

Body condition score, lactation and drought – best practice advice arising from research

David Stevens
Bryan Thompson
Ian Scott
Geoff Asher

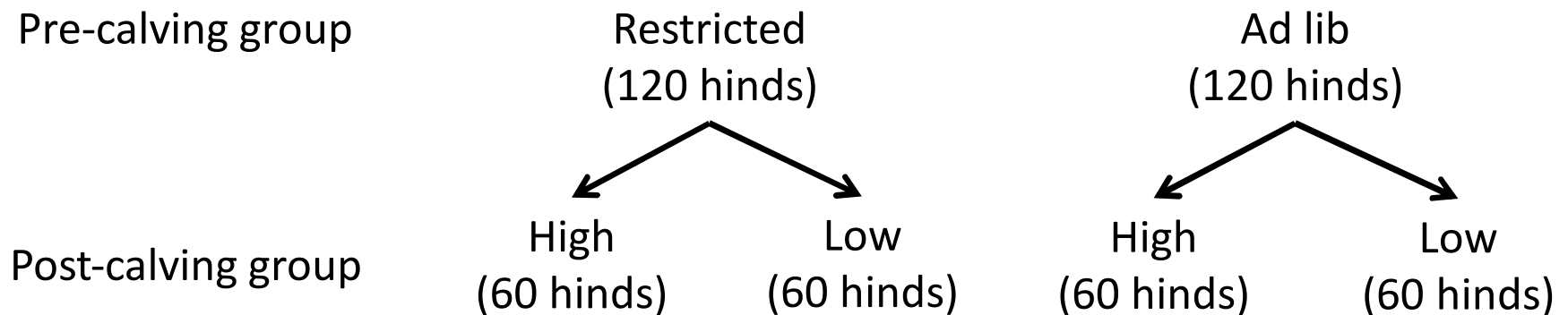


Background

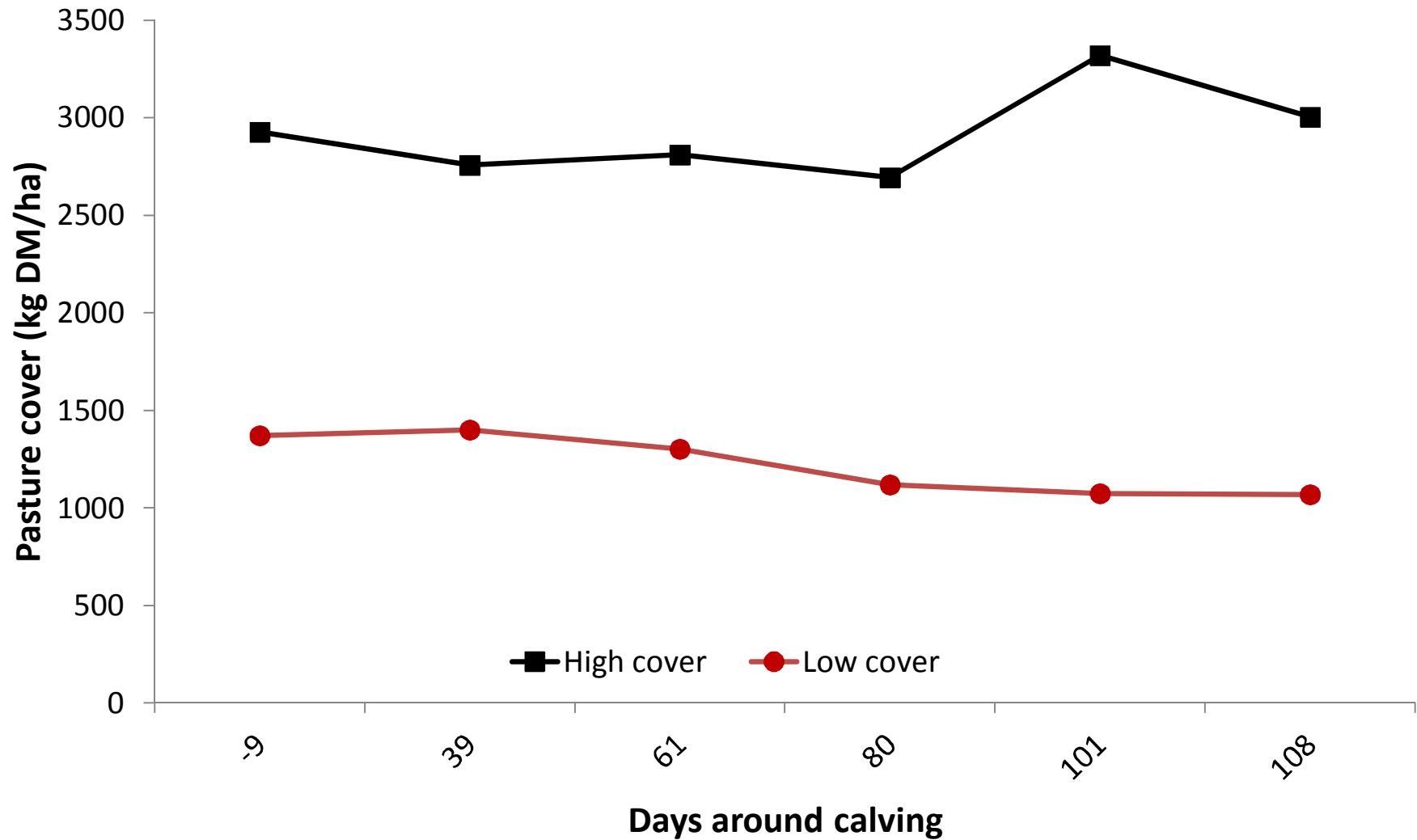
- How do we plan for drought conditions over calving and lactation?
- Somehow we need to buffer the hind and the calf to ensure optimal calf growth and to minimise severe body weight loss in hinds.
- Hinds naturally prepare for lactation by increasing fat reserves over pregnancy.
- Can we use “Body Condition Score” (BCS) as a tool to prevent or minimise production losses due to drought.
- Our study investigated how hind BCS at calving influences lactation and calf growth when faced with ‘good’ or ‘bad’ seasons.

Trial design

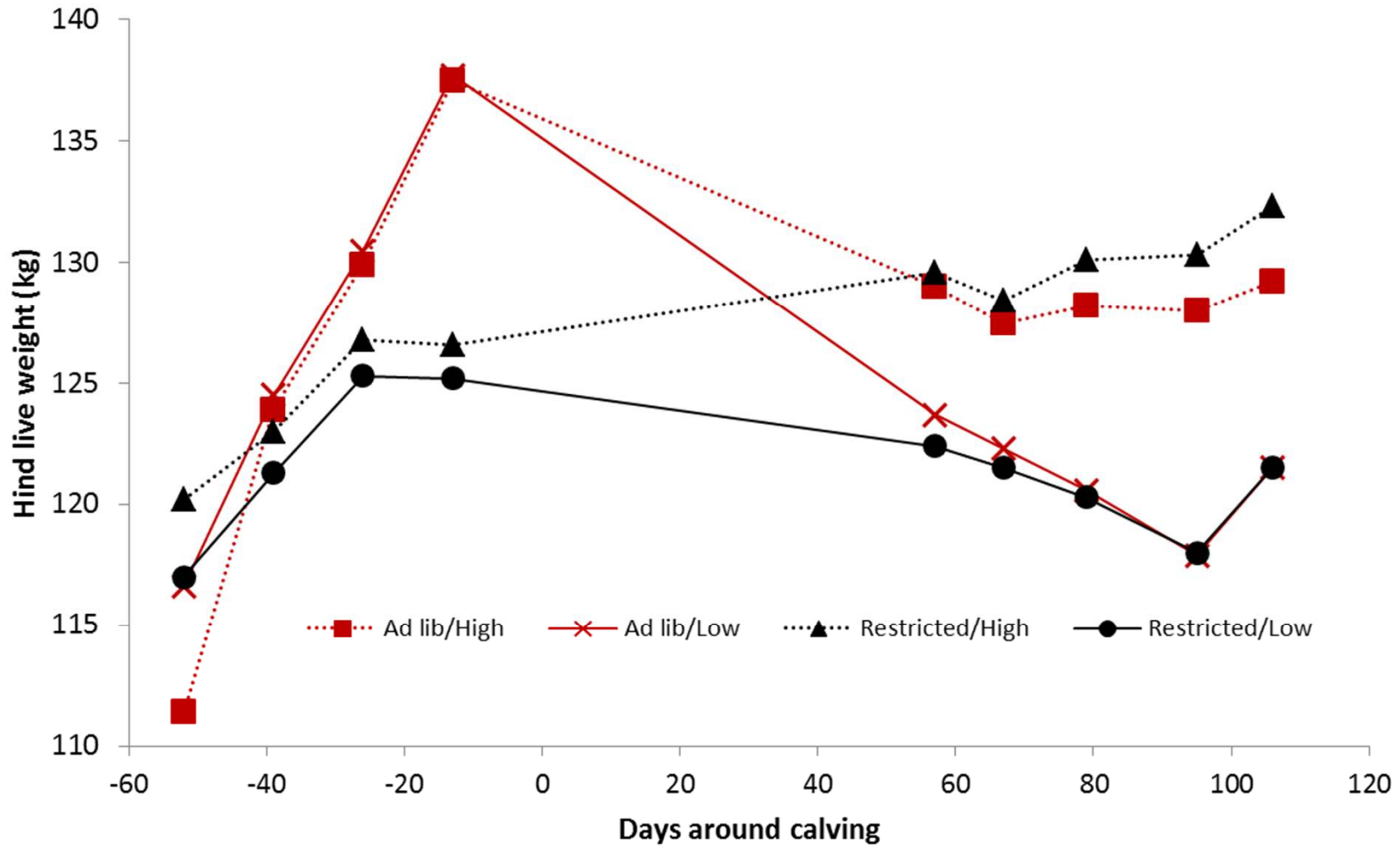
- Field trial at Invermay using 240 hinds.
- 2 pre-calving groups: BCS 2.5 (restricted) & 3.5 (ad lib).
- 2 post-calving groups: high allowance (>2400kg DM/ha) & low allowance (<1400 kg DM/ha)



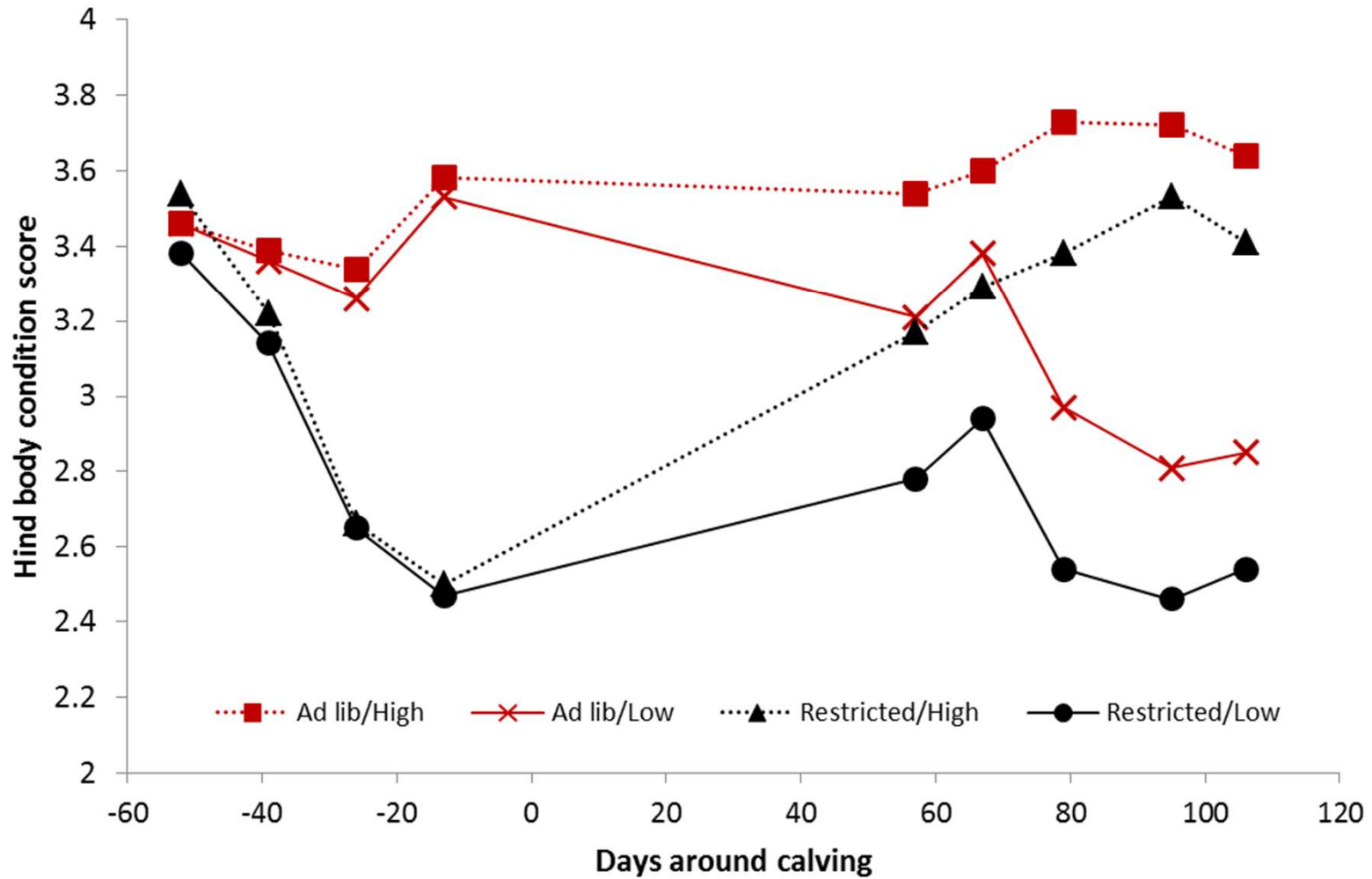
Differences in pasture cover



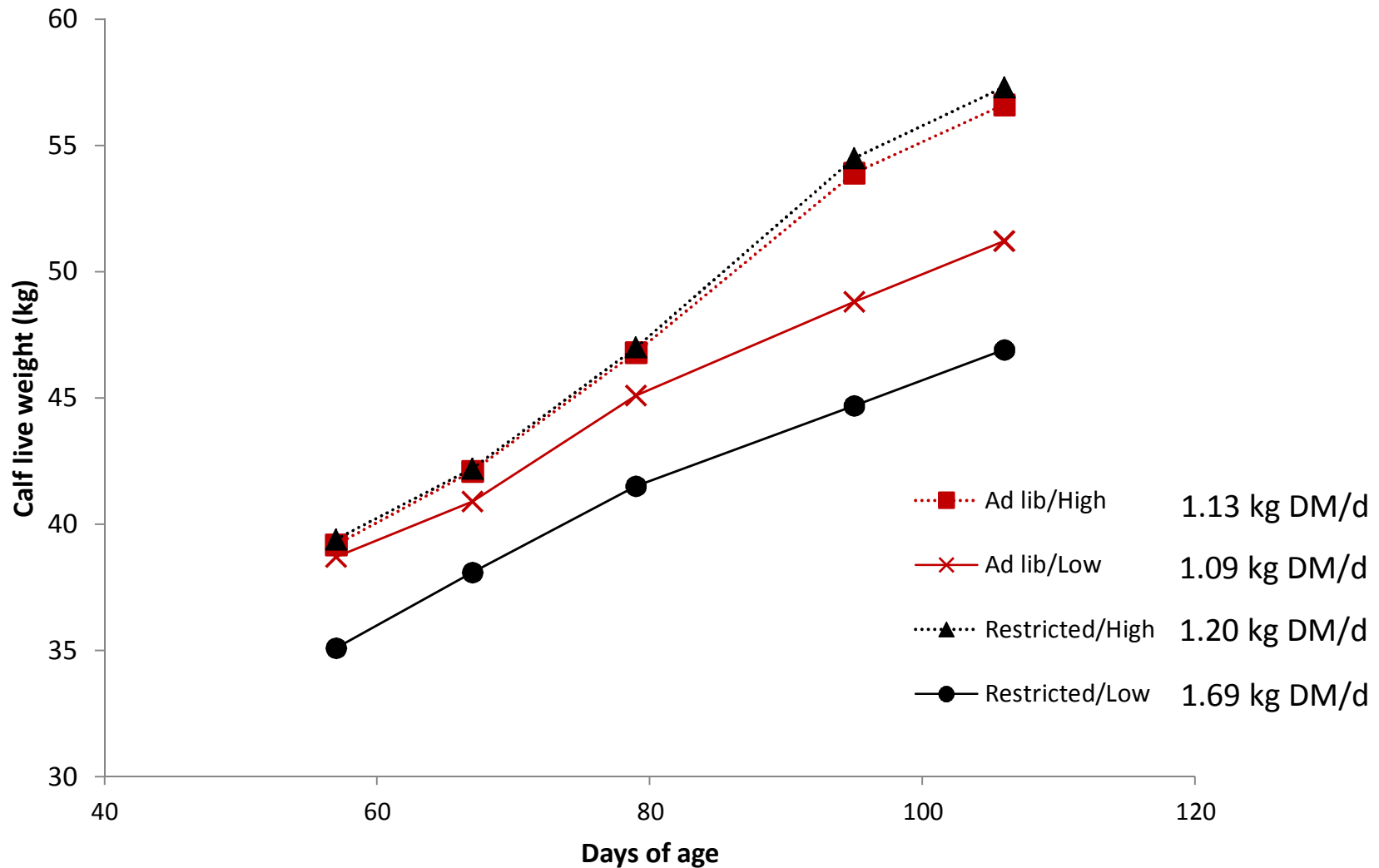
Changes in hind liveweight



Changes in hind BCS



What is driving calf weaning weight?



Implications

- Pre-calving BCS counts
 - BCS can help maintain calf weaning weight if pasture is in short supply
 - The influence of BCS runs out at day 80 so early weaning may be an option
 - Low BCS in March will delay conception

