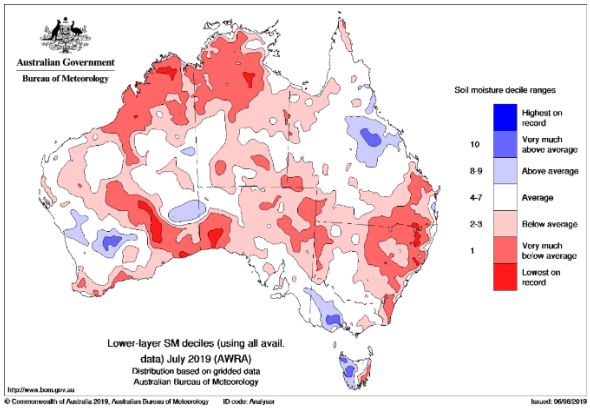
Recommendations in difficult seasons



Well this map of soil moisture from the BOM shows just how tough things are in many parts of our region - with 'very much below average' or 'lowest on record' red patches dominating, apart from the areas post flood in Qld.

Many of the recent SDIs have included animals with pneumonia or generalised weakness, where poor nutrition and suspected underlying immune suppression are part of the picture. Many of the recommendations are around ways to reduce risk in very difficult seasonal conditions. Even small changes can help, and veterinary input can provide the focus needed.

Meanwhile I would encourage all to follow up on those cases which look like promising SDIs, but seem to drag on or hit dead-ends. There is always a story and your extra effort is valuable for client and our program. Good luck with this!

Cheers Kev

Newsletter #14 (27 August 2019)

50+ dead weaners – dealing with ongoing problems

In July 2019 about 800 young/poor weaners were on feed in the main yards of a station on the Barkly Tablelands. They had been weaned early due to the rapidly deteriorating condition of the cows.

4-7 deaths occurred each day for 8 days prior to the vet's visit. The Ops Manager had noticed some coughing and weaners with nasal/ocular discharge. He did a PM on 2 animals and sent photos. One animal had obvious lung pathology but the other animal had minimal respiratory involvement.

At the visit the feed yards and animals were examined and 3 autopsies conducted. A comprehensive set of bloods, fresh and fixed tissue were sent to Berrimah Lab.

The animals were assessed to have a range of problems as a result of being malnourished and immune-suppressed and this was confirmed by the lab results. Immediate and follow-up recommendations were focused on making practical improvements in the extremely poor seasonal conditions.

The station staff are currently doing a good job in managing the breeder herd and subsequent weaner health issues.

1. Pen animals according to size and reduce pen density

The animals were immature/poorly developed. Some 6-week old calves mixed with older but under-developed ~80-100 kg animals.

Recommendation – Split the six feed pens into more even lines based on weight and apparent age. Move the healthier 50% into adjacent holding paddocks if suitable feeding/water facilities can be improvised.

2. Eliminate close contact with adult cattle

The weaners were in pens between feedlot pens of older cows/bulls, increasing the chance of direct transfer of pathogens.

Recommendation - Ensure an empty pen or laneway between weaners and adult cattle.

3. Pick out sick animals early, treat and isolate

This event was correlated to a cool windy change in the weather, as well as transit of 2200 healthier weaners through the yards.

Recommendation – Can't change the weather, but do increase diligence of monitoring and treatment during this type of risk period. Identify sick animals earlier for improved response to antibiotics and isolate from others to reduce transmission

4. Don't vaccinate these animals at this time

Respiratory signs (coughing, discharges, depression) were present but not to the extent expected in a significant BRD-type outbreak. BRD vaccination will have little beneficial response in animals are that immune-suppressed.

Recommendation - Don't vaccinate now

5. Treat scouring weaners for coccidiosis

A moderate amount of scouring was present but no bloody diarrhoea. Coccidiosis was suspected (later confirmed by the Lab)

Recommendation - Pick scouring animals early and treat according to protocol..

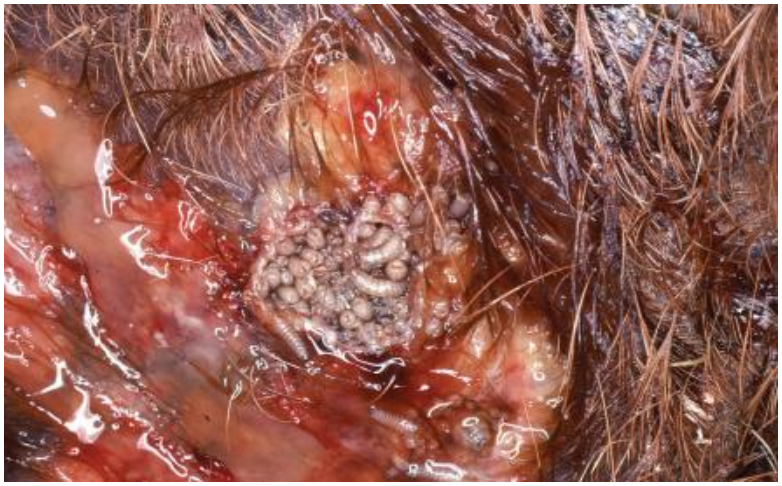
6. Improve the diet

The diet of hay and generic weaner pellets is not adequate.

Recommendations – Younger animals need calf crumble/feed which includes milk replacer and feeding more frequently (as per company's early weaning ration). Consider chopping the hay for better utilisation. Supply molasses to all pens to increase energy levels.

Read more

Got maggots? – show it's not screw-worm fly

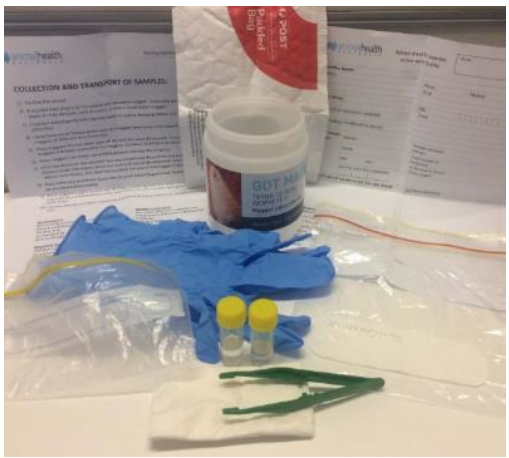


Screw-worm fly maggots form dense feeding infestations in wounds (AHA).

The risk of entry of screw-worm fly is primarily in northern Australia and the most likely pathways are through Torres Strait or returning livestock vessels. Suspicion of screw-worm fly infestation in animals is notifiable under state and territory animal health legislation (read more).

NABS network vets are asked to:

- **Investigate all cases of myiasis in pets or livestock to determine the species responsible**
- **Encourage producer clients to collect and submit maggots if they see them in wounds in live animals**



'Got Maggots' kits are easy to store and use. Contact your lab for further info.

Tip: collecting and transporting maggots (AHA)

1. Confine the animal

2. **Take photos** of the wound and extracted maggots, preferably with a reference object to show scale

3. **Gently wash the wound** with running water to reduce decaying matter and secondary-strike flies.

4. **Use tweezers to collect** up to 10 maggots from deep in the wound. Collect different sizes if possible.

5. **Place them into hot water** (just off the boil) for 10 seconds. This kills the maggots and helps to preserve their structure, assisting in their identification.

6. **Place them into preservative** - the Got Maggots kit bottle, or into a small container of raw vinegar, and seal the lid tightly

7. **Fill in the lab submission**. Include information about the history of wound development, the animal's recent travel history and observations about the wound and maggots (sight and smell).

8. **Pack** - place tubes and absorbent tissue into the small ziplock bag, exclude excessive air and seal.

9. Place bagged maggot sample into the large ziplock bag and seal. Place into the mailing bag with the completed laboratory submission form.

10. **Send** to your government lab. Contact them, if possible, to inform them that samples are on the way.

NABS Network - Govt Veterinary Officers

Updating the contact details for the network government vets who are key contacts in each state/territory:

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Derek.Lunau@daf.qld.gov.au

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Happy to help

Let me know anything you'd like covered here or on the website

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Newsletter sent on Kevin's behalf from the team at Harris Park Group