

## Trials to boost calf survival rates

**T**HE Four Season Company, owned by managing director Charles (Chick) Olsson, has been supplying animal nutrition products across Australia since 1997.

"Tens of thousands of tons of supplements are used annually in the north of Australia," Mr Olsson said.

"There have been great improvements in breeder survival but the opportunity still exists to boost breeder reproductivity, with the north reporting an average of 65 percent calving in normal years.

"Every year the north experiences a virtual drought from July to December and it is a testament to the quality of the northern beef herd and the farmers who produce beef despite these challenges every year.

"Feeding high-urea supplements has seen a reduction in breeder mortality but, as a general rule, has done little in actually increasing calving rates.

"Historically, such feeding strategies are only implemented towards the end of the dry season."

In the early 1980s, Chick Olsson, in conjunction with the Desa Cattle company in the Northern Territory, embarked on an early dry season supplementation program on

Camfield and Montejinni stations.

A program of supplements was selected based on major known deficiencies, utilising a balanced nutrient and safer low-urea supplementation product.

The product was fed out from July to November to all breeding cows.

Mr Olsson explained that, rather than wait until cows had lost condition at the end of the dry season, a strategy was adopted to try and keep cows in best condition for as long as possible.

"After this strategic supplementation began, calving rates for the succeeding years rose to levels above 80pc every year.

"During 2011 many northern cattlemen have expressed the intention to look at improving calving rates, as a long-term average.

"Four Season and MDH have both recognised that, although 30pc urea supplements play a big part in helping animals through the driest part of the year, there exist opportunities to address improved methods of supplementation that are specifically for boosting calf survival rates and general cow health.

"In trying to make products safe, increasing hardness or bitterness has been counter-productive in times of high nutrient need."



Mark and Brendon Upham, with James Dickson and Zanda McDonald, inspecting some trial blocks on Rutland Plains.



James Dickson (left), Four Season, with Dr Ed Butterworth, from North West Vet Clinic Mt Isa, discussing the deficiencies in Northern Queensland.

Four Season national sales manager James Dickson has been working closely with MDH staff and owner Zanda McDonald in researching and developing a range of new-age supplements aimed at producing the desired outcome of a higher calf survival rate.

For the past six months, a range of supplements has been produced and tested along with grass samples to identify any extra major or minor deficiencies.

"It seems impossible that one product can fit all pasture types and it is becoming obvious that two or three types of supplements will have to be fed out at the same time and throughout the season," Mr Dickson said.

"For instance, one of the products that was highly consumed by cattle in the trial were high-sulphur and phosphorus blocks, based with bypass protein and no urea.

"Although it is early days,

Four Season has made a commitment to MDH to work closely on improving correct supplementation, identifying seasonal and grass deficiencies and ensuring that cattle are receiving what they need, when they need it.

"The days of just producing a one off-the-shelf block are over, with major pastoral companies demanding appropriate effective supplementation strategies and in-paddock service, plus testing, to ensure their budgets are not

We are expecting to see some fairly handy improvements in calving over the coming years.

wasted but are invested in herd health and high productivity. "It really doesn't cost any more to supplement correctly, just some effort to ensure it's done properly."

Chick Olsson works on the philosophy that it doesn't really matter what you do in life, it's how you do it.

"We are expecting to see some fairly handy improvements in calving over the coming years and some measurable cost benefits in doing so," he said.

"What a great job it is to mix with the wonderful people of the north. There is no better job in the world!"

For more information about Four Season Company call (07) 3803 3755 or go to [www.fourseasonco.com.au](http://www.fourseasonco.com.au)

AgP

Salt Blocks | Loose Mix | Liquid Feed | Molasses Blocks | Fishing Burley

# Scientific NUTRITION



[www.fourseasonco.com.au](http://www.fourseasonco.com.au)

**4 Season Company Pty Ltd**

ACN 075 508 664

James Dickson  
National Sales Manager  
M: 0403 045 665  
[james@fourseasonco.com.au](mailto:james@fourseasonco.com.au)  
[tania@fourseasonco.com.au](mailto:tania@fourseasonco.com.au)

P: (07) 3803 3755