

# meatup FORUM

**For the latest in red meat R&D**

# Beef productivity drivers - in a whole farm system

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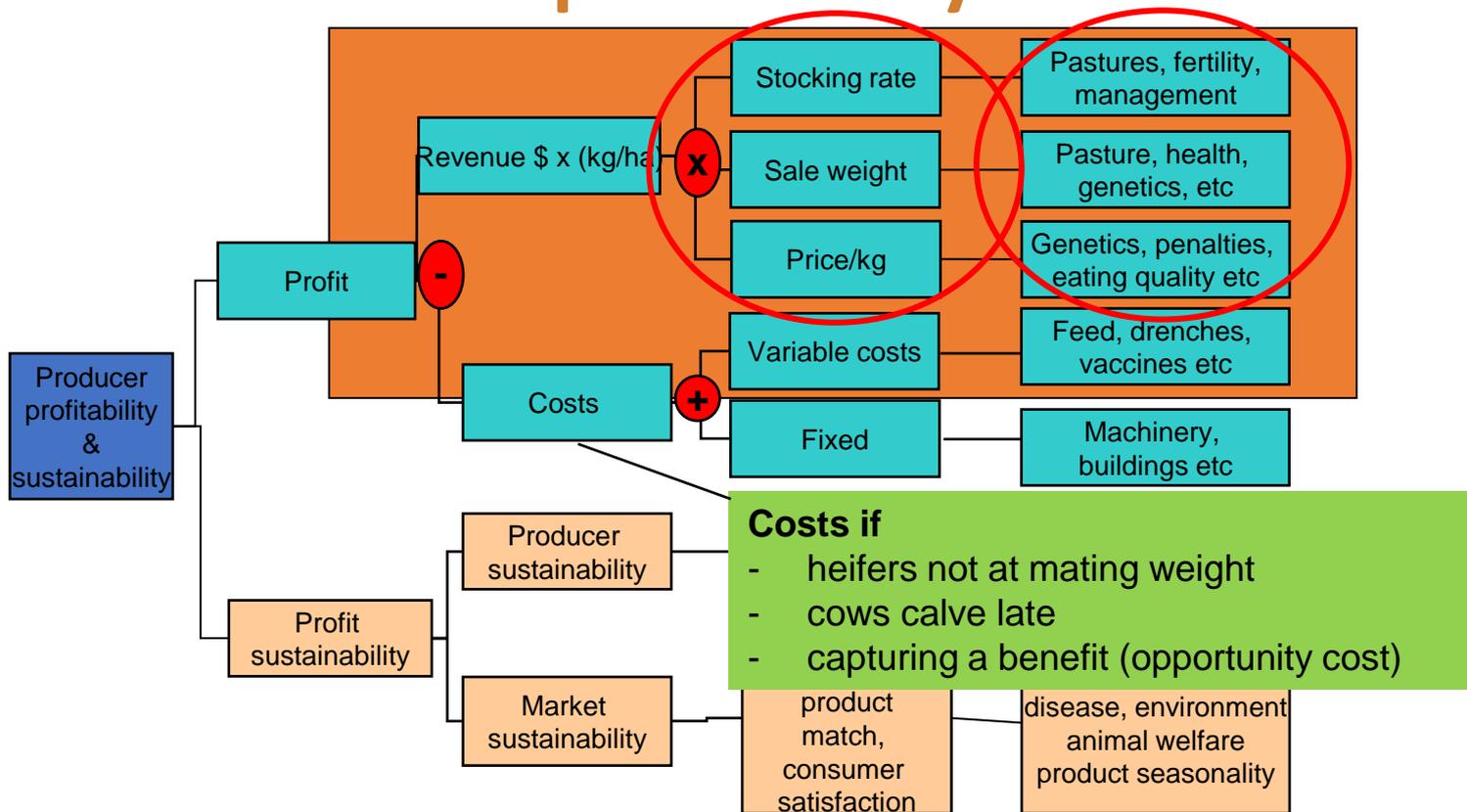
# What characterises the top performers?

They consistently:

- Have productive herds and more operating scale
  - Efficient conversion of grass into beef (more income per animal unit)
  - Target herd expenditure more effectively (every dollar provides returns)
  - Efficient labour use
- 
- Attitude – *“The top 25 percent of producers typically want to succeed and they want to know how they are performing and how they can improve, they think critically, and have an unrelenting **focus on the things that matter**”.*

Source: Australian Beef Report 2020 Vision

# So what matters with profitability & sustainability ?



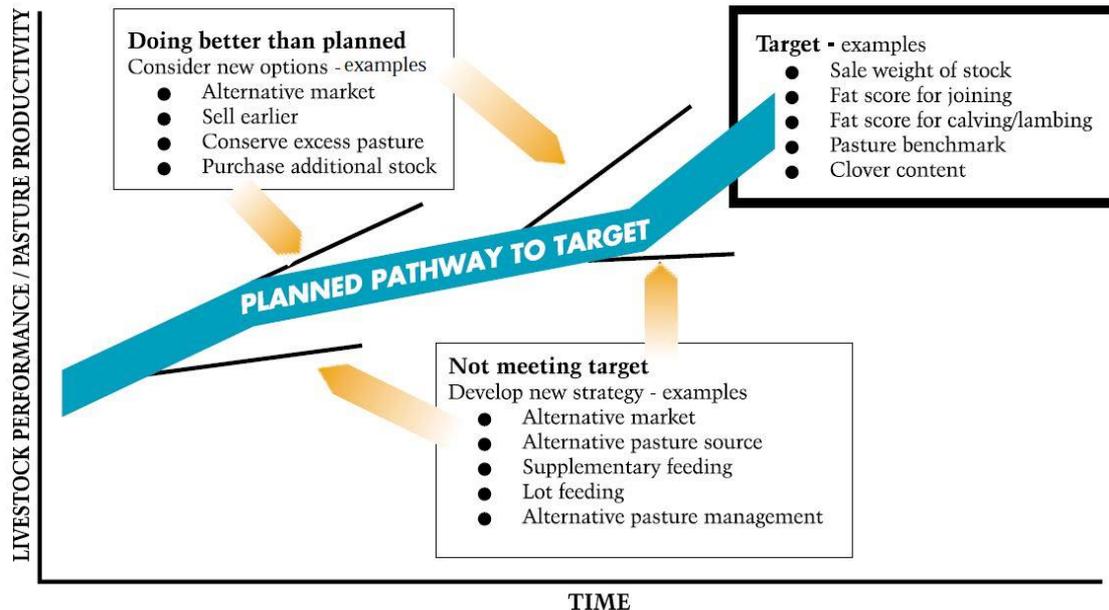
# Number of units X price received, less cost

- Manage cows and heifers to maximise live calves per breeding female, BY
- Manage components/interactions of the production system and, ENSURE
- Focus - matching of feed supply and animal demand, WHILE
- Seeking multiple benefits of any one action
- **List options evaluate benefits and feasibility, choose the best strategy**

# It is not just what you do.... but how well you do it through the production cycle

More precision in decisions

- Identify critical control points
- Am I on track (yes/no)?
- Corrective actions?



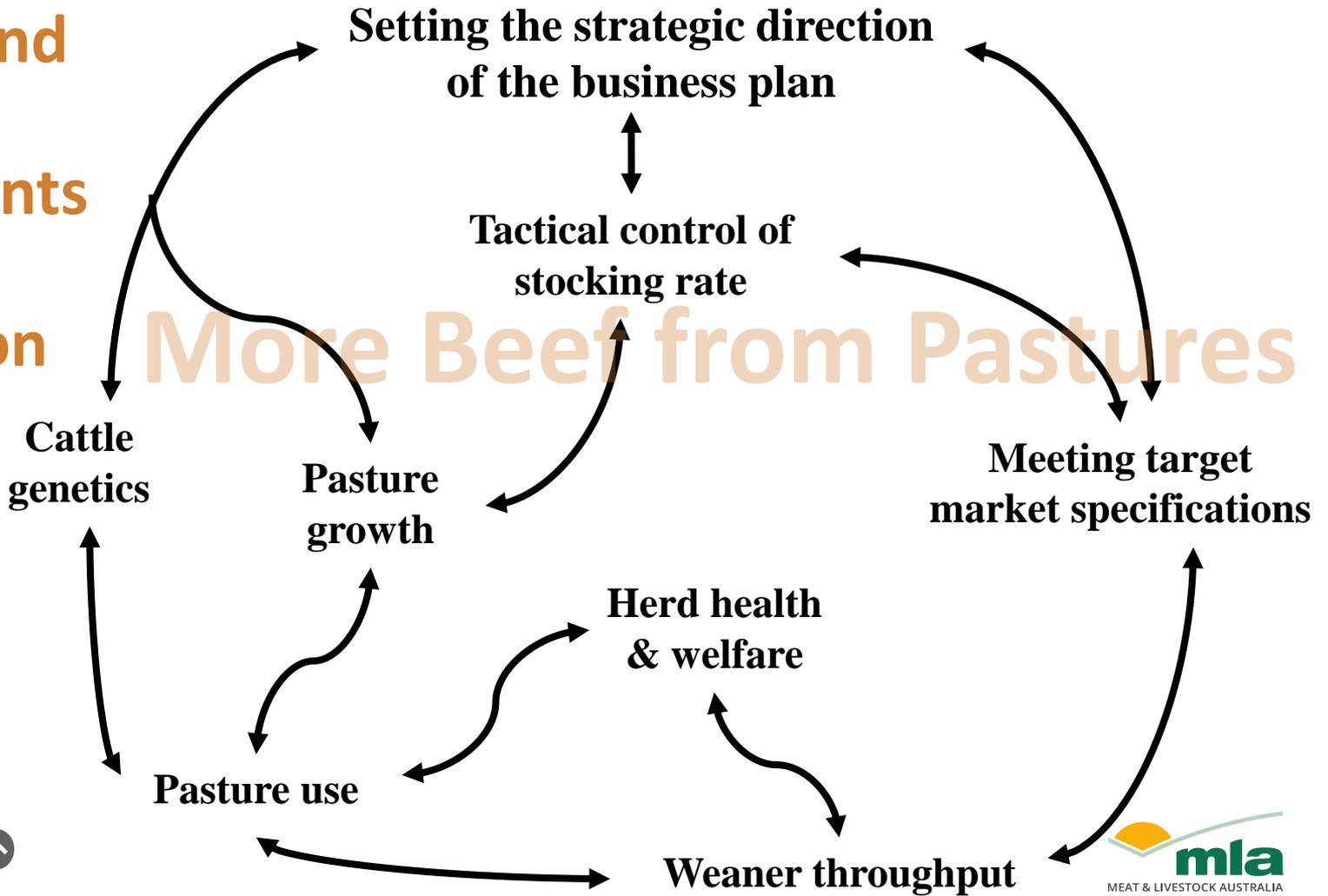
Source: PROGRAZE manual , NSW DPI

# Production efficiency is required

## – focus on what matters & address shortfalls

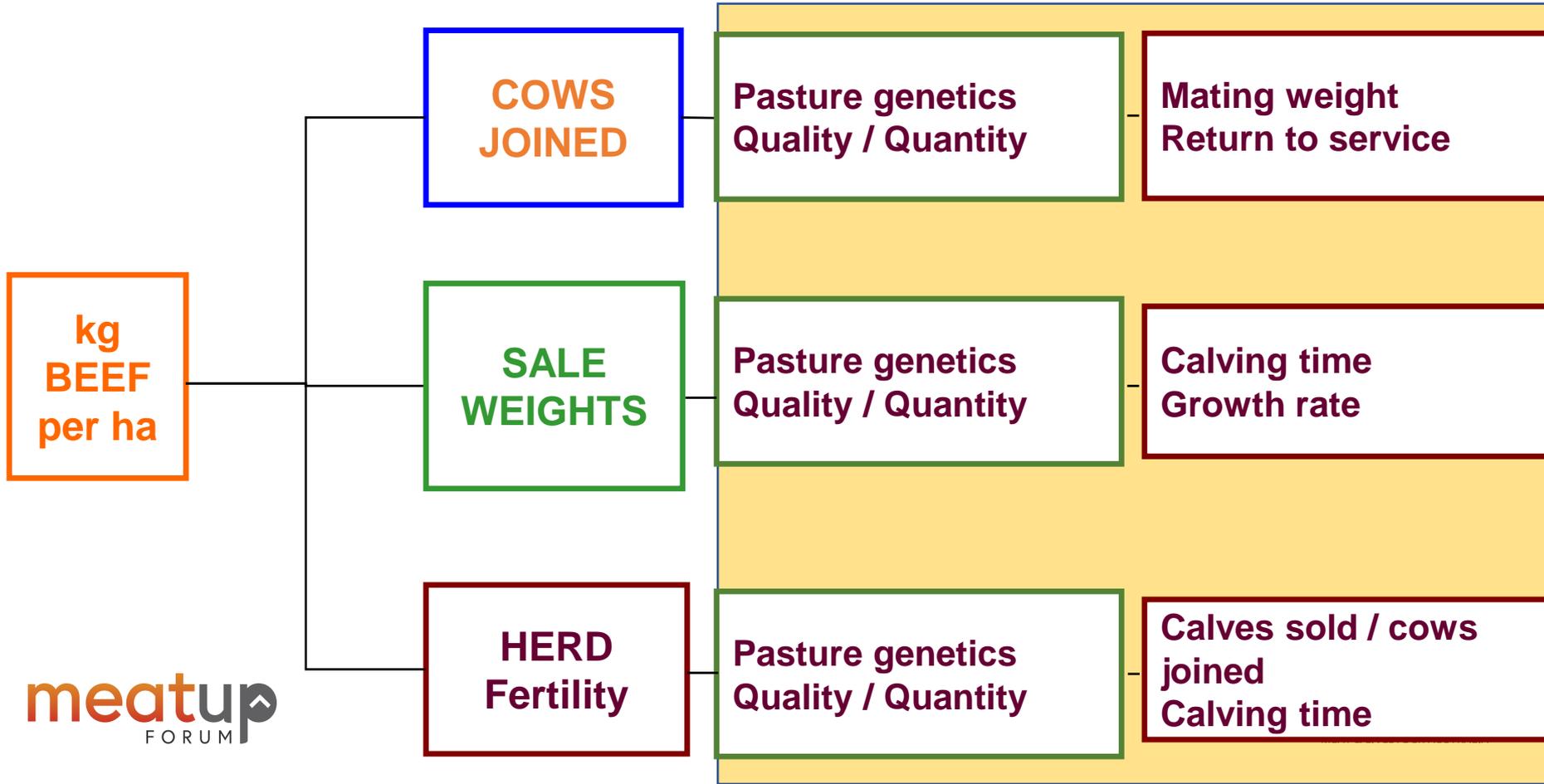
- **Feed quality and quantity** determines intake of energy
- **Energy intake drives animal production**
- **Efficiency of production** from ensuring:
  1. *required* pasture quality and quantity (energy), when it is needed
  2. utilisation of what is grown
- Seek multiple benefits of any one action
  - cows using summer feed
  - less fuel used when mulching

# Understand the components of the production system



More Beef from Pastures

# Set up the most profitable system



## Animal performance

- Genetics – breed & objectives
- Nutrition – forage, supplements
- Fertility (repro efficiency)
- Disease

## Product quality

- Genetics
- Management
- Health/nutrition

REPRODUCTIVE RATE



GROWTH RATE



PRODUCT QUALITY \$



kg beef / ha  
Focus on the  
components

STOCKING RATE



## Soils

- Physical, chemical, biological
- Water & nutrients

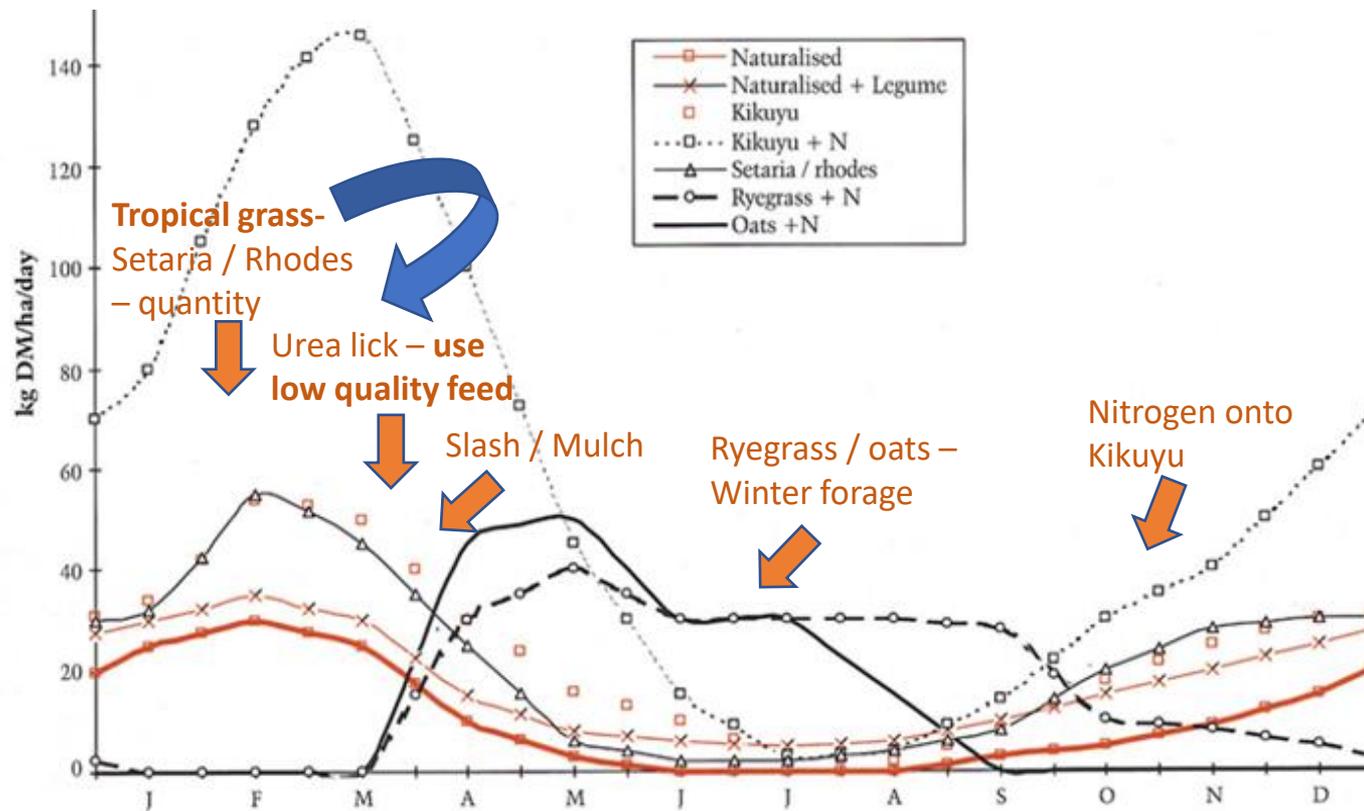
## Climate

- Rainfall pattern
- Soil moisture content
- Temperature
- Frosts and extremes

## Feedbase

- Production period
- **Quality** (ME, protein)
- **Quantity** (kg dry matter / ha)
- Genetics
- Pasture health/nutrition

# Estimated growth rate - north coast dryland pastures



# Local PDS reported benefits of winter feed

- With increased winter forage in the system allowed:
  - higher stocking and high pregnancy rate in breeders
  - retained an early calving pattern
  - improved liveweight of replacement heifers
  - agisted heifers
  - calves sold earlier
  - options to enable keeping stock off vulnerable pastures
  - summer grasses grazed more heavily and retained quality
- Meat produced per hectare increased on all sites
- **Production cost per kilogram of red meat generally increased, profitability of all winter forage sites increased overall.**

# Where to start ?

## PRIORITY

## COST

1. Aligning feed supply and demand	Nil – Very Low
2. Maximise utilisation (existing pastures)	Low
3. Increase productivity (existing pastures)	Moderate
4. Further improve pasture productivity	High

Start here and progress down

Spending to increase productivity can reduce cost of production by increasing efficiency

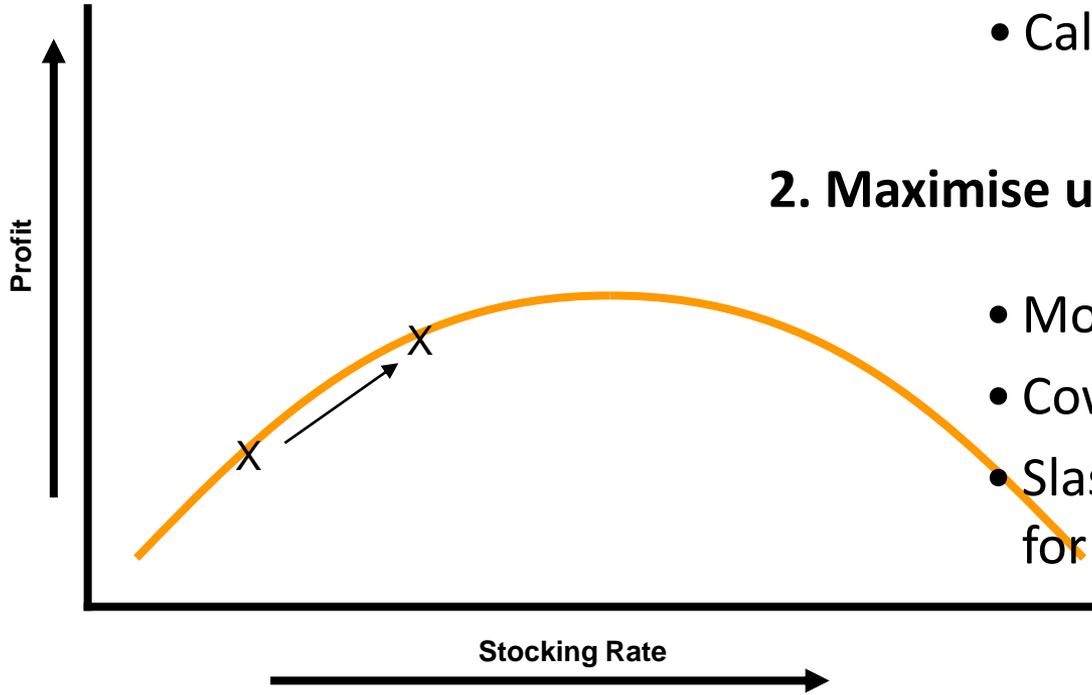
# Steps 1 & 2: Better utilisation

## 1. Aligning feed supply & demand

- Calving time – stock weights

## 2. Maximise use of existing pastures

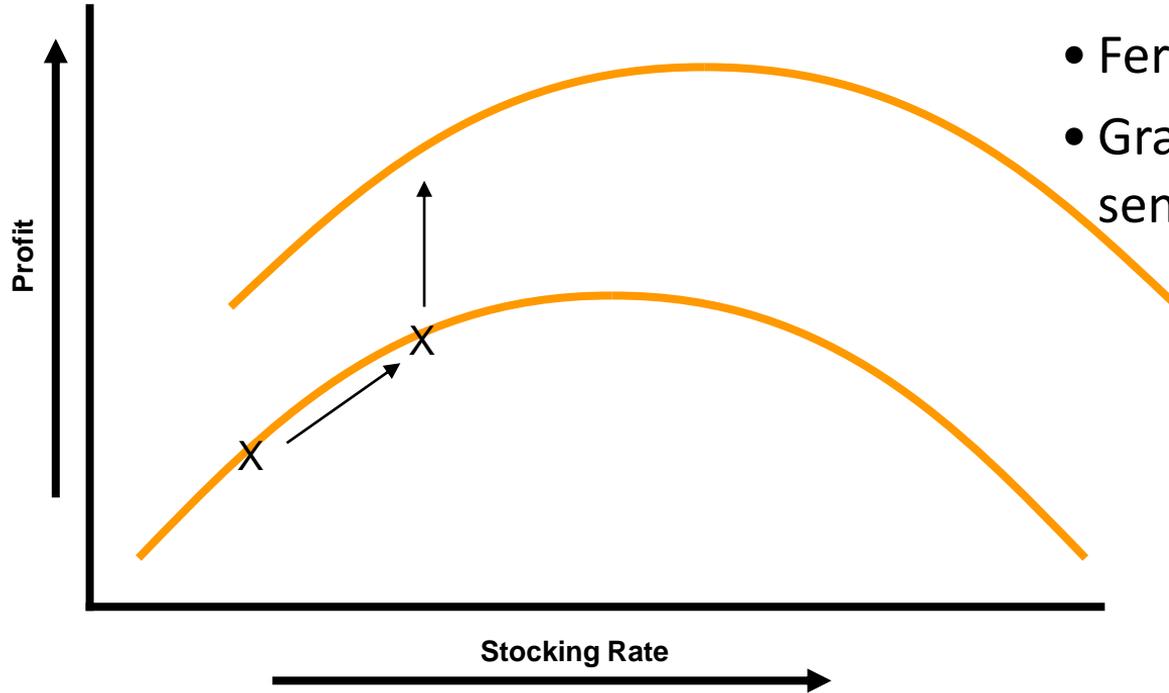
- More stock, smaller paddocks
- Cows + urea lick – use roughage
- Slashing/mulch – opens pasture for grass and clover



# Step 3: Growing more

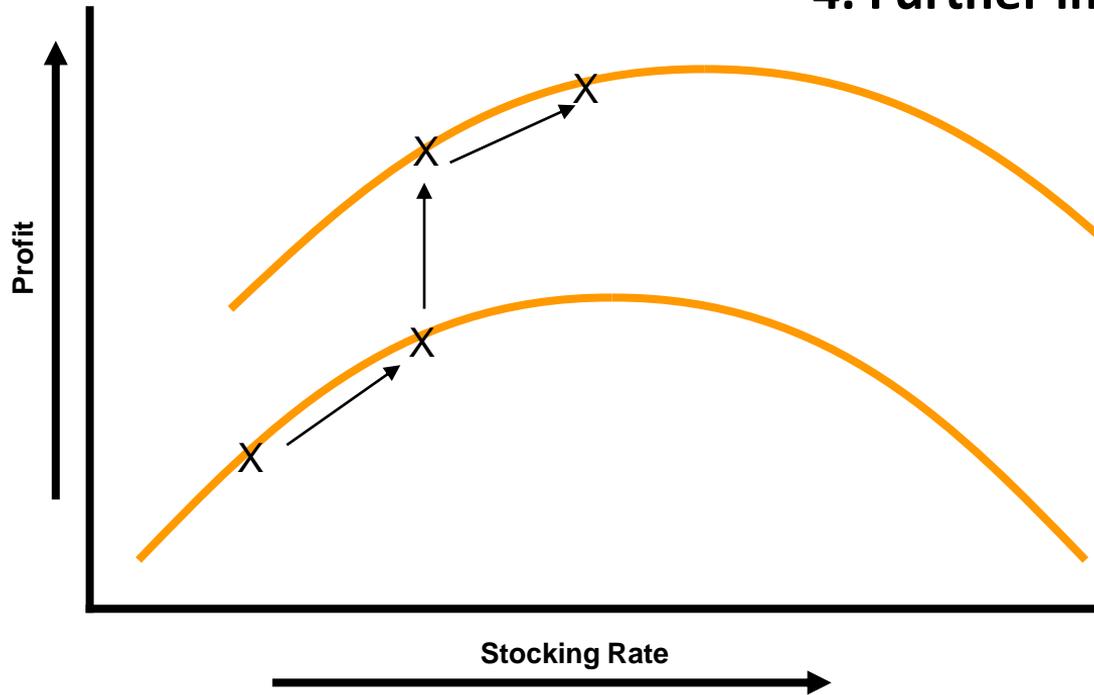
## 3. Increase productivity of pastures

- Fertiliser application
- Grazing pressure to delay senescence



# Finding the new optimum

## 4. Further improve pasture productivity



- Adding winter forages
- New pastures (tropical grasses)
- Assess opportunity cost
- Grow it, then **MUST** use it

# Key principles - to increase beef output

- **Be clear on your business objectives and targets**
- **Know feed supply** - Pasture assessment (quality and quantity); pasture growth
- **Know feed demand** - animal assessment and requirement
- **Consider options** (match supply & demand)
  - Feed budget, improvement
  - Management calendar
- **Evaluate options** (do the sums)
- **Make a choice** (same or change)
- **Plan and implement**
- **Monitor and adapt**



# Take home messages

- Invest in understanding system components and interactions
- Identify production opportunities with your resources
- Set clear targets and objectives - regularly review progress
- Identify optimum calving time, weaner growth path and sale weights
- Start by matching a system with feed supply
- Consider feed supply at critical periods, and solutions
  - both tactical action AND strategic changes

# Tools and resources

- See [More Beef from Pastures](#)
  - Module 1: [Setting Directions](#)
- [Feed demand calculator](#)
- Seasonal Forecasts [BOM website](#)
- [Tools and calculators](#)
- [NSW LLS Every Bit Counts](#) – build your annual management calendar

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