

# meatup FORUM

For the latest in red meat R&D

# Time of Calving - Autumn v Winter

Alan Peggs

Alan Peggs Rural

# Why do most beef producers in WA's South West calve in Autumn?



McLarty's Pinjarra 2020 May – Poll Shorthorn cows with F1 Akaushi (Red Wagyu) calves at foot

Because they end up with calves like this late Spring/early Summer!



McLarty's Pinjarra Nov 20 – F1 Akaushi x Poll Shorthorn calves Yellow Tags

**BUT to end up with  
'big' calves in late  
Spring/early  
Summer you need  
to feed hay until  
sufficient 'green'  
feed is available!  
Is this  
economic????**



McLarty's Pinjarra May 20 – Poll Shorthorn cows with April drop F1 Akaushi x Poll Shorthorn calves at foot.



# Most Sheep Producers in WA Lamb in Winter NOT Autumn! Why?



# What happens when you put the bulls in 15 Sept and not 15 April?



Oakford Sept 20 – Akaushi bulls in with Ucarty Angus cows with Lawson Angus sired Winter calves at foot

# Time of Calving – Autumn v Winter

- Client Oakford – west of Byford - 46 km S Perth – 200 ha 750 mm rainfall
- Wheat Belt farmer – crops/cattle/feed-lot ~ no sheep!!
- Winter calving – pasture availability better meets nutritional needs of the cow
- Dry starts – reduce cattle numbers
- Agist Winter calving cows at Oakford – instructed to feed no hay – manager incredulous!



# Time of Calving – Autumn v Winter

- Oakford Farm good Case Study
- BUT Autumn v Winter Calving research by Dep. of Ag 2000's – Alcoa Fairbridge/Wagerup
- Weaning Weight ~ First Year
  - Autumn ~354 kg lw; ADG 1.09 kg/day
  - Winter ~274 kg lw; ADG 1.16 kg/day
  - Difference ~ 80 kg lw
- Subsequent Years Winter calving cows stocked at 20% higher stocking rate.
- Economics suggested not a lot of difference in final margin between Autumn calving and Winter calving at 20% higher stocking rate

**grazing at start**  
**son:** Opening  
 in late April or May,  
 el holds animals  
 small paddocks  
 until there is  
 0kg dry matter a  
 (/ha) across the  
 paddocks – usually

**grazing targets:**  
 al grazing  
 oves cattle  
 ddock when  
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erty is  
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 n pasture  
 towards the

"I've moved from autumn  
 to winter calving to calve  
 down on green feed and  
 re-join in late spring, also on  
 green feed.

"I've also introduced larger  
 mobs – 150 cows plus  
 calves – and increased  
 grazing pressure. With the  
 20% increase in stocking  
 rate I have achieved, more  
 calves are now born due  
 to an increased number of  
 breeders per hectare."

Bull selection has also  
 been critical, with Michael  
 selecting sires with the  
 genetic ability to produce  
 easier-calving heifers.

"Three main criteria need to  
 be above average: scrotal  
 size, body fat and calving  
 ease," he said.

benchmarking group of  
 producers from south-east  
 South Australia and draws  
 on the expertise of a private  
 advisor who provides an  
 independent, farm advisory  
 board service. ■

✉  
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💻  
 Find out more about the  
 programs and tools Michael  
 uses at:  
 More Beef from Pastures:  
[mla.com.au/mbfp](http://mla.com.au/mbfp)  
 Profitable Grazing Systems:  
[mla.com.au/pgs](http://mla.com.au/pgs)  
 MLA's healthy soils hub:  
[mla.com.au/healthy-soils](http://mla.com.au/healthy-soils)

**Michael Cobiac and  
 Cath Bell, 'Chelestan',  
 Reedy Creek,  
 South Australia**



**Area:**  
 1,100ha of grazing land  
 across two properties and a  
 230ha block of heritage bush

**Enterprise:**  
 Self-replacing, winter-calving  
 Angus beef breeding herd  
 producing feedlot-entry  
 offspring

**Livestock:**  
 Calve 700 cows and helpers  
 each year – total numbers  
 on-property range from 1,400

Michael Cobiac, Reedy Creek, SE South Australia, 1100 ha, 900 Angus breeders, 600 mm rainfall

# Is it more economic to calve in Autumn OR Winter?

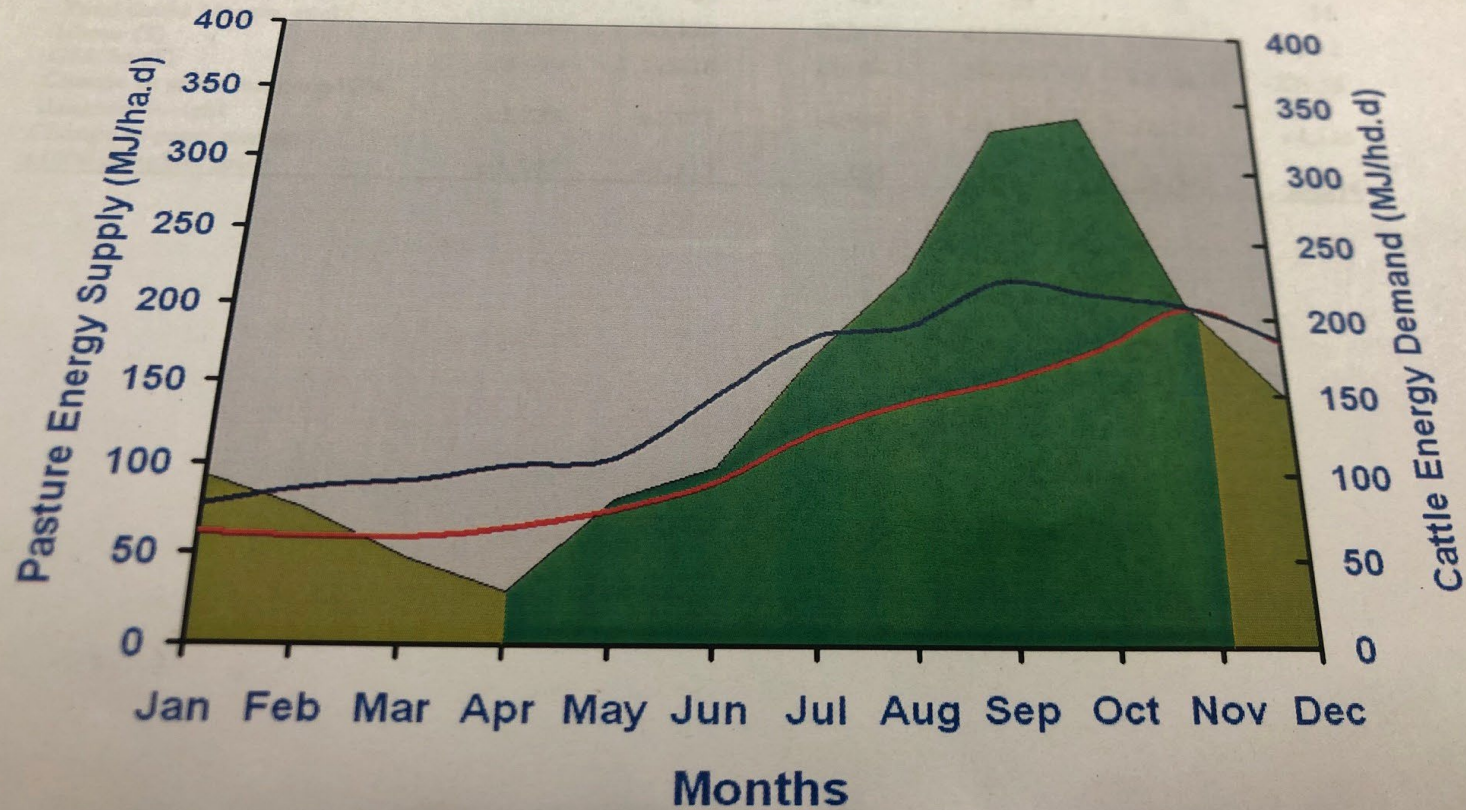


Oakford 30 Jul 21 – Angus cows with Winter drop (15 Jun – 31 Jul) F1 Akaushi x Angus calves at foot.

# Time of Calving – Autumn v Winter

- **Autumn** – advantage 60 days extra growing period
- **Mate 15 July six weeks – Start Calving – 23 April**
- Generally before the ‘break’ of the season – limited feed
- **Feed pasture hay – allow 1000 kg hay/animal**
- **Stocking Rate** ~14 dse/ha = 1 breeding cow/ha
- BUT need to allocate pasture area for hay production ~18% of total pasture area ~ assume only half stocking rate on ‘hay’ area
- **200 ha total**
- **36 ha to hay**
- **Carrying capacity** – 164 ha x 14 dse + 36 ha x 7 dse = **2548 dse**
- 155 breeders
- 27 replacement heifers
- 6 bulls
- 2546 dse
- **90% calving** = 140 calves
- **Weaning Weight** ~Heifer calves 310 kg
  - - Steer Calves 330 kg

# Energy Requirements Autumn & Winter cows + calf





# Autumn v Winter Calving

- **Winter** – disadvantage 60 days less growing period
- **Mate 15 September six weeks – Start Calving – 24 June**
- Generally the season has broken in early May – buy late June reasonable pasture ~ c.1500 kg DM
- **No hay required – so NO need to allocate pasture to hay production**
- **Stocking Rate** ~14 dse/ha = 1 breeding cow/ha
- **200 ha total**
- **Carrying capacity** –200 ha x 14 dse = **2800 dse**
- **170 breeders**
- 30 replacement heifers
- 7 bulls
- 2800 dse
- **90% calving** = 154 calves ~ extra 14 calves
- **Weaning Weight** ~ Heifer calves 250 kg
- ~ Steer calves 270 kg

# Autumn v Winter Calving + 20% Higher SR

- **Winter + 20%** – disadvantage 60 days less growing period
- **Mate 15 September six weeks – Start calving – 24 June**
- Generally the season has broken in early May – buy late June reasonable pasture  
~ c.1500 kg DM
- **No hay required – so NO need to allocate pasture to hay production**
- **Stocking Rate** ~20% higher than Autumn 12.7 dse/ha = 15.3 dse/ha
- **200 ha total**
- **Carrying capacity** –200 ha x 15.3 dse = **3038 dse**
- **185 breeders**
- 32 replacement heifers
- 7 bulls
- 3048 dse
- **90% calving** = 166 calves ~ extra 26 calves c.f Autumn
- **Weaning Weight** ~ Heifer calves 250 kg
- ~ Steer calves 270 kg

# Autumn v Winter v Winter + 20% SR

- Output Assumptions ~ Autumn Calvers

Cattle Class	Cattle Sale Weight	Cattle Prices	Cattle Prices
	kg lw	\$/kg lw	\$/hd
Cows	550	3.00	1650
Heifers	470	4.00	1880
Heifer Weaners	310	4.25	1318
Steers	510	4.50	2295
Steer Weaners	330	4.75	1568
Bulls	800	3.00	2400

# Autumn v Winter v Winter + 20% SR

- Output Assumptions ~ Winter Calvers

Cattle Class	Cattle Sale Weights	Cattle Prices	Cattle Price
	kg lw	\$/kg lw	\$/hd
Cows	550	3.00	1650
Heifers	410	4.00	1640
Heifer Weaners	250	4.25	1063
Steers	450	4.50	2025
Steer Weaners	270	4.75	1283
Bulls	800	3.00	2400

# Autumn v Winter v Winter + 20% SR

- **Input Assumptions**
- **All Calving Periods**
- Fertilizer – pasture 200 kg/ha Dairy 29N:16P:25K:19S
- **Autumn** – hay 100 kg/ha Fodder Max 30N:0P :15K:8 S
- Hay requirements – 188 adults x 1000 kg/hd/yr = 188 t
- Hay all contract – Total Cost \$30K/188 t = \$160/t
- Senior Farm Hand \$55K + Plus (Case Study other activities on farm – Wedding Receptions!!)



# Economics of Calving Time Autumn v Winter v Winter +20% SR

Parameter	Autumn	Winter	Winter + 20%
<b>Cows</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>185</b>
Calves	140	154	166
Live Weight Sold	50073	47301	51474
<b>LW Sold/ha</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>257</b>
Income	\$209K	\$194K	\$211K
Costs	\$164K	\$133K	\$135K
<b>Margin</b>	<b>\$45K</b>	<b>\$60K</b>	<b>\$77K</b>
Income \$/ha	\$1043	\$971	\$1057
Costs \$/ha	\$820	\$666	\$670
<b>Margin \$/ha</b>	<b>\$223</b>	<b>\$305</b>	<b>\$387</b>
Income/kg lw	\$4.17	\$4.11	\$4.11
<b>Costs/kg lw</b>	<b>\$3.28</b>	<b>\$2.82</b>	<b>\$2.60</b>
Margin/kg lw	\$0.89	\$1.29	\$1.50

# Pastoral Region ~ Boolathana Station in a good season 380 mm rainfall YTD



Boolathana Station Jul 21~F1 Akaushi x Droughtmaster and Droughtmaster yearling steers and heifers