



BEEF NEW ENGLAND & NORTH WEST SLOPES news

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A quarterly newsletter for beef producers of the New England and North West Slopes areas of NSW.

IN THIS EDITION

Planning Ahead for Winter

Seasonal Outlook in North NSW

Worms in Cattle

Beef Profit Partnerships

Winter Forage Grazing Management



NSW DEPARTMENT OF
PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

Planning Ahead For Winter

Alastair Rayner, Livestock Officer (Beef Products) Tamworth

The severe drought conditions experienced in other areas of NSW has significant implications for livestock producers. These implications need to be factored into pre winter plans.

The most pressing issue will be the availability and access to supplementary feeds. In many cases supplies of grains and hays is practically non existent or very expensive as demand for these feeds is at levels never seen before. Traditional supplements such as cottonseed, protein meals and even molasses which forms the base for many supplementary feeding recipes, are all in very short supply and also extremely expensive.

This means producers who use some supplementary feeds to manage their winter feed gaps must start planning for winter now. Feed availability is likely to become more restricted. Leaving winter planning too late may see many producers miss out on feeds or have less cost effective options available for winter management.

Pre planning will greatly assist in managing this winter period. Producers should consider their current herd numbers, pasture

availability and feed supply both at present and in the lowest winter months. Another key area will be water supplies. These plans should include a number of options, which may address areas such as early weaning, herd reduction or destocking as well as feeding. Solid plans should include key dates or trigger points which require action or a change in strategies.

On farm water supplies are again becoming critical across the North West Slopes. As part of a pre winter plan, consideration should be given to undertaking a water audit. NSW DPI has recently released Primefact 269 "Stock water – a limited resource". This Primefact contains information on how to assess your water resources, including:

- Water stocktake: quantity
- Water stocktake: quality
- Water stocktake: reliability - meeting the water demand
- Algal identification (including blue-green algae)

While winter may be several months off, producers who plan now will manage this challenging period with greater confidence and success.

Seasonal Outlook In Northern NSW

*Paul Carbery, Advisory Officer, Climatology
NSWDPI, Tamworth*

There is a change in the atmospheric systems that bring rain to northern NSW at about this time every year, with the summer storm influence fading away but the winter pattern not yet established. This commonly makes April the driest month of the year in northern NSW. With current background sea surface temperatures there is no reason to believe this year will be an exception.

However the outlook for winter is better. There was an El Nino in the Pacific ocean during the later part of 2006 and over summer. This usually has a negative influence on winter and particularly on spring rainfall and this recent one certainly did that.

As this El Nino has now completely gone away and Pacific sea surface temperatures are just slightly

below average, not enough to be a La Nina but well down on last year, this should see winter and spring rainfall return closer to average, with a modest chance of being above average.

Exactly when this winter pattern will start to deliver is still not certain. Over the last 20 years there has been a southward drift in how far north the cold fronts come and it is these that trigger winter and spring rain. This is likely connected with global warming so will probably be the pattern this year, meaning general winter rains may not come till late May or into June.

It is possible a strong 'North West cloud band' could deliver good general rain before then but these systems are not all that common, are extremely difficult to predict and should not be relied on.



Editorial

Alastair Rayner, Livestock Officer (Beef Products) Tamworth

Welcome to the Autumn edition of the New England & North West Slopes Beef News. Since the last edition, I have taken up a new role as the District Livestock Officer (Beef Products) based at Tamworth. The Tamworth district covers the Armidale-Dumaresq, Uralla, Walcha, Gunnedah, Liverpool Plains and Tamworth Regional Shires. This is an exciting change after almost ten years based in Glen Innes. However I will maintain a close involvement with the Northern New England as events arise.

If you are passing through Tamworth or you need to contact me, my new number is 02 6763 1100. My new office is located at the Tamworth Agricultural Institute, just opposite Farrer Agricultural School on Callala Lane.

The season continues to be challenging for beef producers across the North West. I encourage all producers to carefully plan for winter. Given the tight supplies of feeds, the concern over farm water and cow conditions, preplanning should be a priority for all producers.

If you have any concerns or would like to talk to me about your winter plans, please feel free to contact me at Tamworth.

Coming Events

Beef-n-omics

Beef-n-omics has been very popular with producers. Since its release earlier this year two tablelands groups have participated in the program. The next course will be held around Mullaley in late May. If you are interested in joining this group, please contact me at Tamworth before the third week of May 2007.

Worms in Cattle

Dr Stephen Love, State Coordinator-Internal Parasites, NSW DPI, Armidale

One of the nice things about cattle is that they generally handle worms better than sheep and goats. Adult beef cattle often need very little drenching, except for liver fluke. Even so, adult cattle generally cope with fluke better than their ovine counterparts.

On 'flukey' properties, April/May is the most important time of the year to give cattle (and sheep and goats) a fluke drench. This one should be a triclabendazole-based product. If an August fluke drench is required, fluke drenches based on other active ingredients can be used.

Young cattle may need up to three roundworm drenches in their first 20 months of life, by which time they should have reasonably good immunity to round worms and, to a lesser extent, liver fluke. Depending on the individual management set up, drenching for roundworms may be required in April /May at weaning, in early Spring, then again in summer. Combining this with

good grazing management will give you a bigger bang for your buck.

You can monitor worminess of cattle using worm egg counts, but this is a less reliable guide to actual worm burdens than in sheep, especially once cattle get beyond 9-12months of age.

On the matter of drench resistance in cattle worms, there have been few confirmed reports of resistance in Australia, unlike the situation in sheep. Things are a little different across the Tasman where there are quite a few reports of cattle worms resistant to macrocyclic lactones (MLs, 'ectins') and other drenches.

If you have doubts about the efficacy of a drench you have just used, get a worm egg count done 14 days after drenching and take it from there.

For more information, see the NSW DPI [publications](#) 'Cattle worm control – the basics', and 'Liver fluke disease in sheep and cattle' (Primefact 446).

Beef Profit Partnerships

Alastair Rayner, Livestock Officer (Beef Products), NSW DPI Tamworth

Introduction

The establishment of Cooperative Research Centres (CRC) has been a true success for many industries, not least those in the agricultural sector. Cooperative Research Centres bring together scientists, academics, industry organisations, students and many others to focus on challenging and developing new technologies for their industries.

The beef industry has been one of the real winners from the CRC program. Commencing with the CRC for Meat Quality, moving through to the CRC for Beef Cattle and now to the CRC for Beef Genetics, many discoveries and new technologies have been developed through this unique program.

Industry programs which many people use constantly have benefited or emerged as a result of the partnerships and work done under the CRC banner. The strengthening of EBV's, the work on feed efficiency, the development of MSA and now genetic technologies are all areas where CRC work has been applied for the development of our industry.

Producer Involvement

Many producers have been involved in activities arranged through the CRC or through one of the CRC's supporting partners. Field days have long been a source of producer involvement, as have been programs such as the Feeder Steer Schools run in Armidale, Victoria and Queensland.

While these traditional activities remain a key part of the extension program of the CRC for Beef Genetics, a new program has been developed. This program is known as Beef Profit Partnerships. In a broad context they involve producers, extension officers, researchers and other industry members focussing on changing management strategies and applying CRC technologies in every day beef enterprise operations.

A key feature of these partnerships is a chance for groups to meet and discuss the actual practicalities of adopting new technologies. Partnerships with researchers and industry mean changes or improvements which can be obvious to producers, but sometimes miss others, are passed directly back to the developers of the technology. Ideally this provides both a robust and proven piece of technology. More importantly it ensures that research and development continues to support and meet the needs of the industry.

How is it working?

Beef Profit Partnerships have been run successfully across NSW. The format of the NSW groups has been to use the Beef-N-Omics training course. Beef-N-Omics is a three day course which uses computer software, technical presentations and practical activities to explore the impact of new technologies on producer farms.

The Beef-N-Omics software has been developed by NSW Department of Primary Industries and the CRC for Beef Cattle. The software helps a user, or in most cases a group of producers

develop a model or an actual or typical beef breeding enterprise. The model takes into account the number of breeding animals, fertility rates, animal longevity, culling strategies and animal sales. It also calculates the amount of pasture and crop grown for each month of the year.

Based on this information, the software calculates the feed supply each month, the feed demand from livestock each month and presents a feed balance. This feed balance can be very useful to measure the impact of stocking rates.

The program also works to calculate a gross margin for the beef enterprise. The gross margin is presented on both a total figure, per breeding cow figure and on a per hectare basis.

While these calculations can be very revealing, the more useful option is to use the program to evaluate the impact a potential change might have on both the feed balance and the gross margin. These changes can include pasture improvement, sowing winter or summer crops, adjusting or moving calving times, changing sale weights or undertaking to trade cattle.

Each session of Beef-N-Omics includes a technical presentation on a technology that could be used by the group. The session includes recent CRC outcomes, other technology and the discussions and experiences of the group. Practical activities may include looking at examples or activities group members

may already be undertaking or considering. The results of these sessions can be used for comparison in the Beef-N-Omics software.

Several participants of Beef-N-Omics groups have already made significant changes to their own enterprises. In one case, a producer moved from a straight bred British operation to a cross breeding operation using a Bos indicus bull over his older cattle. The reason for this change came through recognition that such a cross offered greater hybrid vigour, better adaptability to their environment and a desire to change markets.

Conclusion

Making change or adopting new technologies can often be hard for individuals. When technologies are new or untested it is difficult to evaluate their practical application or value. The long success of CRC technologies have been a result of a partnership between all parts of the industry. These partnerships allow testing and evaluation and help determine the value of a new technology.

The Beef Profit Partnerships build on this proven method and allow producers even greater scope to tailor technologies to their individual needs. Producers interested in being part of a partnership should contact their local DPI beef extension officer or the CRC for Beef Genetics in Armidale.

Winter Forage Grazing Management

Loretta Serafin, District Agronomist, NSW DPI Tamworth

A reasonable proportion of winter forages, namely oats, wheat and barley were sown on the back of good rains at the end of February and early march and more forage is likely to be sown following additional rain.

Grazing management will always play a key role in optimising the quantity and quality of dry matter produced from these forages during the winter.

In recent years the early planted winter forages have tended to suffer a period of moisture stress during the early autumn which has sometimes resulted in the death of plants but mostly they remain inactive and appear stressed but grow away following rain.

To ensure the survival of these forages it is important not to graze too early. The earliest time when grazing should occur is when the plants have developed secondary roots and as such are well anchored and will not be removed from the ground by grazing animals. This is usually during the tillering stage.

Grazing height should also be considered and as a rule of thumb graze

when erect types reach 20-25cm and 10-15cm for prostrate types.

Grazing during the winter should be monitored closely to maintain sufficient dry matter and manage the speed of crop development, particularly if forages are intended for hay production or use as a dual purpose crop for a grain harvest. In addition, warmer seasonal conditions will cause plants without a cold requirement to rush ahead and attempt to produce heads earlier than normal.

Continued grazing once the plants have begun jointing or a node can be felt at the base of the stem means the removal of potential heads if stock are allowed to continue grazing down to this point. Removal of these will mean a loss in production as the plants will need to produce more tillers.

As such monitor your crops progress and remove stock from paddocks intended for grain or hay production when you begin to feel nodes or joints in the stem. A small amount of observation can greatly impact on the amount of grazing, grain and hay you produce in a season.