



Participants names from left to right as follows: Gavan Doull, Wayne Dobe, Kellie Dobe, Jim Wade, Mark Kindelan (Top Stock Agencies), Howard Smith, Krystal Walmsley

Drought Feeding session in Far North Queensland

Jo Srhoj
Subtropical Dairy Extension Coordinator Far North Queensland



Despite recent rain, Far North Queensland (FNQ) farmers gathered at the Malanda Hotel on January 22, 2020 to discuss drought feeding strategies with Jim Wade – Consulting Nutritionist – Wade Agricultural Consultants. Jim had prepared a comprehensive approach for the group to guide the discussion and covered a range of topics including: correct management decisions during times of drought and/or low milk prices, feed availability and quality, the flow-on effects of under feeding the milking herd, and various diet scenarios and their impact on profitability.

Jim presented a summary of a study conducted by Mike Hutjens in 2009. A large number of dairy consultants were asked to survey their clients to determine the best and worse decisions they made when margins were tight. The following table summarises the results from this study.

Best Decisions	Worst Decisions
Maintain forage quality – feed maize silage, low lignin forages	Removing feed
Balancing the ration using models	Pulling out vitamins, minerals & additives
Adjusting starch level with forages	Low forage quality (less expensive to buy)
Strategic culling	Avoiding financial support
Focus on milk components and quality	Reduced hoof care
Financial adjustments	Overfeeding dry distillers grain
Utilise by products	Reducing health expenses
Labour management	Incorrect culling decisions
	Not using records

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The study emphasised the importance of feeding the most productive animals well, maintaining milk quality (components) to achieve the highest milk price per litre, and culling animals that are costing money to feed and/or have recurring health issues.

Jim presented five different diet options to the group and showed the impact of each option on profitability (Operating expenses taken from FNQ Queensland Dairy Accounting Scheme reports). Those who attended the session were provided with a copy of each of the diets. ■■