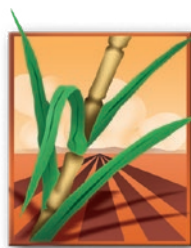




**Y**OU may recall that the cover of our last issue featured severe flooding outside of Mossman in North Queensland. In the interest of fair treatment – and with a nod to the passions aroused by State of Origin – we head 2000 kms south for the cover of this issue.



Mind you, we are able to stick with that flooding theme! The cane area of Northern NSW has yet again been inundated. And when I say inundated – they went well under.

I had a window of opportunity a few months back to drive through the area in between flood peaks – and by 'peaks' I mean seriously high peaks – Everest like peaks.

At stream crossings on the 'river flat' farming country the flood debris in the trees was often 10–15 metres over our heads.

I'm not near as tall as the average cane plant but even so, the very tallest of the cane would still have been struggling to breathe.

And here's a few more challenges that may take your breath away.

Seems we can expect to contend with elevated ocean container shipping costs and ongoing supply disruptions for at least another year before a 'normalisation' of the global ocean freight system, according to new research from Rabobank.

Even though the record-breaking high ocean freight rates seen in the past two years, driven by pandemic-related disruptions, have already begun to soften they remain three to five times above pre-2020 levels.

And wait there's more! Not only have freight costs gone way up but the likelihood of the freight arriving on time has gone way down. Port congestion, exacerbated by staff shortages on the wharves, and only slow additions of new shipping capacity have seen significant and unpredictable delivery delays.

That might explain why our new 4WD has yet arrive – thankfully the 12-year-old Nissan's still got plenty of life left in it – and it's here, on the ground that is Australia, right now.

It's a pity that the floods don't selectively leave the cane behind – happy and healthy – and wash the weeds away. Which leads me to another challenge that has been around for some time and doesn't look like going away any time soon.

Roundup is still doing the rounds, so to speak, of the court

systems in the US. A jury in Oregon, recently found that Roundup herbicide didn't cause a man's cancer. This was the fourth case in a row that Bayer has won in less than a year in its ongoing fight against cancer claims against glyphosate.

You would have to think that's a win for common sense which would recognise the evidence from four decades of scientific studies that have concluded that Roundup can be used safely.

But it was countered by a series of decisions in other courts that have turned down Bayer appeals and left in place court decision upholding multi-million-dollar judgments. And it doesn't stop there – a federal appeals court scrapped a 2020 US Environmental Protection Authority finding on the human health impacts of glyphosate. This sends the EPA back to work on its 2020 decision that glyphosate does not present "any reasonable risk to man or the environment."

Do you get the feeling that, as a farmer, you might be banging your head against a brick wall?

Well, you're not alone – woodpeckers have been doing it for years – not so much with brick walls but they repeatedly headbutt trees.

So, if the brick wall scenario leaves you and I with a headache, what about those woodpeckers?

And, I hear you ask, what's this got to do with farming?

Well, for years scientists have assumed their heads – not the scientist's heads but the woodpeckers' heads – were like shock-absorbing helmets. New research suggests they have no shock absorption at all, and their heads act more like stiff hammers.

So why don't woodpeckers get brain damage? The researchers say the birds' brains are so small that they can withstand the impact, although the same impact would probably cause concussions in monkeys and humans (which I imagine would include we farmers).

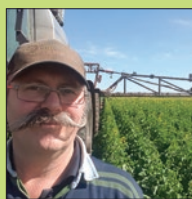
These findings have some practical implications for farmers because engineers have previously used the anatomy of the woodpecker's cranial skeleton as a source of inspiration for the development of motorcycle helmets. The new findings suggest that wasn't necessarily a good idea

## In this issue...



### Perfect paddock protein

Addressing particular challenges has driven the considered inclusion of precision agriculture technology at Postlethwaite



Farms. Neale Postlethwaite and his brother Trevor farm about 2000 hectares of country at Gooroc in Victoria's Wimmera region.

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### Impact of fertiliser price on agriculture

Current fertiliser price increases are reminiscent of the Great Recession period, when prices nearly doubled across all major fertiliser groups at the end of 2007. At that time, fertiliser prices were fuelled by rising demand in many emerging markets.



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### My fascination for old tractors

Why is it that some individuals develop an attachment for old tractors, that can ripen into a lifelong passionate obsession? What is the magic ingredient these ancient pieces of ironmongery have that can convert a normal well-adjusted mind into a state of consuming preoccupation?



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