
Welcome to [ASK] - Always Seeking Knowledge!
#8 - Thursday, December 5, 2002
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1. Quick [ASK]

If you have a shortfall, then you have even more CHOICES. You may have to make big decisions now, if you haven't already made them.

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2. Welcome

Ultimately we all act out of either fear or love. It seems that fear is taking over in this metropolis, at least. Last week Suzie and I walked over the Harbour Bridge to attend a free concert in the forecourt of the Opera House (this city is full of free or nearly free entertainment. It is amazing - in four weeks time there is a month of it, all part of the Festival of Sydney).

We shared our trip across the bridge with security guards. They are patrolling the footpaths and are guarding each pylon. Our Prime Minister has told us not to be alarmed - but that we should watch out! I wonder what that means? It certainly means someone is fearful, somewhere. And the papers are full of fear as well. I read a little saying the other day attributed to the newspaper business, 'If it bleeds, it leads'. Fear sells!

Suzie reckons that the people she contacts every day, in person or on the phone, are telling her that businesses are marking time rather than growing. Employment is spinning its wheels, not moving. They are scared, so she says.

It is time to think another way. What about the concerts held all over the countryside in recent weeks. Wasn't that an outpouring of love from our city and townsfolk?

This weekend in Perth there has been a free concert for farmers and rural business people. The artists have donated their time, and the venue has

been donated. Rural people simply had to turn up. What a wonderful thought.

If I have a fear, it is that we will talk ourselves into a bad time. I notice that however tough things may get (and we probably hardly know what that means - how about fighting a World War and a drought simultaneously - as they did in the 1940's), the birds still sing, and the frogs are croaking away as I write this. Not too many cicadas yet, though.

Nature is a wonderful thing, and we are all fortunate to have been given the opportunity to work with her and/or share her benefits. The people who work with nature seem to have an edge: she is more forgiving to them. In the next section you will read about Brett and Renae Willcocks, and Brett's parents, Bill and Carol. They have been tested to the extreme in recent years, and held their courage.

When the wind of change blew with all its fury a couple of weeks ago, the Willcocks family realised they had passed the worst of their trial. There is another side, to which they are now striding, full of belief in themselves, and hope and compassion for those who are now in terminal trouble.

Celebrate the good things, especially as we come into the Christmas season. You will be interested to know the cicadas just started up, too!

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3. Around the Traps

WA

The HDMA workshop last Friday at the Sandringham was an inspiration to all those attending. Mel Vivian defined the edges of possibility for us all, whilst Don ('I'm a bit nervous about this..') Wilson spoke for 40 minutes without a note or a prop of any kind, in the most structured and logical manner imaginable. Several minutes of applause hardly did him justice.

Brett and Renae Willcocks were incredibly good. They described four consecutive years of crop failure, massive destocking of animals, fear and concern about criticism from neighbours about their management - and then, validation of their actions.

They showed the photos of November 15, 2002 when a windstorm literally took 50mm of topsoil from most of their district, yet left the litter cover (and soil) on the Willcocks farm, intact. In Brett's opinion those people in the district who have battled through feeding stock for years, are now likely to lose their farm following this wind storm. Their wealth just blew away.

Kester Baines challenged us all in a most appealing way. Look up the word, *hubris*, in your dictionary. More on this word in a later newsletter.

Vic

Generally ordinary down Mexico way. Suzie was in the Western Districts recently, and reports that was pretty good, and Graeme Hand tells me Port Fairy is still fairyland!

NSW

Still crook. Around the New England and Northern Tablelands the weather is filling in the dry patches pretty well. Inverell, Armidale etc all in good shape now, whilst west of there it is very ordinary. Quirindi sneaked its

first fall for months last week - about 40mm in places.

The North Coast is hanging-in, whilst the South Coast is decidedly dry. Around Delegate it is as 'green as a leek', a welcome change for that area.

Dubbo was host to some 30 people at the first HDMA workshop, chaired by Brian Marshall. I am told it was a great success, with excellent presentations by Kester Baines, and practitioners Mary Maclean and Mike Parish.

NZ

The season continues patchy, especially in the Otago, whilst Southland is going ok. Suzie and I are looking forward to the HDMA presentation at Lincoln this Friday. A really impressive list of speakers.

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4. Pulling through the drought - getting grazing planning right

My apologies to our city friends. This section, this month, is very rural. People are hurting, and in the process may make some decisions they later regret. The principles apply just as much to city based decisions, however. When the chips are down it is natural but dangerous to revert to usual practice.

The next few months are likely to be challenging for many people. There are two scenarios, depending on location.

In the winter rainfall areas - eg southern WA and Victoria, (and some parts of NZ - although perhaps not applicable this year, yet), the die is cast. The season is over. How much feed you have now is how much feed you have available, and must plan out till the next break. For some it is an abundance, for many it is a shortfall.

Regardless, you must do your planning! Get out in the paddock and do your feed assessment (and remember, the animals will soon tell you if your assessments are right or wrong, so don't worry about being an expert at this stage).

Do the calculations. If you have an abundance, you have CHOICE. You can choose between feeding the microbes now (and making a deposit in the soil bank for next year) or feeding more stock now, and making more money this year. Test the decision towards your holistic goal.

If you have a shortfall, then you have even more CHOICES. You may have to make big decisions now, if you haven't already made them.

If you elect to de-stock, remember, the longer you wait, the more you have to sell. It is a mathematical thing. Your task is to get the animals that remain in your care, safely to an end point. If you are unsure about all of this, call us, and we will give you the names of people who have done this all before, who have made the adjustments early, and marched on to success.

For the rest of us.

I am starting to hear some stories that frighten me. For instance, people just 'opening the gates'. I am sure that the intention is good, but I wonder if the action was ever seriously tested towards a holistic goal. I suspect that people have fallen prey to well meaning but misinformed external advisers, such as doubting family members, or stock and station agents.

Over the years many people have fallen back to conventional decision making when the pressure is on. Please believe me, the time people most need holistic decision making is the time other people will be encouraging you to forget it. If you doubt that, ask Brett Willcocks (08) 9871 9045

If you have opened all the gates, the question is - what are you going to do when you get SOME rain?? Droughts are low rainfall, not no rainfall.

In the next few months there is a high probability of storms - and some rain. I would suggest that you really test towards your holistic goal the action of keeping the remaining stock on a graze plan, however slow you have to go.

When it rains in the summer growing regions, FEED IS GOING TO GROW. If your remaining stock are in one mob, then every day, every square metre of pasture that is not exposed to stock today, will be growing. The next day it will double its growth, and the next day it will double again.

If the gates are open, every plant in every paddock is at risk of overgrazing (a second bite before the plant has fully recovered from a previous bite). There are two consequences - IMMEDIATELY decreased grass production when you MOST need it, and probable plant deaths.

Read the sections in your manual on drought strategies. Read the textbook. Make phone calls to people who have dealt with drought using new decision making.

A strategy that works in practice is to keep the stock moving every day, even several times a day. Give them fresh dirt if needs be. Remember the story I told previously, that at the end of the day droughts are not about lack of feed - or lack of money. They are about lack of hope! Moving those stock every day gives them hope, too!

I am not saying that opening the gates is all wrong, although I confess that I can personally conceive of no situation where it would be an option for me, ever again. If the action tests as the highest marginal reaction towards your holistic goal, then unequivocally, that is what you should do.

Remember, holistic management does not make value judgements - it is simply a framework that allows you to make the value judgements in the light of your highest values. My concern is whether people are abandoning it in the time of greatest need.

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5. Update your Diary

Events we have planned include:

Monday, December 2, Braidwood, NSW	Introduction to Holistic Management
Wednesday, December 11, Wauchope, NSW (Krambach group will be joining this Group)	Wealth Generation and Financial Planning
Tuesday, December 17, Bega, NSW	Wealth Generation and Financial Planning
Tuesday, January 7, Braidwood, NSW	Wealth Generation and Financial Planning
Wednesday, January 15, Gresford, NSW	Introduction to Holistic Management
Sunday, January 19, Braidwood, NSW	Grazing and Land Planning
Wednesday, January 22, Bega, NSW	Grazing and Land Planning
Monday, February 3, Wingham, NSW	Grazing and Land Planning

Friday, February 7, Wauchope, NSW

Grazing and Land Planning

Monday, February 17, Quirindi, NSW

Introduction to Holistic Management

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Coaching (unashamed marketing spiel)

For many years our business has been coaching people in holistic goal formation, wealth generation planning and biological planning. This service is provided by regular phone schedule, by email, or in person at your location.

Successful people use a coach to stay on track. Importantly, in difficult times it often provides the critical difference between clarity and debilitating confusion.

Without caring help, it is all too easy to deviate from where you want to be - to some place else. We act as a 'process coach', letting you focus on the outcome you require, taking away the worries people so often experience - such as, 'Am I doing this the right way?' Coaching is an important part of working on your business rather than all the time in the business.

Email blward@holisticresults.com.au to discuss your coaching time.

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6. Books and Materials you can use

"Guns, Germs and Steel"
By Jared diamond

The subtitle tells it all - A Short History of Everybody For The Last 13,000 Years.

Diamond tells his version of why history unfolded differently on different continents. He is driven by three factors:

1 People are increasingly interested in societies besides those of western Eurasia.

2 Some of these other societies are rising to become important political and economic forces, and Diamond tells us about their origins and beliefs. History and society significantly predates the emergence of writing some 3,000 years ago. Here is a fertile area of research and knowledge. These people all had civilisation as we define it, and all failed at some stage. Diamond reflects on their failures.

3 He then asks and answers the question, 'Why did the ingredients of conquest mostly develop in western Eurasia. Why did these people become disproportionately powerful and innovative?'

This is no five-minute read, but if you are keen on knowing more about history, presented in an evocative and graphic way, you'll enjoy this book immensely.

A must read for everyone, at around \$A25.00

By the way:

You can get this book from The Book Connection in Dubbo, NSW

Ph: 02 6882 3311 Fax: 02 6882 3311 or email orders@bookconnection.com.au

(Also ask them about their Mail Order Catalogue - it is terrific)

or

Scorpio Books in Christchurch, NZ

Ph: 03 379 2882 Fax: 03 379 2886 or email scorpbk@ihug.co.nz

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7. Joke

An elderly gent was invited to his old friends' home for dinner one evening. He was impressed by the way his mate preceded every request to his wife with endearing terms-- Honey, My Love, Darling, Sweetheart, Pumpkin, etc.

The couple had been married almost 70 years and, clearly, they were still very much in love. While the wife was in the kitchen, the man leaned over and said to his host, "I think it's wonderful that, after all these years, you still call your wife those loving pet names."

The old man hung his head. "I have to tell you the truth," he said, "I forgot her name about 10 years ago."

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7. Quotes that mean something

"Just don't give up trying to do what you really want to do. Where there's love and inspiration, I don't think you can go wrong."

-- Ella Fitzgerald

"Destiny is not a matter of chance, it is a matter of choice. It is not a thing to be waited for, it is a thing to be achieved."

-- Jeremy Kitson

"Don't be afraid your life will end; be afraid that it will never begin."

-- Grace Hansen

"Fear of the unknown is the worst of all the fears; it kills the creative powers that come from Curiosity."

-- Dr. Nirvikar Dahiya

"Anything that makes ranching more difficult, rather than more productive, deserves some healthy scrutiny."

-- Mark Rey, Under Secretary of Agriculture, USA

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Regards

Bruce Ward