

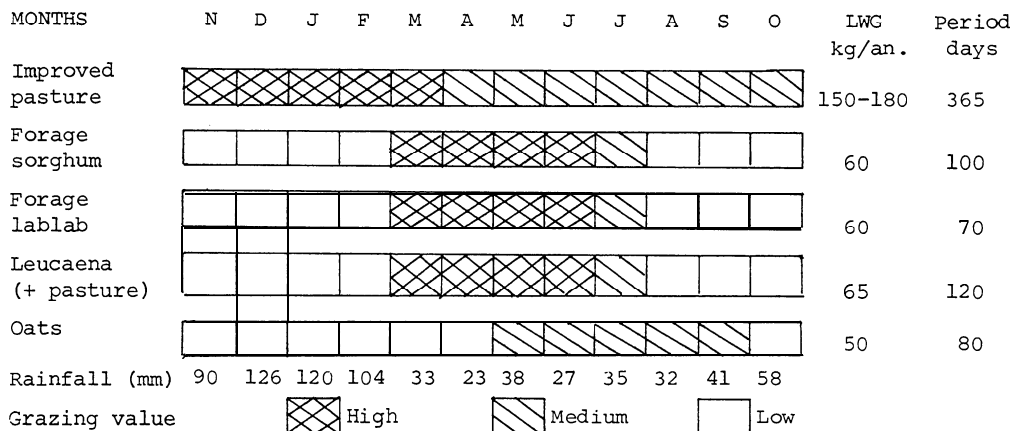
FORAGES FOR BEEF CATTLE IN THE BRIGALOW OF CENTRAL QUEENSLAND

J.H. WILDIN*, B. WALKER*, A.V. FRENCH**, AND T.W.G. GRAHAM***

Soils supporting brigalow (*Acacia harpophylla*) are fertile and grow highly productive pastures of green panic, buffel and rhodes grasses. Annual weight gains are high (150-180 kg/animal) and compare favourably with other tropical pastures (Stobbs 1976). However, as c. 70% of this gain is obtained in November-March, there was a need to evaluate alternative feed sources for the remaining period.

Grazing experiments over ten years at Brigalow Research Station, Theodore, (727 mm) quantified production of a range of raingrown forages (Fig. 1).

FIG. 1 Average weight gain from forages on brigalow soils



Weight gains from forage crops in November-March are similar (c. 0.7 kg/day) to those from sown pastures and have little additional value at this time. However, summer/autumn grown forages are highly reliable and can extend the period of high weight gains to June. Their main role is fattening cattle for sale at around 550-600kg live weight. Winter forage crops, like oats, which rely on autumn/winter rain for establishment are unreliable (5 years in 10) in this region. For growing cattle gains from forage crops are eroded by subsequent compensatory growth.

Forage cropping is expensive and such areas are now being used for grain crops. We see the best prospects for higher weight gains coming from perennial legume-grass pastures, where the legume maintains pasture quality after March, as shown by leucaena-green panic in Fig. 1. New trials show that *Stylosanthes scabra* cv. Fitzroy can also fulfil this role on the poorer duplex soils.

STOBBS, T.H. (1976). In "Beef Cattle in Developing Countries", pp. 164-83, editor, A.J. Smith. (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh).

* Department of Primary Industries, Rockhampton, Qld 4700.

** Department of Primary Industries, Miles, Qld 4415.

*** Department of Primary Industries, Biloela, Qld 4715.