

PROCEEDINGS OF THE AUSTRALIAN RANGELAND SOCIETY BIENNIAL CONFERENCE

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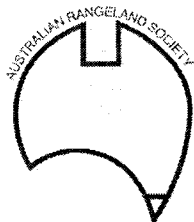
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FARM BUSINESS MANAGEMENT EXTENSION PROJECT: WESTERN QUEENSLAND

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AIMS

The aim of this programme is to increase the level of financial skills among producers in western Queensland, thereby enhancing profitability and sustainable production in the region.

Specific aims are to:

- (a) Help prevent liquidity problems among producers.
- (b) Increase the effectiveness of drought management strategies and as a consequence help reduce stocking pressure on fragile rangelands.
- (c) Enable fuller utilisation of existing financial services.
- (d) Facilitate greater control over income and cost variability through accurate budgeting.
- (e) Improve communication between producers, agribusiness and extension staff.
- (f) Encourage more rapid assimilation of ideas, technology and research.
- (g) Foster comparative analysis and evaluation of different management strategies and enterprises.
- (h) Help relieve personal and marital stress among producers.
- (i) Foster better decision making on-farm.
- (j) Improve profitability and ensure more sustainable resource utilisation in the sheep and cattle industries of western Queensland.

THE NEED FOR SKILLS

There is a perceived lack of financial skills among producers in western Queensland. This is borne out by producer feedback during the course of counselling and extension work, and by results obtained from a QDPI Needs Survey conducted in 1988. A survey following up this work is currently being undertaken to determine which financial skills are most important to producers. Results will be collated and used to change the content of the programme according to producer needs.

FARM BUSINESS MANAGEMENT PROJECTS

The programme comprises six extension projects. These are:

- (a) Financial skills needs survey.
- (b) Financial management workshops.
- (c) Small working groups.

- (d) Feedback to extension officers.
- (e) Agribusiness days.
- (f) Implementation of a farm secretarial service.

PROGRESS TO DATE

At the time of writing, financial management workshops had been run across western Queensland and as a result small working groups of neighbouring producers have been formed to further enhance financial skills.

A financial needs survey is being run concurrently with these workshops to help gauge which skills are most important to producers. Programme content is continually being revised in response to the results of this survey.

An agribusiness field day has recently been held with the aim of improving communication between graziers and financial service personnel.

In recognition that some producers will not keep adequate financial records a farm secretarial service is being established on a user pays basis.

Workshops have been planned for DPI technical staff to promote understanding of financial and economic issues relevant to technical advice.

CONCLUDING COMMENT

Uptake of skills will be monitored over the next five years to evaluate the programme in light of extension theory and practice.