

**SECTION 4  
AREA ROUNDUP**

This section brought to you in association with



# Dawson-Callide

By Simon Struss

The area planted last season was severely reduced due to poor prices, high production costs, strong alternative crops, low starting water allocations and the bitter memories of ploughing out droughted crops the previous season.

But the 1700 hectare crop started to hit the ground in late September, concluding around mid November.

Shortly after the close of the Bollgard window it started to rain — unfortunately too late to bolster the meagre area planted.

The crop endured frequent and substantial rainfall events through to mid January. During this time weather conditions were the mildest for many years. As a result, early fruit set was reduced with many small slab sided bolls. Boll rots and tight locking was ubiquitous later in the season.

Fortunately February and March provided much needed sunshine. The crops compensated well with solid top crops of good quality lint.

The final analysis saw an average yield of 8.75 bales per hectare, the majority of it base grade and above. A pleasing result considering how things looked at Christmas time.

### Planting and varieties

Bollgard varieties were planted on all but three fields. Roundup Ready was also very popular.

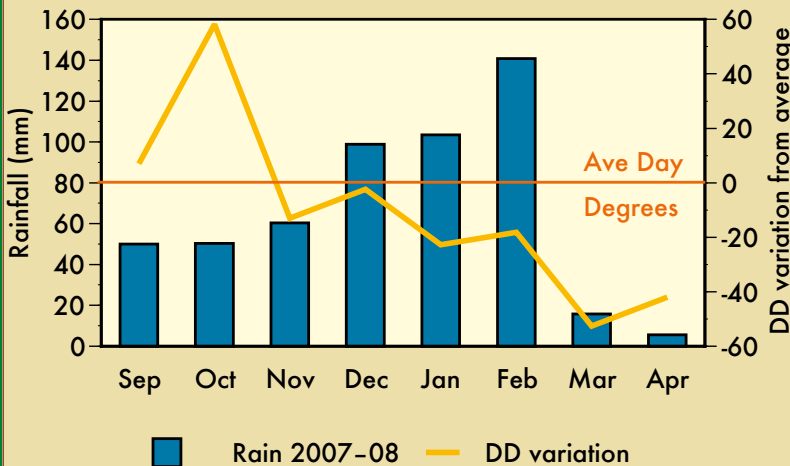
Most fields were watered up under fine skies and achieved excellent plant stands, largely free of seedling diseases. Given the high uptake of the Roundup Ready technology, early weed populations were easily controlled.

Sicot 71 BR accounted for more than 95 per cent of the planting.

Two fields of two by one skiprow were grown. The results justified the trial from a yield and economic perspective. It would seem that this system

### Theodore 2007-08 seasonal climate

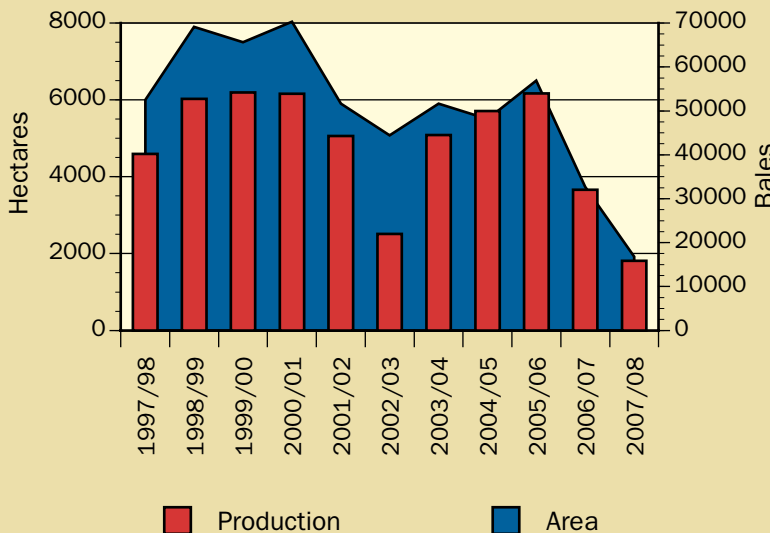
**Total Day Degrees: 2899 (-86); Total rain: 525 mm (-5)**



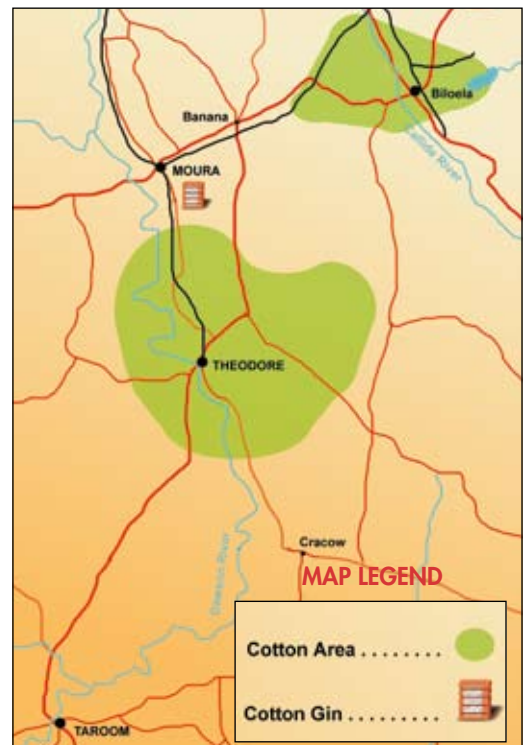
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Total
<b>Cold shock</b>	12	1	0	0	0	0	2	7	22 (+2)
<b>Hot shock</b>	0	3	2	2	1	2	0	0	10 (-15)

\*Average day degrees from 1957 to 2008.  
Source: CSIRO Plant Industry.

### Dawson-Callide: Area and production



### Dawson-Callide cotton area



has a place in our environment, and may be utilised more extensively in the future.

Small areas of Sicot 75 (conventional) attracted only low heliothis pressure, and so performed comparatively well against Bollgard crops — even though the cooler season did not entirely suit Sicot 75.

Only one field of dryland (80 BRF) was planted. It yielded well given the wet season. Any expansion in dryland cotton in this area is hampered by the early placement of the Bollgard planting window. There is a flourishing industry out there if regulators are prepared to address the issue seriously and provide a planting window suitable to requirements.

**Diseases**

As previously mentioned, boll rots impacted on final yields.

No new Fusarium areas became evident throughout the season. There were no other disease problems.

**Insects**

The area was sprayed on average twice for mirids. Heliothis caused no damage in Bollgard crops and required eight treatments in the conventional crops.

Jassids and cotton stainers slowly increased during the season and required controlling in some cases.

Whitefly populations were treated late in the season.

**Defoliation**

Defoliation started in late March, a month later

than usual. Early defoliations were successful, giving complete leaf drop. As the season progressed, good defoliations became rare. Three passes were required on difficult crops. Defoliations continued for two months.

**Picking**

Picking was drawn out with the crop opening slower than usual. This was also due to the late top crop set after the rain.

Rain delays were few.

**Yields and grades**

Most crops yielded between 8.5 and 10 bales per hectare. Grades were mostly base or above. Leaf downgrading remains a problem. This issue appears to plague the area yearly for whatever reason.

**Conclusion**

All in all the results were satisfactory given the wet season and delayed picking.

Prospects for next year appear excellent. At the time of writing, prices are nudging \$500 per bale and water allocations are reasonable for this time of the year. As per usual, the Dawson will require a flow by Christmas to support any substantial crop. There is a strong likelihood cotton may reappear in the Callide Valley and even some under a centre pivot. If prices remain firm and more water becomes available early in the season, conventional cotton may tempt growers.

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