

the burnett buzz...

June 2014

Graziers assess land condition at Miriam Vale workshop

BCCA recently held a grazing management workshop at Miriam Vale, attended by 22 local landholders.

The workshop was presented as a part of the Reef Water Quality Grants and Partnerships program which has the objective of assisting graziers to reduce their sediment run off to the Great Barrier Reef lagoon, whilst improving skills and knowledge on best practice grazing management. The grazing workshop was facilitated by BCCA Extension Officer Peter Crawford.

"The extremely dry season in 2013 and very late wet this year has resulted in some serious overgrazing and reduction in groundcover in many areas of the region, including much of the Baffle Creek catchment", Peter says.

"When country is overgrazed and land condition deteriorates, it takes a long time to recover, so it is important that landholders recognise their land capability and safe carrying capacity,

before setting their stocking rates".

The BCCA grazing workshop program is designed to provide landholders with the skills and knowledge to assess their land capability, and to work out a safe carrying capacity through forage budgeting. Developing a forage budget involves measuring pasture quantity and quality through a visual assessment, or a cutting and weighing process, and calculating a safe carrying capacity for the property based on this assessment.

"When country is overgrazed and land condition deteriorates, it takes a long time to recover, so it is important that landholders recognise their land capability..."

The best time to do this is shortly after the end of the wet season, as there will be little or no further pasture growth during the cooler months.



"Often landholders tend to base their stocking rates on the condition of their livestock, rather than the condition of the land", Peter says. "By doing this, the land condition can deteriorate more or less unnoticeably, leading to degradation and sediment run off. When it does rain, pasture on land in poor condition will take much longer to respond than pasture on land in good condition".

By carefully managing stocking rates to a safe carrying capacity, and therefore maintaining land in good condition, landholders will be in a much better position to restock, or sell stock in good condition at better prices.

The seasonal outlook for the next few months is not encouraging. Therefore it is crucial that landholders assess their pasture supply now, and calculate a safe carrying capacity to enable their pasture to get them through to at least the middle of the next wet season.

A similar workshop will be held in Degilbo on Thursday, 19 June. If you are interested in attending, please RSVP to BCCA on (07) 4166 3898.

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BCCA's Peter Crawford demonstrating how to carry out a cut and weigh pasture assessment, assisted by David Cusack and Kerry Ennett

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Highlights

- Case study on local grazier's PMP
- Soil carbon results from Monto workshop
- Update on Flood Recovery Riparian project in Central Burnett
- Weed file—GRT
- Nitrous oxide trial update
- GLM workshop for Degilbo

PMP— CASE STUDY - Jim & Jenny Cross

The people

Jim & Jenny Cross run a 700-head cattle breeding operation at Wengenville, at the base of the Bunya Mountains, on approximately 1360 ha of owned and leased country. They mainly sell store cattle at 18 months of age and herd genetics are a mix of Brahman, South Devon and Belmont Red.

The opportunity

The opportunity to prepare a Property Management Plan, under The Carbon Farming Project, with the assistance of Burnett Catchment Care Association (BCCA), was particularly timely for Jim & Jenny, given -

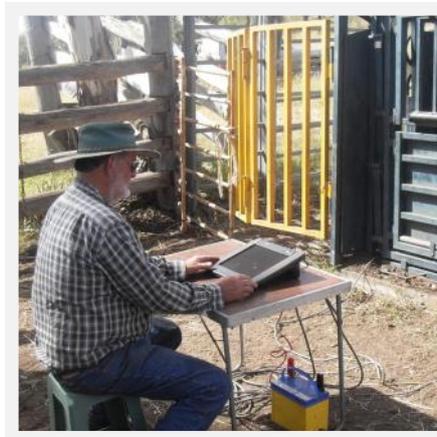
- their recent purchase of an adjoining property;
- Jenny's transition to becoming more involved with the day-to-day operation of the property;
- increasing interest from the next generation (& the following one) in becoming involved in the business &
- their ongoing transition into a more intensive grazing system.

The plan

The Property Management Plan was collated by BCCA based on information

Jim & Jenny supplied during a property visit. The plan records their current grazing, land and herd management practices and things they want to change or improve. It also contains an action plan that prioritises the activities needed to complete the most important projects.

The plan is supported by up-to-date property maps which show the current and proposed infrastructure. The maps are particularly useful for Jim & Jenny as they continue their transition to a new grazing management system which requires additional development work.



The result

Jim & Jenny have already completed some of their priority actions and have commenced others identified in their Property Management Plan. "It is great that we can see we have DONE a couple of projects already."

The future

Jim & Jenny will continue to improve the property infrastructure with additional fencing and watering points as



well as conduct ongoing weed and pest management and pasture monitoring. They are confident that their Property Management Plan and associated farm maps will help them to focus their efforts and support communication within the business unit and the wider family.

"We are looking forward to going through the plans with our daughters and discussing what they see are some goals to work towards as they begin their journey of succession."

"It is great that we can see we have DONE a couple of projects already..."

The plan will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains relevant and will allow Jim & Jenny to appreciate just how much they have achieved in the preceding 12 months.

Jim & Jenny would recommend the Property Management Planning service offered by BCCA under the Carbon Farming Project to other graziers within the region.

The Carbon Farming Project is supported by funds from the Australian Government.

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What's on 'round the Burnett and Beyond...

3 June	BMRG Climate Summit, Maryborough	13 June	Flood Recovery Soil Health Workshop, Wallaville
4 June	BCCA General Meeting, Mundubbera	19 June	Grazing land management workshop, Degilbo
4 June	Self-Assessable Vegetation Clearing Workshop, Eidsvold	20 June	PFSQ Native Forestry Field Day, Monto
12 June	Flood Recovery Soil Health Workshop, Pine Creek	18 Sept	'Innovative Weed Management' & 'Making Money from Weeds' workshops, Gayndah
All winter	Herbicide Applications open for weed control, North Burnett		

Our Events calendar is always being added to. If you'd like to add something to our events calendar, just email Melinda at the Monto office. Check out www.betterburnett.com/events-calendar

Giant Rats Tail Grass – a flood weed

Giant Rats Tail Grass (GRT) is one of the weeds that can be treated using herbicide from our Flood Recovery Herbicide Program.

It is a grass species which is commonplace around the coastal parts of the Burnett has found its way to the north Burnett, and is becoming established around Monto and Biggenden, but has the potential to be more widespread than that.

This weed is unpalatable to stock when it's mature, which makes it a problem



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for graziers who are trying to feed or fatten their stock. The grass grows up to approximately 1.5m, and of this, the flower or grasshead is usually bundled together and can be up to 40cm long. The leaf blades are approximately 6-8mm wide and around 70cm long. There are a few native grass species that look similar to this weed, but can be distinguished by the different grassheads.

"is becoming established around Monto and Biggenden..."

When treating, if possible, cut the flower heads off, back them and burn them to reduce the risk of seed dropping after being treated with herbicide.



Giant Rat's Tail Grass (Sporobolus species)

Riverside Restoration Rollout; first site complete!

Thanks to great weather, keen local volunteers and lots of work the first North Burnett Riparian Restoration Project located at Gr8 Citrus, Ideraway has proudly been completed.

Mr McCosker's farm, Gr8 Ctrus is one of over 40 farms in the Central Burnett region which have been identified by BMRG's soil technical officer as having 'unstable' sections of river bank following the 2013 flooding from ex-cyclone Oswald.

Like many farmers living along the Burnett river, Mr McCosker's orchard was inundated with floodwaters in 2013 which caused a severe erosion slump when the water receded. The slump was very unstable and very close to the orchard which posed a significant risk to the trees and workers on the farm.

"I couldn't believe it. We were standing on the bank after the water went down and heard this massive crack. We ran

back up to the top of the bank near the orchard trees and wham, the bank just fell straight into the river," Mr McCosker exclaimed when BCCA staff first visited the site.

In order to stabilise the area Mr McCosker had earthmoving contractors repair the site. Not long after, BCCA contacted Mr McCosker offering expert advice and assistance to ensure the area was stable. After an inspection by technical staff, revegetation was recommended and since a works crew has successfully planted over 400 local species, removed noxious weeds and debris, re-fenced the revegetation area and broadcast native grass seed to improve groundcover diversity.

The Riparian works crew is a terrific example of BCCA & BMRG working with the community. Community Solutions and other local job seeker providers in Gayndah and Mundubbera have been encouraging local jobseekers to volunteer as part of a works crew to help the community and gain valuable work experience. The crew works Monday to Thursday under the supervision of an experienced site supervisor to carry out works including fencing, seeding, tree planting, mulching, weed control and a lot of watering.

This strategy has proven very successful and we now have a great team of locals working together to help restore and restabilise our riverbanks with more coming every day.

The crew are now moving on to our next site at Luscdale & Kentucky Orchard's near Mundubbera. This is a big site (30ha) with major earthworks and over 1700 plants going in the ground to help protect it from future events. The aim is to complete this site by the end of June 2014.



Riparian works crew member, Robert

"and wham, the bank just fell straight into the river..."

The North Burnett Riparian Restoration Program is part of the On-farm Productivity and Riparian Recovery Program funded jointly by the Queensland and Australian Government administered by the Burnett Mary Regional Group and coordinated by BCCA in the North Burnett region.



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The river bank after the reveg crew has been through

Action on the Ground—N₂O emission trial update

The Burnett Mary Regional Group, supported by BCCA and with funding from the Australian Government is trialling the integration of legume rotations; the inclusion of soil amendments; minimum tillage practices; the use of nitrification inhibitors; improved irrigation management and timing of fertiliser and compost applications in grain cropping systems to demonstrate how improving soil structure and reducing nitrogen fertiliser applications has the potential to decrease nitrous oxide emissions and in doing so increase productivity on cropping lands in the Burnett region.

The initial summer legume phase of the project which trialled the planting of Adzuki beans, Mungbeans and Soy beans is nearing completion with good crops of Adzuki beans and Mungbeans harvested. The Soybean treatment is also close to maturity and preparations are now underway for planting the grain phase of the trial.

Over the last 4 months, 1008 gas samples were collected from the chambers. These chambers collect the nitrous oxide (N₂O) emissions from the trial sites. These samples were sent to DSITIA for analysis along with the weather and soil probe data. Dr Weijin Wang (DSITIA) has found some interesting correlations between soil moisture and N₂O emissions. Following two heavy rain events in March (around 250mm total), the soil was waterlogged and there were obvious peaks in N₂O emissions from the fallow treatment

well above the chambers with bean crop (see graph below).

Cumulatively, around 650g/Ha of N₂O was lost into the atmosphere from the fallow treatment and 150g/Ha of N₂O nitrogen was lost from the bean treatments. It will be interesting to see if this equates to a difference in overall soil N once the soil nitrate levels have been analysed by DSITIA.

To determine plant nitrate levels, representative 1m² quadrant sampling of green plants were carried out on the compost and non-compost bean crops by myself and Professor Phil Brown (CQU), the day before Good Friday. A big “thank-you” to Phil for coming out to Monto from Bundy and braving the Easter traffic. Whilst we are still waiting on the results for the plant nitrates,



Manual gas chambers in a fallow treatment

some other observations show that in general, the plant density and plant weight was higher in the bean treatments where compost was applied. This could be due to the higher amount of root nodulation observed in the compost treatments as shown in the image to the left.

The soil biology samples taken in May from the top soil in the compost and non-compost bean strips, should give us a further idea of what is happening here and the comparison with January’s sample should show any improvements that have occurred in soil health.

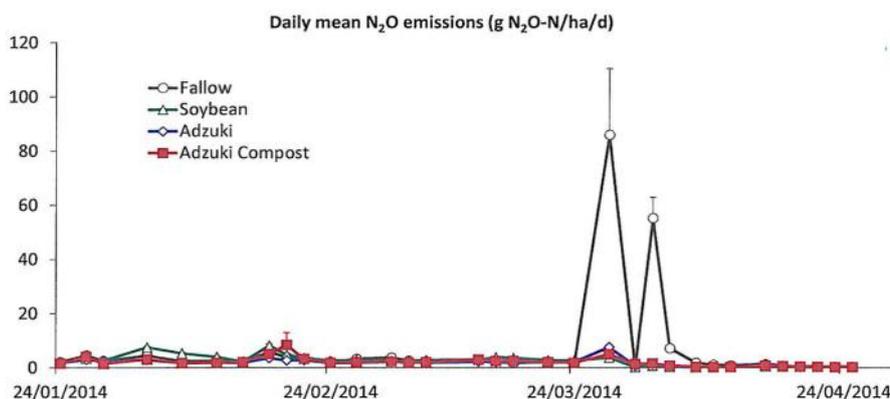


More nodules on a adzuki bean plant from a compost treatment (right hand side)

“Over the last 4 months, 1008 gas samples were collected ...”

Shortly, the entire plots in both locations will be planted to grain, the chambers replaced in the field and gas emission sampling will recommence. We will then see what effect the varying summer practices (bean crop, compost, fallow), combined with different fertiliser rates (Best Management Practice using results from a soil test verses a Standard Industry Rate) and the use of nitrogen inhibitors has, if any, on emissions and the subsequent yield of winter grains.

This project is an initiative of the Burnett Mary Regional Group and is supported by funding from the Australian Government. The project is coordinated locally by BCCA’s project officer Jenny Voigt.



Obvious peaks in N₂O emissions from the fallow treatment well above the bean crop emissions

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BCCA are on Facebook—
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Yes, BCCA is up with the times and on Facebook. Just head to : www.facebook.com/pages/Sustainable-Burnett-Catchment/197863326932611 or search for ‘Sustainable Burnett Catchment’ on Facebook!



Controlling weeds in your creeks and gullies!

To date, 40 landholders have participated in the Flood Recovery herbicide program that BCCA are coordinating in conjunction with Burnett Mary Regional Group and that number is increasing every day! But, more importantly there is an increasing awareness of weeds after the floods, especially since we had some summer rain back in April.

Landholders taking part in this program are controlling Parthenium, Giant Rats Tail Grass, Cats Claw Creeper, Rubber Vine, Madeira Vine and Hymenachne, which were all identified as weeds that are of most threat to agriculture and production following the floods. They submit their application form to the BCCA office for processing and then within a few weeks are able to collect

chemical from their local ag supplies store.

So far, almost 5000ha has been or is being treated as part of the program. This is in addition to the works that the North Burnett Landcare Group are doing, with their works crew starting at the top of the catchment and working their way down the creek systems. They have covered the Three Moon Creek and Monal Creeks and are currently working on the Splinter Creek totalling more than 15,000 ha of creek lines and floodplains.

“So far, almost 5000ha has been or is being treated...”

The North Burnett Regional Council have also been instrumental in controlling and monitoring weed populations along parts of the Auburn

and Boyne Rivers as well as Barambah Creek.

The program will be continuing over the winter and into summer. The weather has been kind to us so far with warmer weather this close to winter giving an open window of opportunity to get started on controlling those weeds.

For a Herbicide application form please contact the office on (07) 4166 3898.



A treated parthenium plant



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What's the dirt on soil?

Landholders in Mundubbera and Monto gathered in April for Soil Health workshops run by the BCCA. Highly recognised agronomists from the Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries with extensive extension and soil agronomy skills shared their knowledge to assist landholders.



Dr Mike Bell and Dr David Lawrence covered topics on soil organic matter which is 'everything in or on the soil that is of biological origin... dead or alive', soil carbon, soil health and the nutrient dynamics of healthy soils.

Soil sampling was also undertaken prior to the workshops so a comparative analysis of the results was discussed—particularly on soil organic matter and carbon—and whether the floods had an impact on same.

Brad Hutchinson commented “it was one of the best workshops he had been to and the speakers provided valuable information that he could use on his property”.

Flood affected landholders who attended the workshops are also eligible to receive follow up comprehensive soil testing and agronomy advice. Experienced agronomists will be undertaking this assessment over the coming months.

“it was one of the best workshops he had been to and the speakers provided valuable information that he could use on his property...”

The funds to run these workshops were made available through the Queensland and Australian Government's On-farm Productivity and Riparian Recovery program to assist primary producers to recover from flooding caused by ex-Tropical cyclone Oswald.



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Dr Mike Bell talking at the Mundubbera Soil Health Workshop

CASE STUDY - Enhancing Degilbo Creek

The People

Greg and Barb Lines own and operate their 150 acre property 'Myee', located about 5 kilometres west of Dallarnil. The property is bounded on the western and southern sides of Degilbo Creek, a major tributary of the Burnett River. Greg and Barb generally stock the property with weaner heifers and steers bred on their home property at South Kolan.



Cattle access point on Degilbo Creek

The Opportunity

Cattle have a restricted access to Degilbo Creek, with some fencing and a long steep and lengthy rocky section of creek bank preventing access to most of the creek bank through the property. However a short low creek bank area is able to be accessed by stock, and there is potential for erosion and sedimentation from cattle using this access. It would not be feasible to fence off this section, as even minor floods would destroy the fencing here.

Prior to involvement with the Grazing Reef Water Quality Grants and Partnerships program, most paddocks were watered by direct access to this one low-bank section of the creek. This meant that although the property is subdivided into several paddocks, gates needed to be left open most of the time so that cattle had access to water.

The Plan

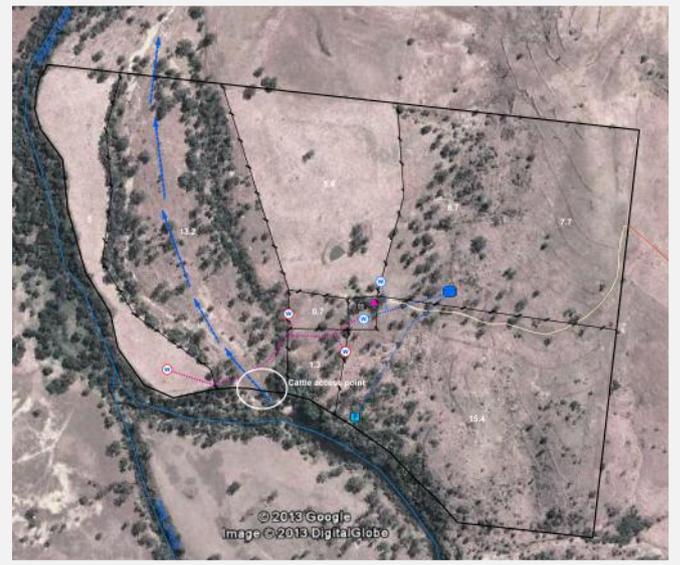
Greg and Barb recently installed a solar pump on a high bank near



Greg Lines overlooking Degilbo Creek from where water is pumped. The steep and rocky bank here prevents cattle access.

the creek, with water pumped to a tank, and piped to two troughs. Greg wished to be involved in the program to look at establishing some more water points, so that stock in all paddocks would not need access to the creek for water.

Right: The property map showing the water point plan.



“Greg developed a plan to improve the overall water infrastructure with the objective of reducing the impact of cattle directly accessing Degilbo Creek for water..”

With assistance from BCCA Extension Officer Peter Crawford, Greg developed a plan to improve the overall water infrastructure with the objective of reducing the impact of cattle directly accessing Degilbo Creek for water.

The project has provided funding which has resulted in a further three troughs being installed and connected to the existing system by 50mm poly pipe.

The Results

This project has achieved a very beneficial outcome, in terms of

reduction of sediment into Degilbo Creek, and improved grazing management outcomes due to the ability to shut more gates. Cattle will still have access to the creek in one paddock (which is basically an overflow area) but as cattle tend to prefer to drink clean water from a trough, it is likely that even in this paddock stock will not continue to water from the creek.



Greg's unique in-fence trough installation. The suspended bar will act as a barrier to cattle, whilst allowing a beast to escape should one get into the trough .

The Future

Greg and Barb are very happy with the outcome, and to BCCA for providing a small amount of funding to assist with the change.

This project is supported by the Burnett Mary Regional Group through funding from the Australian Government.



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BCCA front up at the Mundubbera Show

In early May, the BCCA Flood Recovery Riparian team set up an information stall at the Mundubbera show.

The stall was aimed at landholders living along the Burnett and tributaries



Dutch and Fiona at the Mundubbera show

affected by the 2013 floods, where they were provided with advice on weed control, riparian revegetation, plant species and general planting guidelines.

At the stall, the dedicated, good looking staff, also offered customers a chance to look at their individual properties satellite images and aerial photographs as well as offering customers showbags with all sorts of goodies including, seed packs, tubestock and fact sheets.

The stall had something for all ages with leaf painting for the children, young and old. A splendid day was had by all.

“... offering customers showbags with all sorts of goodies”

The real action was actually inside the pavilion where the egg judging was being held. Two BCCA staffers went head to head in direct competition. The loser taking nothing and the winner taking bragging rights for the next 18 years. For results on this gripping battle, call Fiona on 0407 482 242.

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Grazing Land Management Workshop in Degilbo

Landholders in this region are looking at the serious possibility of very poor grazing conditions following the failure of our wet season. To assist you to make the right decisions in regard to your grazing management this year, you are invited to a free one-day workshop where we will discuss:

- Recognising land types, their strengths, weaknesses and capabilities

- How to maintain good land condition in relation to current carrying capacity
- How and when grass grows around the Burnett and how much the animals should really be eating
- Practical assessments of soils, pastures and overall land condition
- Plus much more!

The workshop will focus on managing our grazing lands focusing on the recent drought but also the effects of the floods, including good weed management.

The workshop is free and happening Thursday 19th June 2014, 8.30am to 3pm at the Degilbo Hall, west of Biggenden.

Register your attendance with the BCCA office on (07) 4166 3898.



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The prospect of future funding is not looking great with the Australian Governments budget announcement that the Landcare funding is being cut by \$483.8 million. The \$1 billion National Landcare Program is said to be still being designed and funding will not be available until the second half of this year.

However, our staff currently have their hands very full coordinating our eight key projects; the Carbon Farming project, Action on the Ground, Reef Water Quality Grants and Partnerships, Water Quality Monitoring and the four Flood Recovery projects; Riparian Restoration, Weed Management, Floodplain Restoration and Land Productivity.

These projects will keep all staff busy until at least June 2015 with two of these projects (Carbon Farming project and Action on the Ground) continuing until 2017.

“... Our guest speakers encouraged significant landholder participation”

I had the pleasure of attending the Soil Health Workshop BCCA hosted in Monto in late April. Our guest speakers from Qld DAFF encouraged significant landholder participation with the use of electronic voting remotes and made the day locally relevant by analysing

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Last word...

soil tests taken on local cropping and grazing properties. It was one of the most informative and engaging workshops I have been to in sometime.

I have been very impressed with the positive responses we have had to the Carbon Farming Projects - Grazing PMP's Veronica has been conducting over the last 12 months. We have landholders from right across the catchment keen to document, map and prioritise their future actions.

The Flood Recovery projects are all in full swing and it is great to see significant funds go on-ground to support farmers get back on their feet.

If you have any questions about any of our projects, please call me or any of our project staff.

Katie Muller

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.

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Soil carbon paired and measured

In early March, QDAFF recently held a soil carbon and organic matter workshop in Monto which included paired soil carbon comparisons collected by Stuart Buck (DAFF Extension Officer). The results of 8 paired soil carbon tests from properties around Monto provided for some interesting comparisons and generated a lot of discussion.

In general soil carbon levels in Monto were on par or slightly better in when compared to other Brigalow soils in Australia under long-term cropping, most likely due to a high initial starting point and relatively high intensity of cropping with irrigation.

As expected, remnant vegetation showed the highest levels of soil organic carbon, followed by pasture and cropping land. Sown pasture gave better results than native pasture and over time, the incorporation of a sown pasture into a cropping system has been shown to gradually increase soil carbon levels towards those of original remnant vegetation (we are talking long-term though).

The type of crop also had a big impact on soil organic carbon with the levels in long term Lucerne crops around Monto higher than nearby long-term cropping land (pairs with stars above them in graph right).

Mr Buck stated, "we were pleasantly surprised by how good lucerne is lifting Carbon levels, especially when grass in also present".

Other observations from our paired testing showed a decline in soil organic carbon in land that had been flooded or under a burning regime.

"We were pleasantly surprised by how good lucerne is lifting Carbon..."

The importance of soil organic carbon (or carbon that is derived from organic matter) was a big part of the workshop as was the function of organic matter in general for soil health and production long term. The soils ability to retain water, hold structure, buffer pH changes and provide a reservoir of nutrients is all linked to the organic matter levels. With continuous cropping, additions need to be made or levels will decline over time and potentially, so will yields.

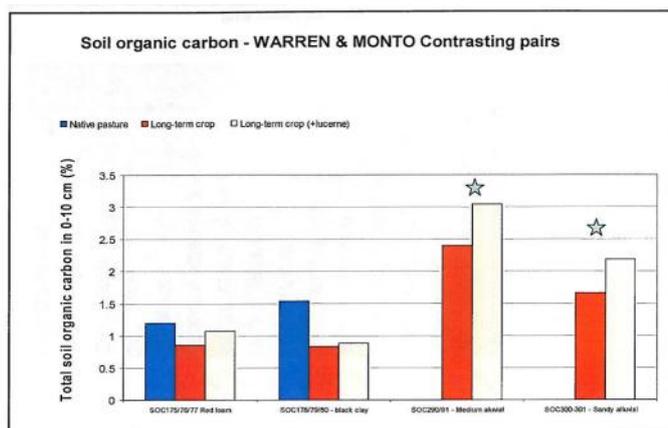
To end, some management options to increase organic matter inputs into soil were supplied, such as:

- Improve nutrient management (ie soil tests)
- Add offsite organic matter (ie manure)
- Green manure crops – legume based for N supply
- Maximise stubble retention (Zero Till, reduce bailing etc)
- Grow more crops where possible (double cropping, less fallows)
- Grow alternative pasture species – Higher Dry Matter allocation
- Add legume to pasture for N supply
- Introduce or increase pasture into system (ley or permanent)
- Return some areas to timber

The workshop generated significant positive feedback from farmers.

Overall, they indicated a better understanding of the role of organic matter and carbon in soil and how their management practices impact on these levels. More importantly, many left with a clear plan on how they were going to boost soil organic matter levels on their farms.

The soil testing and workshop was part of a project funded by Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) and the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Carbon Farming Futures – Action on the Ground program.



Total soil organic carbon results at Warren and Monto (stars)

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