

## THESES SUMMARIES

### REPRODUCTIVE PERFORMANCE OF BEEF CATTLE IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

L.G. Andrews

*Department of Tropical Veterinary Medicine, James Cook University, Townsville, Queensland. 1976. pp. 375. Awarded M.Sc.*

Reproductive wastage is a serious economic problem in the northern area of the Northern Territory. The reproductive efficiency of beef cattle (26,000) was studied over a three year period on a number of commercial beef producing properties in tropical Northern Territory. This area encompassed a range of environments, varying from northern high rainfall areas (Darwin and Gulf) to the southern semi-arid rangelands (Barkly Tablelands and Victoria River District).

In all districts conception patterns followed the rainfall pattern with a lag of approximately one month. In the semi-arid rangeland peak conception occurred during April-May, with some conception occurring into the dry season, apparently because of the persistence of the better quality forage. Conception rates were depressed in the southern regions due to high ambient temperature.

Intervals between calving were subject to wide variation. Calf survival on these semi-arid rangelands generally ranged from 80-85% in brucellosis free herds. Survival showed no relationship to season or time of calving.

Pregnancy rates were positively correlated with effective rainfall one month previously and negatively correlated with ambient temperature in excess of 36°C.

Physiological factors such as lactation-status and body condition also affected pregnancy rate. Lactation has a strongly negative effect on conception and body condition, while body conditions also influenced conception rate. Older cows or younger heifers were most affected.

The management recommendations arising from this study mostly reinforce existing strategies. The importance of nutritional management of the breeding herd in conjunction with seasonal influence is emphasised. Weaning is recommended, being important for nutritional management, disease control and cattle handling.

On a long term basis management should be aimed at vaccination, testing and handling of weaners to create separate disease-free herds. Maintenance of separate disease-free herds allows culling and facilitates disease eradication.

\* This is not the author's summary. The reader is referred to the original for a more complete resume.

### EFFECT OF SHEEP GRAZING *ASTREBLA* GRASSLAND IN CENTRAL WESTERN QUEENSLAND

D.M. Orr

*Department of Agriculture, University of Queensland, St. Lucia, Queensland. 1979. pp. 118. Awarded M.Agr.Sc.*

This thesis examines the effects of grazing pressure on plant responses in *Astrelba* grassland and the plant responses to rainfall at sites of different grazing pressure.

Three commercially grazed paddocks in *Astrelba* grassland near Blackall, central-western Queensland were selected for study on the basis of a history of light, medium or heavy grazing pressure. Summer rainfall at each property prior to and during this experiment was quantified using a simple water balance model.