December 2006

Summer Edition

Practical Systems
Improving the Business of Farming

PSYSTEMS NEWS

From the Editor

Since our last Newsletter the drought across much of Australia has intensified.

On the 8th September our good friends at **PrincipleFocus** published their first drought alert paper - "Hope for the Best, Plan for Reality" .

Much of their advice was well worth considering at the time. By now it may be too late for some actions they recommended. However, I thought the following strategies and thoughts still remain relevant, even at this late stage:

- Selling livestock in a falling market is hard…but like the share trader, selling in a falling market helps to minimise losses. It's as much about minimising losses as it is about maximising profits! The decision not to sell could see us feeding from now until next spring. If you're considering feeding…factor in the time and stress over the next 8 months – consider the WHOLE cost!
- For every DSE you hold over your carrying capacity it will cost you up to $60 to feed. This is against an average gross margin income of $25 from that DSE.
- .Re-do stockflows and cashflows. Often the year of the drought is not too bad on cashflow (if you've minimised handfeeding) as surplus livestock have been sold above budget. It is the year <u>after</u> the drought that we need to pay particular attention to with planning stockflows and cashflows. Do this now in anticipation of the crisis!
- Ensure you have financial resources available to maintain cashflow and to implement your drought strategy. Remember most overheads still have to be paid despite lower turnover. Preplan your funding requirements with your banker well in advance.

Do you have the goals and strategies entrenched in your business to ensure that you don't erode your Social, Economic or Ecological resources during a dry time?

It is possible to 'thrive' in a drought but that depends on you making logical plans and goals NOW instead of when we're in the drought being reactive and making decisions based on emotions.

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Our New Web Site

By the time you read this Newsletter our new web site should be up and running. The site is still undergoing development with many new and interesting features planned. Some of the new features, already there, are worth a look:

- Current News and Events
- Copies of past newsletters - if you need to look up a published article from times past.
- If you have broadband, a very professional preview of each program plays as a "flash movie".
- A special login place for clients on a current program Business Protection Package where there is access to download upgrade patches etc. and a facility to send files to us, if required.
- A special client support forum area. This is a brand new format and you have to register when you first use it to setup your own name and password if you want to post articles to the forum. We look forward to your feedback and suggestions.

In this newsletter:

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Armidale area clients

Recently we have noticed that some of our local area clients have been dropping in to the office and asking to see someone from our Support Team straightaway; to fix a problem they are having.

Whilst we are always happy to see our clients, our Support staff would really appreciate it if you could ring us before you drop in and make a time to see them. They have a big workload and unconventional times for their breaks, so some advance notice of your arrival, and the nature of the problem you need assistance with, would be very helpful.

New Staff Member

Nathan Post, an additional support team member started with the Company last month. Nathan has returned to live in Armidale after some years in Sydney. At present he is undergoing intensive training on the programs under the expert tutelage of Support Manager Richard Kiehne. We welcome him to our support team and you will find him, along with Eddie, on the other end of the 1800 number from early next January.

Client Support

We would like to thank you all for your patience and understanding on the support system. Support is not always as instant as you, or we, would like. Especially around BAS time; or calf registration time. However, we do our best and with the addition of an extra support person we should be able to improve our response time when answering your calls.

The support team have taken close to 7000 calls this year, many of which have been backup files being sent in for repair. These often take some time to sort out. The average return of call time for the year has been 28 minutes. With Nathans help, we will work to get this better next year.

PrincipleFocus Training Courses Now Available to Practical Systems Clients

As you may be aware, Practical Systems has created a strategic alliance with the PrincipleFocus group to provide their members with state of the art management and recording systems via Cashbook Plus!

PrincipleFocus members are using the information Cashbook Plus! provides to make critical management decisions during the dry conditions.

To find out what some of their members are doing in all areas of their business to manage the dry conditions go to the Principle Focus website www.principlefocus.com.au

While you are at the website, take a moment to look at the new training course '**The Business of Farming'**.

The **Business of Farming** is the most relevant, dynamic and holistic agricultural management course in the world. If you are intending to make an investment in training that will enable you to create a securer farming future have a look at the course outline.

If you would like to talk to one of the PrincipleFocus consultants, please ring Richard Groom on 02 6658 0775

Technical Tip - Cashbook Plus!

Did you know ?

Autoskip feature.

This feature allows the user to skip the date and/or reference fields when adding transactions. This is handy where a significant number of entries are to be entered with the same date or incrementing reference numbers e.g. a batch of cheques paid at month end. Just *double-click* the **Date and/or Reference label** above the entry field. The field label will display in a contrasting colour and will be automatically "skipped" as new entries are added).

Add to lists

As you are entering transactions, you can add to the list of Account Codes, Enterprises, Transaction Descriptions and Detail Notes by clicking the **Add to Lists** button at the bottom of the screen. These lists can also be maintained through the **Setup** option on the main menu.

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Product Review

Farmbook Mapping Version 3.0

This release of **FarmMap** and **Farmbook Mapping** is the standard quarterly release. Here are a few of the more significant changes to FarmMap for you to review.

*[**Next Issue:** We will be reviewing the new release of **Farmbook Premium** including the* **Stockbook** *integrated version upgrade for those clients using the two together]*

Backup

You can now backup all farms in the one operation. This is advisable if you have more than one property setup in FarmMap, otherwise you have to change to each property separately and back them up one at a time as before.

Exporting TIFF and JPEG files

Information from FarmMap can be exported in Tiff and JPEG file format (image files) for use in wordprocessor documents. What is included in the export is determined by what you have displayed on the screen at the time.

Exporting points to a GPS Unit

FarmMap can be used to export points on the map or photographic image to a GPS for locating those same points on the farm using your GPS unit.

Show relative distance

FarmMap has a way of showing you the relative distance you have moved the cursor from the last point where you clicked the mouse. This could be useful for working out your planning of paddock subdivisions. You can use it to move the cursor a known distance along a fenceline to mark where the intersecting fence should start.

Hide names on paddocks etc.

You can now hide all names and areas displayed by ticking the **Hide Names** box at the top right of the screen.

Draw Contours

A layer showing the contours of the land in the Image can be created to display topographic relief. This feature would be useful when designing fencing and paddock layout, watering systems and road and track locations. You can also use any other information attached to a position for displaying linked common points.

Draw Thematic Maps

A map layer showing common areas or features instead of the photo image can be created. This feature would be useful to display such things as soil types, acidity levels, crop yields etc. You can also use this technique to display elevation instead of the contour map if you wish. It can be used to display any data where it is necessary to link common points.

Rotate, Mirror or Scale Objects

Objects on any layer can be rotated or scaled to make adjustments to them should the need arise. Also, objects on any layer can be mirrored to make adjustments to their position should the need arise.

Snap-to

The snap-to points feature of earlier versions has been extended to include snapping-to lines and intersections, as well as points.

Convert to paddock

Just in case you accidentally drew a paddock on a layer other than the paddock layer, now any polygon on any other layer can be moved to a polygon on the paddock layer.

Move/Copy objects to another layer

Another nice little feature - any object on any layer can be moved or copied to another layer.

Transaction Review

This is a very powerful function within ***Cashbook Plus!*** that provides a simple means of reviewing and checking the classification of transactions that have been entered into the system.

Click the **Selection Filter** tab and make your required selections (or accept the defaults) for the four drop-down lists :

- **Transactions source** e.g. a particular bank or all banks.
- **Reporting Group** e.g. Overhead Expenses
- **Account type/s** : e.g. all operating expenses
- **Enterprise/s** e.g. a particular enterprise or all enterprises

You can also use the **Description** and **Detail filters** to restrict the list of displayed transactions based on a supplier/customer name and/or detail note. Use the **Retain Filter** checkbox to retain this filter settings when clicking Next/Previous

You can edit any of the displayed transactions as required. This is a simple way of correcting any mistakes you have made in allocating transactions to accounts or enterprises. Just highlight the required transaction and click the **Edit** button. Make any required changes to the transaction and than click **OK** to return to the review screen. **Double-clicking** the transaction works the same way

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CHRISTMAS

From all the staff at Practical Systems

Seasons Greeting to all our clients; We thank your for your support in 2006

We hope you enjoy your family get-togethers over this holiday period and that it rains cats and dogs in the New Year.