

TALKING CANE TRASH

BLANKETING THE HERBERT WITH THE LATEST INFORMATION

Record Keeping – Don't Save it for a Rainy Day

Why keep records?

Record keeping is an important component of farm management. The notebook you have in the tractor and the farm map you update annually are just two types of record keeping that growers use on a daily basis, which support the monitoring of farm activities, business decision making, and planning for the future.

What on-farm practices require record keeping?

In the Wet Tropics farmers are required to keep records of all nutrient applications & chemical applications.

You can find all of the requirements for keeping these records in the following link –

<https://www.qld.gov.au/environment/agriculture/sustainable-farming/reef/reef-regulations/sugarcane>

Keeping records practical

1. Be proactive - Don't wait until you receive an audit letter to get your records in order.
2. Keep it simple & go steady - Review the records you are already keeping and determine what other records you might need to add in future.
3. Find a routine - Most records must be made within 3 days, but it's better to record applications that same day while it's still fresh in your memory. Set a time to make records that suits you (eg. after dinner), or work record keeping into your day-to-day activities by keeping your record book close to hand.
4. Make use of resources - HCPSL has some useful templates for record keeping that growers can use. Your local grower association may also have some additional recording materials or templates. If you are a tech-wizard, consider setting up your own spreadsheets or using a farm management software.
5. Review your records - Records can be useful in helping to understand why there has been a change in productivity and/or profitability (eg. a new chemical applied was more effective than the previous). Consider talking to an advisor about working through past records for determining some future strategies.

Understanding Organic Carbon and Nitrogen in the Soil

Organic carbon (%) is used to determine the nitrogen requirement of soil. This is because nitrogen is stored in organic matter and is a more reliable method than using soil ammonia and nitrate levels, which fluctuate regularly.

Knowing your soil organic carbon level will give you a better understanding of how much nitrogen is in your soil.

Subsequently this affects nitrogen fertiliser recommendations, as nitrogen stored in the soil is subtracted from the total amount of nitrogen required to grow a sugarcane crop, which according to Six Easy Steps® is 160kg of nitrogen per hectare in the Herbert.

As an example, a soil with 1% soil organic carbon (1.72% organic matter) can store 20kg/ha of nitrogen. Therefore the recommended nitrogen application will be 140kg/ha (160kg/ha – 20kg/ha).

Research indicates that applying significantly more or less nitrogen than the recommended nitrogen rate can negatively impact soil health, including organic matter.



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Project Squealer: Putting New Tech to the Test on Feral Pigs

Project Squealer looked at how new tools might help to control feral pigs. The project tested drone-mounted thermal cameras, drones for bait delivery, and GPS tracking collars.

Thermal cameras proved handy by assisting with counting the number and size of mobs, giving landholders better information for baiting and trapping. A special note for all new drone operators; flying at night requires special licensing.

While using drones to drop baits worked, it wasn't cheap. With the cost of the drone, baiting gear, operator training, and flight approvals, a single baiting could cost 1000's of dollars; not to mention the cost of monitoring cameras. Ultimately the project found that money might be better spent on other control methods.

GPS collars gave fresh insight into pig movements. The majority of pigs collared roamed smaller areas than expected. Males travelled farther than females, whose home ranges were around 5 km²; one staying within just 150 hectares. Some pigs avoided cane, while others stuck to specific blocks or varieties; making their habits more predictable.

Tracking also showed that pigs damaging cane usually live within 2 km of the site, often in overlapping family groups.



KEY DATES

HCPSL Christmas Closure

Monday 22nd of December to Friday 2nd of January



Fallow Management

The primary goal of a good fallow management strategy is to reduce not just the number of weeds but also your soils weed seed bank, as well as prevent the spread of Ratoon Stunting Disease (RSD) into the next crop.

The two primary options for assisting with this, as well as to terminate your fallow crop, are spraying with herbicides and mechanical cultivation.

Spraying: Glyphosate-based herbicides (e.g. Wipe-Out 450) can be used for controlling grasses, sedges, and legumes at a rate of 4-6 L/ha. The addition of Fluroxypyr (Starane® Advanced) helps manage broadleaf and vine species, while 2,4D can also be added to assist with a wider range of broadleaf weeds (always check herbicide compatibility before mixing!).

Haloxypol (Verdict®520) is another option for grass control but requires additional broadleaf control and is incompatible with 2,4D.

Mechanical Cultivation: Methods like disking and rotary hoeing are alternatives to spraying but can lead to nitrogen loss in legumes and attract Symphyla, which can harm young plant cane. To combat Symphyla Venom 240 SC (Bifenthrin) can be applied at planting.

Please use the following link for more Fallow Management information – [2025 Fallow Management Do's Don'ts](#)

For further information or advice on any of the above topics, contact HCPSL.

Phone: (07) 4776 1808 or www.hcpsl.com