

Much to talk about in the Spring edition of BeefTalk

In this edition we launch our sheep pages – Flock talk

WELCOME to BeefTalk 40 in which we also welcome the first edition of Flock talk!

Flock talk brings you sheep information from the Leading Sheep team led by DAFF extension officers Nicole Sallur and Alex Stirton based in Charleville.

This issue of BeefTalk is a limited four page edition. The next 12 page edition will print on the 27 November.

In this issue we draw your attention to changes in the vegetation management laws reducing red tape for producers.

Read also about the changes in leasehold land laws which reduce rents, make leases more secure and provide a golden opportunity for lower cost conversion to freehold title.

It is bull buying time again so get some tips on

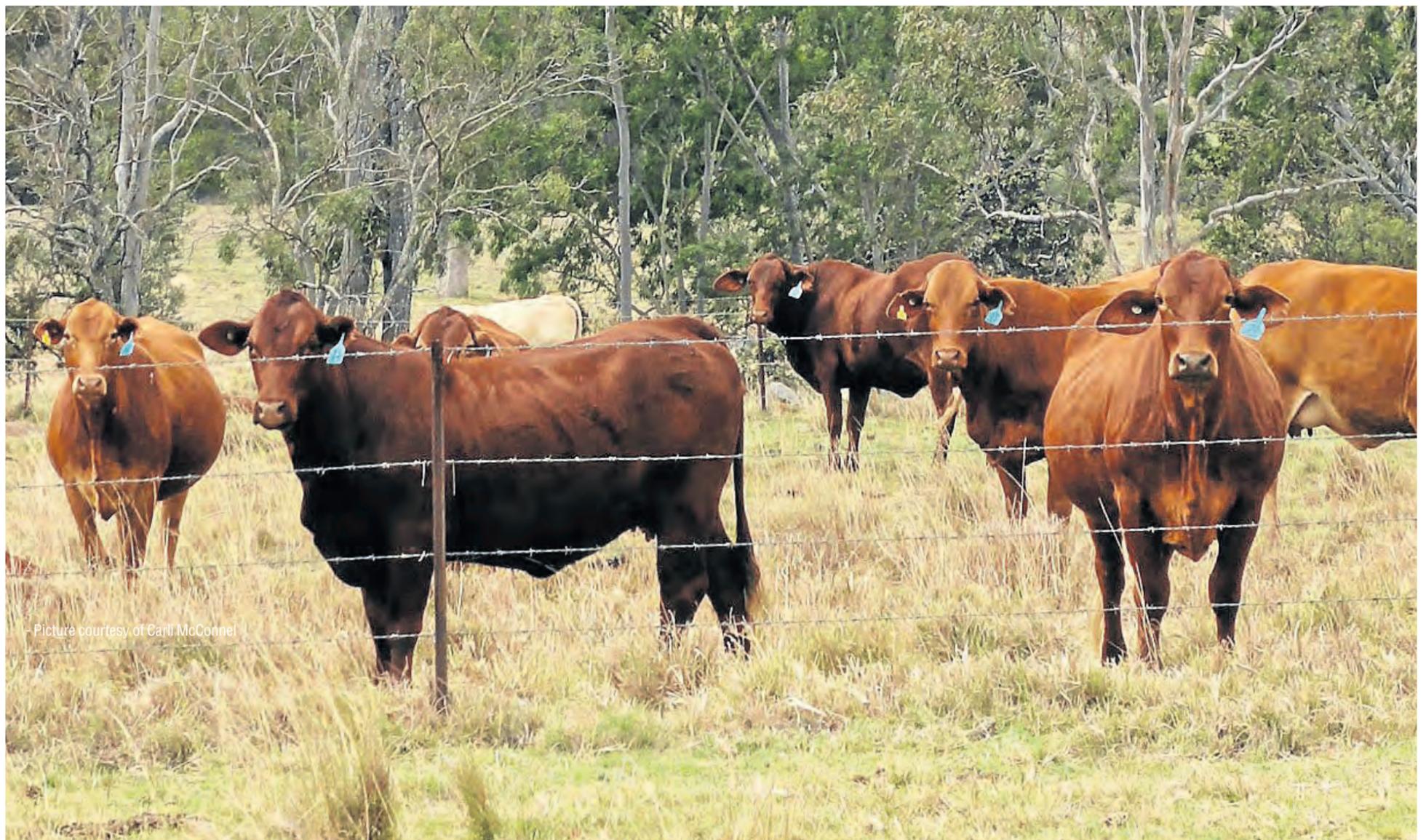
buying and managing your bulls for best returns. Now is a good time to cash in old bulls and buy quality herd recorded bulls to take your herd forward.

Also check the reminder on how important it is to plan for, and wet season spell some paddocks when the rain comes.

As always we welcome your feedback and suggestions for future issues using the short survey at

www.surveymonkey.com/s/beeftalk40. Online versions of BeefTalk are also available for download or email. To receive the online version, please subscribe on the FutureBeef website at www.futurebeef.com.au/sign-up.

— Happy reading!
The BeefTalk team



Picture courtesy of Carl McConnel

Opportunity knocks for leasehold to freehold conversion

THE Queensland Government has released a suite of changes to rural leasehold land laws. These changes make leases more secure and allow for easier and more affordable conversion from a lease to freehold title. Lease payments for term leases will also become more affordable under the new arrangements.

To make leases more secure, the Queensland Government has committed to rolling term leases. Rolling term leases have already been offered to all eligible rural leases that are due to expire before 31 December 2034. Rolling term leases offer an immediate extension of a lease term for the same period as the lease was originally issued for.

To reduce costs and help ease the financial burden on rural leaseholders, the Government has changed the way it calculates annual rental. These changes affect term leases,

licences and permits to occupy that are for primary production purposes (Category 11.2 leases). The calculation has reduced the rental from 1.5% of the current unimproved value down to 0.75%. Many landholders will be taking advantage of this saving to pay for the costs of conversion to freehold title.

The hottest topic at many landholder forums has been the changes to rules relating to the conversion of leasehold land to freehold title. The purchase price of freehold title on Category 11 (primary production) leases has been reduced by using a new calculation method known as the Net Present Value of Revenue calculator.

The Queensland Government is encouraging landholders to take up the offer of freehold title by reducing the conversion price and by contacting all perpetual lease land holders. The new freehold rate is also applicable to all

eligible Category 11 leases including term leases, special leases and pastoral holdings over state land. Leases issued over roads, reserves, state forests, national parks, timber reserves and regional parks are not able to be converted to freehold through this process because they are deemed to have a different primary land use.

The new calculation method for freehold land is complicated. Landholders can get an idea of the price by multiplying their prescribed annual land rent (rent a landholder would pay if there were no capping, rebate or deferral arrangement) by 13.

Using the calculator, the purchase price of a property with an unimproved value of \$485,000 would now be \$95,302 as opposed to \$485,000. This example demonstrates that there is a significant saving in purchase price.

The Government hopes that leaseholders will take advantage of this saving to offset other costs that may be associated with a conversion to freehold such as addressing native title, survey costs or purchasing the rights to commercial timber.

There are other changes to rural land administration including the rules relating to subdivision, buying and selling leases which also offer more flexibility and security.

If you would like to know more about these changes or any of the information above please call in to the nearest Department of Natural Resources and Mines (DNRM) business centre, call 13QGOV (13 74 68) or visit DNRM at www.dnrm.qld.gov.au.

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Plan now to spell pastures after rain

Pastures need to re-establish a healthy root system

Spelling always worthwhile after rain

WITH the weather still dry in most areas, the thought of spelling pastures may be far from many minds. However, now is the time to plan which pasture you can spell, should we get a significant break in the season.

We are often tempted during times of drought to throw all of the gates open and let our stock find what they can.

For pastures to recover from rain, however, they need a spell to re-establish a healthy root system that will be the basis for future productivity.

A grass plant can generally only sustain a root system that mirrors its growth above ground level.

In some cases, if growing conditions are favourable, a spell may only need to take six weeks before the pasture has gone to seed and stock can re-enter the paddock.

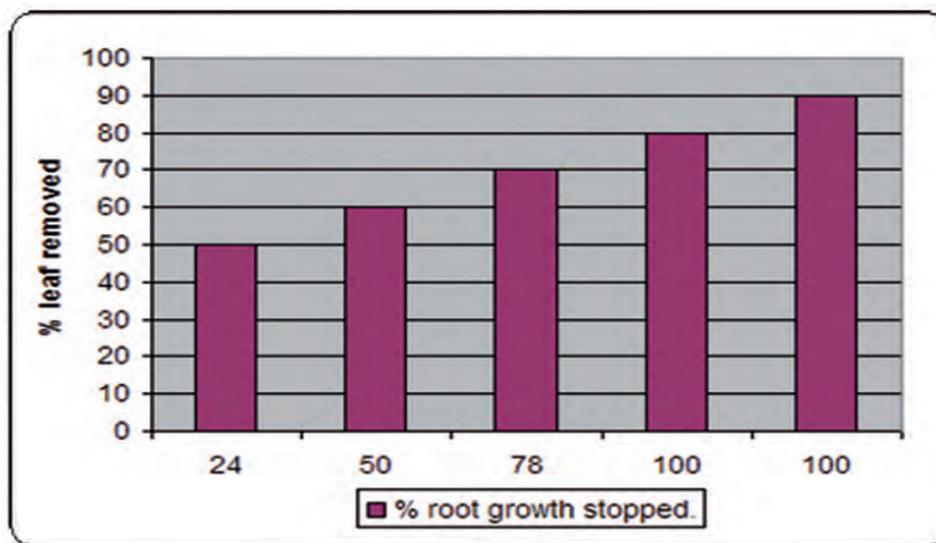
Successful spelling of a paddock is always a problem where there are large numbers of macropods and rainfall is isolated.

However, spelling is always worthwhile when there has been more widespread rain.

Research carried out in the US has told us a lot about the effects of grazing on root growth.

The results showed that removing 90 per cent of a plant's foliage totally stopped root growth for up to 17 days in cool and warm season grasses.

The study also found that continuous grazing could



Effect of varying amounts of grass leaf removal on root growth. – (Adapted from Crider 1955).

stop pasture root growth for the whole growing season.

A study of various grazing systems on nine properties in Queensland found the main key to healthy pastures on these properties was a system of regular wet season spelling.

A different paddock can be spelled each year and this can have long-term benefits for maintaining pas-

ture diversity, increasing ground cover and giving a healthy pasture that will respond to any rainfall we receive.

Many properties currently have reduced stock numbers so now is an ideal time to plan for spelling.

The productivity lost by resting a pasture will be recouped in better productivity in the longer term.



Qld vegetation management law update

Significant changes in two years

VEGETATION management laws in Queensland have changed significantly over the past two years. The introduction of self-assessable clearing for many routine clearing activities has made life a lot easier for many primary producers (and departmental staff).

The self-assessable code (SAC) for clearing fodder trees in the Mulga Lands was released in December 2013, along with SACs for property infrastructure, managing thickened vegetation in the Mulga Lands, weed control, managing regrowth vegetation, managing encroachment and clearing to improve operational efficiency.

An example of the significance of these changes is the case of fodder harvesting in the Mulga Lands. Applications took months to assess under the old development permit system. The requirement for clearing under a SAC is that the landholder notifies the Department of Natural Resources and Mines (DNRM) of the clearing and follows the self-assessable code while clearing. Notification can generally be done online in a matter of minutes and the result is, in most cases, a more practical set of clearing conditions.

It should be noted that SAC clearing activities are auditable. So while there is less red tape around doing the clearing, and the codes are less complex, there is more responsibility on the landholder to follow the codes. The SACs cover a broad range of routine clearing activities; however, there are still cases in which individuals or groups want to clear outside the conditions of the SACs. In these cases, permits can still be applied for and groups can tailor clearing conditions in an area management plan for a larger area of operations.

A second round of SACs was released on August 8, 2014. These SACs include clearing to manage thickened vegetation in the other bioregions (Brigalow Belt, New England Tablelands, South East Queensland, Mitchell Grass Downs, Channel Country, North West Highlands, Gulf Country, Desert Uplands and the rest of Queensland), clearing for necessary environmental works and a new code for forest practice on freehold land.

To look through or download codes and to notify for clearing, visit the webpage www.qld.gov.au/environment/land/vegetation/management/. While you are there, check out the new regulated vegetation mapping. The mapping represents another significant change to Queensland's vegetation management laws. The regulated vegetation mapping is now available to view on Google Earth using the vegetation management globe.

More information is available on our website www.dnrm.qld.gov.au or by contacting the vegetation management hotline on (07) 4529 1391 during business hours. Also keep an eye out for workshops and field days being run in your area.

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Measure your individual paddocks

Area needed to calculate safe stocking rates and feed budget

MOST people know the total area of their property but when it comes to individual paddocks often the figures are like a politician's forecast – 'a bit rubbery'.

As properties are divided into paddocks it is important to know paddock sizes to calculate safe stocking rates and a feed budget for the coming season. In the case of planting pastures, crops and fertilising an accurate knowledge of paddock area is necessary to

budget for costs and the amount of inputs needed.

The advent of smartphones and tablet-style devices has led to a proliferation of applications (apps) for these devices. One handy app that is available for free in basic form is 'Measure my land', by Ivan Rublev. You can use this app to quickly calculate the area of a paddock anywhere you are so long as you can access a phone signal. After downloading the app your property can be located on the satellite image. The corners of the paddock to be measured are tapped in using the screen. The app will then give you the area in either

hectares or acres. There is also a distance measure that can be used for estimating length of fencing needed or the length of pipe needed for a watering system. The app allows you to store three measurements. If you need to store more you can buy an upgrade to the app.

This is not as accurate as GPS points downloaded to a map but it is a handy tool that you can use anywhere to estimate a paddock area. Search for 'Measure your land' to download the app.

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Further info can be found at www.qatc.edu.au or the selected college web site above.

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Bull fertility measurement: crucial to your next calf crop

Simple tests and objective data provide confidence in your bull choice

WHAT do you want from a bull?

Lots of calves born trouble-free in a short calving period every 12 months!

Also, calves with good temperament, are environmentally adapted and grow well to meet market specifications or become highly fertile breeders.

Since you cannot accurately see a bull's fertility and genetics, to have confidence that your bulls are fertile and taking your herd in the right direction requires some simple tests and objective data.

Getting it right is important as bulls drive your next calf crop and the herd's genetic direction and profitability for the next 10-15 years.

1. GETTING LOTS OF CALVES

Bulls must be physically and reproductively fit and healthy.

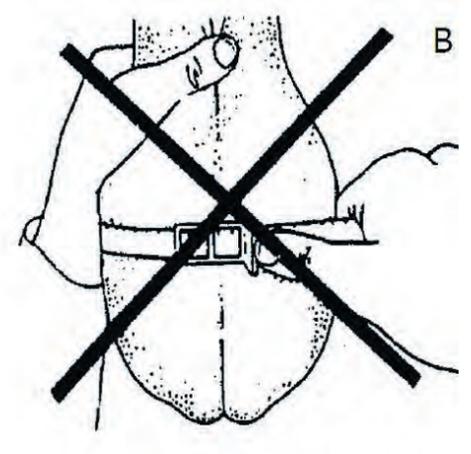
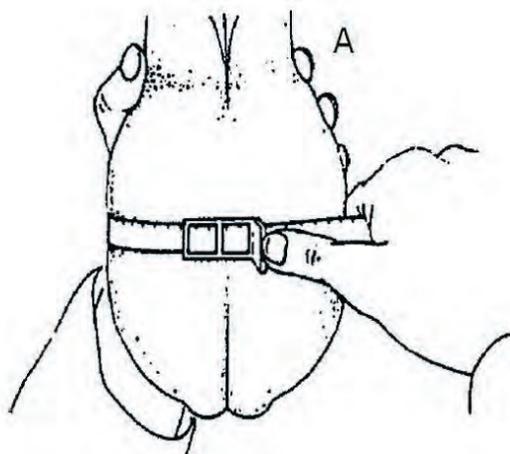
Avoid under or over fed bulls and ensure their vaccines are up to date, in particular 7-in-1 and vibrio and potentially 3-day, botulism and tick fever as required. Ensure he is pestivirus free.

The Bull Breeding Soundness Evaluation (BBSE) is a standardised test of five key fertility components to assess if a bull has a high probability of being fertile at the time of testing.

It tests for physical faults in head, legs, joints, hooves, sheath and penis. It measures scrotal circumference and tone, semen motility and morphology (percent normal sperm) and can test for



Correct technique for firmly holding the neck of scrotum to measure scrotal size.



mating ability. You choose how many components are tested. However, it does not evaluate genetics. Visit the Australian Cattle Veterinarians (ACV) website www.acv.com.au for more information.

Scrotal circumference (sperm production) and testicular tone (sperm health) are very important and easy to check.

Bulls with larger testicles produce daughters that reach puberty earlier, whilst bulls with high percent normal sperm produce daughters that cycle sooner after calving and have higher lifetime calving rates.

Firm and springy testicular tone usually means healthy sperm whilst abnormally soft or hard tone indicates likely problems.

Normal testicle tone feels similar to the thick muscle at the base of our thumb when your hand is closed.

Soft testicles or part thereof are similar to the muscle when your hand is open and relaxed.

Scrotal circumference is mostly influenced by weight and breed.

The ACV and breed societies have graphs and tables showing the average and range of scrotal circumference for different weight, age and breeds. Some tropical breed graphs are available in BeefTalk 36 (page 41) at www.futurebeef.com.au.

Use bulls with average or above average scrotal circumference for their weight. One guide is minimum scrotal size of 32cm for tropically adapted two year old bulls.

A scrotal size estimated breeding value (EBV) is better than a single raw measure. A negative 'Days to Calving EBV' is also an important fertility measure promoting cows conceiving early.

The publication 'Bull selection: buying better bulls' has tips on measuring scrotal circumference and can be downloaded free from the FutureBeef website.

For safety ensure the bull is securely restrained in a crush with a rail behind the hind legs to prevent him kicking backwards.

Always measure from behind. Do not attempt to measure through rails from the side of the crush or race as it can result in severe hand or arm injury. Scrotal measuring tapes are available from the ACV or try your breed society.

Percent normal sperm: aim to have bulls with at least 70 per cent normal sperm, especially for single sire mating or artificial insemination.

While 50pc normal sperm is a minimum standard for multi sire mating, higher figures are better to buffer against stress and to achieve higher cumulative pregnancies per cycle.

2. GETTING THE RIGHT CALVES

BREEDPLAN estimated breeding values (EBVs) are the most accurate genetic tool to make long term gains in growth, fertility and carcass traits. A bull's appearance is due to the interaction of its genetics with the

environment, for example whether its pasture or grain fed.

The BREEDPLAN system separates the genetics from the environment and calculates EBVs for a range of traits including birth weight, growth, milking ability, fertility and carcass information.

The EBVs take into account not only the animal's performance, but also the performance of all its recorded relatives as well as the relationships between traits.

Many breed-specific sales publish their sale catalogue on the BREEDPLAN database.

The 'sort catalogue' option is a useful tool. It lets you draft animals on a suite of traits making it easy to sort through hundreds of animals to find those which meet your objectives.

Another useful tool for improving fertility genetics is the dam history of bulls.

The Beef CRC outcomes recommend using bulls that are from dams that have calved by three years old, and have had at least three calves in a row from the start of their breeding life.

Bulls from dams with lesser calving frequency are likely to sire less fertile progeny. The calving history of any breed registered dams will be on that breed's database.

You can get this from the online sale catalogues. A call or email to the breeder can confirm the dam's pregnancy status for this season's calving.

Check what age the dam was when she had her first calf.

DNA technology is also available and developing rapidly. It is already very useful for determining poll status, certain diseases or parentage.

In future, it will be combined with EBVs to enhance their accuracy.

In summary, Bull Breeding Soundness Evaluations gives you confidence that a bull is capable of producing lots of calves; while BREEDPLAN helps you get the right genetics.

If you want to learn to use EBVs to make genetic progress in your herd look for information on websites such as the Australian Genetics and Breeding Unit, Tropical Beef Technical Services, breed societies and FutureBeef.

A handy booklet 'Buying bulls - it's all in the genes' is free to download from the FutureBeef website. A two-day Breeding EDGE workshop is also available.

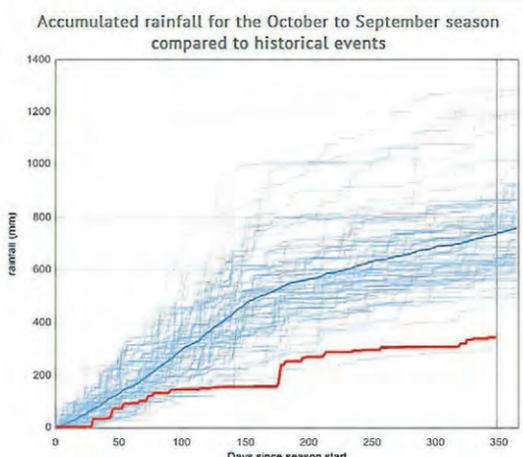
For more information, talk with your local FutureBeef extension officer or visit the FutureBeef website at www.futurebeef.com.au.

CliMate tools for decision makers

CliMate is a climate analysis tool that users can access on the Web, iPhone, iPad and iPod Touch devices.

CliMate has a number of analyses structured around the following questions:

- How's the Past? Presents views of monthly and annual rainfall and temperature summaries to allow you to explore relationships and patterns.
- How often? What is the chance of a sowing event based on amount of rainfall over 5 days?
- How hot-cold? When determining an ideal sowing date, when are heat and cold stresses lowest for the optimum sowing time?
- Season's progress? When adjusting inputs during a crop or pasture season, how does the current season compare with previous conditions in terms of rainfall, temperature, heat sum or radiation?
- How wet? N? How much water and nitrate have I stored over the fallow?
- How likely? Based on current ENSO conditions, what is the probability that rainfall or temperature is greater than or less than key thresholds (e.g. terciles, median) and how reliable have these forecasts been in the past?
- How's El Nino? What is the current ENSO status based on key atmospheric and oceanic indicators? What is the Australian Bureau of Meteorology's interpretation of this?
- How dry? Coming soon! Based on recent rainfall records, are we likely to be facing a drought in the



An example of data from CliMate. This graph shows Gayndah has a rainfall deficit of 391mm for the preceding 12 months.

near future or are we in a drought now? And how do current dry conditions compare with previous droughts?

Visit www.australianclimate.net.au for more information.

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Managing to get the most from your bulls

Above all, select fertile bulls to pass on desirable genetics

Management practices

THERE are a number of management practices that can help you get the most from your bulls.

DOMINANCE

In multiple sire herds, one bull may dominate to such an extent that a large proportion of calves may be sired by only a small percentage of bulls. You can avoid this by using bulls of similar age and libido in the one mating group. Dominant bulls may try to keep less dominant bulls away from the cows, yet they may not serve the cows themselves. High libido bulls often serve females on heat and go away before they are threatened. A Bull Breeding Soundness Examination (BBSE) can identify high libido bulls.

AGE

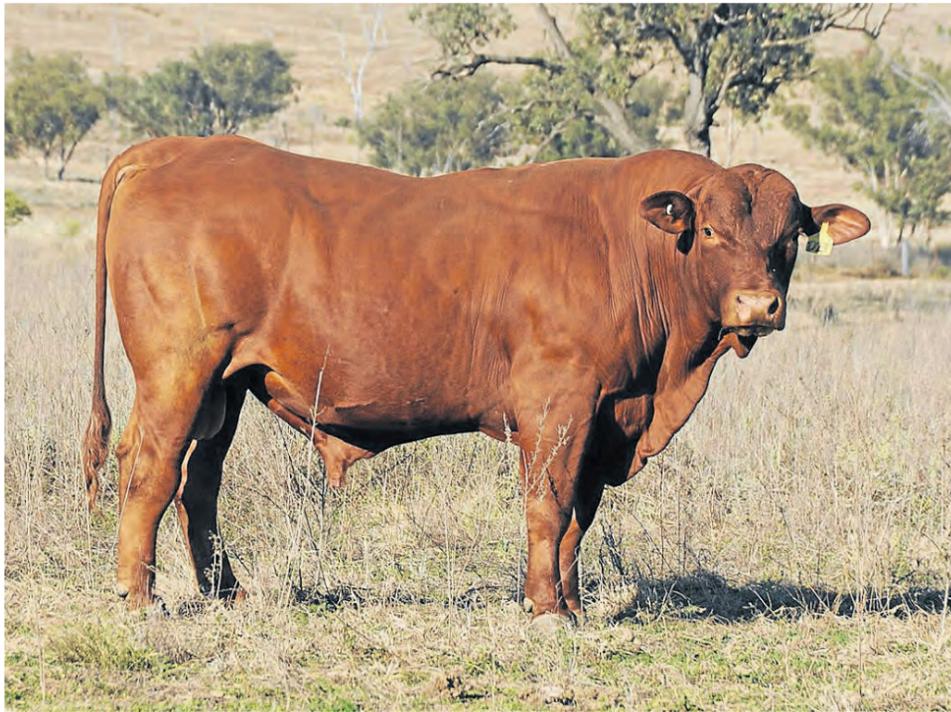
The older the bull, the more prone he is to subfertility or even infertility, either due to some damage to the reproductive organs or physical problems, for example arthritis, which may interfere with service. Bulls also become more difficult to handle.

The longer a bull is in the herd, the more calves his purchase price can be spread over and a lower bull cost per calf results. However, while a bull is in the herd his own genetics is not improving and the benefits from keeping bulls longer, in terms of cost per calf, must balance against the opportunity to replace that bull with a genetically better one. To keep a bull in the herd to old age, he must be fertile and equal to, or better than, the most recent bull replacements.

DISEASE

Bulls can spread venereal diseases such as vibriosis and trichomoniasis. Both cause either delayed conceptions or abortions. Vaccinate all bulls annually before mating. Heifers may also be vaccinated for vibriosis.

Both diseases are more prevalent in older bulls. If breeders are vaccinated for leptospirosis, vaccinate the bulls too, to reduce the effect of infection at or during mating. Infection of a bull during a short mating season can seriously reduce the herd conception and subsequent branding rates. Other vaccinations worth considering are tick fever, ephemeral fever (3-day sickness), mucosal disease and vaccination with



5-in-1 against the clostridial organisms such as black-leg and tetanus.

BULL PERCENTAGES

Mate bulls according to their ability and the paddock characteristics, as there is no set percentage. Field trials indicate that bull percentages about 2.5 per cent can be used provided the bulls have passed a full BBSE before mating.

CULLING BULLS

Regular replacement maintains genetic progress. Purchased bulls or homebred bulls should be screened annually before the peak mating period for conditions affecting their ability to produce offspring.

NUTRITION

Avoid buying fat bulls and maintain bulls in good forward store working order (condition score 3 to 4) for best performance. Working bulls can suffer some weight loss with little or no impact on libido. Overfed

and overfat bulls often demonstrate depressed libido and can contract metabolic disease if required to work and with poor feed quality in the pasture. Moving bulls from one site (at purchase) to another (your property) can result in depressed fertility due to changed nutrition and expose them to new diseases that can affect their fertility. Therefore, move bulls well in advance of when they will be used.

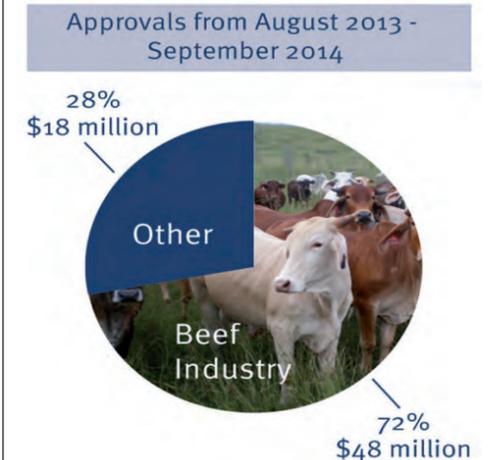
BULL PURCHASE

Evaluate bulls' genetic information before buying. Also ask for the Australian Cattle Veterinarians' BBSE certificate which will provide a basis for insurance and any subsequent changes in the bull's fertility. To make good progress in your herd, wherever possible, select bulls based on sound breeding objectives using estimated breeding values. Select for a balance of traits which are measurable, heritable and of economic importance. Above all, select fertile bulls to pass on desirable genetics.

● Source: Bull Selection – buying better bulls, John



Producers benefit from farm finance and drought loans



Up to \$1m available through QRAA

PRODUCERS facing drought conditions or responding to difficult market circumstances are making good use of Farm Finance and Drought Concessional Loans of up to \$1 million available through QRAA.

Based on current approvals, producers will be realising a benefit of up to \$150,000 over the five-year concessional loan term (\$20,000 to \$30,000 per year).

More than \$68 million has been approved under the schemes to date, with 71 per cent (\$48 million) of loans being approved to beef production enterprises.

Sixty-two per cent of all loans have been approved for producers located in southern Queensland, with these enterprises receiving nearly \$39 million in loans.

With the Bureau of Meteorology forecasting below median rainfall from September to November in drought affected areas of Queensland, interest and uptake of the concessional loans continues to increase.

It is important for producers not to self-assess their eligibility for a loan. QRAA has client liaison officers based in Brisbane, Bundaberg, Kingaroy, Roma and Toowoomba who are available to visit producers on farm to help with the application process and explain how the eligibility criteria may apply to a producer's individual situation.

A number of temporary offices are also scheduled to be based in the Burnett region in September and October, which will provide producers with the opportunity to personally discuss their application with QRAA staff.

For more details on eligibility criteria, loan conditions and how to apply, or to speak to QRAA customer relations staff, contact QRAA on freecall 1800 623 946, email contactus@qraa.qld.gov.au or visit QRAA's website www.qraa.qld.gov.au.

The Farm Finance Concessional Loans Scheme and the Drought Concessional Loans Scheme are funded by the Australian Government and delivered by QRAA.



Land a deal...