AUSFARM NUTRITION NEWS

An informative news bulletin designed to bring the latest topical and technical nutrition product news and information to cattle and sheep producers



This newsletter comprises articles about seasonally significant metabolic diseases, production opportunities and general nutritional advice to assist producers in growing their best animals. Please read articles relevant to your business and contact our team if you have any enquiries.

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AusFarm Company News



ANIKA HATTY BECOMES A QUALIFIED RUMINANT NUTRITIONIST

Anika Hatty, ANP's Technical Support Manager, recently graduated from the Australian Association of Ruminant Nutrition (AARN) technical nutrition course to become a qualified Ruminant Nutritionist and a member of the AARN by exam.

Since joining ANP at the beginning of the year, Anika has been working closely with our Chief Nutritionist, Dr Paul Meggison, our external technical consultants and farmers, assisting with diet formulation and nutritional troubleshooting. It's fantastic to see Anika's hard work and dedication pay off. The confidence gained from this result will undoubtedly see Anika continue to be a fantastic asset for AusFarm Nutrition Products and our customers.

Congratulations Anika!

P.S. - Reportedly, Anika graduated at the top of the class.

CADE BRINGS UP TWO YEARS WITH AUSFARM NUTRITION PRODUCTS

Two years ago this month, Cade Lette sat the last exam of his Bachelor of Agricultural Science at Charles Sturt University and started with AusFarm Nutrition Products straight away. Since then he has grown into a valued member of the ANP team and is well on his way to becoming a highly technical ruminant nutrition technician.

Cade came to us with a strong grounding in the science. Over the past two years he has added hands-on, practical experience to it, taking what he learned at university and applying it on farm and in the field. That mix of technical knowledge and real-world understanding makes him an extremely valuable part of our business, both to the team and to the clients he works with.

Sheep nutrition is Cade's particular interest. That's no surprise, since he grew up on his family's award-winning merino stud, Conrayn Merinos at Cooma. He is now working towards becoming a qualified nutritionist by exam through the Australian Association of Ruminant Nutrition. It's an ambitious goal, and one we're proud to support.

Congratulations on two years, Cade. Thanks for your hard work and enthusiasm, and we look forward to watching you keep growing with ANP.









MATILDA IS KICKING GOALS IN SALES AS STEPH ADDS A NEW MEMBER TO THE FAMILY

Congratulations to Steph on welcoming a new addition to the AusFarm family.

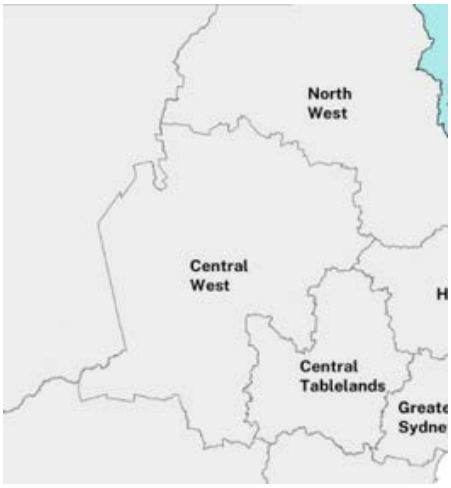
With Steph on a well-earned break, many of you, especially our distribution partners, will likely have been visited by Matilda recently.

Matilda ran our site at Henty Field Days and is currently filling Steph's big shoes over the next six months as she prepares to take on a key customer-facing role when Steph returns.

Matilda's enthusiasm and passion for livestock production are already helping her thrive in her new role, as she builds customer relationships and adds value to producers on-farm. If you see Matilda out on the road in her flash AusFarm Nutrition Products ute, give her a wave.

AusFarm Company News

LOOKING TO GROW OUR SALES TEAM IN CENTRAL & NORTHERN NSW



As we continue to grow, so does our need for good people who can help deliver the service our customers expect.

Based in Orange, Dubbo or the surrounding areas, this autonomous work-from-home role involves technical assistance and product sales for producers on-farm and our distribution partners in-store.

If you know of anyone who is interested in joining our sales team as a technical sales support officer in the Central West or Northern NSW, then we would love to hear from you.

The package includes a good salary for the right person with experience, a vehicle, on-the-job training and a rewarding bonus scheme.



NEW PACKING ROBOT SLASHES PRODUCTION LEAD TIMES

Around six months ago, we installed a new state-of-the-art packing robot to add to our recently updated manufacturing system.

The robot was instrumental in achieving record production and reducing lead times on our loose-lick mineral lines over winter. With a packing capacity of 1,000 bags per hour, we may not see her in full swing, but we definitely can slash production times when the pressure comes on.

Seasonal Nutrition News

WHEN GREEN ISN'T ENOUGH: MATURING PASTURE, FALLING DIGESTIBILITY AND THE CASE FOR EFFECTIVE UREA SUPPLEMENTATION GOING INTO SUMMER

Key Points

- ***Maturing pasture loses quality before it loses colour***
- ***Dry matter intake (DMI) is king - as pasture matures intake decreases, and so does animal performance***
- ***Effective urea supplementation boosts DMI and, in turn, animal performance***
- ***Accurate feed tests can indicate when to supplement for the best results. We can test feed for you***

Green does not mean good all the time

A paddock that still looks green in late spring can be worth only half as much to a cow or ewe as it was six weeks earlier. As pasture runs to head, digestibility falls, fibre climbs and protein drops, well before the colour changes. The cheapest fix is usually protein for the rumen, not more energy.

What happens as pasture matures

As plants shift from leaf to stem and seed, cell walls thicken and lignify. Lignin is indigestible to rumen microbes and shields the fibre bound to it, while protein moves out of the leaf and into the seed head.

Typical, approximate values for temperate improved pastures in south-eastern Australia:

Growth stage	Dry matter digestibility (%)	Metabolisable energy (MJ/kg DM)	Crude protein (% DM)	NDF (% DM)
Leafy, vegetative (winter–early spring)	75–80	11–12	20–28	40–48
Stem elongation / early head (mid–late spring)	65–70	9.5–10.5	12–18	50–58
Flowering to seed set (late spring–early summer)	55–62	8–9	8–12	58–65
Dry, hayed-off standing feed (summer)	45–55	6–7.5	4–7	65–75

Once grasses run to head, digestibility commonly falls 0.3–0.5 units a day, or 12–20 units over six weeks. Stems and seed heads can stay green while digestibility is already in the low 60s, so the eye overrates the feed.

Dry matter intake is king

Ruminant nutritionists say "dry matter intake is king" because how much an animal eats drives its performance more than any quality figure. Daily energy intake is simply intake multiplied by energy density, so when both fall, the losses multiply.

On pasture, stock stop eating when the rumen is full, not when energy needs are met. The build-up of low-digestible feed in the rumen is why it is common to see cattle in late-spring and summer with large bellies, but in a declining condition. In feed tests, neutral detergent fibre (NDF) is the best predictor of this fill effect and essentially how much dry matter an animal can consume in a day. The table below is a widely used guide (Mertens) matching NDF with DMI of a 500kg dry cow.

Pasture NDF (% DM)	Approximate maximum DMI (% of liveweight)	DMI for a 500 kg cow (kg DM/day)
45	2.7	13.3
55	2.2	10.9
65	1.8	9.2
72	1.7	8.3

For a 500 kg cow, leafy pasture gives about 13 kg DM × 11 MJ/kg = 143 MJ ME/day. Maturing pasture gives about 9 kg × 8.5 MJ/kg = 77 MJ ME/day. Energy density fell 23%, but energy intake fell 46%, against roughly 60–65 MJ a dry cow needs just to maintain.

Impacts on cattle and sheep heading into summer

Cattle: Steers gaining 1.0–1.2 kg/day on leafy spring pasture commonly slow to 0.3–0.5 kg/day on maturing feed, and can lose 0.2–0.5 kg/day on dry feed below 7% crude protein. Spring-calving cows face falling feed while lactating and rejoining; one condition score is roughly 80–100 kg, and cows below score 2.5 conceive later and less often.

Sheep: Selective grazing buffers sheep for a while, but intake falls fast once green leaf is gone. Lambs growing 200–250 g/day in spring often drop below 100 g/day. Each extra condition score at joining adds roughly 20 lambs per 100 ewes, and feed restriction weakens staple strength.

Note - The cheapest condition to keep is the condition an animal already has. MAINTENANCE.

Feeding the rumen: how Rumen Degradable Protein (RDP) lifts digestibility and intake

On maturing pasture, protein for the rumen microbes, not energy, is often the first limiting nutrient. RDP is the protein and non-protein nitrogen (urea) broken down in the rumen, which microbes need to grow and digest fibre. Below about 7–8% crude protein, the microbes run short of nitrogen and a cycle sets in:

1. Fibre-digesting microbes slow down.
2. Fibre stays in the rumen longer.
3. The rumen stays full, so intake falls.
4. Less energy and protein are eaten, and condition is lost.

RDP supplementation reverses this cycle. On forage below about 6–7% crude protein, typical responses are:

- DMI: increase 20–40%.
- Digestibility: increase a few percentage units.
- Liveweight: cattle that would generally be losing 0.3–0.5 kg/day maintain weight, saving 10 to 15kg/month.

Because RDP unlocks energy from feed already in the paddock, it is usually far cheaper than feeding energy.

What to do about it?

The trigger is falling protein, not falling colour. Start when a feed test shows crude protein nearing 8% and NDF above 60%, or when most of the paddock has gone to seed, dung firms up, and stock begin losing cover over the ribs.

We can test your feed for free

Talk to your local ANP sales support officer to get your feed tested, so you know when to act. Supplementing early with RDP is much more affordable than trying to play catch up in the middle of a dry summer or autumn.

The bottom line

Rising NDF cuts intake, and because dry matter intake is king, energy supply falls further than feed tests suggest. Targeted RDP feeds the rumen microbes so stock digest and eat more of the feed on hand, making it one of the most cost-effective ways to carry cattle and sheep through a dry summer.

Figures are typical, approximate ranges and vary with pasture, location and season. Seek feed testing and advice from a livestock nutritionist before supplementing; urea in particular must be introduced gradually.

AusFarm Nutrition Products

SUMMER SMASH PROMOTION



Bonus 4 bags $240* RRP

SMASH stubbles & dry pastures with this monster of a deal

Buy a pallet (40 bags) of StockMins-Stubble Starter or StockMins-HiPro & receive 4 Extra Bags Free

40 bags will boost digestibility and utilisation of dry feed for 1,000 ewes or lambs for around 40 days

T&C's: Promotion period 1 November 2026 to 31 January 2027. Offer available for distributors and producers on full pallet (40 bag) purchases only. Offer also available on mixed pallet purchases of StockMins-Stubble Starter & StockMins-HiPro.
*Value of bonus is based on the RRP of StockMins-HiPro at the time of publishing, excluding freight and GST.

Sheep Nutrition News

DON'T LOCK THEM UP YET: GETTING THE MOST OUT OF GREEN FEED THIS SPRING

Key Points

- ***Grain-assisted green feed grazing costs around $1/kg gain versus $2/kg gain in a feedlot***
- ***Maturing ryegrass can still have plenty of protein, so supplementing with grain can boost growth***
- ***As pasture further matures and protein becomes limiting, add lupins or beans to the diet***

Feedlots are the fastest way to put weight on lambs, but they are rarely the cheapest. With good soil moisture and rising temperatures, Riverina winter pastures look set to stay green right up to Christmas.

That gives producers a valuable window to maximise weight gain on green feed, at a low cost, before finishing lambs in the feedlot.

The cheapest protein is already in your paddock

Dr Paul Meggison, ANP's Chief Nutritionist, believes many lamb producers underestimate what their green feed can do. Too often, they chase growth rates in confinement instead of effectively utilising maturing green feed or regrowth in hay paddocks.

"Protein is the most expensive major nutrient in a diet, and the cheapest form of protein is growing in paddocks," Dr Meggison says.

Mature pasture still has plenty to give

As green pasture matures, its energy, digestibility and protein all decline. Using the below lush ryegrass pasture as an example:

Measure	Ryegrass in July	Same pasture now
NDF (%)	40	54
Energy (MJ ME/kg DM)	12	9
Crude protein (%)	25	16

In this scenario, producers chasing growth rates tend to push animals into a feedlot early, and in doing so, can miss out on cheap gains that can be generated by grain-assisted green feed grazing.

Paddock gains cost half as much

For the team at ANP, on-farm profitability comes first. Growing a lamb in a feedlot costs about $2 per kg of gain, roughly double the $1 per kg it costs in the paddock when supplement feeding 500g/hd/day of barley.

That is why ANP recommends using up every source of green feed before opening the feedlot. That includes summer crops, lucerne and even regrowth from hay paddocks.

Build the finishing diet in the paddock

A lamb finishing diet needs 14% crude protein, minerals, and as much energy as you can fit in. Dr Meggison says the most economical way to get there is to graze green feed for as long as possible and boost energy with grain.

As the season goes on, the diet can be adjusted step by step:

1. **Green pasture plus grain:** Graze for as long as the feed lasts, using grain to lift energy.
2. **Late-flowering pasture plus grain and pulses:** When the pasture becomes quite stemmy, you can even add some lupins or beans to the diet to boost the protein.
3. **Dry Feed:** As the feed dries off, you could even step animals up onto a full grain ration before inducting them into the feedlot. This helps to avoid the common issues when introducing animals to feedlot diets in confinement.

Support grain feeding in the paddock

ANP's most popular spring supplement, StockMins-Lamb Finisher, is designed for grain-assisted green feed grazing. It combines minerals, vitamins, trace elements, Bovatec® and buffers to:

- Support grain feeding of up to 800 g/head/day
- Reduce the risk of coccidiosis
- Support higher liveweight gain

Sheep Nutrition News

GRAIN-ASSISTED LUCERNE GRAZING FOR RAPID LAMB GROWTH

Key Points

- ***To achieve rapid growth in the paddock, one option is to finish lambs on lucerne***
- ***Lucerne is high in protein but quite short in energy - grain supplementation can balance the diet***
- ***Rapid passage rate of lucerne can cause red gut - roughage can help***

Rapidly growing lambs do best on a diet of around 16% protein and 12 MJ ME/kg DM of energy. That level of nutrition is common on actively growing winter pastures such as ryegrass and phalaris during the cooler months.

As winter-dominant pastures go to head and mature, though, their nutritional value declines. To keep lambs moving forward at a good rate, it may be time to think about grazing summer crops or lot feeding.

Making the most of lucerne

Warmer and longer days could be enough for lucerne to kick into action and really freshen up, which would be perfect timing for near-perfect summer feed. Lucerne's high protein makes it ideal for growing lambs, especially in summer when good protein sources are scarce.



Lucerne does have its limits. At around 10 MJ ME/kg DM, it is quite low in energy, and with crude protein around 28%, it can also be too rich in protein. Lambs then spend energy excreting the excess protein, which puts further downward pressure on the energy left over for growth.

Offering barley at around 500 g/head/day balances the energy shortfall and the high protein. Paired with StockMins-Lamb Finisher, this approach has given producers reported liveweight gains in lambs of around 300–350 g/head/day.

Lambs grazing lucerne should also have free access to roughage such as palatable straw or low-value cereal hay. Roughage stimulates cud chewing, promotes optimal rumen function and reduces the risk of 'red gut'. Many believe that feeding roughage on lucerne reduces production, but it can increase it. Roughage slows the passage rate of feed, so the animal extracts more nutrients from what it eats.

Boost liveweight gain with StockMins-Lamb Finisher

Over summer, StockMins-Lamb Finisher is the ideal green feed supplement for grain-assisted grazing. Its balanced combination of essential minerals, vitamins, trace elements and Bovatec® supports the development of rapidly growing lambs and helps to reduce the risk of coccidiosis. It also contains long-, mid- and short-acting acid buffers to support mid-level grain supplementation on pasture.

Sheep Nutrition News

MAKE THE MOST OF SUMMER STUBBLES WITH EFFECTIVE UREA SUPPLEMENTATION

Key Points

- ***Stubble grazing rests pastures, feeds stock and retuens nutrients to the soil***
- ***Spilt grain is ideal for dry ewes and weaners, but not sufficient for finishing lambs***
- ***Spread grain piles and feed StockMins-Stubble Starter to reduce the risk of acidosis***

Stripping has already kicked off in the north and west, and longer, warmer days are sapping the green from standing feed. For producers looking to give their pasture paddocks a break, grazing stubble is a great way to make use of the new feed on offer.

Grazed effectively, stubbles help grow and maintain livestock through summer when feed is usually short in both quantity and quality. In return, the grazing stock physically breaks down the stubble, which makes future sowing easier. Grazing also returns valuable organic matter and nutrients to the soil.

Spilt grain is another useful by-product of the winter harvest. Sheep digest whole grain very efficiently, so they are well suited to cleaning up what's left behind in freshly harvested cereal paddocks.

Paired with an effective protein source, spilt grain can be used to finish lambs. However, we don't recommend it, as there are too many variables and risks involved in making it work efficiently. Instead, we see spilt grain as better suited to getting dry ewes into good condition for shearing and joining or for backgrounding weaner lambs.

Stubbles have plenty to offer dry stock. Worm pressure is low, and wool stays cleaner because there are fewer burrs and less debris. Spilt grain can lift body condition and wool growth. Standing straw combined with a little bit of grain and a urea-based mineral supplement, such as StockMins-Stubble Starter, provides a good maintenance diet for dry stock.

Grazing fresh stubbles safely

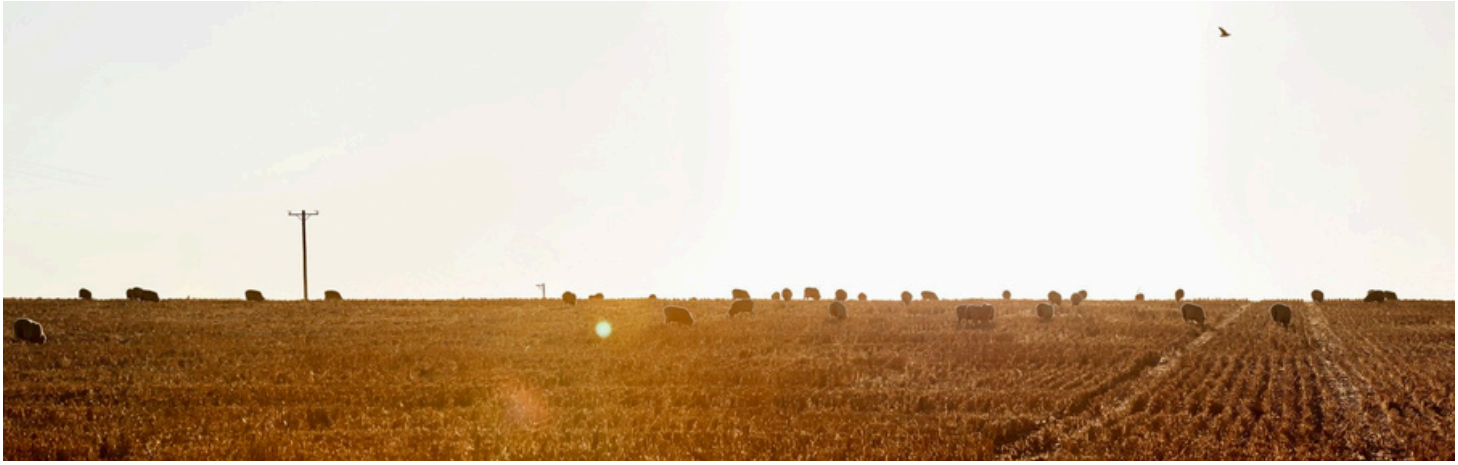
Cereal grain in stubbles is a great source of feed, but unlimited access to it can cause acidosis. Spread out any piles of spilt grain across the paddock, and offer grazing stock a buffered urea-based mineral supplement, such as StockMins-Stubble Starter, to provide a good nutrient balance.

StockMins-Stubble Starter is a buffered, high-protein (9% urea) mineral supplement. It is designed to be fed to sheep for the first 14 days on new stubbles, when spilt grain may be present. Several effective buffers help balance rumen pH in sheep eating high-grain diets when acidosis is normally a common problem.

The supplement also provides balanced levels of essential minerals, vitamins and trace elements to improve energy utilisation, immunity, fertility and all-round animal health. Its urea content boosts fibre digestion and energy utilisation. It is commonly accepted that protein supplementation with the right level and source of non-protein nitrogen (NPN) can increase dry feed utilisation by up to 30%.

Feels Like Summer promotion

Until the end of January, buy 40 bags of StockMins-HiPro or StockMins-Stubble Starter and get an extra 4 bags free. The offer also applies to mixed pallets. See a copy of the flyer in this publication for more information.



Cattle Nutrition News

GET IN FRONTO OF FLIES TO HELP BEAT PINKEYE THIS SUMMER

Key Points

- ***Flies can spread pinkeye rapidly, and we are expecting a heavy fly season***
- ***FlyBye has been shown to reduce fly pressure, with garlic alone accounting for a 47% decline***
- ***BoviFlyBye and BoviPro-FlyBye bring FlyBye to grazing cattle, and a sheep version is in development***

Why pinkeye flares in summer

Pinkeye outbreaks tend to flare up over the warmer months, as grass seeds, weeds, dust and flies play their part in irritating eyes and spreading the disease.

Although pinkeye is a bacterial infection (Moraxella bovis), once established in the host, flies feeding on infected secretions can rapidly spread the bacteria from animal to animal, causing an outbreak of pinkeye within the herd.

A big fly season expected this summer

Fly numbers are on the rise after a wet winter and spring in the south, and cattle producers may need to pull out all the tricks in their bag to break the chain and manage flies this summer.

When flies bother cattle, they can be seen 'herding' in groups and show signs of irritation. This behaviour compromises their eagerness to graze and consequently can impact production.

Prevention pays

Prevention is usually the most effective and economical way to manage disease, and that is especially true of pinkeye. It spreads rapidly, can cause significant value loss in livestock, and treatment is expensive and time-consuming.

More than five years of research and trials led to the creation of FlyBye, a specially formulated combination of organic and inorganic ingredients that, when eaten, has been shown to reduce fly pressure on cattle.

In an independent study of garlic, one of FlyBye's individual components, pest-fly coverage on beef cattle fell by 47% and defensive behaviours by 41% (Durunna and Lardner, 2021).

From the feedlot to the paddock

FlyBye Premix has been reducing fly pressure in dairy and beef feedlot rations for the past six years. The development of the BoviMins range of cattle supplements now gives extensive cattle producers the same option during the warmer months.

Pinkeye is tough to manage in heavy fly years. A supplement that reduces fly pressure while supporting immunity and health can be a valuable part of an integrated control program.

ANP's BoviMins-FlyBye range includes:

- **BoviFlyBye** for cattle grazing green feed
- **BoviPro-FlyBye**, a protein supplement for cattle grazing dry feed

Both products are weatherproof and palatable, and their tear-and-tip, free-access format makes them extremely easy to use.

If you're expecting a big fly year, get in front of flies by adding **BoviFlyBye** or **BoviPro-FlyBye** to your grazing program.

Coming soon for sheep?

Blowflies are a different fly, but they are a major concern for sheep producers. ANP is conducting co-operative research to develop a similar product for sheep. If it proves successful in reducing blowfly pressure, FlyBye for sheep could become another valuable tool in the box.

We'll keep you posted on developments.

Cattle Nutrition News

CAN YOU FEED ANIMALS TOO WELL IN DRY TIMES? YES.

Key Points

- ***Feeding cereal hay can cost up to 10 times more than supplementing protein on dry pasture***
- ***It is easier and cheaper to maintain weight over summer than to lose it and put it back on later***
- ***Dry cows are maintained most cheaply on poor-quality dry feed. Save good feed for growing stock***

Feeding hay by the truckload is quite common in dry seasons as the quality and quantity of standing feed declines. Although cattle perform well on hay, it can commonly be surplus to requirements for maintenance and can cost significantly more than alternative options.

It goes without saying that the most cost-effective feed in any season is home-grown feed, with efficiency gained in the matching of feed value with the class of livestock. AusFarm Nutrition Products (ANP) have run the numbers in a cattle operation, and at current fodder prices, feeding cereal hay to growing cattle can be up to 10 times more expensive than effectively utilising dry pasture by supplementing with StockGro-HiPro liquid feed supplement. Similarly, in dry cows, maintenance feeding with hay is up to seven times more expensive than supplementing with StockGro-HiPro while grazing stubbles and almost double the cost of feeding StockGro-HiPro and buying in barley straw.

Dr Paul Meggison, ANP's Chief Nutritionist, has been working with producers for many years on dry season feed budgeting and sharing his knowledge in effective dry feed supplementation. The table below is a comparison of the costs associated with adopting four different dry season feeding options to satisfy low-level growth and maintenance in different weight classes of cattle.

Liveweight (kg)	Expected Production (g/hd/day)	Cereal Hay Only#	Dry Pasture* + StockGro-HiPro	Stubbles^ + StockGro-HiPro	Straw# + StockGro-HiPro
250	200g	$12.95	$1.30	Maintenance only	Maintenance only
300	300g	$15.55	$1.70	Maintenance only	Maintenance only
350	400g	$18.15	$2.10	Maintenance only	Maintenance only
400	500g	$20.70	$2.60	Maintenance only	Maintenance only
450	Maintenance	$16.75	$2.80	$2.80	$10.00
500	Maintenance	$18.15	$3.00	$3.00	$10.20
550	Maintenance	$19.75	$3.50	$3.50	$10.50

*Dry ryegrass pasture given a cost of $0. ^Stubbles given a cost of $0. #Straw of moderate quality ($110/tonne delivered) and cereal hay of moderate quality ($300/tonne delivered).

Maintenance of Dry Cows

For dry cows looking to maintain condition through the dry period, the greatest efficiency is achieved by grazing home-grown stubbles and supplementing with **StockGro-HiPro** for a cost of around 50^{c}/hd/day or $3.50/week. Monitor feed availability and plan for alternatives if feed becomes limited.

Where the quantity of home-grown forage is limited, maintenance in dry cows can be achieved efficiently by feeding palatable barley or oaten straw and supplementing it with **StockGro-HiPro**.

Supplementing for Production

An improved pasture, like ryegrass, in its early dry stage, where there are plenty of leaves still on the plants, can be most efficiently utilised by grazing with producing animals (steers, heifers and lactating and late pregnant cows) when supplemented with **StockGro-HiPro**.

A word of caution – the nutritional value of standing dry feed significantly declines when leaves drop from the plant or when rained on. It is important to monitor dry feed and re-assess its production capacity while grazing and following rain events.

To make best use of dry pasture for production purposes, supplement with **StockGro-HiPro** early and make the most of the pasture before it's reduced to dry stalks and stems.

We can test your feed for free

Our new high-tech NIR device can test feed on the spot in the paddock and generate accurate results within a few seconds.

Your local sales support officer can assist with:

- Assessing paddock quality and quantity on farm
- Testing pasture and fodder samples submitted at our Blaxland Rd office in East Wagga



When to Feed Hay

Feeding hay is the least efficient option assessed and really should be fed to cattle to supplement standing pasture when quality and/or quantity are lacking. For a producer feeding hay to growing cattle, the measure of efficiency comes back to production goals and where individuals think the market is going to be come sale time.

Support maintenance on poor quality dry feed with StockGro-HiPro

ANP's liquid StockGro-HiPro supplement is designed to correct protein, energy and mineral deficiencies and maximise the health and performance of cattle on mature dry feed and stubbles. StockGro-HiPro achieves this by supplying several sources of rumen-degradable protein (RDP), in the form of urea and ammonium salts (non-protein nitrogen), and a range of essential minerals, vitamins and trace elements delivered on a little and often basis.

Furthermore, the growth in rumen microflora elevates fibre digestion, thus allowing for greater energy release, resulting in better feed conversion efficiency from stubbles and dry feeds.

Talk to the team at ANP to help plan for the dry season and manage the efficiency of your dry season feeding.



Cattle Nutrition News

WEANING THIS SEASON: SET YOUR CALVES UP FOR LIFE

Key Points

- ***Wean based on cow condition, not just on calf weight***
- ***Keep weaners growing through transition to boost lifetime productivity***
- ***Imprint and creep-feed before weaning to ensure a swift, stress-free transition***

Milk is a highly nutrient-dense feed, and producing enough of it to satisfy a growing calf takes a lot of quality feed on the cow's part. During lactation, cows put a large proportion of the nutrition they eat towards milk production, so it is common for them to lose condition.

You may have a calf weaning weight benchmark in mind, but the cow's condition is the best indicator of when to wean. If cows have been "milking off their backs" for an extended period, consider weaning early. Getting the calves off gives cows the chance to regain condition before the next pregnancy cycle.

That condition is far cheaper to keep than to rebuild. When a cow loses 1 kg of liveweight, she frees up 28 MJ ME. Putting that same kilogram back on costs 42 MJ ME, so don't let your cows lose too much weight as you pay almost double to put it back on later.

As dry conditions bite and feed quality and quantity declines, early weaning may also be the more efficient option. At current fodder costs, it can make more sense than supplementary feeding cows that are still feeding calves.

Keep weaners growing

Whenever you decide to wean, keeping calves growing and developing through the process is what matters most. This period can shape their body composition and productive capacity for the rest of their lives. It is also far more efficient to wean and feed weaners and cows separately than to feed them together.

A 200 kg weaner should be aiming for around 1 kg/head/day of liveweight gain. To get there, it needs a diet providing 80 MJ ME and 16% crude protein daily. Calves on good-quality fodder convert feed very efficiently, so money spent on good feed during weaning is likely to bring the greatest return over the animal's life.

Tips for a stress-free yard weaning

ANP Chief Nutritionist Dr Paul Meggison has a few suggestions for a successful, low-stress yard weaning.

Preparation starts before the calves leave their mothers.

- Imprint feed the calves at least three times before weaning so they are already familiar with their new feed. Creep feeding a pellet or grain mix is also good practice, and Paul is happy to talk through suggested diet specs and formulations. Grain speeds up rumen development, which helps the animal make better use of forage throughout its life.

On the day

- Wean animals that are in appropriate condition, and pick a mild day with no rain and a maximum temperature under 30 degrees. That can be hard to find in a hot summer. If it can't be avoided, wean early in the morning or late in the afternoon to minimise heat stress. Where possible, group animals into weight classes.

In the yards

- Provide clean, fresh water and ad lib high-quality hay or silage, along with some straw for extra roughage. Offer a simple grain mix or pellets in gradually increasing amounts.

Minerals need attention too

- Once calves stop drinking milk, they no longer get adequate calcium, sodium, vitamin A, vitamin E and trace elements, so these need to be supplemented. StockGro-EziWean is a great way to fill that gap.

Final note

- Keep on top of fly management to reduce the incidence of pinkeye. See our article Get in Front of Flies to Help Beat Pinkeye this Summer for more.

StockGro-EziWean

StockGro-EziWean is an effective liquid feed supplement designed specifically for weaning. It meets mineral, vitamin and trace element requirements, reduces stress for cows and calves, and supports rumen development. That helps weaners hold their weight and move onto new diets quickly, setting them up for a productive life.