

Ramping up extension delivery as pasture dieback spreads south

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Introduction

Pasture dieback causes the premature death of productive sown grass pastures across areas of eastern Queensland and New South Wales. It has been spreading to new areas in southern Queensland (SQ) since 2018 and more notably since 2023. Successful extension of recommended management options to restore productivity on affected paddocks has been conducted since 2015 by the Department of Primary Industries (DPI), but mostly in central Queensland. From 2024 to 2025, the extension program in SQ has aimed to help producers accurately identify pasture dieback and manage affected pastures back to productivity.

Methods

During the period from March 2024 to June 2025, ten targeted on farm extension events were delivered to beef producers and industry personnel. On-farm events were hosted by producers with existing networks in the local district. Four guest presentations were also delivered as part of producer workshops, hosted by other projects or organisations. One Beef Connect webinar was delivered to online attendees in collaboration with the DPI pasture dieback experts from north and central Queensland.

Results

There were 88 attendees at the four guest presentations and 105 for the webinar. A total of 270 attended the ten on-farm extension events with 130 completing a feedback form. Of the respondents, 98% learnt something new, with 100% indicating an increase in their knowledge on the topic. The events achieved a value rating of 6 out of a possible score of 7 for the information provided, 6.4 out of 7 for overall satisfaction with the event and 61% of respondents intended to make a change to their management across a total of 41,261 hectares. Extension events were further supported by online resources hosted on the FutureBeef pasture dieback web page that has seen a significant increase in visits between February 2024 (1,500) and May 2025 (11,500).

Discussion

The ongoing spread of pasture dieback across southern Queensland and increase in the severity of pasture dieback impact in certain areas has increased the demand for targeted extension services. The extension strategy used in SQ closely aligns with previous DPI pasture dieback extension developed and delivered in 2020-21 (Hopkins *et al* 2022). Results indicate the extension methods employed to date have provided value to producers. As producers move beyond their initial search for information on the topic towards longer term management options. Our extension strategy is also adapting tailored information on improving pasture production and resilience in the presence of pasture dieback.

References

Hopkins K. et al. (2022) Proceedings 33rd Biennial Conference of the Australian Association of Animal Sciences, 34, cliii.

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