

South Queensland Drought Update

Issue 1 – 8th September 2014

Welcome to the first edition of the South Queensland Drought Update. The purpose of this Update is to provide an additional source of information on a variety of topics relevant to drought affected primary producers in southern Queensland. The Update supplements and summarises information available from a wide range of sources including websites and workshops.

This Update is produced by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) on behalf of the South Qld Regional Drought network – a network of government and non-government service providers who work with drought affected primary producers. The Update will be produced on a quarterly basis, or more often if required, although we hope that its lifespan will be short-lived!

To provide feedback or to suggest content for future editions, please contact Tom Callaghan on 07 4688 1231 or Thomas.Callaghan@daff.qld.gov.au. For drought assistance enquiries please call **13 25 23**.

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1. Latest News

Drought Concessional Loans Scheme

This Federal Government scheme is now open for applications in Queensland and New South Wales. Loans of up to \$1 million, or 50 per cent of the farm business's debt, whichever is lower, will be available. Drought concessional loans can be used for debt restructuring, operating expenses, and drought recovery and preparedness activities. Producers must be in eligible locations to apply, but are also able to access the Farm Finance Concessional Loan Scheme if their property is not in areas where producers are eligible to apply for the Drought Concessional Loans Scheme. [Click here](#) for more information or visit www.qraa.qld.gov.au or call 1800 623 946.

Farm Household Allowance

This allowance provides fortnightly income support to eligible farmers and their partners without the need for a drought declaration. This program focuses on encouraging farmers to prepare for and manage the effects of drought and other challenges. [Click here](#) for more or visit www.humanservices.gov.au or call 13 23 16.

Feral Animal Assistance Package

The Federal Government will provide Queensland with at least \$2.1 million worth of funding in 2014-15 for the management of pest and feral animal impacts on drought-affected farmers. The funds have been delivered through the state government to local organisations in affected areas. Delivery organisations will work with local farmers to manage the impacts of pest and feral animals. Current projects relevant to the Darling Downs and South West regions can be found by [clicking here](#) or visiting www.daff.qld.gov.au

2. Upcoming Events

“Helping our friends through tough times”

Mental health awareness & unchosen change workshop presented by Gavin Fuller, Mates Who Open Gates, & Rob Nielsen.

Location	Date	Time
Bymount Community Hall	Monday 15 th September 2014	12pm – 3pm
Mitchell Shire Hall	Tuesday 16 th September	9am – 12pm
Roma Community Hub (near PCYC)	Tuesday 16 th September	3pm - 6pm
Surat RSL Hall	Wednesday 17 th September	9am – 12pm
St George RSL	Wednesday 17 th September	3pm – 6pm
Bollon QCWA	Thursday 18 th September	9am – 12pm
Dirranbandi Tennis Courts	Friday 19 th September	9am – 12pm

Lunch, afternoon tea or BBQ provided at each session. RSVP (for catering): Liz Grummitt – Ph: 0409 541 666 or Tracy Harms (Ph: 0417 286 760) or Sue Pukallus (Bymount) (Ph: 4623 3838)

“Road to resilience”

The Tie Up the Black Dog Committee is hosting two evenings with ABC broadcaster Craig Hamilton and coaching legend Wayne Bennett.

Location	Date	Time
Roma Cultural Centre	Friday 14 th November 2014	6.15pm (free BBQ) for 7pm start
Goondiwindi Community Centre	Saturday 15 th November	6.15pm (free BBQ) for 7pm start

Bookings open 1st October – book early as places will be filled quickly.
Visit www.tieuptheblackdog.wordpress.com or [click here](#) to access the flyer.

3. Financial Assistance

Drought Relief Assistance Scheme

This Queensland Government scheme helps primary producers in the grazing industries manage their livestock during and after drought.

Assistance available to eligible primary producers includes:

- Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebates for the establishment of water supplies to meet emergency animal welfare needs

And freight subsidies for the transport of:

- fodder
- water for livestock
- livestock returning from agistment
- animals purchased for restocking after the drought

[Click here](#) to access relevant application forms or visit DAFF at www.daff.qld.gov.au or call 13 25 23.

Other Financial Assistance Measures

Farm Management Deposits, Farm Finance, taxation measures: Visit the Federal Department of Agriculture at <http://www.daff.gov.au/agriculture-food/drought>

Rural Financial Counselling Service: Free rural financial counselling. Central/Southern region www.rfcsqcsr.com.au , South-West region www.rfcsqsw.org.au , or call 1800 686 175.

QRAA: Farm Finance Concessional Loans, Productivity Loans. Visit www.qraa.qld.gov.au or call 1800 623 946.

Water licence application fee relief: [Click here](#) or visit the Department of Natural Resources and Mines www.dnrm.qld.gov.au or call 13 74 68.

Transport concessions: [Click here](#) to view drought assistance or [Click here](#) for school transport assistance or visit the Department of Transport and Main Roads www.tmr.qld.gov.au or call 13 74 68.

Electricity rebates or concessions: [Click here](#) or visit the Department of Energy and Water Supply www.dews.qld.gov.au or call 13 43 87. If you are an Ergon Energy customer seeking relief from charges [click here](#) or visit www.ergon.com.au or call 13 10 46.

4. On Farm

The following includes excerpts from the Beeftalk Winter Issue No. 39 – [Click here](#) or visit www.futurebeef.com.au to read in full.

Climate

Forecasts are indicating that a weak to moderate El Niño may develop by spring 2014 which often, but not always, brings drier than normal conditions.

The Bureau of Meteorology has been rolling out a new weather forecast system (MetEye) to help you make important weather related decisions on your property. MetEye provides simple, interactive weather maps that you can use to zoom down to a 6km square to get a 7 day forecast for: maximum and minimum temperature, forecast rainfall totals, wind speed and direction, weather phenomena (like frost, fog, thunderstorms). Visit: <http://www.bom.gov.au/australia/meteye/> or [click here](#) for a simple user guide.

Monthly climate outlook: [Click here](#) or visit www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au

Stock Management

With much of Queensland in drought, many producers are implementing drought strategies aimed at minimising losses and maintaining productivity.

Factors which influence the relief measures used to cope with drought conditions include: the expected duration of the drought, the current water and feed supplies, herd composition and condition, time and labour, present and future markets, financial resources and attitude to risk.

Having a written drought plan with strategies which are consistent with the goals of the grazing business is important. Producers who experienced the 2003 drought said that the key to staying in control is “*forward planning – knowing what you are going to do and when*”. They said that their best decision was “*destocking to critical dates*” and their worst decision was “*not acting early enough*”.

The following drought management strategies are important:

Adjust stock numbers according to currently available pasture and water supplies

Sell least productive, highest risk stock such as pregnancy tested empty and late calving cows, cull heifers, old cows, poor temperament and poor doers

Wean calves, as young as three months of age, to help cows maintain condition and fertility. Calves will need good nutrition.

Pay attention to water quality and supply to make better use of paddock feed and prevent cattle bogging and polluting water.

Plan supplements ahead, establish contracts or purchase when there is greater availability and lower prices. Supplements are used to value add pasture. Most people agree feeding is best kept to short periods or preferably avoided using appropriate stocking rates.

Segregate herds for more efficient supplementing of stock according to their needs.

Maintain good herd health to control risks.

Beware the break in particular weak cattle chasing green pick which is mostly water.

Wet season spell some paddocks each year for more productive pastures.

Selling early to reduce stock numbers may be a good option. As one cattle producer put it, “*Every beast on the property represents dollars and dollars aren’t subject to drought*”. Selling takes some of the stress off you, the paddocks and the remaining stock.

Agistment can work well to avoid feeding and spell home pastures, or it can be a very costly problem.

Production feeding can work well if stock have nearly reached a price premium but won’t quite get there without some better feed. The economics are better with lower feed costs, shorter feed periods, good performance and higher sale price.

Custom feedlotting: Ask for and do the budgets to check the likelihood of profit. Ensure sums are done consistently using ‘as fed’ or ‘dry matter’ figures. Understand charges, risks and marketing options.

Survival feeding can work well if you’re well prepared and it is not too long and expensive. Otherwise feeding can be very expensive, time consuming and stressful for you, stock, pastures, equipment and finances.

Useful Links

Visit www.futurebeef.com.au or

- [Click here](#): Guide – Dry season management of a beef business
- [Click here](#): Four dry season forage budgeting videos
- [Click here](#): Tools to help assess the cost of selling versus feeding and costing nutrients

Visit www.leadingsheep.com.au or

- [Click here](#): Tips for sheep nutrition
- [Click here](#): Supplement feeding for sheep – recorded webinar
- [Click here](#): Nutritional management of spring lambing Merinos – recorded webinar

[Click here](#) or visit www.business.qld.gov.au/industry/agriculture/animal-management/sheep/health-welfare: Managing sheep in drought and supplementary feeding

[Click here](#) or visit www.mla.com.au – MLA Drought preparedness checklist and tools

[Click here](#) or visit www.dpi.nsw.gov.au – Managing in drought

[Click here](#) or visit www.agforceqld.org.au – Alternate feed suppliers list

Drought survival stories

Access three eBooks containing drought survival stories by Queensland sheep and wool producers: [Click here](#) or visit www.leadingsheep.com.au

5. Social and Community Services

Helpful tips

Tips for primary producers offered by lifeline during the recent drought workshops coordinated by DAFF:

- YOU and your family are the most important part of the business also needing attention.
- Don't bottle your feelings up inside. Get help, if you need it. Don't wait until things have gone too far.
- When times are tough we tend to let go of the things we enjoy. This is really the time to prioritise those activities. Even if you don't feel like it, do them anyway.
 - o Do things you enjoy. Watch a movie, go camping, fishing, motorbike ride, walk, sport, craft etc.
 - o Connect with others, catch up with friends and family, have a BBQ, meet for drinks etc.
- Remain healthy by eating a balanced diet and drinking enough water. Find the time to exercise – it is a good method of stress management and gives you a chance to connect with others if you are playing a sport.
- Take time to unwind at the end of the day. Have a hot shower, listen to music or read a book. Turn-off your mobile and emails.
- Prioritise an early night to get enough sleep. This will help you bring focus to the following day.

Support services

Department of Social Services: Visit www.dss.gov.au or call 1300 653 227

- [Click here](#) for Targeted Community Care information
- [Click here](#) for Family Support Program information

Medicare Local: Visit www.ddswqml.com.au or call 1300 808 606

Lifeline: Visit www.lifeline.org.au or call 13 11 14. DD and SW QLD – 1300 991 443

Salvation Army: Visit www.salvationarmy.org.au or call 1300 36 36 22

Beyond Blue: Visit www.beyondblue.org.au or call 1300 224 636

Relationships Australia: Visit www.raq.org.au or call 1300 364 277

Kids Helpline: Visit www.kidshelp.com.au or call 1800 55 1800

Women's Infolink: Visit www.communities.qld.gov.au/communityservices/women or call 1800 177 577

Mensline Australia: Visit www.mensline.org.au or call 1300 789 978

Queensland Health: Visit www.health.qld.gov.au or call 13 43 25 84

Frontier Services: Visit www.frontierservices.org or call 1300 787 247

The Bush Connection: Call 07 4639 7897 for free confidential support and referral.

Local: Doctors, clergy, hospitals or community health centres can also help.