

Best Practice for Grazing.

with Mick Alexander



“Feed Budgeting—helps you get a good nights sleep”

Knowing how much pasture you have on hand will help you to sleep at night.

There is nothing worse than laying awake worrying about the seasonal conditions and just hoping it rains soon or seeing the stock slipping and not knowing what to do about it. A well thought out and accurate feed budget may also make you extra income or save you a lot of feeding later in the year.



Mick Alexander on the ground pulling the grass and herbage that a cow would utilise.

Most graziers in the region believe they will have plenty of pasture to see them through the dry season, but looks may be deceiving. June is an excellent time to assess the feed on hand and consider matching the available feed to stock on hand.

By now the first frost will have happened and in most areas we are in the dry season. That is not to say, we will not have any growth, but that is a bonus if it happens. Most perennials will continue to have very minor growth, throughout the dry season if soil moisture is adequate. However, you only notice the growth if you are resting paddocks.

The next 5 – 6 months are laid out in front of us. We need to establish a plan as to:

- How much (quantity) feed is in each paddock in kg grass/ herbage or stock days.
- The quality of feed (protein and energy)
- The number of stock on hand and requiring feeding
- Supplementation required
- A destocking or restocking plan.
- A grazing plan

Each paddock/ landtype will require specific

assessment to measure its potential stocking rate for the winter period. This can be carried out using various methods including

- Cutting, drying and weighing pasture. (sounds difficult but is easy)
- Stepping out the estimated area to feed an animal each day. (very subjective)
- The use of photographs (photo standards) available from the local DPI office
- Using an estimate of yield available in KG of pasture / hectare
- Or estimating the approximate number of animals or LSU which have been carried on a longer term basis.

However, the best method of feed budgeting and the simplest is to get down on the ground and cut or pull the plants that the cow is going to utilise. Whatever they don't eat, they need to put back on the ground for the microbes and to protect the soil.

Some of the important points to remember include:

- An LSU (Large Stock Unit) 400kg steer requires approximately 2.5-3% of its bodyweight each day or 10 – 12kg dry matter each day on average.
- We need to budget (agree to utilise) for only 30- 40% of the standing feed for the cow. The other 60 70% will be utilised to feed the microbes and provide ground cover.



Shane Kraaft demonstrating feed budgeting technique.

Grazing BestPrac will be running a Technology of Growing Grass workshop at Gympie on the 24th and 25th June, demonstrating the most effective method of feed budgeting.

For more information, contact Noela on 0749 383919 or Shane on 4995 8330.



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Gayndah 21st & 22nd June Gympie 24th & 25th June
Stanthorpe 5th & 6th July

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