

## Defining 'success' – creating timeless video content on 'how to' adopt key practices

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**Abstract.** Creating videos as an extension tool is a part of many projects. However, what makes a video successful? What performance metrics define success? In this paper, the authors review the process of creation and promotion of 15 videos for beef producers with a focus on achieving adoption of specific management practices. The videos, created for the previous FutureBeef project, involved ~70 people across Queensland, Western Australia and Northern Territory, including a professional film crew. The videos feature beef producers, veterinarians, extension officers and researchers. The authors share key learnings from the planning, filming and editing process, through to content performance. The greatest learnings included invest time into consultation with a broader project team to create a clear definition of a 'successful video' and identify methods so that created video content can be integrated into ongoing broader extension delivery. Doing this extends the 'successful' lifetime of the product.

**Keywords:** Video content, practice change, social media

### Introduction

In recent years there has been an increase in the use of video content for social media to communicate key messages to agricultural producers. It is now considered a standard method of communication and is integrated into many extension projects. Video can be a very effective way of delivering technical information and engaging with producers on an emotional level (Phillips et al. 2021).

The recent *FutureBeef project (2018-2021)* funded by Meat & Livestock Australia included a milestone to create 15 videos for extensive beef producers in northern Australia. Video content created by FutureBeef is uploaded to the project's [YouTube channel](#), integrated within pages on [the website](#) and also promoted via social media platforms, [Facebook](#), [X](#) (formerly known as Twitter) and [Linked In](#).

While e-extension isn't a substitute for face-to-face interaction, one of the strengths of online content, is that it facilitates extension at scale and provides an opportunity to those that are unable to attend events. When done well, video content and other e-extension resources can enable peer-to-peer learning for those in isolation. However, it is important to remember that video content is not a standalone extension piece and should be considered an integral part of broader extension delivery.

As extension practitioners we aim to form a relationship with a producer and provide them with technical information that enables them to make some kind of practice change (Williams et al. 2021). This principle can be directly applied to creating video content for online platforms by remaining farmer centred, carefully selecting those who feature, and providing key technical messages with links to further information.

### What does video 'success' look like for an extension project?

The 15 videos were created to be published on all our FutureBeef content sharing platforms. For simplicity, this paper will focus on YouTube and Facebook.

FutureBeef joined YouTube in November 2011. The 'FutureBeefAu' channel currently has 1.82 K subscribers and 295 videos, including webinar recordings. Video performance metrics on YouTube is relatively simple compared to other social media platforms. A 'view' is the main metric, measured once somebody watches the video for 30 seconds.

FutureBeef joined Facebook in January 2012. The page currently has 11,443 likes and 13,412 followers. Facebook posts can include anything from videos, posts sharing research findings and promotion of events. The general goal is to create content that directs Facebook users to more information on the FutureBeef website. There are numerous Facebook metrics for video content, including impressions, shares, reactions, views and amount of time watched. 'Views' can capture how many people watch for three seconds, for 15 seconds, and for one minute.

Upon the undertaking of the project milestone, the FutureBeef team didn't have in mind any metrics, specific topics or even a definition of success. As such, the FutureBeef video project lead invested considerable time and effort into consultation to create a video 'brief' which defined what

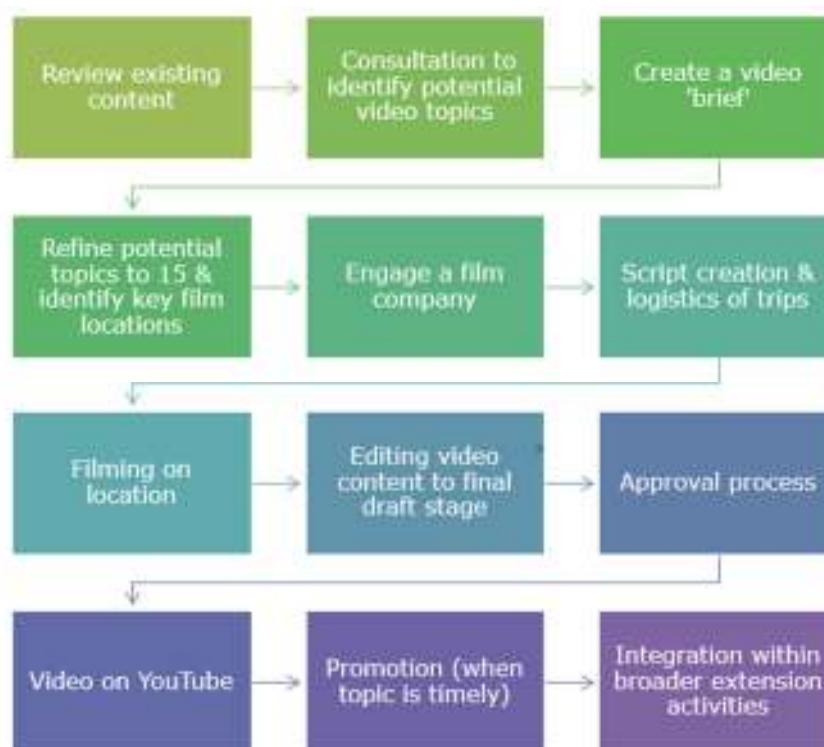
'success' would look like for FutureBeef. The following outlines the process and learnings of the journey.

### Methodology

FutureBeef is a collaborative project with a large operational team delivering online extension to beef producers across three states (QLD, NT and WA). With a healthy budget allocated to creating 15 professional videos, considerable thought was put into how, where, what and why we chose the topics, the people featured and locations for filming.

There is a very clear sequence of events as outlined below in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Process from review through to integration**



#### Review existing content

The review process was initiated by conducting an audit of pre-existing video content on FutureBeef and similar platforms. There were two clear reasons for doing so. Firstly, to ensure that any new content created was not a duplication. Secondly, to reflect on what content had performed well with our target audience and identify common themes.

Content identified as performing well was typically practical and taught viewers something. For example, *'How to raise a poddy calf'* remains one of the most watched FutureBeef videos on YouTube. Another commonality was that much of the existing content was filmed in Central Queensland. It was important to the project team to represent geographic diversity in the industry, and as such, we aimed to shoot the new videos 'everywhere else'.

#### Consultation

A goal was to be inclusive of the broader project team. Multiple extension practitioners in each state were consulted via email to provide input into topics they felt would be useful in their region. This was followed up with a phone call in some instances. This collaborative effort resulted in approximately ~60 ideas submitted.

Duplicates were removed and the ideas presented to the Queensland FutureBeef Operational team. The following criteria was used to assess whether topics were suitable to pursue:

1. Is it practical?
2. Does it teach a key concept?
3. Do we know a 'good' producer / extension officer to feature?
4. Do we think producers will watch it?

If the answer wasn't yes to all four questions, the topic was discarded or reallocated to another medium (for example, webinars or articles). Through this process 15 to 16 ideas with potential suitable locations were identified.

Producer collaborators were approached based on the existing relationship they had with extension staff and their knowledge on the topic. The producer had to have implemented the practice in question long enough ago to discuss the impact it had on their business. It was important that the producer had a good reputation within the industry but hadn't been regularly featured in other media.

### ***The video 'brief'***

Creating a script is a process. Before you can create a script, you need to think about the video 'brief'. Key considerations include:

- where to film
- ideal scene landscape
- video length
- overall tone
- who to feature
- ensuring longevity
- accessibility.

After discussion and deliberation, the following brief was constructed. Videos were to:

- Be 4-5 minutes long, specifically no longer than 7 minutes.
- Focus on 'how to' implement one specific practice.
- Be solutions focussed.
- Feature well-regarded producers.
- Be authentic, with questions scripted but responses not.
- Include engaging extension staff/researchers.
- Be technically correct.
- Cover geographic regions not previously featured.
- Be accessible (including subtitles).

Consultation with other media teams who had experience in video production suggested the optimal length of videos was two minutes, with the caveat being, particularly engaging content could be longer. Given the challenge of creating a video that articulates adoption and impact of a specific practice in two minutes, we had to aim for ensuring it was engaging.

*Selecting a film company* Before engaging a film company, you need to have at least a general idea of what you want to create and potential shoot locations. This allows the company to provide quotes with indicative costs.

*Script creation* With practice change in mind, we stepped forward with an overall goal of creating a series of practical 'how to' videos that also included the 'why' and somebody who has successfully adopted the practice. Fifteen loose scripts were created collaboratively, supported by a professional script writer from the film company.

As with all extension, raising awareness of a practice is the easy part. Stepping through the pathway to adoption of new practices requires more time for explanation. Thus, we focused on one practice per video and breaking research findings into simple key messages. These would be outlined conversationally by the beef producer when discussing how they adopted the practice.

Practically this 'interview style' involves a member of the project team asking questions out of sight from the camera. The interviewer questions do not feature in the video so it's imperative that the person answers in a way that includes what was asked. For example, if the interviewer asks 'how do you manage stocking rates?', the ideal response would start 'Here on our property we manage stocking rates by' and then provide their response.

Writing 15 scripts with different contributors was arduous. Some topics were more challenging than others due to differences in opinion on technical messages or definitions. Although time consuming, it is crucial to rectify these issues before inclusion in the video content. Collaborative script writing ensures more consistent key messages. While the aim was to create a decent outline with the script, it is important to remember they are not set in stone and can be reordered during editing. Once draft scripts are completed it is advised to ask the film company about an indication of video length.

## **Results and discussion**

Overall, 68 people directly contributed to putting together 15 videos. Video filming was undertaken in 17 locations, including 15 grazing properties across three states, over two years. Opportunistically we also captured additional footage that will enable creation of at least two further videos.

The number one key learning from this filming experience is to expect challenges and to have back up plans in place from the outset.

### ***Planning***

This project started late due to staff changeover. Inclusivity in the planning process took a lot of time but also added value by providing broader perspective. Likewise, having specific topics that require you to align filming to an animal production calendar (such as weaning) also add time and potentially trips. Travel restrictions due to COVID-19 increased uncertainty. All of these could be classified as challenges. However, none were insurmountable.

The first and most important thing to appreciate is that time spent planning a video, creating a script and arranging logistics will take longer than the filming itself. While you want to maximise the opportunity (particularly if filming in remote locations) it is beneficial during planning stages to focus on producing fewer, targeted, high-quality videos.

Secondly, take time to research options when choosing a film company. Look at their work and note down what you like about the product. When you meet with the film company discuss what you are aiming to create and be clear about what they are to provide in terms of crew and gear for shoots. Get the film company to outline potential costs and explain what happens if the videos end up out of 'scope' (i.e., longer than expected).

Thirdly, during script development, if there is a lack of consensus from technical experts, question whether the topic is right for a video. For extension videos with a practice change focus, you need clear messages. If there is difference in opinion around key messaging this might indicate that research is ongoing and poses the risk that the video will soon be 'out of date'.

### ***Filming***

More locations, or more interviews, increase logistical requirements, and in turn, increases the time spent planning and overall cost.

Planning the filming involves the who, what, when and where? It is advisable to have a backup location (or person) in mind if things don't go to plan. In practice, this means time on location can be spent effectively by capturing as much footage as you can. Any additional footage is a potential resource that can be used to create content in future.

Pay specific attention to what you see on location. It is important to have identified what you can't feature in advance and communicate this to the videographers. Examples include activities inconsistent with health and safety requirements and legislation. Show examples to the videographers and explain why it can't be included. Additionally, be sure to check the background of the footage for anything that might distract or detract from the video.

There are a few practical learnings from filming on location. Primarily, a film crew of two with cameras and drones amounts to eight pieces of oversized baggage for filming gear alone. This requires two four-wheel drive vehicles to fit comfortably. A designated driver will help ensure the ongoing resilience and focus of the crew.

Secondly, request people being filmed wear plain colours, ideally not black or white. Also avoid any checked or striped shirts as they display poorly on film. If it looks like rain (in addition to having an undercover filming option) consider bringing a back-up shirt in the same colour. During editing the interview questions may end up in a different order to how they were shot on location. In the case of rain, it's harder to do this due to how 'rained upon' the shirt appears influencing the order footage must be used.

Thirdly, a script exists to ensure the interviewer has questions to ask and key points are included in the response. However, content experts selected for their knowledge know their topic without a script. Such people benefit from taking the script away.

Fourthly, not everyone is comfortable on camera. When selecting a person to feature in your video it is advisable to choose based on how engaging the person presents. However, this is not foolproof as people can be engaging and still find it hard when they are being filmed. Using a person the interviewee knows to ask interview questions can help get the best performance. However, keep the script at hand as it is an important tool to ensure all important items are covered during the filming.

## **Editing**

Editing can be completely outsourced to the film company. However, one of the key learnings from this project was appreciating that open ended interview style questions on technical topics require an editor with technical knowledge to ensure key messages are correct. An editor without technical knowledge may use an interview take based on sound quality even though a key point was said incorrectly.

The second key learning from editing was the realisation that extension officers often answer questions by delivering the same message in numerous ways. This is a useful skill in almost every other situation but not for a video as it adds length. Note that anything more than that contracted length may come at extra cost. Edit ruthlessly as this will have a significant impact on your budget.

Thirdly, like educating the videographers, it's important to explain anything that cannot be included to the video editor and work closely with them. Cast a very close eye over footage and remove anything that would draw attention for the wrong reasons.

Fourthly, do not underestimate the importance of the final touches, these include naming your video and getting feedback from everybody that features in it. Both tasks have a significant impact on video performance on both YouTube and Facebook. Maximise your chances of the video being seen by naming the video with a Google search in mind and include the terms commonly used in your industry.

Lastly, getting feedback from everybody who featured can be hugely time consuming, however, if somebody who features in your video does not like something, prioritise making that change. It is important to respect that this video reflects on them and their reputation. If the people who feature are pleased with the final product, they are more likely to share it on social media.

In addition to increasing searchability we can maximise our views by increasing accessibility. Editing and correcting transcripts for subtitles is worth the time. Automatic subtitles can transpose incorrectly, particularly when industry specific expressions are used. For example, automatic transposing software turned 'cull cows' into 'cold cows' thereby changing the context of the message. Such issues occurred frequently. Without correction, the final product lacks a professional finish and does not communicate the key messages.

## **Content performance**

Content performance in terms of metrics is hard to predict. It is also hard to compare between platforms as they don't have a metric with the same definition.

If people find FutureBeef content on YouTube, they may be channel subscribers or alternatively looking for information using a search engine. This means the video name and topic are the most important factors affecting content performance. This contrasts with social platforms such as Facebook and X, where users are looking for entertainment. Video performance on Facebook is influenced by various factors outside of the control of the content creator. One such factor is the Facebook algorithm, where the success of previous content influences whether your current content is shown to your followers.

Of the 15 videos, there wasn't one that performed consistently above others across both YouTube and Facebook. However, most of the videos had greater views on YouTube. The highest performing video on YouTube is *Ageing Cattle by Teeth* with 8985 views. It has performed well above the second most successful video, *Bull Breeding Soundness Evaluation*, with 3800.

The other significant point to note (Table 1) is irrespective of the length of the video in question, the average viewing time is approximately half the length of the video. Those engaged in viewing the video are watching considerably longer on YouTube than Facebook.

Facebook views can be influenced by the initial time the video is uploaded. However, Facebook allows you to identify when your target audience is online. There is also a conflict whereby Facebook's business model prioritises 'paid' posts over 'organic' (non-paid) content.

As such, it is challenging to draw simple conclusions from content performance metrics on Facebook (Table 2) particularly given that some videos had paid promotion. Facebook paid advertising proved more challenging than anticipated. The project team spent approximately three days creating different types of advertising for the videos on Facebook at a total cost of \$2038.87. When considered in relation to our goals of increasing views, the advertising had limited success.



**Table 1. Performance of videos on YouTube**

Video title	Publish date	Views	Video length	Avg. view duration
Ageing cattle by their teeth	Sep 27, 2021	8985	6:51	03:11
Bull breeding soundness evaluation	Oct 4, 2021	3800	5:09	02:09
Phosphorus supplementation	Oct 4, 2021	1758	5:14	02:48
Getting the best out of your weaners	Mar 21, 2022	1651	6:14	04:02
Signs of overgrazing	Oct 4, 2021	1638	6:49	03:04
Vaccination best practice for healthy herds	Nov 18, 2021	1573	4:18	02:36
Transporting cattle safely	Oct 4, 2021	1285	5:59	02:26
Pregnancy testing for forward planning	Nov 18, 2021	1245	4:40	02:39
Using decision dates in grazing management	Dec 1, 2021	1103	7:45	03:46
Stylos to boost beef production	Mar 16, 2022	1070	4:45	02:49
Using fire as a management tool in grazing lands	Oct 4, 2021	814	7:13	03:49
How to make an informed decision in changing conditions	Nov 18, 2021	660	2:37	01:53
Foetal ageing for targeted breeder management	Nov 10, 2021	539	6:32	03:33
Wet Season Spelling	Nov 18, 2021	518	6:09	03:48
Managing land condition*	Mar 16, 2022	323	7:39	03:44

Video not yet promoted\*

Source: FutureBeef Google Analytics as at 21/09/23.

**Table 2. Performance of videos on Facebook**

Video title	Video upload date	Paid post?	3 second views	1 minute views	Avg. mins. viewed
Bull breeding soundness evaluation	Nov 6 2021	No	4192	953	0:25
Transporting cattle safely	Oct 30 2021	No	2490	663	0:23
Ageing cattle by their teeth	Oct 2 2021	No	2030	374	0:18
Foetal ageing for targeted breeder management**	Feb 21 2022	Yes	1617	289	0:17
Phosphorus supplementation	Oct 9 2021	No	1310	190	0:14
Wet Season Spelling*	Nov 20 2021	Yes	5476 (O= 1161)	515	0:14
Pregnancy testing for forward planning**	Feb 21 2022	Yes	1023	105	0:08
Using fire as a management tool in grazing lands	Nov 13 2021	No	995	181	0:25
Getting the best out of your weaners	May 31 2022	No	876	308	0:27
Vaccination best practice for healthy herds**	Feb 21 2022	Yes	648	115	0:17
How to make an informed decision in changing conditions*	Dec 4 2021	Yes	1729 (O= 633)	116	0:05
Using decision dates in grazing management**	Feb 21 2022	No	614	92	0:10
Signs of overgrazing**	Feb 21 2022	Yes	496	97	0:20
Stylos to boost beef production	Sept 30 2022	No	320	36	0:10
Managing land condition	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0

Individual social media promotion\*  
Included in campaign series promotion\*\*

O = Organic or unpaid views

Source: FutureBeef Meta Business Suite Analytics as at 21/09/23.

We promoted two videos individually at a cost of \$100 per video. The first individual promotion video ended up our highest viewed (three seconds) video on Facebook. *Wet Season Spelling* had 5476 (three second) views. Of these views, 1161 were organic or unpaid, and 4360 derived through the paid promotion. The video gained an additional 10863 impressions, which means it appeared in 'someone's' Facebook feed an extra 10863 times. The 5476 views at three seconds dropped off considerably to 515 one-minute views.

The second individual promotion video *How to make informed decisions in changing conditions* resulted in 1729 views. Of these views 633 were organic and 1098 were acquired through paid promotion. The advertising gained the video an additional 7890 impressions. However, the 1729 views at three seconds dropped back to 116 one-minute views. Despite the paid promotion this

video was not in the top three video content. There was also a substantial decrease in viewers for both advertised videos between the three second view, and one minute view metrics.

In contrast, the second highest performing video on Facebook *Bull Breeding Sounding Evaluation* had 4192 views (three second) and 953 one-minute views with zero paid advertising. Not only was it extremely competitive without promotion it had a much better retention rate with more people still watching at the one-minute mark. This video was well received, as also seen on YouTube and well shared by the followers.

Promoting individual videos had much better returns than the campaign series. However, these videos' organic view rates were already competitive given their topic. As the opening screen is all viewers see within the first three seconds, the campaign series provided FutureBeef with increased brand awareness as opposed to increased views of video content. Given this experience with paid Facebook advertising, careful consideration should be given to whether Facebook paid advertising is worthwhile, particularly as algorithms are outside of content provider control.

### **Conclusion**

Sixty-eight people contributed directly to putting together 15 professional videos that continue to be integrated into extension delivery for beef producers in Northern Australia.

Creating a set of criteria or framework around what successful content would look like, or what is important, provides questions for reflection upon project completion. Did we focus on 'how to' implement one specific practice? Were the videos solutions focussed? Did they feature well-regarded producers? Could we show them in two years, and they'd still be useful? Are the videos accessible? Were they engaging? While it is important to create video content that demonstrates 'success' through online performance metrics, of equal significance is creating a lasting legacy product that enables practice change. Achieving both provides far greater value for the investment.

The key messages from this exercise are:

- Invest time into consultation and planning to create a 'brief' that outlines what a successful video looks like.
- Ensure the video is integrated into other activities within broader extension delivery as this will ensure content longevity.

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