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Quality Graze: Producer Steer Challenge

Welcome to the journey – finding production answers with producers



Angus



Hereford



Murray Grey



Shorthorn



Brahman & Hereford

Background

Research is a journey of discovery and producer engagement in research is critical. This challenge allows producers to travel the journey of discovery with researchers.

In 2011 the Quality Graze trial was implemented on Old Man Plains Research Station (OMP), Alice Springs, Northern Territory to investigate the feasibility of consistently supplying grass-fed beef for premium markets.

Purpose

The purpose of the producer steer challenges is to directly involve producers in cattle and grazing research, by tapping into their competitive nature. It provides a neutral venue for producers to compare their steer performance under the latest industry grazing land management recommendations.

The challenge is analysed by researchers and producers alike with the aim to identify potential improvements to a steer breeding and fattening production system for premium beef markets.

The invite

Stations in the Alice Springs district were encouraged to nominate steers; seven responded.

Steer criteria: 6-8 months of age
 180-220 kg weaned weight
 No pestivirus, worm burdens or coccidiosis

The battlefield

Old Man Plains Research Station

Grazing Strategy: 2 paddock / 12 month rotation

Paddock long term carrying capacity: 2.2 AE/km² of watered area

Stocking rate strategy: Restricted seasonal adjustment

Commentary

It appears that environmental conditions exert a greater influence on steer performance than genetics (Figure 1). This is a very powerful message that emphasizes the importance of grazing land management in premium beef production.

The participants experienced how their steers can meet the requirements to access premium markets through applying a grazing strategy and carrying capacity appropriate for an arid environment.

Fully cured paddock feed in central Australia = production \$\$\$.

Scoreboard

Remote Livestock Management System

Liveweight; Growth rate

Additional performance data

Liveweight; Growth rate; p8 fat depth;
 Diet quality; Body condition;
 Hip height (Skeletal growth)

Graph legend

- Angus
- Hereford
- Murray Grey
- Shorthorn
- Brangus (Angus x Brahman)
- Santa (Shorthorn X Brahman)
- Droughtmaster (Brahman X Shorthorn)
- Droughtmaster X Hereford
- Droughtmaster X Brahman
- Brahman
- Average ALL
- Target (Based on meeting MSA standards)

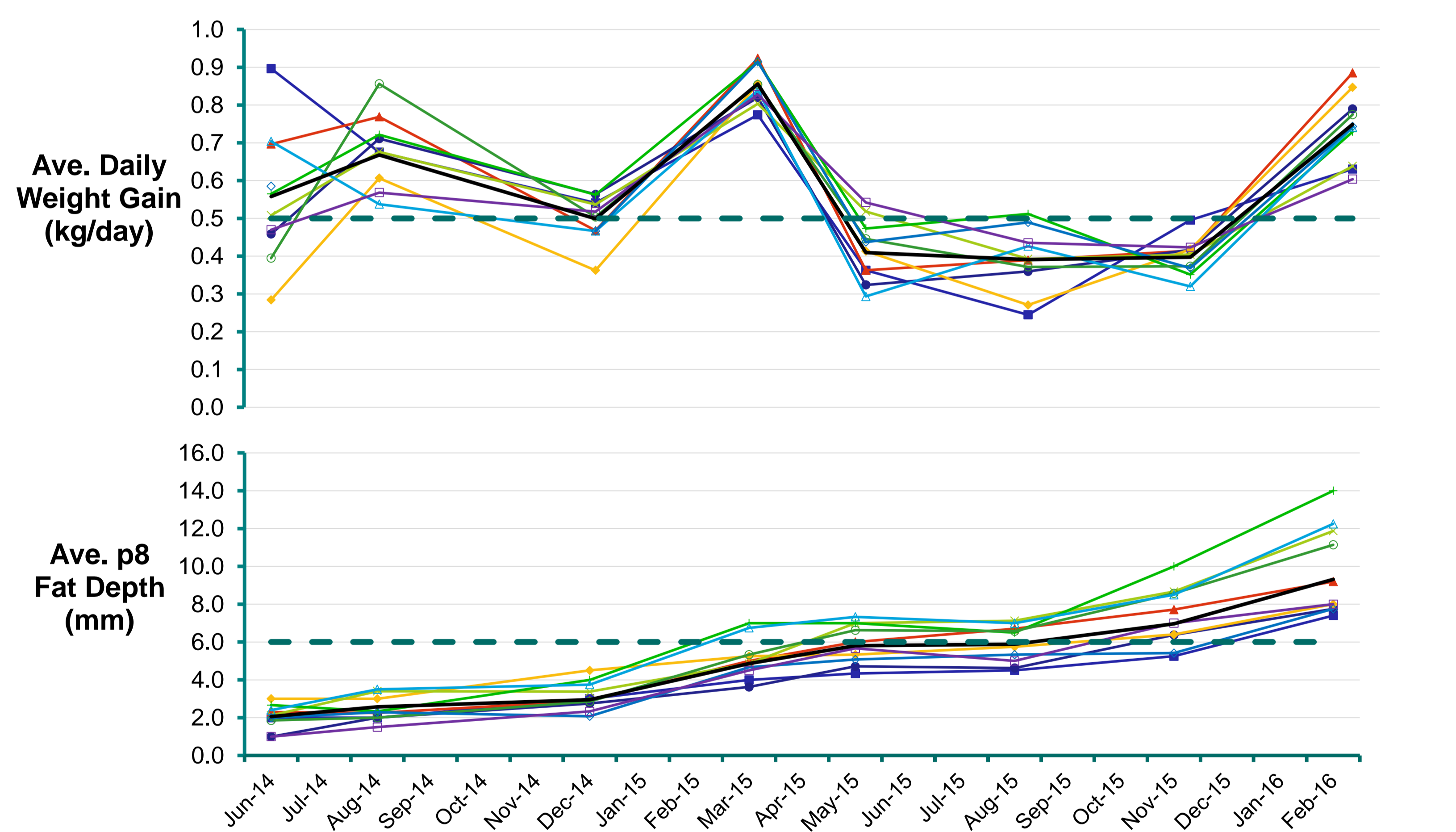


Fig. 1. Steers were mustered quarterly to collect performance data such as liveweight (Target: 575kg at 30 months of age; daily growth rate 0.5kg) and p8 fat depth (Target: >6mm).

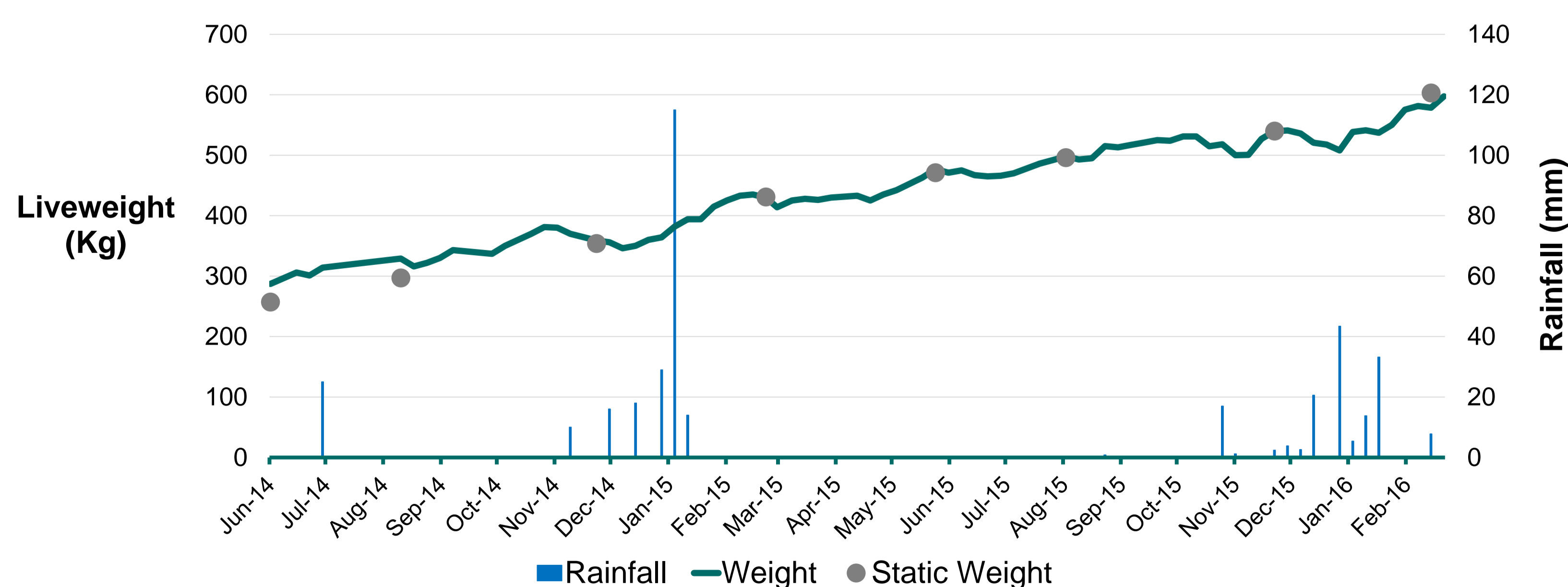


Fig.2. Average steer liveweight collected via the Remote Livestock Management System compared to the quarterly static weight and rainfall.