via the saleyards or sell direct to the meatworks and sell directly to abattoirs, you do not need to open an account. The saleyards and abattoirs will do all the transactions for you.

When updating the database for each animal, you will need the:

- NLIS ID or RFID number of each animal
- ‘from’ PIC or place of destination
- ‘to’ PIC or place of destination
- serial number of the waybill or combined NVD/waybill
- date of movement.

As noted, you don’t need to report movements for saleyard purchases, as the saleyard operators carry out this task for people buying cattle from a saleyard. However, if you’re a purchaser, you may wish to check your database account to ensure they’ve done this correctly.

Once movement details have been uploaded, the NLIS database emails the transfer details to both the consigning PIC on the national Vendor Declaration. Agents acting as a third party for a client will also receive an email.

Without internet access: Producers without internet access may utilise third party providers who assist by doing NLIS transfers. Some third party providers and livestock agents have non-written authority to carry out transfers, in which case you don’t have to provide a written authorisation.

Before making any arrangements with a service provider, discuss their services to ensure they will meet all legal and commercial obligations.

Once a transfer is complete, get a written confirmation from your service provider or livestock agent that the transfer has been completed correctly.

Note to transfer service providers: Third party service providers should also check that PICs of cattle bought and sold through saleyards, and taken to abattoirs, have been correctly transferred.

What if I don’t update a transfer?

If you move an animal to a property with a different PIC and the movement is not updated on the database, the warning will be identified at a later reading or report from the database. The system will detect any animals not correctly registered against the PIC they are consigned to.

When the animal’s movement records are later uploaded, the database will automatically assign it to the consigning PIC on the national vendor declaration.

However, the animal’s lifetime traceability status will be lost because its movements have not been fully recorded. Animals that do not have lifetime traceability status may not be eligible for some markets such as the European Union.

For assistance

Call the NLIS Helpdesk on 1800 654 743, email support@nlis.com.au or visit the NLIS website www.nlis.mia.com.au.

Contact your local Biosecurity or Stock Inspector.

Dug McNaught

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Protecting your greatest asset - YOU

Don’t bottle your feelings up inside. Get help, if you need it. Don’t wait until things have gone too far.

WARNING SIGNS THAT YOU OR YOUR FAMILY MEMBER/FRIEND MIGHT NEED SOME HELP:
Suicidal words: “It’s not worth it”, “I can’t go on”, “I can’t handle this any longer”. You would be better off without me.
When people make these sort of statements, it is a sign that more help is needed. It is an invitation for help.

If you feel you are not getting the support you need from a provider, it is OK to ask another opinion or try another counsellor/service provider. Don’t give up until you get the help you need. Sometimes you might need to talk to a few people.

On-farm biosecurity planning essential

BIOSECURITY Queensland coordinates the government’s efforts to prevent, respond to, and recover from pests and diseases that threaten the economy and environment.

As a rural landholder, regardless of the size of your property, you play a vital role in minimising biosecurity risks and protecting your property and animals.

On-farm biosecurity involves protecting the health of your animals and their environment by reducing the risk of disease, chemical residues and weeds and pest animal spread.

Assessing the risks and planning to control them can improve the profitability of your business and contribute to good biosecurity in your community.

Some of the major risks include:
- Visitors
- Introducing new animals
- Inadequate hygiene
- Machinery hygiene.

Visitors, including neighbours, agents, sales people, advisors, shooters, fishers and vets can unintentionally bring disease and other pests on to your property.

Ensure that visitors wash their hands, and have clean clothing and boots, wear protective clothing, footwear and provide disinfectant for visitors inspecting your animals. It is also important to keep a register including names and dates of all visitors to your property.

National parks are the most common way to introduce disease into your stock. This includes bought-in replacement stock and staf, feral or wild animals. A priority is to ensure that boundary fences are stock-proof to prevent stray animals entering and stock property stealing. Before introducing new animals, request the history of livestock and minimise the risk of introducing disease. Obtain supporting paperwork, such as animal health statements, and ensure movement requirements are met.

COUNSELLING AVAILABLE IN YOUR AREA:
Please contact your local GP or Lifeline’s telephone counselling line (13 11 14) for local contacts.

Lifeline Darling Downs & SW Qld Ltd has local counselling services across the south west of Queensland.

An audio copy of this short talk is on the DAFF website. Please visit www.futurebeef.com.au/topics/business-management to listen to this recording.

Megan Hakala, Senior Practitioner
Lifeline Darling Downs & SW Qld Ltd

On-farm biosecurity involves protecting the health of your animals and their environment.

Workshops offer information on getting through tough times

Lifeline
13 11 14 www.lifeline.org.au
Lifeline Darling Downs & SW Qld Ltd 1300 991 443 www.kidshelpline.com.au
Mensline 1300 789 978 www.menslineaus.com.au
Rural financial counselling service 1800 866 175
Murray-Darling Basin Assistance and Referral Line 1800 050 015
Relationships Australia 1300 364 277 www.relationships.com.au
Beyonduhn line information 1300 224 635 www.beyondblue.org.au
SANE Australia help 1800 888 382 www.sane.org
National Association for Loss & Grief 1300 569 467 www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au
Suicide Call Back Service 000

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Megan Hakala, Senior Practitioner
Lifeline Darling Downs & SW Qld Ltd

On-farm biosecurity involves protecting the health of your animals and their environment.
With much of Queensland in drought many producers are implementing drought strategies aimed at minimising losses and maintaining productivity.

There are many factors which influence the relief measures used to cope with drought conditions. These include: the expected duration of the drought, the current water and feed supplies, herd composition and condition, time and labour, present and future markets, financial resources and attitude to risk.

Having a written drought plan with strategies which are consistent with the goals of the grazing business is important. Producers who experienced the 2003 drought said that the key to staying in control was “forward planning – knowing what you are going to do and when”. They said that their best decision was “stopping to critical dates” and their worst decision was “not acting early enough”.

The following drought management strategies are important:

- Adjust stock numbers according to currently available pasture and water supplies in order to last well into the next expected wet season. Good ground cover before the summer rains is important to improve infiltration and hold valuable soil nutrients in place for better pasture growth.
- While some may get early storms, it will be safer to cater for a later break to the dry season, especially in El Niño years. Four dry-season forage budgeting videos can cater for a later break to the dry season, especially in El Niño years. Four dry-season forage budgeting videos can be viewed on the FutureBeef website www.futurebeef.com.au/resources/multimedia/#GLM.
- Niño years. Four dry-season forage budgeting videos can be viewed on the FutureBeef website www.futurebeef.com.au/resources/multimedia/#GLM.
- There are many factors which influence the relief measures used to cope with drought conditions.

When stock numbers exceed or are anticipated to exceed, feed supply options include selling, agistment, feeding (production, feedlot, survival), drive, lease or buy more land. It is important to do the sums. Tools to help assess the cost of selling versus feeding, production feeding, custom feeding and stocking nutrients are available at www.futurebeef.com.au/topics/business-management/beef-business-tools.

Selling. Past droughts have found many producers retrospectively regarding selling early to reduce stock numbers as one of their better options. Sales of normal sale stock and vulnerable breeding stock has the attraction of converting cattle into cash, preserving more paddock feed for remaining stock and tightening up calving.

As one cattle producer put it, “every beast on the property represents dollars, and dollars aren’t subject to drought”. Selling takes some of the stress off you, the paddocks and the remaining stock.

It controls downside risk of escalating costs and losses over an unknown period, and leaves you more time and opportunity for other work. It may rain the next week, but the philosophy adopted by many is that it was the right decision under the circumstances at the time.

Pastures will also recover more readily. Moving early provides a bigger pasture sparing effect and often has the advantage of stock having better condition and sale prices.

Difficulties in selling revolve around getting known stock and genetics bred up over time, uncertainties of low sale prices, buy back price and quality and hoping for rain. Forecasting the outcomes if it does not rain and remembering that productive pastures are the foundation of the business, can help decision making.

Agistment can work well to avoid feeding and spell home pastures, or it can be a very costly problem. Sending steers on a one way trip can work well. Contracts are important for both parties. Some problems include finding it, time and distance from home property, management, communication, fence maintenance, yard, feed running out and having to find more agistment or return home, poor performance, losses, bullying, diseases, parasites and plant poisoning.

Production feeding can work well if stock have nearly reached a price premium but won’t quite get there without some better feed. The economics are better with lower feed costs, shorter feed periods, good performance and higher sale price. Cull cows can be an opportunity where there can be very significant increases in sale price by lifting carcass weight and fat to above a critical threshold.

Custom feeding: astrology for and do the budgets to check the likelihood of profit. Ensure sums are done consistently using as ‘fear’ or ‘duty matter’ figures. Understand changes, risks and marketing options. Check entry specifications and requirements and avoid putting poor temperament and poor performers into high cost feeding. Having a full pen load can reduce mixing stress and disease issues.

Survival feeding can work well if you’re well prepared and it’s not too long and expensive. Otherwise feeding can be very expensive, time consuming and stressful for you, stock, pastures, equipment and finances. Problems include not knowing how long it can go for, reducing feed availability, rising feed costs, less time and opportunity, stock becoming unsaleable, stock losses, pasture damage, soil erosion risk and its impact on future productivity.

It is important that materials containing lead are securely stored.

Batteries have been a particular problem as a source of lead with battery cases regularly being found in paddocks, either whole or shredded into small pieces.

Producers should check that there are no sources of lead in rubbish dumps or around farm buildings and machinery that stock can access. Stock have died from silage contaminated by lead shot, automotive grease, oil filters, putty and even headlight windows.

CLINICAL SIGNS OF LEAD POISONING

A combination of gastro-intestinal (either constipation or diarrhoea) and neurological signs may occur. Acute poisoning can include stock found dead or displaying combinations of several signs for a few hours before death, including:

- Colic
- Staggering gait
- Rolling eyes
- Shivering
- Muscle spasms
- Blindness
- Uncoordinated attempts to climb obstacles
- Excessive response to external stimuli
- Head pressing
- Convulsions.

Sub-acute poisoning signs can include dullness, loss of appetite, abdominal pain and diarrhoea.

Chronic poisoning signs include wasting, loss of appetite, anaemia, constipation, recombinency and breathing difficulty. Sometimes acute attacks may occur during the course of chronic poisoning.

Paraesthesia and death may also occur.

For more information or to book your advertisement please contact your Queensland country life advertising consultant.
National Livestock ID Scheme: the basics

Lifetime traceability a benefit to the livestock industry

THE National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) is the identification and traceability system for livestock. Lifetime traceability improves product integrity and market access and assists with the management of disease and chemical residue issues. NLIS is based on the property registration system. Registration provides properties with a property identification code, which is the key to tracking movements between places.

NLIS DATABASE

The NLIS database is managed by NLIS Ltd on behalf of industry and government (Stock Identification Regulation 2005). NLIS - A guide for producers (Quick start guides and references) is available for download from the website.

USING THE NLIS DATABASE

Establish a free user account to register livestock movements, check and download carcase feedback database and view reports (e.g. transaction history, data on property, audit property).

Livestock movement notification – to be completed within 48 hours of stock arrival on property of destination.

● Online: Electronic notification is preferred through either an account or email (notebook or Excel file).
● Third party: Access authority form allows a third party (agent) to access the database on a producer’s behalf.
● Movements to abattoirs and/or saleyards – the abattoir/saleyard is responsible for registering the movement.
● Movements on or off property – the receiver (e.g. manager, owner) is responsible for registering the movement.

USING NLIS IN MANAGEMENT

NLIS technology offers producers many options to increase efficiencies in data management within their business. These can include:

● Production performance e.g. weight gains, carcase feedback etc.
● Reproductive performance
● Health management e.g. vaccination, HPGs, sickness, chemical application, etc. This is useful information for LPA.

FOR ASSISTANCE

Call the NLIS Helpdesk on 1800 654 743, visit the NLIS website or email support@nlis.com.au.

Biosecurity Queensland has held the first in a series of webinars to help answer any questions around the requirements for transport movements, check and download carcase feedback database and view reports (e.g. transaction history, data on property, audit property).

Once applied, an NLIS tag remains on the animal for life, unless replaced by a new device due to loss or malfunction.

You can’t control the markets. But you can get the most from them with Compudose®, the proven way to maximise growth rates in grassfed cattle. Its 15.8% average liveweight gain advantage¹ allows you to increase total production or achieve market specifications sooner, maximising your productivity and profitability at the same time. Find out how Compudose can be the difference between a good season and an ordinary season— contact your Elanco Animal Health representative on 1800 226 324.

Annie Donoghue
‘Barranga’
Bauhinia, Qld

Do you know the code of practice for transport of stock?

HOW long can a pregnant cow be transported without water? Not sure? Find out in the code of practice for transport of livestock.

The code of practice for transport of livestock (the code) is the result of discussions nationally between the livestock industries, scientists, welfare agencies and government. It aims to safeguard the welfare of livestock being transported.

The code covers the transport of both commercial and non-commercial livestock and applies once livestock are assembled prior to loading and continues until the livestock are unloaded at the final destination.

The code aligns Queensland with other states and territories to achieve a nationally consistent approach to livestock transport.

It is recommended that producers, drivers and receivers of livestock familiarise themselves with the laws.

Compliance with the code became compulsory under the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001 on January 31, 2014. However there is a qualified six-month grace period for enforcement ending August 1, 2014.

It is recommended that, producers, drivers and receivers of livestock familiarise themselves with the laws and ensure they are compliant.

The code includes the responsibilities of those involved in the transport, maximum times off water, ensuring that livestock are fit for the intended journey, handling rules and special considerations.

Under the code, animals that are not fit for the intended journey must not be transported.

It is the responsibility of the consignor and the transporter to ensure the animals are fit for the intended journey.

The code applies to the following animals being transported by road, rail or by container or vehicle aboard a ship:

Alpacas, buffalo, camel, cattle, sheep, goats, horses, pigs, poultry, ostriches, emus and deer.

Biosecurity Queensland has held the first in a series of webinars to help answer any questions around the changes to the compulsory requirements for transporting livestock.

For further information and details of future webinars, producers can contact Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23 or visit www.business.qld.gov.au.

The difference between a good season and an ordinary season is this much

Click here for full front cover image and artwork.
BREEDERS
- Pregnancy test 6 to 8 weeks after bull removal and do your annual vaccinations of breeders at the same time.
- Cull breeders from main mob (pregnancy tested empty, temperament, age and defects). Track to saleyards or fattening paddock.
- Assess mating program and plan changes if necessary. Consider options for breeding programs, e.g. crossbreeding.
- Check on and maintain condition of pregnant breeders especially maiden heifers and first calf cows.
- Order NLIS tags.
- Assess your maiden heifers. Are they going to be heavy enough to mate?
- Assess your first calf cows. Are they in good enough condition to get back in calf?
- Check calving heifers for calving difficulties and identify those you have to assist so you can sell them. Checking the first calf cows is not only good animal husbandry but also gets them used to having you moving around their paddock and they keep that quietness.
- Check bulls for soundness, most importantly have a semen test conducted on each breeding bull, and
- Check calving heifers and yearlings for any signs of lead poisoning.

BULLS
- Check bulls for soundness, most importantly have a semen test conducted on each breeding bull, and determine numbers needed for next breeding season.
- Consider type/breed of bull that will produce the type of calves best suited for your potential markets.
- Source and evaluate potential bull suppliers.
- Check young home grown bulls as potential sires.
- Source and evaluate potential bull suppliers.
- Check on and maintain condition of pregnant breeders at the same time.
- Order NLIS tags.
- Assess your maiden heifers. Are they going to be heavy enough to mate?
- Assess your first calf cows. Are they in good enough condition to get back in calf?
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PASTURES
- Consider burning native pastures every 2 to 3 years in late winter or early spring after 50mm of rain to maintain good/pasture condition and control woody weed growth.
- If pasture condition needs to improve, remove stock from paddocks that have been burnt until pasture is at least 15cm high.
- Watch SOIL and other long range forecasts for suitable time to plant pasture.
- To maintain or improve pasture composition, ensure paddocks get at least one late spring or summer spell every fourth year.
- Check calving heifers and yearlings for any signs of lead poisoning.

PARASITES AND DISEASES
- Plan tick control for summer. Check for resistance if control is a problem.
- Order buffalo fly tags if using them or maintain rubbers or whatever else you use for buffalo fly control.
- PROPERTY MAINTENANCE
- Check fences and water facilities in breeding paddocks.
- Check-lived and creek crossings before next wet season.
- Make sure you have adequate amounts of wire, steel posts, etc on hand for maintenance. If you get flood/wind and have wrecked fences chances are the supplies you won’t be in short supply.
- Maintain fire fighting equipment, extinguishers, etc and ensure that fire breaks are maintained and serviceable.
- Slash or mow around buildings and wooden cattle yards as well as inside paddocks that adjoin roads where most fires start.
- Clean around buildings and check that gutters are free of leaves.
- Ensure all staff know what to do in case of fire. Do they know who is in charge of fire?
- Do workplace health and safety audit of property.
- Do your annual health checks and ensure that you have quality family time together.
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NUTRITION - DRY SEASON MANAGEMENT
- Re-evaluate dry season management plans.
- If season has not broken, check breeder and weaner condition. Sell, agist or drought feed.
- Draft cattle according to nutritional requirements.
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FOOD SAFETY
Livestock that accesses a source of lead may have residues in the meat or offals, while not exhibiting any signs of lead poisoning.
Blood lead levels in ruminant livestock may remain elevated for several months after abnormal lead intake.
A normal blood level of less than 0.24 umol/l (<0.05 mg/kg) is adopted for lead residue management purposes in exposed animals.
Exposed stock may be restricted from sale or movement to manage any food safety or trade risks in lead residues which could be above maximum Lead levels set in the Food Standards Code.

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- Do workplace health and safety audit of property.
- Do your annual health checks and ensure that you have quality family time together.

Lead poisoning in livestock - impacts on food safety

Differential diagnoses

- Similar nervous system effects can be induced by various diseases affecting the brain, including:
  - Cerebral babesiosis - tick fever
  - Nutritional and metabolic deficiencies, e.g. hypomagnesaemia, ketosis, thiamine deficiency, vitamin A deficiency
  - Other poisons, e.g. mercury, organophosphates
  - Plant poisoning, e.g. Miconia ferruginea
  - Enteroxoaemia, e.g. Cladospirum periphragmum type D
  - Viral infections, e.g. infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR), sporadic bovine encephalomyelitis (SSBE), and bovine malignant catarrh (BMC)
  - Bacterial infections e.g. listeriosis.

Clinical lead poisoning in adult ruminant stock is associated with liver or kidney levels exceeding 10 mg/kg but total poisoning can occur with lower tissue levels.

It is not just the animals and property that need maintenance. You and your family are the most important assets on your property. Make sure you go for your annual health checks and ensure that you have quality family time together.
Using dung samples to estimate diet quality

**NIRS dung samples gauge the quality of pasture diet**

DUNG sample tests are a relatively easy way to get estimates of diet quality for cattle on tropical pastures. Near infrared reflectance spectroscopy (NIRS) is used to estimate cattle's diet quality, in particular:

- **crude protein (CP per cent)**
- **dry matter digestibility (DMDpc)** - a reflection of available energy
- **non-grass proportion of diet** (for example, browse, legumes, herbage).

People often ask if you can just test the plants directly to measure pasture quality. The problem here is that cattle select plants and parts of plants very differently to people. A dung sample gives a much better indication of what stock have eaten. One of the main benefits of NIRS dung samples is its gauge if and when protein is becoming a primary limiting nutrient.

The table shows dung sample results over a year on tropical sown grass pasture in south Queensland.

**Crude protein and dry matter digestibility** as expected diet quality was high with a wet spring/summer and lower in the drier autumn and winter, falling a low in June of 5.5 per cent crude protein and 54.3pc digestibility.

**Stems** (400-500g) averaged close to 1kg dry matter in addition, around 0.4kg in autumn, losing 0.2kg during winter, and gaining 0.05kg in spring. As a rough guide, energy and protein will become limiting for breeders below around 55pc DMD and 5pc CP, while for dry stock around 50-51pc DMD and 5-6pc CP, the lower range being 88pc digestibility.

**Non-grass intake** was high in spring 2011 following good October rain and increased in the diet again in winter 2012, when pasture grass had hayed off and cattle were seeking higher protein material with herbage and browse.

**CP/DM ratio** looks at the balance of protein relative to energy. If energy is high and protein low, then protein may become a limiting nutrient. Conversely if protein is high relative to energy then energy is limiting and adding extra protein costs money for nothing.

**Dung samples** can be used to measure and understand the relative feed value of different paddocks and how this changes over time with seasonal conditions and management such as introduction of legumes and wet season spelling.

Diet quality data can help identify if and when to supplement protein or energy. Savings can be made by avoiding unnecessary supplementation. The data can also help decisions in matching stock to paddocks, limiting of weaning to reduce nutritional stress on cows and stock movements or sales.

**The data can help decisions in matching stock to paddocks, timing of weaning to reduce nutritional stress on cows and stock movements or sales.**

FIREWEED is a serious weed in south-east Queensland where it can reduce pasture production and potentially poison cattle and horses.

_Fireweed_ (Senecio madagascariensis) is a pasture weed native to South Africa. It was accidentally introduced to Australia around 1910 and has spread via wind-blown seed throughout the north coast of NSW and into Queensland. It is easily confused with some of the 87 other _Senecio_ species found in Australia, especially its closest relative, the native _S. centaurium_. Googling ‘Have I got fireweed’ (_Senecio madagascariensis_) locates a fact sheet with a simple key for identification. Ask your local weeds officer if you are still unsure.

Dense infestations of fireweed are present in the Warwick, Beenleigh, Beaudesert, Gold Coast, Logan and Redland local government areas, and isolated infestations range from Stanthorpe to Hervey Bay. The species has the potential to spread along the coast as far north as Rockhampton.

Fireweed seed can spread as a contaminant of equipment, produce (such as commercial seed and hay), turf, soil, and livestock. The prolific growth of fireweed reduces pasture production, and increases the likelihood of consumption by livestock.

Fireweed poisoning causes chronic liver damage and death in grazing livestock, such as cattle and horses. It remains toxic when cut, so contaminated silage may also pose a risk to stock.

Fireweed is a class 2 declared pest plant under Queensland legislation. Landowners must take maximal steps to keep land free of class 2 pests and is a serious offence to introduce, keep or supply little plans without a permit. Description: 

- **Annual or short-lived perennial.**
- **Varies in size and shape depending on conditions.**
- **In dry harsh conditions may be less than 20cm tall with narrow leaves, no branching and few flowers.**
- **In ideal conditions, grows up to 50cm tall with multiple branches, long wide leaves (6 x 2cm) and about 100 flowers.**
- **Leaves 2-6cm long, alternate, dark green, with serrated margins.**
- **Flowers bright yellow, daisy-like with a diameter of about 2cm, produced in 1000 seeds each.**
- **Each seed 2-3mm long and cylindrical in shape with rows of very fine short hairs and a silky pappus (parachute).**
- **Shallow-branched tap root with many fibrous roots.**


Contact: Damien O’Sullivan, 19FF, Victoria
Phone: (07) 41610117
Email: damien.o’sullivan@daff.qld.gov.au.

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**Fireweed - serious weed in SEQ**

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Phone: (07) 41610117
Email: damien.o’sullivan@daff.qld.gov.au.
Planning supplementation for cattle on winter pastures

As grass quality deteriorates stock may require nutritional supplements

PASTURE development is appealing as it enhances productivity, but how do you estimate its profitability? A proper estimate requires budgeting of costs and benefits over many years. Consequently there can be reluctance to do the sums and more reliance on ‘gut feeling’ for decision making.

There is a simple budgeting procedure to help estimate sown pasture profitability, assuming everything is up and running. Proposals tailed this test can be ignored while detailed analysis should be done for proposals that look promising. The process compares the annual income and costs of the present grazing situation with a sown pasture, with the annual income and costs assuming sown pastures is fully established. After allowing for development costs and any extra capital required, the profitability of developing sown pastures can be estimated. An example is given for introducing leucaena where the process compares the annual income and class of cattle their nutrient requirements may be able to be met using leucaena supplementation, but in some cases it won’t.

For example: 450kg dry heifers grazing a typical early dry season pasture of 600kg DM, protein would meet their nutritional needs for maintenance (approximately 150g per day). The current product is a 250g per day, they would need 175g per day.

This protein shortfall cannot be fully met through a leucaena supplementation. It is therefore often management strategies could be used, such as weaning to reduce the nutritional requirements of the breeder or more targeted supplementation of lactating females with true protein source. If leucaena quality deteriorates too far, or there is too little feed, energy supplementation will be needed. This is expensive and best kept to short periods, or whenever possible, and is best compared with the cost of supplements and the condition of your stock.

For a proper estimate requires budgeting of costs and any extra capital required, the profitability of developing sown pastures can be estimated. An example is given for introducing leucaena where the process compares the annual income and cost of available supplements with one that only provides protein as sometimes these can be cheaper than a whole balanced feed and may still provide the required nutrition.

The economics of sown pastures

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As grass quality deteriorates stock may require nutritional supplements
Weaning, educating calves

Correct training of calves at weaning means easier animals to work with

WEANING is far more than separating the calf from the cow until they both stop suckling. Correct management and training of calves at weaning sets their pattern of behaviour for the rest of their lives.

BEFORE WEANING

For the first few days after weaning, calves try to get back to their mothers and can manage to do so seemingly miraculously. To avoid injuries and escapes, check all equipment ahead of time that will be used at weaning, including yards, hay feeders and water troughs.

It is best to assume a ‘bill and brace’ approach. Calves get bored and will often manage to open a catch by playing with it, so put another chain or wire around gate catches. Broken welded mesh in round bale feeders can catch calves’ hooves.

AT WEANING

Muster your cows and calves. After doing whatever is needed to the cows, such as pregnancy testing and vaccinating, then turn them into a paddock close to the yards with access to a larger grass paddock. Cows find weaning very stressful too. Many cows will break fences and jump grids to get back to their calves if they are moved too far apart on the first day of weaning.

After three to five days the cows will have forgotten about their calves and will be much easier to move further. Make sure the water troughs are clean and hay feeders full before putting the first calves into the weaning yard. Then leave them overnight. There will be a bond from both the cows and the calves, but this is quite normal.

TRAINING BEGINS

For the first two days, spend time walking quietly through the calves. Move them slowly and calmly into another yard while you fill the hay racks. This teaches the calves to walk through gateways and move at your direction. On the third day, run the calves into the working yards and teach them to draft and walk up the race. Do this by letting 10 or so go past and stopping the rest. Work the first group often through the race and crush without stopping them. Then go back and get another group. By doing this, even the most nervous calves will learn what is required of them. Do this every day until you fill the hay racks.

Weaning is a good time to teach weaners to eat from a trough. While they are locked in the yard and bored, they will try new things they would not touch in the paddock. Once the calves work well through the yards, it is time to take them out and introduce them to whatever you use on your property, such as dogs, horses and bikes. Open the gates from the yards and stand by to blow them up if they start to run. Work them around the paddock, letting them see you are in charge, and graze as you do so. A line yard is ideal for this work but any small well-built paddock will do.

Once happy with the way they are working while handling them, let them have the full day out in the paddock and just yard them at night. Weaners will often rush at night when they can be frightened by stray dogs or dingoes. Yard the weaners for three or four days until they just walk along in front of the bike or horse. Then they can go out into another paddock to grow up. Running some older steers with weaners in the paddock will help settle the weaners down and also help protect them from dog attacks. While working weaners, make a note of any calves that do not settle down. If a calf does not respond to the constant handling at weaning, it will always be difficult to handle and should be identified for culling.

HEALTH

All calves in ficky country should be vaccinated against tick fever at weaning. Once you know how many weaners you have, order the 3-germ blood. Give the weaners their second 5-in-1 (or 7-in-1) vaccination. If they haven’t had their third of 15, give them the 3-in-1. If the third of 15 is due, then give the 5-in-1. If they have not had the second, give them the 7-in-1. For the first two days, spend time walking quietly through the weaners. Once happy with the way they are working while handling them, let them have the full day out in the paddock and just yard them at night.

TRAINING BEGINS

When the dung is firm and dry, the calves are ready to lose weight. Feeding earlier encourages it. Feeding also stimulates the rumen to maintain digestive activity, which can save money in the long term. At night, calves usually eat more or do not eat at all. Avoid the constant handling at weaning, it will always be difficult to handle and should be identified for culling.

BENEFITS

The time and cost put into training weaners is recouped many times over as the animals grow and enter the adult herd. Well-trained weaners are a pleasure to work with, whereas cattle that have not been trained well at weaning cause many problems. If you buy in cattle, particularly calves that you don’t know, try giving them a few days weaner training before you let them out. Steers going into the finishing paddock and replacement heifers to be go into the breeder herd will benefit from a few days of weaning.

CattMcCem, Meat & Livestock Australia
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Email: calimentine@meatandlivestock.org.au

Feeding licks to cattle - how to decide what’s best

THERE are many different options for feeding lick blocks to cattle. It can be difficult to decide which supplement and delivery method suits your operation best. There are also decisions on the recipe and target nutritional intake, which can save money in the long term. At right is a handy table to help you weigh up the benefits and penalties associated with some commonly used supplements.

The following points may help you to get the most economic and nutritional benefits out of your supplementary feeding program:

● Adjust stock numbers in paddocks as feed quantity and quality reduces. This will ensure that available pasture is the main source of nutrition, which can save money in the long term.

● Assess the quality of the pasture and decide if supplements are needed or likely to be cost effective. NRS testing can assist with identifying protein content and digestibility of the pasture.

● Determine cattle needs and the primary limiting nutrient. In the early dry season this is usually protein. As feed quality continues to decline and especially in the late dry season, if females are heavily pregnant or lactating it may be energy.

Targeted supplementation to these animals during appropriate times will ensure the most cost effective strategy. When grasses are actively growing on phosphorus deficient soils, then phosphorus can be the primary limiting nutrient during the wet season. Nutrient deficits may also be corrected through management practices, for example, when weaning to reduce nutritional stress on lactating females.

Monitor intakes to avoid excessive and costly intakes or situations where intakes are too low to supply enough nutrients. Change the palatability of the extra-large digestible feed to encourage higher animal intakes. This takes trial and error and can be done a number of ways, such as adding or removing salt, grain, amm, protein meals and um. Avoid buying large quantities of a lick or block until you know they will eat it.

Ensure ratios of nutrients are in balance. Calcium and phosphorus are recommended at a ratio of 2:1 (calcium:phosphorus) and nitrogen and sulphur should be at 10:1 (nitrogen:sulphur). Unbalanced nutrients can negatively impact the nutritional benefits of the supplement.

To achieve the desired nitrogen: sulphur ratio, sulphur sources should be included at the following rates:

● one part Gran-am to five parts urna (by weight)

● one part elemental sulphur to 20 parts urna (by weight).

Nitrogen, sulphur and phosphorus can also be delivered to stock through water. The publication ‘Water medication - a guide for beef producers’ is available from Meat & Livestock Australia on 1800 675 727 or download from www.mla.com.au/news-resources/Publication-details/pubid=5977. (For news, events and industry information.)

For more information about the Riverina range of Pasturepro® products, please contact your local Feed Supplier or Merchant, or visit www.riverina.com.au

RIVERINA® PASTUREPRO® Supplement and Concentrate range

When to Supplement

Dry supplements should ideally be introduced before conditions become dry and cattle start to lose weight. Feeding earlier out can stop this and will utilise more of your pasture to promote gains. When the dung is firm and dry, this indicates the nursery is short of protein and cattle will be losing weight. The addition of non-protein nitrogen and true protein from concentrates to the Pasturepro® Range may stimulate the rumen to produce methane and improve feed efficiency. Dry supplements can be fed to dry pastures by 30% or more.

RIVERINA BRANCHES AT:

CASHU
MURGON
MURGON
MEADWS/BOOK
MACAY
MACAY
WARWICK
02 4622 7400
07 4168 2555
07 4162 1999
07 4691 4961
07 4592 6082
07 4600 2590
Reynolds Road, Casino
43 Gesslers Road, Murgon
110 Youngman Street, Kingaroy
1534 McEvoy Street, Casino
18 Nestor Lane, Meandaroo
9 Queen Street, Oakey
248 Boundary Road, Mackay
134 McCoy Street, Warwick

For further information about the Riverina range of Pasturepro® products, please contact your local Feed Supplier or Merchant, or visit www.riverina.com.au

RIVERINA® STOCKFEEDS

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