



BEEFnews

HUNTER VALLEY, UPPER MANNING
& CENTRAL COAST

SUMMER 2006

NSW Department of Primary Industries, www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/beefnews

A quarterly newsletter for beef producers of the Hunter Valley, Upper Manning and Central Coast areas of NSW.

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NSW DEPARTMENT OF
PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

The drought conditions being faced by most Hunter Valley beef producers have been a nerve wracking time for everyone involved in the beef industry. Most particularly farm families are the hardest hit.

Drought Support Workers Tanya Chesworth and Caroline Long have been running Bucks BBQ for the blokes, 'Indulge Me' days for the ladies and Farm Family Gatherings, but they want to hear from you about what you, as a rural community, would like to do.

There are Personal Development courses for rural women which are sponsored by CWA.

Contact Tanya and Caroline on 6545 1800.

Keep in touch with Tanya and Caroline to keep up-to-date with the changing criteria for funding and assistance packages available to farm families in drought.

Rural Financial Counsellor, Ron Lindsay, from Gloucester is available to help you with cash flow budgeting, financial applications and accessing funding. Ron is at Scone on Wed/Thur and you can organise to see him by ringing 0428 582 570.

If you do need feeding advice then Todd (Scone) and Ian Paterson) are available . . . but the time for this is probably past and its just now a long slog to survive the situation.

We are here for you to talk to, any time.

Drought Support Workers (NSW DPI, Scone):

Tania Chesworth 6545 1800 or 0428 249 092
Caroline Long 6545 1800 or 0428 296 332

Rural Financial Counsellor (Gloucester and Scone):

Ron Lindsay 65451800 or 65582570 Mobile 0428 582 570

Centrelink Drought Hotline: 132316

www.centrelink.gov.au

www.affa.gov.au has a fact sheet on EC assistance.

Of feeds and other things

Ian Blackwood, Livestock Officer (Beef Products), Paterson

Stock feed prices vary greatly between outlets and between bulk versus bagged delivery. Calf pellets have been the best example over the past 3 months with nearly \$300 - \$230/T difference.

Molasses, bulk, has been consistently priced. If you are a molasses user make sure you place orders for delivery, from now on, with the supplier.

The molasses price will be relative to grain (on a dry matter basis), so given that grain is now at import parity (the cost of importing grains) and has been for the past 6 weeks, then molasses prices are not likely to change.

White cottonseed has rocketed in price, a result of cotton crop size, oilseed crushing competition and risk-taking traders in the market. Against grain at \$300 - \$330/T, white cottonseed is still to be considered in the ration mix. Again, order.

To compare feed prices go to our NSW DPI website www.dpi.nsw.gov.au and locate the Feed Calculator which will allow you to work a price per unit of energy (ME MJ) in the feeds you want to compare.

Keep abreast of feed prices . . . there is a lot of rumour about at the moment. There is feed available and yes, it is at a price!

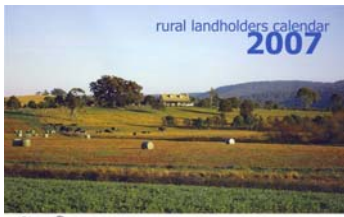
Keep working your plans, doing the cash flows so you know how you are tracking.

Be objective with your drought plan and write it down. That way you can tick off the milestones as they occur.

Late winter/spring drop calves are now 3-5 months old and early weaning should be on everyone's "to do" list. In this Beef News there is an early weaning "checklist" to help you plan the job for both the cows and the calves.



RURAL LANDHOLDERS CALENDAR



If you did not receive one of these in the mail then give our Paterson Office a ring on 4939 8940. These were sent to all landholders in the Hunter CMA geographic area.

Livestock Producer Assurance . . . LPA/NVD Waybill

Ian Blackwood, Livestock Officer (Beef Products), Paterson

By now most people have worked their way through the initial booklet, sent out in 2004, to begin the 'new' Quality Assurance Program.

When you received your new LPA/NVD booklet, did you notice that your PIC number has been printed onto each page? Have a look.

This means that you are officially in the MLA run Livestock Producer Assurance (LPA) quality assurance scheme. When you sign the form you are saying that all statements made as on the form, are true and correct and can be substantiated with records.

Make sure you have the records because, as a registered participant in LPA, you can be audited for your use of the scheme and the statement you have made. You must be able to verify the statements.

There has also been confusion over the legal use of the LPA/NVD Waybill when you sell cattle. The following points are the facts:

1. The form is in three parts;
PART A which incorporates the travel permit (Transported Stock Statement) and the LPA component.
When you sign Part A, which is a statutory declaration, you are saying the facts you provide are truthful.
PART B is completed by the carrier.
PART C is between selling agent and buyer (and is optional).
2. In NSW there is no law that says you must have a completed LPA/NVD waybill to sell stock
3. In NSW there is a law that says you must have completed a Travelling Stock Statement, or equivalent as Parts A & B of the NVD/Waybill, in order for your cattle to be transported to the saleyards, abattoir . . . or anywhere

4. Market forces require you to sell cattle with a completed LPA/NVD Waybill. No LPA/NVD Waybill, no bid or direct sale to abattoir or feedlot.
5. If you buy cattle privately, always request (ask? demand!) for the LPA/NVD Waybill, and remember, they must be tagged with an NLIS device (before they leave the property of origin) which is **your**, the buyer's, responsibility to transfer to your property PIC.

Emergency NVD/Waybill

Ian Blackwood, Livestock Officer (Beef Products), Paterson

Need a NVD/Waybill in a hurry and you have run out?

Yes, you can obtain one but...

ONLY from the internet

ONLY if you are an accredited LPA producer

ONLY if you have already placed an order for a booklet (which have not yet arrived). They are FREE of charge to a Producer.

Can your agent help out?

Yes, they can as they can purchase (from MLA) an Agent Emergency NVD/Waybill.

BUT you will be charged for this service.

ONLY an agent can complete the Agent Emergency NVD/Waybill.



Is climate change affecting your business now?

Michael Cashen, Climate Risk Management Officer, Paterson

As part of NSW DPI climate risk initiative, a comprehensive analysis of the major climatic indices for agricultural production was undertaken by staff from NSW DPI for the

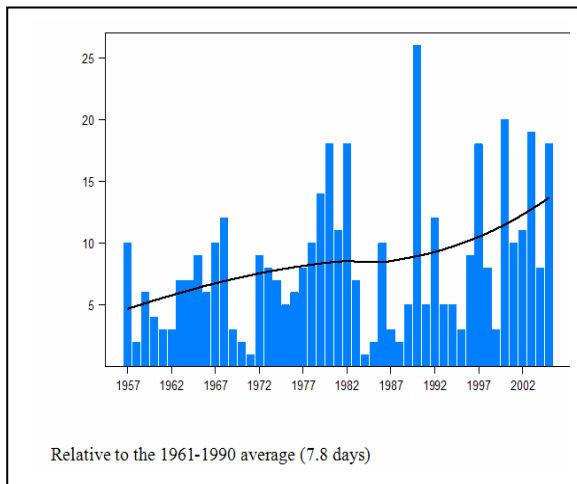
Hunter Valley region, the results of which were presented by Paul Carberry NSW DPI at a community forum looking at Climate Change in Muswellbrook on 22 November 2006.

The analysis which focused on data from Jerrys Plains, revealed that recent increases in temperature in the region may already be negatively affecting most existing traditional industries in the region including the beef industry.

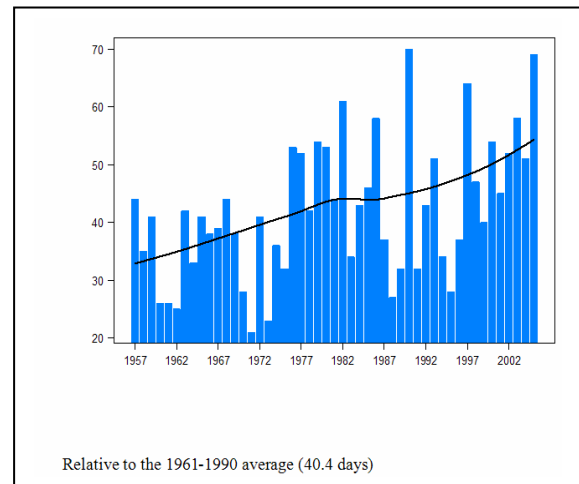
Two climatic indices for temperature stress in beef cattle were among those examined in the analysis:

- **Hot days with no recovery**, which determined the number of days with maximum temperatures exceeding 33 degrees AND minimum temperature on the following day exceeding 20 degrees from December to February.
- **Temperature-Humidity Index (THI)** “High heat stress” days were defined as those yielding a THI value of 78 or higher, which provides the number of high heat stress days for the December to February period each year.

The results of the analysis for Jerrys Plains are presented below:



Number Hot Days with no recover



Number High Stress Days (THI > 78)

The negative affects of heat stress on production and animal welfare in beef cattle include; increased sweating and panting, increased loss of CO₂, reduced carbonate balance of the blood, increased acidification of tissues and rumen, reduced digestion rate, reduced intake food and production.

To learn more about the weather, climate variability and climate change and how these risks can be managed register a place in the next NSW DPI workshop 'A Farmer Guide to Managing Climate Risk' by calling Michael Cashen on 02 49 398953 or Paul Carberry on 02 67 631132.

Hunter Beef Producers Consider Early Weaning

Todd Andrews, Livestock Officer (Beef Cattle), Scone

The dreadful seasonal conditions experienced over much of the Hunter Valley in 2006 has meant that early weaning is again a serious management option for breeding herds. Calves can be weaned as young as 6 weeks old, although most calves in the Hunter would be well past that.

Early weaning, before cow fat scores fall below 2, has two major benefits. Firstly, it reduces the nutritional stress on cows and so will help them maintain or increase body weight. For producers considering lengthening the current joining season, this may increase conception rates. In addition, weaning calves from cows now will also mean that they will be heavier when calving in spring 2007, with subsequent higher conception rates next year.

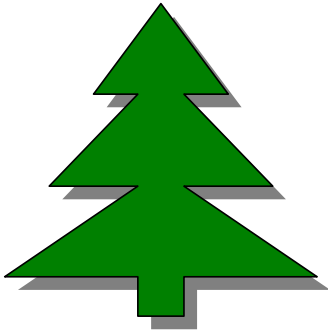
Early weaning also allows the liveweight gain of calves to be managed. Under current pasture conditions, many breeders will be producing little or no milk and so young calves are being forced to forage sparse pastures. This will result in 'woody' calves that have reduced growth potential for the rest of their lives. Early weaned calves can be managed to reach marketable weights more quickly, with some attention being paid to the following factors.

Nutrition

Ideally calves should be managed to put on at least 0.6 kg/head/day, to ensure that they can develop properly later in life. Both protein and energy are important- calves up to 3 months old need 18% protein, dropping to 16% at 4-5 months old. Young animals need a high proportion of 'bypass' protein that is contained in soybean, canola, safflower and cottonseed meal and copra. Note that calves less than 3 months should not be fed large amounts of cottonseed meal. Such meals can be combined with grains at approximately 1 part meal: 4 parts cracked grain.

Calves less than 3 months need 1-2 kg of calf pellets or a protein meal: grain mix per day. This can be increased to 2-3kg for calves over 3 months. Note that calves 4 months and older can be fed molasses: protein meal mixes as well as long chop roughage (does not need to be high quality hay).

Calves may benefit from an injection of Vitamin A, D & E if they haven't had access to green grass for 3-4 months. It is unlikely that other mineral and block based supplements will be of benefit.



Christmas holidays are here again and every year we hear about another horrific farming accident, many involving children.

Farmsafe Australia tells us that 30 children die each year in farm accidents – that is 20% of all farm-related deaths.

In children aged 0-4 the most common cause is drowning, whereas children aged 5-14 are most commonly injured by farm machinery, ATV's and other vehicles.

Farming is a dangerous business and we need to recognise this.

Complete the Child Safety Checklist on the Farmsafe website on:

http://www.farmsafe.org.au/images/pdfs/child_safety_farm_checklist.pdf

Health

All calves need to be wormed and vaccinated. Clostridial diseases, such as blackleg and pulpy kidney, can cause sudden death in combination with sudden diet changes. Read Vaccine labels to ensure that instructions are followed. Most importantly, stock must initially be vaccinated twice-vaccinating once without a follow up offers no protection whatsoever!

Commercial calf feeds contain coccidiostats to prevent coccidiosis infections. Producers mixing their own calf mix should be aware that infections can occur in young calves-discuss preventative measures with your vet. Minimising dust and treating animals for flies will also help to minimise pink eye infections.

Producers should also note that any procedures (eg castration or dehorning) should be carried out prior to weaning as these extra stresses at weaning time predisposes calves to infection and weight loss.

Markets

The first target for early weaned calves is to get them to a marketable weight. Although calves of any size can be sent to the saleyards, GreenMountain Trading (David Payne 0409 920 561), Northern Rivers Meats (Tom Manning 66 622 044) and Ramsey Meats (Allan Langley 0418 439 640) all process calves for veal. Calves need to be a minimum 130kg liveweight and can be up to 240kg. Ideally calves would be well muscled although little fat cover is required. Calves destined for this market do not need to be castrated.

Courses Get Cheaper

Neil Griffiths, District Agronomist, Tocal

Existing Prograze, Landscan, Property Planning and the new Paddock Plants, TALC (Targeting Actions for Local Catchments) and Drought Planning courses are now cheaper than ever thanks to an arrangement between NSW DPI and the Hunter Central Rivers CMA. During 2007 a limited number of these courses will be available at a cost to you of \$100 per farm per course (this is a saving of between \$240 and \$1,200 per course!).

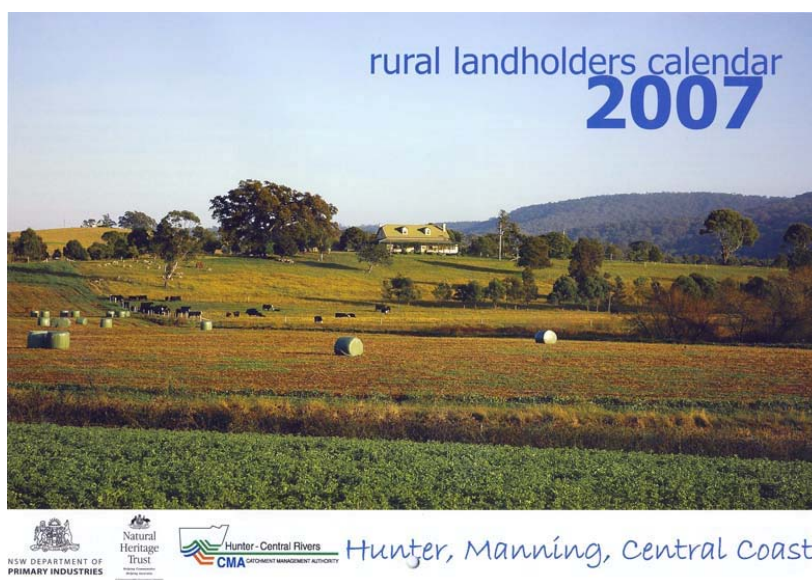
If you are not familiar with these courses contact us at Tocal, Taree or Scone or look up www.profarm.com.au. We are keen to run 1 or 2 of these courses from each office. We will be promoting the courses in 2007 but will take names now so be quick to ensure your place in the course of your choice.

Get your FREE Rural Landholders Calendar 2007

Neil Griffiths, District Agronomist, Tocal

Most landholders should have received a Rural Landholders 2007 calendar for the Hunter, Manning and Central Coast via the post at the end of November.

The calendar contains a range of reminders, tips, contacts and information. Please contact your local DPI office (Scone, Tocal, Taree, Gosford) if you would like a copy.



Pasture management in drought

Neil Griffiths, District Agronomist, Tocal

Nothing can make pasture grow without water but there are some options to encourage quick growth when it does rain.

Don't overgraze: try to leave some groundcover by destocking to a "sacrifice paddock" once useful pasture is eaten. Maintaining some groundcover will reduce the risk of wind or water erosion and importantly, help survival chances of established perennials in your pasture. Growth from established perennials will provide the quickest feed recovery when useful rain does occur.

Watch for weeds: especially if you are buying in grain or hay from unusual sources look for any new weeds when it does rain. Again this is made easier if you feed in a restricted area rather than spreading hay all over your property.

Be ready with fertiliser: depending on pasture and soil type and fertiliser history a prolonged drought may release some nutrients allowing good growth when it does rain. It is well proven that perennials surviving in high fertility soils will give the quickest growth when it rains. If you have low fertility soils you may need to use fertiliser before you can expect strong growth from pasture after drought.

BEWARE POISONING RISK

During drought stock may eat a range of weeds they would normally ignore. Poisonous plants include rock fern, bracken fern, green cestrum, lantana, mother of millions, alligator weed, cotton bush and many others.

Nitrate poisoning can be a problem with new growth from pastures and some weeds in high fertility areas.

If you grow forage sorghum (or Johnson's Grass) prussic acid (HCN) poisoning is an increased risk if plants are moisture stressed.

Kikuyu poisoning is a "willow the wisp" which seems to occur on new growth after a drought. Its cause has never been determined and seems to affect only a few paddocks with no problems for the majority. One piece of advice worth considering from farmers affected during the last outbreak of kikuyu poisoning is not to force stock to eat new kikuyu growth if they don't want to no guarantees but it was reported that in some cases stock did not want to eat what looked like good fresh new growth.



**NSW Department of Primary
Industries at Paterson and
Scone would like to wish you
all a safe and Merry
Christmas and wish you all the
best for a Happy New Year.**

AUSTRALIAN RUMINANT FEED BAN LIVESTOCK PRODUCERS

If you are an Australian livestock producer and you feed your stock you need to understand the Australian Ruminant Feed Ban.

RESTRICTED ANIMAL MATERIAL (RAM) IS:

... meat, meat and bone meal, blood meal, poultry offal meal, feather meal, fishmeal or any other animal meals or manures.



IT DOES NOT INCLUDE:

... tallow, gelatine, milk and milk products. These products are exempt from the definition of RAM and may be used in ruminant feeds. Tallow includes used cooking oils provided they have been treated to remove RAM.



REMEMBER

- Read the label – ensure the feed does not contain RAM
- Totally clean your machinery of all RAM to prevent cross contamination of ruminant feeds
- Ensure your stock do not have access to feed containing RAM
- Keep records of your purchases and Commodity Vendor Declarations for each purchase.

RUMINANT FEED BAN PRODUCER CHECKLIST

Complete this checklist and retain in your files to ensure that you are meeting the requirements of the scheme.

This checklist can be used as part of the internal audit for Industry Food Safety/Quality Assurance Programs.

QUESTIONS	YES	NO
Do you purchase feed products that may contain RAM? <i>Note: In the case of home mixers, feed products produced on the property must also be recorded.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If the answer is Yes please proceed >		
1. Do you require all feed commodities/products brought onto your farm/feedlot be accompanied by a Commodity/Byproduct Vendor Declaration (CVD/BVD) providing product history at time of purchase? OR	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Do you maintain records that verify the feed commodities do not contain RAM?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Do you ensure that products that may contain RAM are stored separately and securely from feed commodities that will be fed to ruminant livestock?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Do you maintain and implement cleaning procedures that totally remove all feed residues from within the materials handling and mixing systems, preventing cross contamination of feed containing RAM with feed destined for ruminants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. If you sell the product you mix, do you label all product in accordance with your State or Territory labelling requirements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Do you maintain records that verify questions 4 and 5 above?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you answered NO to any of the questions (1 to 6) you are NOT complying with the requirements of the Australian Ruminant Feed Ban. You MUST implement measures to rectify the non-compliance/s.

Further copies can be downloaded from: www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/aaahc/programs/adsp/tsefap/feedban.cfm