

LIVESTOCK

New molasses blocks busting poverty, GHGs

BY MARK PHELPS

RESEARCHERS have found that high-quality nutrient molasses block supplements fed to cattle and buffalo in developing countries can address both rural poverty and climate change.

Work done by the University of Sydney in both Laos and Cambodia during the past 13 years shows nutritional and health interventions not only improve the efficiency of livestock production, but directly increase the efficiency of smallholder farmer enterprises by up to a factor of five.

Professor Peter Windsor, from the Sydney School of Veterinary Science Australia and who headed the research effort, said the use of new technologies, especially the use of molasses blocks, was a practical way of improving livestock management.

"Molasses blocks motivate farmers to improve their cattle and buffalo production, and address the extended lag period when forage plantations are being established," Professor Windsor said.

"That's especially so in dry seasons when nutrition is limiting, and in developing

countries where the lack of cattle handling equipment makes the administration of medication difficult."

Reducing greenhouse gases is recognised as a major challenge in developing countries, where poorly-nourished ruminants are major contributors to harmful gases contributing to climate change.

The research has now developed a strategy that delivers major improvements in cattle and buffalo production efficiency. In a nutshell, it potentially reduces GHG emissions by enabling more meat to be produced per cow from fewer but healthier, more productive animals.

"As molasses blocks, forages and health interventions deliver superior productivity for smallholder large ruminant production in developing countries, potentially reducing GHG emissions, 'scale-out' of this strategy is advisable and under development," Professor Windsor said.

"Applied efficiently, this strategy will likely create both major socioeconomic benefits that improve resilience in some of the poorest rural communities, and re-

duced GHGs from livestock that diminishes the risk of the impending climate change catastrophe."

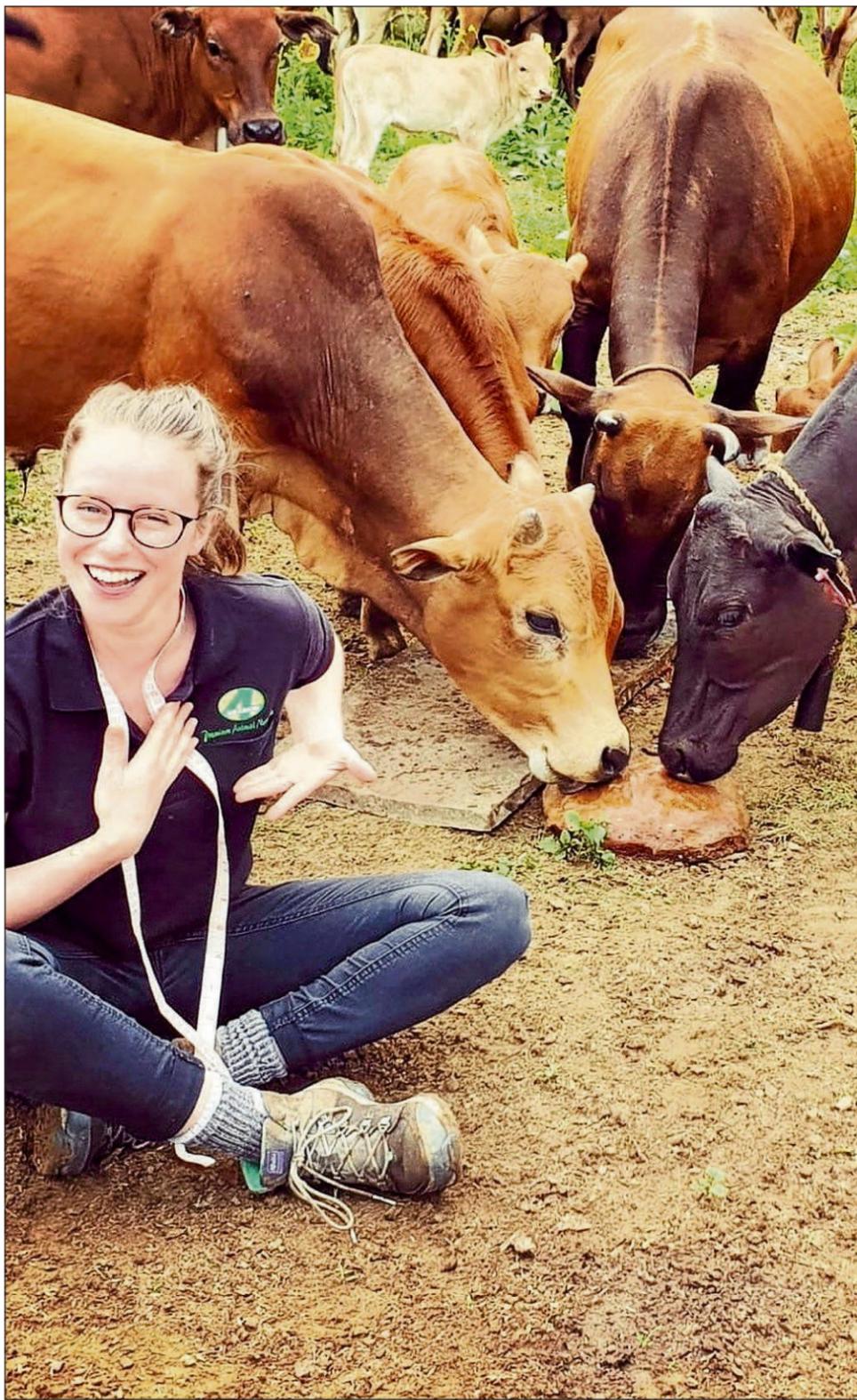
The molasses blocks used in the long-running trial work were developed and supplied by the 4 Season Company, based in Brisbane.

The research and business model was the result of a cross-sector partnership involving the 4 Season Company, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the University of Sydney.

The partnership was established through the Business Partnerships Platform, which brings government, business and non-government organisations together in cross-sector partnerships to scale sustainable business opportunities to create a lasting social impact.

For the Australia Government, business partnerships are one of many ways to promote sustainable economic development. By leveraging the resources, skills and expertise of businesses, this goal can be accelerated.

For businesses, a BPP is seen as an opportunity to create or grow a business opportunity.



Researcher Nichola Calvani with cattle consuming new technology molasses blocks, which are helping to address both rural poverty and climate change.

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