



# HIGH COUNTRY FARMING



HERALD FEATURE

## Leucaena for protein and drought proofing

By MILES NOLLER

Graziers have known about the tree legume plant Leucaena Mimosine for many years.

Indeed the CSIRO introduced the South American plant to Northern Australia for cattle grazing in the 1950s.

But only in recent times has Leucaena made its way south to cooler areas, including the Darling Downs, as a high protein feed that assists in drought-proofing a grazing business.

A field day at a Kaimkillenbun property has helped to allay myths about the plant and provide a case study about how good Leucaena is, even on the frosty black soil floodplains of the North Eastern Downs.

More than 40 landholders attended the field day organised by North East Downs Landcare and held on Dalby Downs, an 8500 acre aggregation at Kaimlillenbun.

North East Downs Landcare has 16 catchment subgroups, many across the Rosalie and Crows Nest areas where graziers could benefit from a permanent protein forage tree to help feed cattle on smaller areas.

Manager of Dalby Downs Jonathan Schmidt said more than 2000 acres of Leucaena was now growing on Dalby Downs, most of it on the black soil valley land.

It is planted in twin row corridors (rows about one metre apart), and the Leucaena corridors are five metres apart. Grass is planted between the Leucaena corridors.

The grass mixture varies depending on soil types but includes purple pigeon grass, Katambora rhodes, Tolga rhodes, Gayndah buffel, and the native blue grasses.



In a Leucaena area on Dalby Downs: Jonathan Schmidt, property manager, Craig Antonio, Millmerran grazier and president of the Leucaena Network, and Gavin Peck, pasture agronomist with the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Toowoomba.

Mr Schmidt said that once established, Leucaena helps overcome the effects of a dry season. Leucaena hangs on longer than other feed as a drought takes hold and, at the end of a drought, leucaena will pick up quicker and provide forage sooner than grass and other pas-

tures. He said the root system of Leucaena spreads three to five metres from the plant and extends up to five metres into the soil. So, if there is some subsoil moisture, Leucaena will provide green shoots early in Spring and this green pick will help to keep cattle going.

If cattle are ready to sell during a dry period but the market is weak, Leucaena will help to keep cattle going for one to two months until prices improve.

Leucaena had a reputation for being suitable only for tropical regions, but a number of properties including Dalby Downs have shown that even though Leucaena frosts, it emerges from winter with green growth much quicker than other forages and crops.

Mr Schmidt said he has found that the Leucaena always has a green shoot in late July or August.

The Leucaena and grass is used at the end of summer until a change to an oats crop, or from oats back to Leucaena.

Three varieties, Cunningham, Taramba, and Wondergraze are grown on Dalby Downs. Mr Schmidt said that, although all varieties frost, he thought this was a good thing because they did not have to spend money on expensive chopping, to keep the Leucaena at a manageable height for cattle, and to encourage extra stems to grow.

On Dalby Downs the frosts and cattle knocking down the stems have effectively controlled the height of the plants.

While Leucaena contains a substance that can be toxic to livestock in some situations, this toxicity can be overcome with the introduction of a microbe to the rumen.

Mr Schmidt said once introduced, it was easy to ensure this microbe persisted from paddock to paddock and herd to herd.

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• ABOVE: Alternate corridors of Leucaena and grass pasture, which were recently grazed. The green crop in the background is oats that was being grazed.

• LEFT: A silage pit on Dalby Downs inspected during the field day. Silage, principally from forage sorghum, is a significant part of the ration on Dalby Downs, with Leucaena and grass, and winter forage and grain.

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Harristown Saleyards  
**Cattle Market Report**  
Monday, June 23

**COMBINED YARDING OF 464 HEAD**  
Numbers returned back to normal, with limited numbers of bulls & prime cows being yarded most of the yarding was made up of weaner's and feeder cattle. Restockers were operating on plain conditioned cows and selected weaners. Limousin weaner steers ex Pittsworth sold for 200c/kg while selected feeder heifers sold to 155.2c, 400kg + feeder steers sold just under 190c/kg. Overall quality was good but still with a fair sample of second quality cattle meeting limited competition. Good panel of buyers were in attendance. Droughtmaster Cross heifers from Yarraman 296kg sold for 151.2c for \$448, Hereford cross steers from Blackbutt 452kg sold for 183.2c for \$828, Sahwail cross steers 332kg sold for 151.2c for \$502, Santa cross butcher heifers 363kg sold for 160.2c, Angus weaner steers 246kg sold for 176.2c for \$434, Angus feeder steers 365kg sold for 185.2c, Heavy Red Angus heifers 585kg sold for 137.2c for \$802, Hereford steers 408kg sold for 183.2c for \$748, Limousin steers from Pittsworth 310kg sold for 200, \$620.

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**TOOWOOMBA CATTLE & PIG MARKET REPORT**  
Monday, June 23

**LIMOUSIN STEERS FROM BROOKSTEAD**  
485KG TOP THE DAY AT 217.2C/KG

**CATTLE:** Numbers remained at 1065 at Elders Toowoomba sale today Monday 23rd June. The market was firm tending to dearer across all sectors. Best bulls from Tudor Valley reached 161.2c/kg. Very few good bullocks yarded, the best from highland plains topped at 173.2c/kg for 553kg. Heavy feeder steers were dearer with a number of operators competing strongly, best steers from Crows Nest reached 186.2c/kg. Heavy heifers were in short supply, the best pen from Millmerran topped at 185.2c/kg. The cow market held last weeks improved rates, with best cows topping at 140.2c/kg weighing 520kg. Very few heavy prime trade cattle yarded, the best limousin steers from Brookstead weighing 482kg realised 217.2c/kg to return \$1048. Best trade heifers from Hodgsonvale reached 181.2c/kg. Again very few good vealer calves yarded, the best steer and heifer vealers from Pittsworth both realised 190c/kg. Feeder steers suitable for the trade topped at 192.2c/kg. Light weight angus store steers from Biddeston realised 195.2c/kg. Cows and calves reached \$670 per unit.

**PIGS:** Prime pork and bacon sold to rates similar to last week's solid market. Backfatter sows sold to slightly easier prices, while lighter numbers of stores and weaners sold firm on last Monday. Prime pork \$2.30-3.40/kg, Prime light bacon \$2.40-2.95/kg, Prime bacon \$2.98/kg, Boars 15c/kg, Sows to \$1.13/kg, Forward Stores \$128, Weaners \$60-85.

**NEXT SALE Monday, July 7**  
**FOR BOOKINGS**  
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**CROWS NEST CATTLE SALE**  
**CROWS NEST SHOWGROUNDS**  
Saturday 12th July 10am

**Early bookings include:**

- 30 Angus cows & calves
- 12 Euro cows & calves
- 30 Santa/Droughtmaster steers, 9-10 months
- 15 Angus steers, 6 months
- 15 Droughtmaster steers, 6-8 months
- 12 Droughtmaster heifers, 12-14 months
- 6 Hereford steers, 8 months
- 10 Droughtmaster x steers, 10 months
- 12 Santa Hereford x steers, 12-14 months

*Further bookings welcome & appreciated*

For all enquiries please contact  
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