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www.clipex.com.au
1800 65 77 66

www.futurebeef.com.au
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Drought relief ready for applications

Beef adviser available as a sounding board

Help with critical management

UNFORTUNATELY there has been no ripper wet season this year, and with the late break in many areas pasture growth will be restricted. With a second light year in a row for a lot of properties, decisions on stock numbers, marketing, weaning and supplementation will be critical for the short and long term performance of businesses.

Should you need some advice, want to run some economics on your options or need a sounding board for your drought management plans, please contact your local beef adviser (contacts below).

These officers will also be able to guide you through applications for the Drought Relief Assistance Scheme help including paperwork for the water infrastructure rebate and freight subsidies.

The application forms are available on the DAFF website www.daff.qld.gov.au/environment/drought-drought-relief-assistance-scheme-application-forms. Should there be a group of you interested in a common theme, for example nutrition, marketing or weaning, please give one of us a call and we can organise someone with technical expertise in the topic to support you in a meeting in your local area.

The Grazing BMP program has been charging ahead running workshops on the modules soils and grazing land management, animal welfare and animal production and people and business.

The findings of the recently completed Cash Cow Scheme help including paperwork for the water infrastructure rebate and freight subsidies.

The project has derived an enormous amount of information from the 142 breeding mobs on the 72 commercial properties which participated in the study. You will find a brief tutorial on the preliminary findings at www.futurebeef.com.au.

THE NINE CENTRAL QUEENSLAND BEEF ADVISERS ARE:

Jo Gangemi, Biggenden (07) 4982 9178.
Deb Darvill, Emerald (07) 4983 7419.
Byrony Daniels, Emerald (07) 4983 7467.
Mick Sullivan, Rockhampton (07) 4983 039.
Ken Murphy, Rockhampton (07) 4983 6637.
Matt Brown, Rockhampton (07) 4983 0324.
Joan Williams, Mackay (07) 4967 0732.
Ross Duff, Mackay (07) 4967 0734.
Jim Fletcher, Mackay (07) 4967 0731.

CLIMATE WATCH: When is it too late?

AS the end of the summer rainfall season rapidly approaches, a key question springs to mind; when is it too late to realistically expect a significant improvement in seasonal conditions?

The answer to this question will depend on your definition of the end of the summer rainfall season or ‘brown day’, your location and your approach to normal risk management.

At all times, it is important to have a realistic expectation of what your ‘normal’ rainfall is and how it can change throughout the year.

For example, St Lawrence has a median (that is, what happens 50 per cent of the time) wet season rainfall (October to April) of 441mm. However, the distribution of monthly rainfall within that period varies greatly. For example the median monthly rainfall at St Lawrence is 45mm in March, 39mm in April and 35mm in May.

The answer to this question will depend on your location and how you approach normal risk management.

A similar pattern can be found throughout the Queensland. For example, Emerald (with a median wet season rainfall of 401mm) has a median monthly rainfall for February of 74mm, March of 50mm and April of 22mm.

Therefore, waiting until the end of April before making management and husbandry decisions such as the setting of stocking rates for our normally dryer winter months can be viewed as a higher risk approach.

This approach also does not allow adequate time for pasture growth and recovery between the end of the summer rainfall season and the arrival of cooler winter temperatures leading to tropical grass dormancy.

Another way to view this is if a minimum of 50mm event within a consecutive 3-day period is considered your ‘green day’ (or the minimum amount required to provide an improvement is seasonal conditions), what is the likelihood of it occurring during the last few months of the summer rainfall season?

Using Emerald as the example, historically only 50pc of the time is more than 50mm recorded during March. This drops to less than 30pc of the time for April. Therefore, a rule of thumb could be that if the season has not improved by the end of February, appropriate management decisions such as adjusting stocking rates or early weaning need to be considered.

For more information please email david.mcnair@ science.daf.qld.gov.au.

CQ BEEF feedback

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

Do you find the CQ Beef useful? □ Yes □ No

Why did you give this answer?

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Toorila operation: improving breeder performance

Producers Lachlan and Trudy Mace share their experience and strategies

LACHLAN and Trudy Mace run a breeding and finishing enterprise at Toorila, Stannage Bay targeting the EU market. Toorila is 10,000 ha with about half the property marine plains and the balance principally narrow leaved ironbark forest country.

The marine plain country is very productive, but because it becomes very wet and a lot goes under water in the wet season, it has to be worked in conjunction with the forest country.

Managing the cattle and grazing to make best overall use of the property is a major challenge.

The Maces have a Brahman based breeder herd and run a rotational crossbreeding program with Brahman and Angus bulls. Angus bulls are joined to the higher Brahman content females and Brahman bulls to the lower Brahman content females.

The aim is to maintain the Brahman content necessary for the cattle to handle the environment and ticks while capturing the benefits of hybrid vigour from crossbreeding and improved carcase traits from the Angus.

To improve the performance of the breeder changes have been made to the breeder vaccination program and management strategies.

Breeder management

Heifers are joined at two years of age and up until the 2012-13 mating, heifers were joined for 12 weeks and the balance of the breeder herd for 16 weeks. Joining was commenced on 1 December.

Weaning and pregnancy testing is undertaken in May-June.

Empty cows are finished on the marine plain country and sold in the summer following culling.

Cows that are dry at branding in December-January are handled for vaccination programs in place for leptospirosis and vibriosis because Lachlan and Trudy had effective vaccination programs in place for leptospirosis and vibriosis.

Investigating pestivirus status of herd

Because Lachlan and Trudy had effective vaccination programs in place for leptospirosis and vibriosis (Table 1) they decided to investigate the pestivirus status of their herd.

Testing found high levels of previous exposure to pestivirus in the older breeders but there was considerable variation between years in the exposure of the joiner heifers.

For example, all 21 No 8 heifers tested in 2009 showed previous exposure whereas, none of the 23 No 9s tested in 2010 showed previous exposure.

An effective vaccination program will ensure all animals are vaccinated. The Maces are moving to a whole herd vaccination program as it will ensure all animals are vaccinated. The Mace’s are moving to a whole herd vaccination program as it will ensure all animals are vaccinated.

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Lachlan and Trudy commenced vaccinating their finishing steers for Three-day sickness following heavy losses in 2009. While expensive at $16/hd the Mace’s consider it a sound investment as they have not seen a loss to Three-Day sickness in the heavy steers since vaccinating.

Breeder performance

Pregnancy rates across all breeders have averaged 79 per cent for 2007-2013. However, pregnancy/calf losses from pregnancy test to branding have been disappointing. From 2008 to 2012 the losses have ranged from 8.3pc to 17.2pc and averaged 14.0pc.

Losses were higher in the first calf cows group (up to 23pc).

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Pestivirus vaccination program

Lachlan and Trudy decided to implement a pestivirus vaccination program in 2011 commencing with the No 0 joiner heifers being vaccinated in mid 2011 ready for joining in December 2011.

The high level of exposure in older cows meant there was no need to vaccinate these animals.

Since 2012, as well as joiner heifers, previously vaccinated females that are pregnant and retained in the breeding herd receive an annual booster vaccination. In 2014, the females to be vaccinated are No 3 joiner heifers (2 doses) and the No 2, 1 and 0 retained females (1 dose). Over the next few years the herd will reach a point where all breeders are vaccinated. The Mace’s are moving to a whole herd vaccination program as it will ensure all animals are vaccinated and they have maximum flexibility in how they structure management and mating groups.

During the wet season cattle often have to be removed from the marine plain and this restricts the number of breeder groups they can have, while maintaining the Brahman and Angus bull mating groups.

Impact of pestivirus vaccination

While the program is still in its initial stage some promising results are occurring. The pregnancy/calf loss from pregnancy test to weaning in 2013 was 8.0pc and 6.3pc in 2014.

Other breeder management changes

Major changes have been made to the mating program, breeder management and grazing management to enable Lachlan and Trudy to calve the first calf cows out as a separate group.

Previously the first calf cows had to be run with the main breeder group from the end of mating, due to when and how cattle could be run on the marine plain.

Having the first calf cows as a separate group is enabling better management of body condition as they can be weaned sooner and supplemented better if required.

Because of the high conception rates achieved in the maiden heifers (87pc average 2008-2012), the Maces have reduced the joining time for the maiden heifers from 12 to 9 weeks so they can identify and retain the most fertile heifers.

The balance of the breeders will continue to be joined for 16 weeks.

To help cows maintain body condition, the commencement of mating has been moved back from 1 December to 15 December.

This will reduce the time cows are lactating late in the dry season before a reliable seasonal break can be expected.

You can’t control the weather. But you can make the most of every season with Compose®, the proven way to maximise growth rates in grassfed cattle. Its 15.8% average liveweight gain advantage allows you to increase total production or achieve market specifications sooner, regardless of the season. Find out how Compose® can be the difference between a good season and an ordinary season – contact your Elanco Animal Health representative on 1800 226 324.
Weaning timeliness crucial in dry times

Seasonal Tips – Autumn to April/May

We’ve just been through a harsh hot summer with a late break to the season and unfortunately some still haven’t had much useful rain. The timeliness of weaning is very important every year, but in dry years it is imperative.

Removing the need to produce milk for its calf in the early dry season is equivalent to giving the cow a supplement of up to 2kg of grain or 3kg of fortified molasses every day.

Timely weaning is a lot more cost effective than supplementing the breeder herd. Weaning in April/May this year will leave your breeders in better body condition and give them a much improved chance at re-conception than if they were weaned later in the year. Some droughted producers may have already weaned and done so very early on trying to save cow condition and reduce the demand for costly supplementation.

Weaning is also a great opportunity to educate stock through the yards and teach them about mustering by tailing them through the weaner paddock.

With year round mating calves are weaned at a wide range of ages.

Calves weaned under 150 kg will need supplements of highly digestible protein and energy if pasture is insufficient. If weaners are of various sizes, draft them according to size and feed them accordingly. Make sure your weaner feed is on farm and ready to go.

If you haven’t got the feed in front of you that you need it’s time to remake your marketing plans.

A pregnancy test during the weaning muster will not only identify empty cull cows but foetal aging at the pregnancy test will also allow the removal of cows that are going to calve out of season from the herd.

Foetal aging at pregnancy testing is the best method to convert from continuous mating to herd.

Drafting the breeders into three groups (those to calve at the preferred time of year, those to calve out the previous allowance ($1.5m), ensuring more farmers and their families can receive support in these difficult times.

This will also include farmers automatically enrolled into the Farm Management Programme.

McVeigh said other measures included an extra $12 million for water infrastructure, and for Queensland this would mean an additional $6 million to the Queensland Government’s Drought Relief Assistance Scheme.

The Prime Minister recognises agriculture has a great future beyond this drought.

“Every $1 in loans up to $1 million would allow eligible farm businesses to refinance existing debt at a lower interest rate and would cover up to 50 per cent of eligible debt,” he said.

The new payment comes with a more generous asset test ($1.5m) than the previous allowance.

“I am also very pleased the Federal Government has brought forward the new Farm Household Allowance, starting March 3, which will put food on the table and help pay the bills,” he said.

The new payment comes with a more generous asset test ($1.5m) than the previous allowance.

We've had a late break to the season, but don’t be tempted to leave the bulls in longer. This will only start the out of season calving again.

The start of the dry season means it’s also time to take a good hard look at your pastures and your stock numbers.

If you haven’t got the feed in front of you that you need it’s time to remake your marketing plans. Making these decisions earlier will present you with more marketing opportunities, than a forced sale later on.

If you have sold extra stock due to the seasonal conditions, talk to your accountant about Farm Management Deposits or other tax management methods.

For a copy of the MLA weaner book please contact me or find a copy online at www.mla.com.au.

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This funding will add to the Newman Government’s efforts, which include last month’s announcement of an extra $20 million in support.

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SEVENTY per cent of Queensland is now drought-declared. A full list of drought declared shires is available at www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au.

The Queensland Government announced a new drought assistance package in January 2014 that includes an expansion of the existing measures announced in May last year and a range of new assistance to help farm families, farm businesses and farm communities affected by drought.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE


- Assistance is available to producers with properties in drought declared areas or with an individually declared drought affected farm business. Assistance includes:
  - A freeze on rural land rents in the 2013-14 financial year
  - Transport concessions for drought-affected primary producers
  - Mental health and community support workshops to help those affected

Drought Relief Assistance Scheme (DRAS): This scheme provides up to $30,000 (up to $50,000 with an approved property drought management plan) each financial year to help graziers transport fodder and water during drought, and after the drought has ended. Freight subsides for returning livestock from agistment or restocking after the drought.

DRAS now also includes the emergency water infrastructure rebate (up to 75 per cent) on water infrastructure purchased for emergency animal welfare. A DAFﬁc# offc# needs to approve a water availability statement completed by the claimant, which veriﬁes eligibility to apply for the rebate on the basis of emergency animal welfare need. Examples of emergency water infrastructure rebates include sinking a bore on properties where surface water has run out, or playing water to a trough in a grassed paddock that is too far from the nearest watering point for livestock to walk. All forms for claiming water and freight rebates are available at www.daff.qld.gov.au/environment/drought or at local DAFF ofﬁces 13 25 23.

Income support: Call the Drought and Farmer Assistance Hotline 13 53 16, visit the Federal Department of Human Services. Income support, Transitional Farm Family Payment, assistance for isolated children, information is available at www.humanservices.gov.au.


GRA: For information on farm finance concessional loans or productivity loans call 1800 623 946.

Land rent relief: Rural land rent increases will be frozen for the 2013/14 financial year for those farm businesses in drought declared areas. Visit www.mrr.gov.au or call 13 74 68.

Transport concession and assistance for road trains: Assistance for drought-affected primary producers may be available for the payment of fees and permit requirements, including vehicle inspection fees, drought road train permits, pilot escorts and vehicle height limits when transporting livestock or machined baler hay. Visit www.tmrf.qld.gov.au or call 13 74 68.

School Transport Assistance Scheme: Families that drive their children to school or connect with a school bus run may be eligible for an increase in the school transport allowance. Visit www.tmrf.qld.gov.au or call 13 74 68.


Electricity rebates or concessions: Visit www.dews.qld.gov.au or call 13 43 87.

Ergon Energy: For drought relief rebates or concessions visit www.ergon.com.au or call 13 10 46.

Legal Aid Queensland: Rural legal services. For legal, debt-related problems, lender disputes, or ﬁnancial hardship with farming businesses, visit www.legalaid.qld.gov.au or call 1300 65 11 88.

The Telstra Bill Assistance Program: Short term emergency relief to residential customers if you are unable to pay your Telstra fixed home telephone bill.

Administered by national welfare organisations including Salvation Army, Smith Family, Anglicare and St Vincent de Paul. Queensland-Salvation Army (07) 3222 6666, New South Wales-Smith Family (02) 9085 7222.

SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Lifeline: 13 14 14 Crisis Counselling Line 24-hours for individuals and families.

Salvation Army: 1300 36 36 22 telephone counselling 24-hours a day, 365 days. BeyondBlue: 1300 224 636 help with personal issues, depression and anxiety.

Relationships Australia: 1300 364 277 confidential counselling and family support services.

Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800 a national 24-hour telephone counselling service for children and young people (ages 5 to 18).

Women’s Infolink: 1800 177 577 Free, confidential information and referral service Queensland-wide to support women.

Mensline Australia: 1300 798 978 help men with relationship issues.

Queensland Health: 13 45 25 84 provides a series of mental health and psychological support workshops across drought-affected areas. Workshops aim to enhance mental health and wellbeing in communities affected by drought and provide community members and human service workers with the skills to identify, support and protect people that may not be coping during difﬁcult times.

Frontier Services: 1300 767 247 provides health, family, community services and pastoral support in remote Australia. Outback Links: 1300 731 349 places volunteers with rural and remote families for short periods.

The Bush Connection (07) 4639 7891 free confidential support and referral. Personal support, identify options, advocacy, in crisis situations.

Other assistance: Local doctors, clergy, hospitals or community health centres can also help.

CLIMATE AND MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

The current Queensland drought situation report, map and seasonal outlooks are at www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au/queenslanddroughtmonitor.

DAFF 13 25 23 and FutureBeef have resources on feeding and management of livestock during drought, strategies to help cope with stress and software packages to evaluate options and assist in decision making. Email callweb@daff.qld.gov.au or visit www.daff.qld.gov.au/environment/drought. A booklet “Dry season management of beef cattle business” can be downloaded free from www.futurebeef.com.au.
The Australian Government are now providing an additional 25 per cent rebate of the total cost of emergency water infrastructure. The total rebate the applicant may now receive is now 75 per cent of the total cost of the water infrastructure only. If the producer has no Drought Management Plan in place, the maximum amount of rebate/ subsidy an applicant can receive under all of the DRAS schemes (including EW1) is $20,000. With a Drought Management Plan in place, the maximum amount the applicant can receive is $30,000.

The extra 25 per cent only applies to EW1 and is retrospective and will be automatically paid to those who have already received the 50 per cent Queensland Government rebate for EW1. For any inquiries or assistance with a Drought Management Plan or an application for assistance a rural financial counsellor may be able to assist.

**INCOME SUPPORT – Interim Farm Household Allowance**
The Australian Government has announced a new Federal Government Program known as the Interim Farm Household Allowance (IFHA). Producers who have been able to lodge an application for this assistance from March 1. IFHA is provided to help farm families experiencing financial hardship to meet basic household needs and improve long-term financial security.

Claims for Interim Farm Household Allowance will be accepted until June 30, 2014.

- **Eligibility basics**
  - You must be a farmer.
  - Contribute a significant part of your labour and capital to the farm enterprise based on specific criteria.
  - Meet with a Rural Financial Counsellor.
  - Meet an income and assets test.

Producers who currently receive Transitional Farm Family Payment will be automatically transferred over to Interim Farm Household Allowance.

Former primary producers who have previously received 12 months support through Transitional Farm Family Payment or Transitional Income Support can submit a claim for Interim Farm Household Allowance.

RFS can assist producers with further information on government assistance programs.

If you are affected by drought contact one of our rural financial counsellors for information on assistance programs.

**Contact us:**
Biloela: John Lacey 0448 124 916
Charleville: Ange Bo Sheet 07 4644 3457
Barcaldine: Brian Dodson 07 4644 3457
Gatton: Frances Harvey 0419 132 591
Innisfail: Nick Bailey 0448 460 309
Kingaroy: Alan Broome 0419 999 742
Lucky Valley: Cath Cather 0477 304 074
Roma: Vicki Betz 07 4622 4858
Roma: Sally Ottaway 07 4622 4858
Roma: Ross Goodwin 07 4622 4858
Roma: Dale Murphy 07 4622 4858
Warwick: Fiona Mead 0438 738 691
Rural Financial Counselling Service

**What Can A Rural Financial Counsellor Help You With?**
- Help clients identify financial and business options
- Help clients negotiate with their lenders
- Help clients develop an action plan
- Help clients meet their mutual obligations under the Interim Farm Household Allowance
- Give clients information about government and other assistance schemes
- Refer clients to accountants, agricultural advisers and educational services
- Refer clients to Centrelink and to professionals for succession planning and family mediation

Rural Financial Counsellors do not provide family, emotional or social counselling or financial advice – but they can provide referrals and information.

If you are affected by drought contact one of our rural financial counsellors for information on assistance programs.

**Interim Farm Household Allowance now available**

Producers in financial need, whether they are drought-affected or not, have been urged to contact Centrelink on 13 23 16 regarding the Federal Government’s Interim Farm Household Allowance program.

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Minister John McVeigh said the money is available and supports the Queensland Government’s election promise to grow agriculture as one of the four pillars of the Queensland economy.

“The Federal Government has brought toward the new Interim Farm Household Allowance to assist our Queensland producers affected by the drought,” Mr McVeigh said.

“The allowance will help with daily living expenses like putting food on the table and paying their electricity bills. Agriculture is like a pillar of the Queensland economy and the Federal Government also recognises agriculture is a significant sector with a great future. The Interim Farm Household Allowance will be paid at a fortnightly rate equivalent to the Newstart Allowance. The new scheme replaces the old Transitional Farm Household Payment with the net asset test raised to $255 million.

“I am in discussions with the Federal Government about other drought assistance measures, such as the concessional loans, pest control and mental health support measures, to ensure this assistance available as soon as possible.”

Producers can contact Centrelink on 13 23 16 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm) for more information and application forms or visit www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/interim-farm-household-allowance.

The Interim Farm Household Allowance will be available until the permanent Farm Household Allowance is implemented on July 1, 2014. Existing Transitional Farm Family Payment recipients will be automatically transferred to Interim Farm Household Allowance with no break in payments.

For more information on the Newman Government’s drought relief assistance scheme call 13 25 23 or visit www.qra.qld.gov.au.

**Countering leucaena toxicity: new research to assist Queensland’s grazing industry**

**Graziers** who rely on leucaena as a feed source for their herd will welcome new Queensland Government research exploring the shelf-life of the live bacterial inoculum that blocks the plant’s toxicity.

The main toxin is mimosine, which is a non-protein amino acid of varying concentrations in the leucaena plant and occurring at highest concentrations in the rumen bacterial inoculation, for the past 17 years.

Rumen bacterial inoculation, for the past 17 years.

The bacteria in the inoculum are anaerobic, so careful handling is required to prevent killing the inoculum.

**The bacteria in the inoculum are anaerobic, so careful handling is required to prevent killing the inoculum.**

**Drought Relief Assistance Scheme**
The Queensland Drought Relief Assistance Scheme (DRAS) is available to eligible primary producers located within a drought declared area. The scheme has been set up by the Queensland government to help primary producers in the grazing industries manage their livestock resource during drought and to help in the restoration of that resource after drought.

Drought relief and to help in the restoration of that resource after drought.

The DRAS scheme also provides a rebate on Emergency Water Infrastructure (EW), which includes assistance for the purchase, supply and installation cost of water infrastructure purchased for emergency animal welfare need.

A completed Water Availability Statement to confirm need must be approved by the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry prior to applying for the EW. Original tax invoices must accompany any DRAS application.

If the producer has no Drought Management Plan in place, the maximum amount the applicant can receive is $30,000.

**Eligibility basics**
- You must be a farmer.
- Contribute a significant part of your labour and capital to the farm enterprise based on specific criteria.
- Meet with a Rural Financial Counsellor.
- Meet an income and assets test.

Producers who currently receive Transitional Farm Family Payment will be automatically transferred over to Interim Farm Household Allowance.

Former primary producers who have previously received 12 months support through Transitional Farm Family Payment or Transitional Income Support can submit a claim for Interim Farm Household Allowance.

RFS can assist producers with further information on government assistance programs.

NEED TO KNOW MORE?
More information on IFHA can be found at http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/interim-farm-household-allowance, telephoning Department of Human Services on 132316 or by contacting your rural financial counsellor.

The contact numbers for the Rural Financial Counsellors are detailed above.

The Rural Financial Counselling Service is supported by the Australian Government and Queensland Government.

**Rural Financial Counselling Service CONTACT US:**
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Rural Financial Counsellors do not provide family, emotional or social counselling or financial advice – but they can provide referrals and information.

The purpose of the Rural Financial Counselling Service Program is to provide FREE support to primary producers, fishers and small rural businesses that are suffering financial hardship, and who have no other alternative sources of impartial assistance, to manage the challenges of change and adjustment.

Graziers who rely on leucaena as a feed source for their herd will welcome new Queensland Government research exploring the shelf-life of the live bacterial inoculum that blocks the plant’s toxicity.

The main toxin is mimosine, which is a non–protein amino acid of varying concentrations in the leucaena plant and occurring at highest concentrations in the rumen bacterial inoculation, for the past 17 years.

Rumen bacteria inoculum, while current batches are produced by sub‐culturing from steer fed leucaena for 1 year. The inoculum contains a rumen bacterium that breaks down DNH, a toxic by‐product of the ruminal breakdown of mimosine.

Rumen contents from steer fed leucaena were initially used to start the fermentation to produce the inoculum, while current batches are produced in sub‐culturing from older batches.

The inoculum is mixed with cryoprotectant (glycerol) and stored frozen until it is shipped to producers.

The bacteria in the inoculum are anaerobic, so careful handling is required to prevent killing the inoculum through exposure to oxygen.

This article was run in The Leucaena Network’s News February 2014. Visit the Leucaena Network website for more information about leucaena www.leucaena.net.au
KEY findings from a range of forage systems will be presented at field days across the Fitzroy basin district in April.

High quality annual and perennial forages play an integral part in beef backgrounding and finishing operations in the Fitzroy basin area.

Forages such as oats, forage sorghum, lablab, leucaena, butterfl y pea, and perennial pastures are all used within beef production enterprises, but which ones perform the best?

The High Output Forages project worked with 13 beef producers between Taroom and Capella for over 3 years collecting forage, animal and economic information from 25 paddock sites.

The project, co-funded by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Meat & Livestock Australia, benchmarked the commercial performance of a range of forages to identify ways to improve their profitability.

Each site provided information on soil nutrients and moisture, forage yield and quality, cattle class, liveweight gain, diet selection, stocking rate, grazing management, input costs, sale data and gross margin economics.

The analysis of forage, animal and economic performance of the sites is almost finished, with some interesting results emerging:

- It is important to consider economic, forage and livestock performance when comparing forage options as the forage ranking may differ for these criteria;
- Forage profitability depends on a range of factors including plant biomass and quality, class of cattle, and grazing management (stocking rate, timing and length of grazing), as well as seasonal and market factors;
- Under current market and cost conditions, perennial legume-grass pastures may have an economic advantage over annual forages;
- The effect of annual forages on farm profitability can be marginal and the increase in business risk significant, therefore their use needs to be considered carefully;
- Not managing sown forages according to ‘best-practice principles’ may result in less than optimal productivity and profitability.

Along with data collection from these sites, five enterprises were selected for whole-farm economic case studies, to assess the importance of forages in the profitability of their wholefarm operation.

A Forage Decision Support Tool is being prepared that will help in deciding how to best use land for forage production.

The Forage Cost Calculator enables on-farm costs to be included so that the economics of different forages can be analysed using current costs and cattle prices.

An updated Best practice guide to forage use for growing and finishing beef cattle will be available mid-year, which will be an invaluable guide to growing forages in the Fitzroy River catchment.

Maree Bowen, DAFF, Rockhampton
Phone: (07) 4936 0291
Email: maree.bowen@daff.qld.gov.au

Foraging for profitable beef production
The Clermont Cattlemen’s Challenge – an update

All the statistics on the 2013/14 event

THE 2013/14 Clermont Cattlemen’s Challenge is well underway. A highlight of the Clermont Show, the challenge has seven components over the 12-month period between shows. The components include weaner judging, grass grow-out phase (nine months), feedlot phase (100 days), carcass competition, grazed steer judging, overall weight gain and a taste test. The challenge provides an excellent showcase for the district’s beef industry. This article provides an update on activities and cattle performance up to feedlot entry on February 4, 2014.

CLERMONT CATTLEMEN’S CHALLENGE ACTIVITIES

This year’s challenge has 17 local exhibitors with each entering a pen of five weaner steers. The steers were delivered to the Clermont Showgrounds on May 26, 2013, the day preceding the Clermont Show.

WEANER JUDGING

After an overnight wet curfew, the steers were weighed and judged as stones most suitable for growing out for the 100-day grazed market. Average weaner weight across the 85 steers was 294 kg (range 291-320 kg). The heaviest steer was 359 kg and the lightest 230 kg. Greg and Alicia Magee of G & A stock yards, Clermont received the maximum points in the weaner judging (5 points) followed by Laurel Hills (4 points), Trelawney (3 points), Parnu (2 points) and Clydevale (1 point).

GRASS PHASE INDUCTION

On May 27, 2013, the steers were transported to Hugh and Sherri Philp’s property, Wyena, which is located approximately 120km north of Clermont.

On February 2, 2014, after 251 days on grass, the steers arrived (13/5/13). Rainfall during the grass phase was 72mm 1/6/13, 51mm 13/11/13, 23mm 1/12/13 and 30mm 1/2/14, the day before the steers left.

FIELD DAY – WYENA

A field day and barbecue was held at Wyena on October 2, 2013 to inspect the cattle. Approximately 30 local families attended the event. Guest speakers included Mark Connors, Zoetis, and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry’s Jim Fletcher, who discussed ‘Reproduction and genetics in northern Australia’ and ‘Northern Forestry’s Jim Fletcher, who discussed ‘Reproduction and genetics research findings’, respectively.

A game of cricket was scheduled for the afternoon but as the mercury passed 35°C, play was abandoned and early drinks taken.

FEEDLOT INDUCTION

On February 2, 2014, after 251 days on grass, the steers were transported to Paringa Feedlot, Capella. Due to a lack of pen space, they were fed hay and a grain ration for five days before induction.

On February 7, they were weighed and induced. Average steer weight was 439 kg, with the mob ranging from 345 kg to 532 kg.

The steers will remain on grain for 100 days.

CATTLE PERFORMANCE

Over the 251 days from induction at the Clermont Show (27/5/13) to induction at Paringa Feedlot (12/2/14), the average liveweight gain of the steers was 124 kg (0.72 kg/hd/day) (Table 1). There were no points allocated for weight gain over the grass phase.

FEED AVAILABILITY

The diet is described as a low quality diet with 50% of the feed being a low quality lucerne hay, 25% dried burndown and 25% surplus drought hay. With 3,811 kg/hd of available pasture in the paddock, the steers had ample feed.

The quality of the diet remained high during the grass phase (Figure 1).

Table 1: Liveweight gain summary grass phase Clermont Cattlemen’s Challenge 2013/14.

| Mob average | 94.5 | 51 | 145 | 0.73 | 0.40 | 0.57 |
| Highest exhibitors group | 119 | 79 | 184 | 0.93 | 0.62 | 0.72 |
| Lowest exhibitors group | 65 | 29 | 96 | 0.50 | 0.23 | 0.38 |

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- Newly upgraded and fully covered sales & exhibition arenas and bar facilities
- Separate facility for clean stock

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Email: council@cloncurry.qld.gov.au  •  Direct saleyard contact (07) 4742 1670
**Understanding, managing liveweight loss**

### Why regular weighing is a must

In any beef cattle operation the aim is to maximise the kilograms of beef turned off per year. In order to know how many kilograms are being produced it must be measured, that is, regular weights recorded. It is important to understand what can influence these measurements and consequently the accuracy of data collected.

The liveweight of an animal includes the weight of body tissues and the contents of the digestive tract (gut fill) and bladder. Changes in gut fill have the greatest effect on liveweight, as gut fill can account for 12 to 22 per cent of an animal’s liveweight.

Factors which determine gut fill are water intake, feed quantity and quality, the time since the last intake of feed or water and the rate of passage of gut contents. Pasture type and quality and consequently season affect gut fill. Gut fill increases as feed quality declines due to slower passage of gut contents. Grass-fed cattle have a higher percentage of their liveweight as gut fill than grainfed cattle and lose liveweight as gut fill then slows with time.

If feed or water is not supplied, cattle will lose weight rapidly in the first 12 hours. Liveweight loss then slows with time.

Table 1 highlights the average liveweight loss over a 72-hour period when cattle are not on feed or water.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time (hours)</th>
<th>Average weight loss (kg)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-24</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-48</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48-72</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Average liveweight loss over a 72-hour period.

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**Weight loss example**

The transport of steers in the Clermont Cattleman’s Challenge is a good example of how liveweight can be affected in a short period of time. After the 251 days of the grass phase of the challenge, the average weight of the No. 3 steers after mustering (full weight) and immediately before trucking was 474kg.

The cattle were transported about 200km to the feedlot, where they were fed hay and a starter ration for five days before induction. The cattle were off feed and water for about four hours before induction and weighing.

The average weight of the cattle at induction was 449kg, meaning they lost an average of 35kg, or 7.4 per cent of their full weight from the paddock.

Weighing procedures:

- Consistency in weighing procedures is crucial to reducing errors and gaining a better picture of animal performance.
- If curfews/fasting periods are used, the period must be standardised, whether animals are given water (wet curfew) or not (dry curfew).
- Where full liveweights are used, the time of day when animals are weighed should be standardised.

Factors affecting liveweight:

- The recovery period to regain lost weight can be anywhere from three to 21 days depending on the per cent liveweight lost and the conditions the animal tolerated.
- Pasture type and quality and consequently season affect gut fill and bladder. Changes in gut fill have the greatest effect on liveweight, as gut fill can account for 12 to 22 per cent of an animal’s liveweight.
- Body tissues and the contents of the digestive tract (gut fill) and bladder. Changes in gut fill have the greatest effect on liveweight, as gut fill can account for 12 to 22 per cent of an animal’s liveweight when cattle are not on feed or water.
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**Minimising weight loss**

Recommendations to help minimise liveweight loss when buying or selling cattle:

- Avoid unnecessary delays between mustering and selling – generally time is more important than the distance travelled.
- Provide rest periods during and after transit.
- Provide water and hay during rest periods.
- To find out more about our range of Stock Prods call us on 1800 425 524 or visit www.gallagher.com.au

---

**Clermont Cattleman’s Challenge: All the details on the 2013/14 event**

- From previous years:
  - Factors contributing to the high diet quality during the grass phase were:
  - The paddock and pasture is in excellent condition, which encourages the establishment and growth of perennial grasses, forbs and legumes.
  - Light-stocking rates (Table 2) allowing animals to select a high-quality diet.

**WORM TESTS**

Fecal egg count test was used to assess the worm levels in the steer.

**Pasture type and quality and season**

- Mean weight of steers at the Wyena induction ramp was 439kg, meaning they lost an average of 35kg, or 7.4 per cent of their full weight from the paddock.

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Laura Devlin
Beef Extension (FutureBeef)
07 4983 7419

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**Table 2: Stocking rate summary grass phase Clermont Cattleman’s Challenge 2013/14.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight date</th>
<th>2/3/13</th>
<th>16/3/13</th>
<th>16/4/13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dry in stock</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average liveweight (kg)</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average liveweight per head</td>
<td>98.8</td>
<td>98.8</td>
<td>98.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total adult equivalent</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Stock Rate</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Future Further Information**

For further information, please contact the chief steward David Muller, Trelawney, Clermont, on (07) 4963 5218 or email trelawneystn@bigpond.com or Cattleman’s Challenge secretary, Natalie Fenger, Hillview, Clermont, on (07) 4983 3338 or email selling@bigpond.com.

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**IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES**

**May 16, 2014** – Field day at Proserpine. Proficiency of cattle, free cattle weighing, guest speakers, exhibits to select steers for the carcass competition component, plus more!

**May 26, 2014** – Clermont Show Cattle Judging. Pen of 100-day grain-fed steers class, pen of steers with the highest weight gain. Winner judging to 2017/18 steers.

**May 27, 2014** – Clermont Show Beef Dinner. Results announcement, visitors present and the winning exhibitor crowned Cattleking. These are all open events. Please come along and join in. If you want to try your hand next year and enter in the 2014/15 challenge please contact David or Natalie for further information.

---

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**FAQ:**

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PRUSSIC ACID POISONING

All sorghums, including Johnson grass, can cause prussic acid poisoning by releasing the toxic compound hydrocyanic acid (HCN) when the plant is crushed or consumed as leaf material. Grain sorghums, sweet sorghums and perennial forage sorghums can contain the highest concentrations of HCN. Sorghums and Sudan grass hybrids have intermediate amounts, and Sudan grass the least.

Cattle are most commonly affected, but goats, sheep and horses are also poisoned. Pumiceite are more susceptible because cut chewing and rumen bacteria both contribute to cyanide release. Monogaesic animals, such as hogs and pigs, are less susceptible than cattle because the enzyme responsible for hydrolysing HCN from cyanogenic glycosides is destroyed in the small intestine. Prussic acid levels are highly variable.

- young plants
- early growth
- plants stressed from lack of moisture, cold weather, or attack by grasshoppers or other insects
- plants grown in nitrogen and low phosphorus soil.

HCN LEVELS IN HAY, SILAGE

Some reduction in HCN potential occurs during hay making. It does, however, render the sorghum safe for livestock. Do not make hay from sorghum crops which are considered unsafe to graze. If suspected hay must be used, get it analysed first and either test feed it or blend with safer forage.

Sorghum silage has been stored for several months is much safer than hay, as the acid fermentation process normally releases any HCN present. If possible, analyse suspect forage hay or silage before feeding.

Consulting laboratories for information on representative sampling, labelling, handling and analysis.

NITRATE POISONING

Nitrates accumulate in forage and in sorghums can contain the highest concentrations of HCN. Sudan grass hybrids have intermediate levels, and Sudan grass the least.

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FITZROY Basin graziers and grain growers have united to build their business know-how at a series of workshops held across central Queensland recently.

More than 410 Qld enterprises were represented at the four People and Business workshops held in early February at Middletion, Clermont, Springsure and Arcadia Valley.

As part of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry extension officer Matt Brown explained, the workshops are part of the promotion of best management practice through the Grazing BMP and Grains BMP programs.

“Modules covering subjects from the paddock to the office are offered to enterprises that want to ensure they are achieving industry benchmarks for best management practice,” Mr Brown said.

These recent workshops covered more of the office-based topics, ranging from workplace legislation, risk management, employee inductions and injury prevention in the workplace.”

Special guest speakers included representatives from Workplace Health and Safety Queensland and WorkCover Queensland.

The workshops were well received by industry attendees, with one Arcadia Valley grazer praising the information as timely and relevant. “The BMP module was interesting and easy to follow. Workplace Health and Safety was a bit challenging but was necessary to cover”

Mr Brown said for enterprises who missed out on the opportunity, more BMP workshops could be scheduled. For more information contact AgForce Queensland Grazing BMP officer Michael Taylor on (07) 3238 6042.

The February workshops were organised by DAFF and Three Rivers and Central Highlands Regional Resource Use & Planning Co-operative (CHRUP).

CATTLE ticks (Rhipicephalus microplus) are tested for resistance to acaricides at the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry’s Biosecurity Sciences Laboratory in Coopers Plains, Brisbane.

The larval packet test (LPT) is the standard testing methodology for a variety of acaricides. This test relies on a good supply of larvae to be produced by the adult female ticks.

To get meaningful results, they need a good sample of cattle ticks to test. The following steps are a general explanation of how to collect ticks most likely to lay a suitable amount of eggs for resistance testing.

● For more information or to arrange tick collection call your local Biosecurity Officer on 13 15 25.

2. Collect ticks early morning – before 7.30am if possible.

3. Collect only the fat, fully engorged ticks. Half-engorged and small ticks only lay a few eggs and aren’t useful for testing. Avoid collecting nymphs (9-12 days old). This stage is the hardest to kill, and a few may survive dipping, even if they’re not resistant to the acaricide.

4. Select ticks from a range of cattle. That is, a few ticks from a number of cattle, to provide a better representation of the tick population. Supply a separate sample from each mob using another dip or spray facility.

5. Collected at least 40-50 fully engorged ticks. A minimum of 40-50 healthy active fully engorged ticks are required; however, it’s better to send in more if you can.

6. Put ticks in a ventilated container.

● A plastic takeaway container with air holes punched in the lid is suitable.

● Don’t put anything else in the container with the ticks. Keep away from all chemicals, sunlight and excessive heat, as ticks can die or be seriously affected if not treated properly and become useless for analysis.

7. Supply as much information as possible on the advice sheet – this helps the parasitologist make a diagnosis. Download a copy from www.daff.qld.gov.au.

8. Don’t put anything else in the container with the ticks. Keep away from all chemicals, sunlight and excessive heat, as ticks can die or be seriously affected if not treated properly and become useless for analysis.

9. Ask your biosecurity officer about collecting ticks for adult immersion testing.

Introducing graduate policy officer, Emily Barbi

I GREW up in Mackay and attended Mackay Christian College for most of my schooling including my senior years, when I undertook Agriculture as a core course. During this time I developed an interest in Agriculture and after graduating Grade 12, I undertook a three-year Bachelor of Applied Science Degree majoring in Production Animal Science at the University of Queensland, Gatton.

I am particularly interested in beef cattle production, especially reproduction, and undertook my course work placement on a cattle and wheat property between Roma and Taroom. I also gained a reproduction, and undertook my course work placement on a cat-

I have also had various opportunities to travel around the world with my family including Europe, New Zealand, Hong Kong and China. It is also used by the Australian Lot Feeders Association, the organisation representing most intensive cattle feeders, for communication of industry developments, training workshops and conferences and market trends.

Stock, health, backgrounding, fodderstock processing, manure management, yard design and equipment are regularly covered in the magazine.
New supplement strategy reveals emerging trends

A MAJOR experiment at Brian Pastures Research Station near Gayndah is examining trends showing that after four months on the farm, these groups were split again into halves with half the heifers being fed a diet with Kynophos to meet their nutritional demands of the heifers and calves. In pregnancy and the first three months of lactation, followed early April 2014. It covers the last four months of pregnancy and the first four weeks of lactation. However, after the first four weeks of lactation the heifers managed according to current advice (low P in pregnancy, high P in lactation), for the first four weeks of lactation. 

Pre-loading strategy examined in the experiment is to try to pre-load heifers with phosphorous in the dry season, when they should be pregnant and it’s relatively easy to get them to take a supplement. Bone is a rich source of P, and the heifer’s skeleton could potentially be used to store large amounts of P. The heifer could then draw on these stores of P through the next wet season, when they should have a calf at foot. Phosphorus is especially needed to maximise the heifer’s ability to produce milk, as milk is very rich in P.

The experiment started in June 2013 and will finish early April 2014. It covers the last four months of pregnancy and the first four weeks of lactation. Seven heifers followed a recovery phase of six weeks of fasting when all heifers will be fed a high P diet. Forty maiden heifers due to calve at three years of age were started on a diet rich in energy, protein and fibre with both diets identical apart from the presence or absence of Kynophos as the P supplement. During lactation the fibre was reduced and energy increased to meet the nutritional demands of the heifers and calves. In pregnancy, half the heifers were fed the diet with Kynophos fully mixed into their diet, and the other half without. At weaning these groups were split again into half with and half without Kynophos.

Pre-loading heifers with phosphorous in the dry season

Examples of the first-calf heifers on each P supplementation strategy at weaning. 

Several fortnightly to determine mobilisation of P in the body and P outputs:
- Phosphorus inputs measured through weekly feed intakes.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS
- The high P and low P groups had a difference of approximately 45kg in live weight by calving.
- Addition of Kynophos improved appetite dramatically.
- There was no difference between the high P and low P groups in calf birth weights, indicating the extra nutrition in calving helped the high P heifers to continue to grow their own body stores of fat, protein and bone.
- According to the expectation P storage, the heifers fed high P in pregnancy but low P in lactation produced 30pc more milk than those fed low P throughout pregnancy and lactation (Figure 1).
- The ‘current advice’ strategy still proved to be superior to the ‘pre-loading’ strategy. The heifers fed low P in pregnancy but high P in lactation produced 20pc more milk than the high P in pregnancy, low P in lactation heifers (Figure 1). The heifers fed high P through pregnancy and lactation produced three times more milk than those fed the low P diet throughout, indicating the value of P supplementation in pregnancy and lactation (Figure 1).
- During lactation, P supplementation allowed the heifers to continue to grow their own bodies as well as produce extra milk.
- Calf data is yet to be finalised but current trends indicate that weaning weights will reflect the milk production rankings of P supplementation strategies.

Ideally, P should be fed during lactation in the wet season in areas of Queensland deficient in P. However, if this is not possible, the ‘pre-loading’ hypothesis has merit – dry season supplementation can be a viable alternate to maintain P storage levels in the bone that can be drawn out and mobilised throughout the body to stimulate milk production when wet season supplements are restricted.

The research team includes Dr Liangyong Cui, Dr Rob Dixon, Dr Mary Fletcher, and Dr Lisa Kidd (UQ). Thanks to MLA, DAFF and UQ (School of Veterinary Science and QAAFI) for funding this project.

Dr David McNeill, University of Queensland. Email: d.mcneill@uq.edu.au

Milk outputs from first-calf heifers on different P supplementation strategies (high P in pregnancy/high P in lactation; high P in pregnancy/low P in lactation; low P in pregnancy/low P in lactation).

For further details or advertising booking confirmation please contact your Queensland Country Life representative.