

the burnett buzz...

Autumn 2012

CASE STUDY: Covering ground to achieve their dreams

After only a few years of hard work and patience, graziers Stephen Richards and Chaille Twine are finally starting to see their dream slowly become a reality.

The first stage was to encourage the regrowth of productive pasture species by de-stocking and installing internal fences for a rotational grazing program. "When we came there were



One of the new internal fences of Ewii Station

Mr Richards and Ms Twine purchased their 132ha property 'Ewii Station' in 2008. They always dreamed of having their own grazing block where they could prove that farming can incorporate sound ecological management and production with the right property design.

"When we found Ewii Station it gave us an amazing feeling of peace. We could see that it had once been well looked after but been sadly neglected due to overgrazing," re-lived Ms Twine. "There were some bad areas of erosion we really wanted to fix by allowing natural regeneration of the steeper hillslope to slow the water flow. This would also increase the native habitat for wildlife in the area."

predominantly wire grasses and creeping lantana, with lots of bare patches. Now there are legumes, black spear grass and other improved pasture species including pangola grass and buffel which are starting to dominate. All we did was destock and put a few fences in," said Ms Twine.

After attending the Sustainable Practices Grazing workshop held in September 2011, Mr Richards decided to apply for the available \$3,000 grants for Sustainable Grazing Practices which would help them pay for more internal fencing and a watering point to help with their rotational grazing program. As part of the workshop Mr Richards also learnt about different soil types and erosion control which

applied to their property management.

"This funding meant that we were able to install more fencing and a trough so we could rotationally graze and spell more of our country to encourage natural pasture regeneration and reduce erosion. A fence we constructed at the top of the property also allows us to control stock access to the steep areas and we can now let this area regenerate to native condition to slow the flow of water into the better pasture areas" said Mr Richards.

So what does the future hold for Ewii Station? "We will continue to divide the rest of the property so we can completely control the grazing pressure. We have also applied to the Burnett Mary Regional Group for more funding to protect some of the natural springs," said Ms Twine.



Mr Richards in the process of installing new fencing on Ewii Station

Inside this issue:

Fridays a winner for the North Burnett	2
Graziers get muddy feet finishing projects	2
Elsie's Diary	2
What's on in the Burnett	2
Pasture monitoring—it's that time of the year	3
Healthy Habitats case study	3
Last word...	4

Highlights

- Sustainable Practices Case Study— Richards and Twine
- North Burnett Landcare's Friday Clubs
- Pasture Monitoring—it's that time of the year again
- Healthy Habitats Case Study—Co-ordinated pig control

Fridays a winner in the North Burnett

North Burnett Landcare recently embarked on a project they call "The Friday Club" whereby a number of local agriculturalists (not necessarily Landcare members) gather to share ideas and their farming philosophies. Each get together is hosted by one of the participants and followed by a farm tour. The Friday Club gets together on one Friday afternoon per month in an atmosphere that encourages social interaction.

To encourage the participants, a guest (a specialist in his or her own field) is invited along to share thoughts and ideas on subjects such as: use of fire in property management, adapting to climate change, food security, soil carbon, feral animal management, erosion management and other typical sometimes challenging subjects.

Mr Glenn Baker, Landcare president said "the gatherings are a means to get people from different sectors of local primary industry together to share their experiences. This is not an activity where Landcare gets a pat on the back but one which allows people to gather and be challenged on issues into the future." To date the activity has proven very popular with participants engaging and keen to give up one Friday each month.

The project is facilitated by Landcare with great support of BCCA,

BMRG and the Be Natural cereal company. This activity is a true partnership.

For further information on Friday Club contact Glenn on (07) 4166 3554 or glen_baker@westnet.com.au.



Monto farmer Fred Jarvis discussing his grain operation with Mulgildie producers, Nigel and Jane Onley

reef rescue
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Graziers get muddy feet finishing projects

The exceptional wet season has resulted in the late start to some of the 47 approved Reef Rescue grazing projectsnot that we are ones to complain about the wet weather! The Burnett Mary Reef Partnership provided up to \$15 000 cash per grazier in the Great Barrier Reef catchment to improve farm management practices, mainly to keep their fertiliser, soil and chemicals on farm.

The bumper start to the year has resulted in tremendous pasture growth, with

graziers able to utilise their newly created fences and water points to spell certain paddocks to allow the pasture to rest and set seed. This results in improved groundcover, which is important in reducing the amount of sediment leaving the farm and ending up in the Great Barrier Reef Lagoon.

The program is now in its fifth and final year, with BCCA field officers currently visiting properties to assist graziers in their application to receive incentives to implement projects such as erosion

control, fencing of different landtypes to allow for better grazing management, installation of additional stock water points and revegetation of riparian areas.

These applications will be assessed over two rounds, in June and August 2012. The early assessment of the projects will allow successful applicants plenty of time to have their project completed by the end of the year.

Best of luck to all of you that have applied for the final year of the Reef Rescue funding.

What's on 'round the Burnett...

- 18 May Dry Rainforest Field Trip, Mundubbera
- 31 May BCCA General Meeting, Gayndah
- 31 May Beef Up Forum, Durong
- 1 June Beef Up Forum, Biggenden
- 3 June Wildlife Qld Urban Wildlife Forum, Hervey Bay
- 14 June AgForce Property Computer Mapping, Kingaroy
- 18 June AgForce Targeting Pests & Weeds Session, Monto
- 19 June AgForce Targeting Pests & Weeds Session, Eidsvold
- 20 June AgForce Targeting Pests & Weeds Session, Gayndah
- 22 June AgForce Targeting Pests & Weeds Session, Kingaroy
- 25 June AgForce Targeting Pests & Weeds Session, Durong
- 18-24 July RCS Grazing for Profit, Rockhampton

From Elsie's Diary

The nest protection program run by Burnett Catchment Care Association will be continuing again in the 2012 season, again partnering with the (now) Department of Environment and Heritage Protection and IMPACT Make Your Mark.

In early May of this year we had reports that some of the females have been active on the banks of the Burnett River, looking around for suitable nesting areas. This activity makes them vulnerable to attack by wild dogs, and eventually when they lay their eggs (approximately ten per female in one nest) these eggs will be vulnerable to wild dogs and goannas digging them up and eating them, as well as to grazing cattle trampling on them.

We will start to see some eggs being laid by the start of June and we will have fenced off two nesting areas that have been popular over the years and have seen continued activity from the female turtles.

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Pasture monitoring - it's that time of the year again...

With winter soon approaching, we all should be looking to our pasture to determine if our current stocking rate can be sustained through the upcoming non growing period. A large number of past recipients of the Reef Rescue funding have had pasture monitoring sites established on their property by BCCA field officers.

BCCA have, to date, established over 200 sites in the coastal Burnett and Baffle catchments during previous years of the Reef Rescue program. The pasture monitoring is performed at the end of the growing season and includes examining soil and pasture condition, along with estimating pasture yield. This monitoring leads to an overall estimation of land condition, along with the ability to perform a 'feed budget'.

As we can expect little or no pasture growth from now until Spring, the pasture yield we have now is essentially the feed that we will utilise through the winter months. By estimating our total pasture yield, we can apply a series of calculations in order to estimate how many grazing animals we can carry during the winter period. As not all pasture is available for grazing, we need to take into consideration what proportion of the pasture is unpalatable, what proportion will be wasted (from trampling, dung contamination etc.) and the proportion we will leave for residual (stubble). Once we have calculated our 'available' pasture, we can then determine how many grazing animals we can carry for a given period of time.

Those lucky graziers that have had a pasture monitoring site established in the

past have been given a pasture monitoring 'kit' allowing you to calculate your own feed budget in years to come. This year, you may not have to do your own pasture monitoring, as you may soon be contacted by a BCCA field officer who will do it for you, free of charge. The preferred time of year for this pasture monitoring is upon us, and we will contact you soon if you are eligible for the pasture monitoring re-assessment.



CASE STUDY: Co-ordinated Feral Pig Control

Feral pigs are a known pest in the inland Burnett, but thanks to some funding from the Healthy Habitats program seven landholders took advantage of the first round of co-ordinated baiting program at the end of the 2012 Summer season.

The people

Seven property managers/owners from Hawkwood, Auburn and surrounding areas registered their interest in a co-ordinated program that was run by BCCA. All beef producers, they identified that they had a problem with feral pigs on their property and took up the opportunity to be part of a wide-spread action against the pest.



This pig with its unique markings was not found in the area after the night this photo was taken

The Property

The seven properties ranged in size, location and ecosystem values, but the general Hawkwood-Auburn area was selected as the target area for this project as a large number of threatened plants and animals are known to inhabit freehold remnant areas as well as state forests and national parks.

The Problem

Feral pigs are a declared pest in Queensland and while pig shooting is a favourite pastime for some, pigs are still relatively abundant in our area. They are also a mobile animal and which can make managing them on one property alone a rather futile activity.

The Plan

So with this all in mind, while still not covering every square inch of the region, 140kg of poisoned liver was laid across the seven properties. North Burnett Regional Council's Lands Protection Officers were partners with us on this project as they supplied the 1080 poison and some local advice for pig control in the North Burnett. The baits were laid just before Easter 2012, targeting the feral pigs before they moved from the forested areas to our region's cropping areas for the winter, where they would find better food. The dosage of 1080 bait used in these baits is twice as strong as that used for wild dog baiting, and while wild dogs

may have shared in the poisoned bait, the concern was for non-target animals taking the poisons. New technologies are being produced to manage what animals can access these baits, such as the Hog-Hopper™, however more often than not it is the target species that takes the bait, not the native species.

The Product

An infra-red camera was set up at one of the baiting stations before, during and after baiting. Feral pig activity did not reduce, however it appears that some pigs that were photographed before and during baiting were not photographed in the weeks after baiting, indicating some successful poisoning may have occurred. However, the baiting activity has not killed all the pigs as piglets and different adult pigs were photographed still weeks after the baiting activity.

The Potential

This baiting program was widespread, however there were many gaps on private and state land where baiting was not being undertaken, and so it is hoped that in the future any co-ordinated baiting programs will be better participated, and therefore have a greater spread of baits, and hopefully a greater impact on the number of feral pigs.





Burnett Catchment Care Association



BCCA is a community based organisation working on the philosophy of integrated catchment management.

Integrated Catchment Management (ICM) is a philosophy that encourages a coordinated approach to the management of natural resources in Queensland. Its overall purpose is to integrate the management of land, water and related biological resources in order to achieve their sustainable and balanced use.

ICM involves the voluntary actions of stakeholders including government, rural landholders, industry, fisheries and urban dwellers that incorporate the goals of achieving and maintaining a healthy catchment for future generations.

BCCA is a member based organisation. If you'd like to become a member please phone or email the office for a membership form!

BCCA derive the majority of our funding and acknowledge support from the Burnett Mary Regional Group and the Australian Governments Caring for our Country program.

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Last word...

It has been full steam ahead with the fifth and final year of the Reef Rescue Grazing program for the last few months. We have received in excess of 60 Expressions of Interest, mainly from new participants to the program, located on the coast.

It is great to be still capturing new participants in this late stage of the program. Rumours of a Reef Rescue 2 are circulating so hopefully the Government will choose to continue with the program after June 2013.

We have recently found out we were unsuccessful in our first round bid for the Australian Governments Clean Energy Futures Biodiversity Fund.

A big congratulations to the Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee (MRCCC) who were successful in their bid "Restore riparian resilience: Mary River threatened aquatic species recovery plan". It appears most of the successful

applications totaling \$271M were focused on major revegetation works. However there will be subsequent rounds of funding so if anyone has any specific ideas for the Burnett region, please don't hesitate to contact us.

We still have a number of other funding applications including Action on the Ground and Caring for our Country submitted so we hope we are more successful with them.

As mentioned in our Reef Rescue muddy feet story, some of our Year 4 projects have struggled to finish their projects over the wet season. We are hoping to alleviate that in the fifth and final year by completing project application now with the projects due before the next wet season. We hope this approach allows our participants to complete their fencing and other activities over the dry season, in the cooler months.

Thanks to all involved in the Sustainable

Practices project, we hope the development of your property management plans has focused your future plans and goals and the small incentives set you on your way to an improved operation.

Finally, a reminder to anyone with Brigalow vegetation and are keen to enhance or protect it; the Healthy Habitats inland Burnett program may be able to help you. Give Louise or Fiona a call to discuss your funding options.

Katie Muller

