

BETTER HAY AND SILAGE CASE STUDY

1. PROJECT BACKGROUND

Rainfall in Western Australia (WA) South West Land Division occurs predominantly between Autumn and Spring, dictating pasture supply. More than 50% of pasture growth occurs in spring. Due to typical dry/hot summers, dry-land livestock producers rely heavily on preserving spring surplus (hay/silage) to support stock productivity/welfare and environmental outcomes over summer and autumn.

Increased frequency of late breaks and lower rainfall has resulted in a higher demand for both quantity and quality preserved fodder. Science based capacity building fodder conservation training has not been delivered to stakeholders in WA for over 20 years. Western Beef supported by several local and national organisations secured a Future Drought Fund grant to address these issues.

2. ACTIVITIES

- Train the trainer workshops on fodder preservation, storage and allocation were offered to WA educators and livestock advisors.
- Better Hay and Silage workshops were delivered in 21 locations around southern WA to beef and sheep producers and service providers.
- Rumen8-Beef workshops were delivered in 13 locations to teach beef producers and advisors how to use this freely available computer software to make more efficient hay/silage allocation.
- Education webinars and videos covering hay/silage related best practice were produced and are available from the Western Beef website

3. PARTICIPANT

Koojan Downs Feedlot, located in Moora, has a 20,000 head capacity and is part of Harvest Road Vertical Integrated Business. It also includes backgrounding properties in the Northern Agricultural Region and a Pilbara breeding station.

Five team members (some pictured above at the Gingin workshop) attended the Better hay and Silage workshops either in Gingin or Dongara in 2024.



4. PRE-WORKSHOP STATUS/MOTIVATION

Hay has been staple part of ration for a while to give the animals the fiber they need to balance the rest of the feedlot ration. Have not made silage before and wanted to increase fodder production and value from hectares. The team didn't know much about how to optimise quality from grass. This would have a large value to business if they could have control over feed supply, quality and quantity – translating into stability to business model, reduction in risk, continuity of product and stability in supply chain.

5. KEY LEARNINGS AND OUTCOMES

Timing, Timing, Timing!!! It is absolutely critical to get the timing right and imperative for fodder quality. Now they understand the value of MJ of Energy and % of Crude Protein needed from feed to drive production in livestock. First year of silage went well and they are doing 1000 hectares of silage this year. All in bunkers, approx. 15,000t of whole crop silage. Previous outcomes were not great but now have much better understanding of when to cut (no wilting as going into a bunker and use a contractor to do all work). Confidence has increased.

6. LOOKING AHEAD

Will be testing and recording more and using data to drive decisions. Would definitely benefit from refreshers and reflection sessions. Before-season 'reminders' or refresher info/key points– if not in person catch ups then maybe 1 or 2 pages emailed out to people.

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