

DROUGHT LOT FEEDING SHEEP

Unfortunately with the dry conditions continuing, it is the time to make some hard decisions now about your drought strategies for the coming summer months.

The establishment of "containment areas" may have some real advantages for your business enterprise. Feed lotting sheep during drought is a means of;

- managing stock effectively
- keeping your core breeding stock alive
- preserving pasture ground cover
- saving your country to enable a quicker response when it does rain.

Once pasture or ground cover drops to around 70% and feeding levels increase to 3kg/hd/week per adult sheep, it is a good time to consider establishing a containment area.

Obviously the main goal of a containment area is not to finish animals or intensively feed for weight gain but to provide a maintenance ration to enable stock survival.

Locating a Feedlot.

The feedlot needs to have easy access to good quality water and shade. They are best located away from the house and away from main roads.

Area required

Allow 1sqm per sheep. Upper limit in an individual feedlot is 800 head

Water supply

A good, reliable, quality water supply is extremely important to the success of a feedlot. Water availability is the deciding factor when considering a containment area. Trough size is not as important as flow rate. An adult sheep will drink between 3 and 5lt/day. Flow rates need to be able to match this demand. Troughs need to be cleaned regularly. Long narrow troughs are better than large round troughs.

Feeding

If possible, do not let breeding stock fall below condition score 3. Once stock condition falls below this, it is much harder and very costly to increase weight back to a level 3 on a maintenance ration.

Where cattle and sheep are being run put sheep into feed first and preserve paddock feed for the cattle. Troughs can be made from corrugated iron nailed to posts and formed by driving on the tin to create the trough.

Allow 5cm of trough length per sheep. Double this if stock are being fed along a fence line and only have access to one side of the trough.

Contact your local DPI / RLPB sheep advisor, animal nutritionist or veterinarian when formulating a ration as a number of pre-feeds will be required at reduced rates to accustom the animals onto the grain gradually.

- Additives may be required such as 1% limestone to the grain as limestone prevents urinary calculi.
- An induction period onto a grain diet is very important.
- Feed twice or three times a week.
- Provide access to roughage.
- After a month, check for shy feeders and remove.

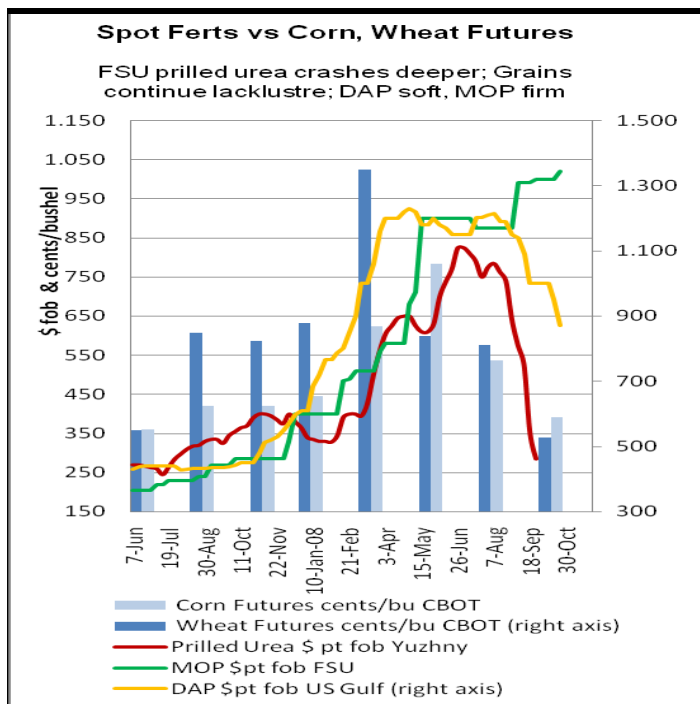
Animal Health

- Drench stock on entry to feedlot.
- If stock are in the feedlot for more than three months give injections of vitamin E.
- If stock are in the feedlot for more than 6 months give injection of vitamin A
- After the break, continue feeding for two weeks to allow pastures to re-establish.

NEW MARKET INFORMATION

Fertiliser prices

Fertiliser prices have continued to soften over the past few weeks and urea has crashed over the past several days. MAP has also come off the boil but not to the same extent. See chart below. The key reason for the price devaluation seems to be the same everywhere - lack of demand due to low market confidence. Several international urea and phosphate manufactures have lowered or stopped production as product containment at ports and warehouses becomes an issue. [Fertiliser prices are in \$US. When you convert to \$AUD A/P's should hold when freight, handling & \$AUD is factored in.]



Pasture fertilizer still has a role in maintaining carrying capacity through capital applications of fertilizer, even at the current prices.

The fertilizer market has changed significantly since last year. The global downturn has seen dramatic decreases in the cost of sulphur and urea due to reduced demand. Phosphate prices have also come back but not to the same extent, while potash continues to climb.

Much of the stock on hand will have been purchased at the old prices, however there **may be buying opportunities if reduced demand continues. Producers should follow prices closely and be prepared to negotiate hard.**

Courtesy FMB Group

Deregulated Grain Marketing—the new system—grain buying opportunities?

Just a reminder that grain marketing will be operating under the deregulated system this year. This may seem obvious but we are still hearing comments that suggest growers haven't given much thought about how to market grain this year. Nobody is really sure what the new landscape will be but what is absolutely certain is that it won't be the same as past years. Commentary from grain marketers suggests prices will be under considerable pressure at harvest so talk to your qualified marketing adviser about what options are available now. There may be an opportunity to take advantage of the uncertainty surrounding the new grain marketing strategies and purchase grain directly off the headers following harvesting. Have a chat to your local adviser and see what they recommend.

Upcoming Events

MFS “This Summer, Survive or Thrive” Discussion

Date: Thursday 20th November
Time: 4.00pm
Venue: Nimmitabel Country Club (Bentley Street)
Speakers: Grant Burbridge (“Connemurra”, Oberon Valley, Tarcutta)
Greg Meeker, Beef Advisor (DPI)
Doug Alcock, Sheep & Wool Advisor (DPI)
Facilitated by Mike Stephens (MS&A)
Topic: Drought management

please RVSP: 02 6458 4188
Email: nancy@msanda.com

Exerts from Mike Stephens “20 Questions for Australian Agriculture”....

Mike Stephens likes to tell a story about a man standing in the street with a dog. He is approached by a second man who asks him, “Sir, does your dog bite?”

The man replies “No”, so the second man bends down to pat the dog. The dog attacks him viciously. “I thought you said your dog didn’t bite?” he cries. The other man replies, “He doesn’t – that is not my dog.”

The story illustrates an essential truth for Mike, “It’s all about asking the right question,” he said. “You can only start thinking about the right issues and doing the things you need to do as a farm business, industry or nation, if you are focusing on the right questions.”

Mike says despite the myriad of challenges, new and old, he remains an optimist about the future

of farming in this country, and the number of farmers he sees asking the right questions and coming up with creative approaches to building viable businesses.

“It is a matter of being both optimistic and realistic,” he said. “You have to take time to address the right questions, improve your own business and risk management skills, understand what is happening around you, and think about where the real opportunities lie.

So what are the questions you should be asking when considering the challenges ahead? Perhaps the questions are should you keep stock and feed them or sell now? If you decide to keep them, which stock to keep, what to feed, how and where?

Spend some time getting the right questions and then you have a better chance of getting the questions right.

Disclaimer -This communication provides information which the authors and publishers believe to be current and accurate as at the time of production. It is not intended to replace specific agricultural, legal, accounting and/or financial product advice and no one should rely on its contents or take any action on the basis of its contents without obtaining appropriate professional advice. Financial, seasonal, and biological factors are varied and uncertain. The authors and publishers are not licensed under the Corporations Act to provide financial product advice. The authors and publishers make no warranty as to the reliability or accuracy of the information, and expressly disclaim all or any liability or responsibility whatsoever whether to a direct addressee of this communication or to any other person who may use it in respect of any loss or damage flowing there from whether direct or consequential.