Changing Production systems or Enterprise Mix

The key to drought management is the same as in a normal year: be prepared and be flexible. You must be prepared to change the rotational mix and review your plans as the season progresses.

The table below can guide you in your choices

**The Tactical Decision Making Timeline – Northern Wheatbelt**

– compiled by Rob Sands, FARMANCO Management Consultants

The following tables attempt to put into a simple framework the tactical decisions required as a season progresses. The critical dates shown apply to the Northern Wheatbelt. The dates can be adjusted by +**5 days for the Central Wheatbelt** and **+10 days for the Southern Wheatbelt.**

The ***Cereal/Pasture Yield % of Av.*** Can be used as a guide to the effect on yield potential from later sowing dates, and should form the basis for reducing inputs for the crop. As crop potential drops, fertiliser rates and can be reduced significantly, and prophylactic fungicides should be left out. Research has shown that the time of sowing yield reduction varies from 1.0% to 2.0 % per day. Duplex and shallow soils tend to have the higher losses, and deep soils the lower losses. Heavy soils need more rainfall to get above the wilting point of the soil and therefore have less available moisture in dry years then lighter soils.

You should aim to maintain an acceptable grazing pressure by matching ***Stocking Rate*** to the amount of available feed. Stocking Rate can be reduced by less sheep same area, same sheep more area, same sheep some in feedlot, same sheep some on agistment. The reduction in pasture production from late emergence will be similar to the reduction in Cereal Yield in many cases, so use this as a guide to the realistic stocking rates as a percentage of your average.

Part 1: Early to Normal Start to Season

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Critical Dates | Soil Moisture Levels | Cereal Yield % of Av. | Weed Pressure | Crop Options | Sheep Options |
| 10th April | >25 mm | Too Early | Low | Sow Med to Long Season Canola | Increase stocking rates |
| High | Wait for weed germination |
| <25mm | ------ | Low/High | Wait |
| 20th April | >25 mm | Too Early | Low | Sow Canola & Lupins, Increase Crop Area | Increase stocking rates |
| High | Wait for 7 days then sow |
| 10 -25 mm | Low | Sow Canola & Lupins if they will germinate |
| High | Wait for resistant weed germination  |
| <10 mm | ------ | Low/High | Wait |
| 1st May | >25 mm | 130% | Low | Sow Canola & Lupins, long season cereals | Increase stocking rates |
| High | Wait for 7 days then sow |
| 10 -25 mm | 120% | Low | Sow Canola, Lupins, long season cereals |
| High | Wait |
| < 10 mm | ------ | Low/High | Wait |
| 10th May | >25 mm | 115% | Low | Only Sow Canola & Lupins on better soil types, Sow Highest Yielding Long to Medium Cereals  | Normal stocking rates |
| High | Wait for 7 days then sow |
| 10 -25 mm | 110% | Low | Sow medium season cereals |
| High | Wait for weed germination |
| < 10 mm | ------ | Low/High | Wait |
| 20th May | >25 mm | 105% | Low | Sow Medium to Short Season Cereals. Only sow Lupins and Canola in med to high rainfall areas on good soil types | Normal stocking rates |
| High | Wait for weed germination |
| 10 - 25 mm | 100% | Low | Sow medium to short season cereals | Look to Reduce stocking rates |
| High | Wait for weed germination |
| < 10 mm |  | Low/High | Wait | Reduce stocking rates |
| 1st June | >25 mm | 90% | Low | Sow medium to short season cereals | Reduce stocking rates by 20% |
| High | Wait for weed germination |
| 10 - 25 mm | 85% | Low | Sow short season cereals, reduce inputs |
| High | Wait for weed germination |
| < 10 mm | ----- | Low/High | Wait |

Part 2: Late Start to Season

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Critical Dates | Total Soil Moisture Levels | Cereal Yield % of Av. | Weed Pressure | Crop Options | Sheep Options |
| 10th June | >25 mm | 70% | Low | Sow short season cereals reduce inputs | Reduce stocking rates by 30% |
| High | Wait for weed germination if resistant |
| 10 - 25 mm | 65% | Low | Sow short to very short season cereals, minimal inputs |
| High | Wait for resistant weed germination OR leave out |
| < 10 mm | ----- | Low | Wait |
| High | Leave Out for Sheep |
| 20th June | >25 mm | 55% | Low | Sow short to very short season cereals, minimal inputs | Reduce stocking rates by 45% - Sell all non essential stock |
| High | Wait for weed germination if resistant |
| 10 - 25 mm | 45% | Low | Sow very short season Cereals |
| High | Leave Out for Sheep, sow cereal for fodder |
| < 10 mm | ----- | Low | Wait |
| High | Leave Out for Sheep |
| 1st July | >25 mm | 40% | Low | Only sow very short season Cereals on better soil types, minimal inputs | Reduce stocking rates by 60% -Only keep core breeding stock |
| High | Leave Out for Sheep, sow cereal for fodder |
| < 25 mm | ----- | Low | Leave Out for Sheep |
| High | Leave Out for Sheep |
| 10th July | >25 mm | 30% | Low | Only sow very short season cereals on better soil types in the medium and high rainfall areas, minimal inputs | Reduce stocking rates by 60% -Only keep core breeding stock |
| High | Leave Out for Sheep, sow cereal for fodder |
| < 25 mm | ----- | Low | Leave Out for Sheep |
| High | Leave Out for Sheep |
| 20th July | >25 mm | 20% | Low | Only sow very short season cereals on better soil types in the medium to high rainfall areas, minimal inputs | Reduce stocking rates by 75% -Reduce Stock to your available Feed Budget |
| High | Leave Out for Sheep, sow cereal for fodder |
| < 25 mm | ----- | Low | Leave Out for Sheep |
| High | Leave Out for Sheep |
| 1st Aug | >25 mm | ----- | Low | Leave Out for Sheep, sow cereal for fodder | Reduce Stock to minimum OR Sell All stock and go on holidays |
| High | Leave Out for Sheep, sow cereal for fodder |
| < 25 mm | ----- | Low | Leave Out for Sheep |
| High | Leave Out for Sheep |