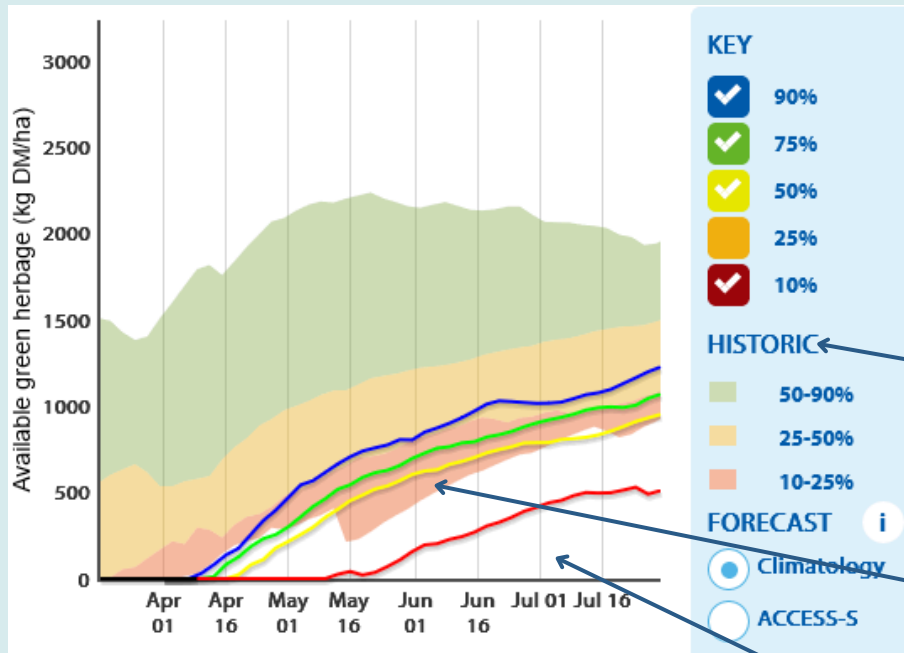# FARMING FORECASTER AND THE WARNING SIGNS OF DRY TIMES

The farmingforecaster.com.au site provides a range of information about pastures, groundcover, soil moisture and supplementary feeding.

EXAMPLE OF A PASTURE FORECAST TO ASSESS THE RISK OF A DRY EVENT

Historical data provides a benchmark to compare against the forecast for the current period. To get a more comprehensive picture of what is happening in your area, check several sites around your locality. The same message from several sites boosts data confidence. Everyone, however, will have their own attitude to risk.

Historical data (the shaded areas on the graph) shows the amount of available pasture that has occurred over the last 30 years expressed as percentiles.

The red shaded area gives information about dry events. It covers the 10-25% of data representing the drier end of measurements.

The white area below the red band shows where pasture was in the driest three years out of the last 30.

If the green (75%) forecast line is in the red shaded area of the graph, it means there is a 3/4 chance that the current period is forecast to have dry conditions and it is a strong sign to start planning for a dry event.

If the yellow (50%) forecast line is in the red area, this is not as strong of a signal because there is an equal chance of the forecast being better or worse.
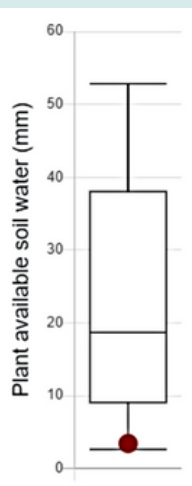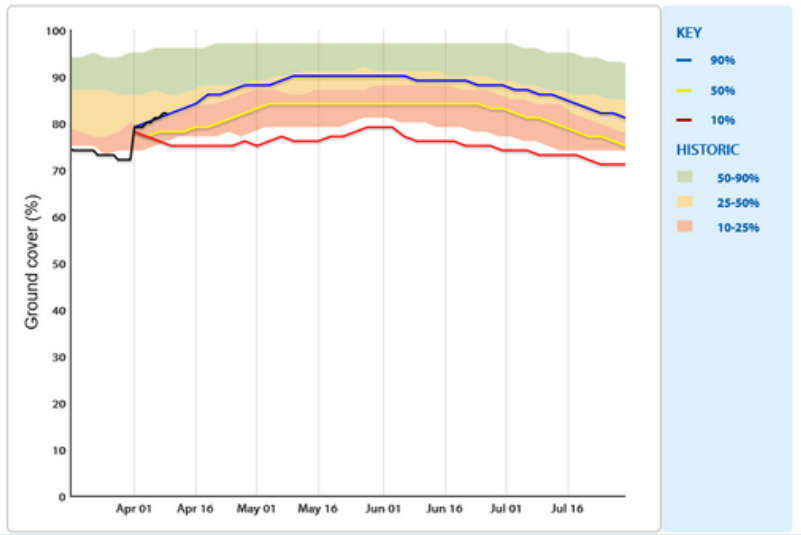
WHAT OTHER INFORMATION SHOULD I LOOK AT?

Probe soil moisture data tells you the amount and location of moisture in the soil profile. If the current data is shaded red then you have a dry profile and no buffer for a future dry period.

Please note the soil probe is separate to the modelled soil moisture and doesn't contribute to the forecast.

Model soil moisture data is calculated from the 5 km gridded daily weather data and takes account of the soil type and its impact on storing soil moisture. The red dot is the current value (3 day average) and the box plot shows you where the soil moisture has been over the last 30 years for the same 3 days.

If the red dot is below the box it is telling you the current values are in the driest 25% of the last 30 years for the current date.

The **ground cover graph** compares the historical data against the current forecast. If the 50% forecast is tracking in the red area, this is a strong warning about damage to pasture which will have long term impacts.
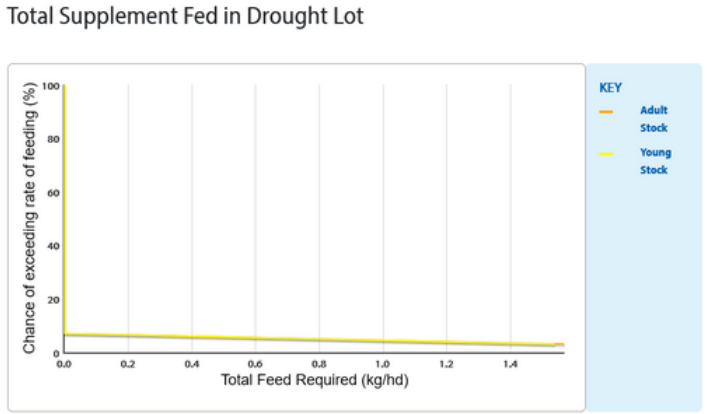

Warning: The Drought Lot is active at some point during this time period.
Learn More

A **droughtlot warning** will appear on the pasture graph if groundcover rules are breached (<75%). The droughtlot warning will appear if the rule is breached more than 10% of the time. The warning does not indicate how significant the problem is (view supplement graphs below). A breach of 20% or 80% gives the same warning message.

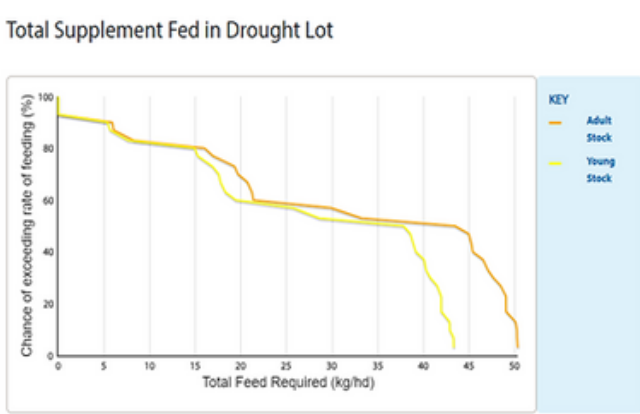## HOW DO I INTERPRET THE DROUGHTLOT WARNING?

Compare the graphs below and see the difference in potential feeding:

GRAPH A

Over the 4 projected months, there is a 90% chance that you do not need to supplementary feed or only need to supplementary feed a small amount (5kg/hd) of grain. The same value applies to the adults and young stock.

GRAPH B

Over the 4 projected months, there is a 90% chance that you will be required to feed both stock classes. There is a 50% chance the amount needed is around 30kg/hd and in the worst scenario the amount could approach 50kg/hd.

In Graph B, most of the 30 years of historical data must break the groundcover rule to have such high amount of feeding, and the current position must be very dry. In Graph A, it might only be a small part of one year's data that has broken the rule. You must decide at what chance of feeding (%) you will react and start your planning.