

# Property Management Planning and Carbon Farming in

## a grazing system of the Burnett Mary

**Bruce & Ann GOSSNER, Gin Gin**

### **The people**

Bruce and Ann Gossner run an 850 ha grazing operation near Gin Gin conducted across 5 properties. Currently they are running just over 200 breeders and, normally, non-replacement weaners are sold directly off the cow at 8-10 months of age.

The breeders are mostly Brahman or Angus-cross cattle with Brahman, Angus & Santa Gertrudis bulls. Set stocking rates are used except at one property where cattle are rotated between paddocks of improved pasture consisting of Rhodes grass, Green & Gatton Panics, Bluegrass, Wynn cassia and Seca stylo. Remaining properties have a mix of native grasses (eg. Black speargrass and Kangaroo grass) & improved species (eg. Rhodes grass and Wynn cassia).

Commercial harvest of timber is also conducted as part of the business and irrigated hay is produced on the home property. This hay is stored as supplementary feed for their cattle.

### **The opportunity**

Bruce and Ann were interested in preparing a Property Management Plan, under the Carbon Farming Project, with the assistance of Burnett Catchment Care Association (BCCA), as they wanted to review current practices & land condition with a view to planning changes they would like to make in their grazing operation. This opportunity was particularly timely given a run of dry seasons which had resulted in disruption to some of their normal grazing & herd management practices.

### **Carbon Farming in their grazing system**

A review of carbon farming practices, relevant to extensive grazing in the Burnett, revealed a number of these practices are already routinely implemented. However, they are keen to continue, and enhance, these practices for the benefits they bring to the business and the environment through improved resource condition, enhanced carbon storage and reduced greenhouse gas emissions intensity (ie. greenhouse gas emitted per kg of beef produced.)

They aim to retain good ground cover and healthy perennial pastures (for soil health & productivity) and carefully manage the significant stands of native vegetation which exist on their properties. These practices will help to maximise carbon storage within the landscape while operating a commercial grazing and timber-harvesting business.

The current and planned herd management practices, coupled with enhanced grazing techniques, will also help to ensure they are running an efficient cattle-breeding operation – thereby reducing the emissions intensity of the business and enhancing business viability.



If you are interested in a **Property Management Plan** please contact

**Burnett Catchment Care Association**

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## The Plan

As the operation is conducted over 5 properties, the Property Management Planning process was used to identify the key activities likely to deliver the most positive benefits.

The use of property maps during the planning process helped Bruce and Ann to discuss and prioritise their infrastructure & development plans. Planned activities include –

- Fencing projects – repairs to existing fencing & installation of new-sub-divisional fencing to create some additional paddocks
- Upgrade of existing, & installation of new, watering points
- Pasture improvement on the 'better' country and
- Stabilising eroded gullies.

The discussion around pasture condition was a chance to determine which paddocks need spelling for recovery and which ones are recovering well following a reasonable wet season this year. Some changes to grazing management are to be implemented such as incorporation of more rotational grazing & associated paddock spelling for pasture recovery on an ongoing basis. The planned fencing and watering point projects will help facilitate these grazing management changes.

Some herd desired herd management changes have also been identified. They are keen to move towards having all poll cattle and would like to see higher and more consistent calving rates particularly for the second-calf cows. They aim to better collect, manage and use herd data to ensure their culling and selection decisions are leading to herd improvement. Strategies to achieve these goals are to be put in place.

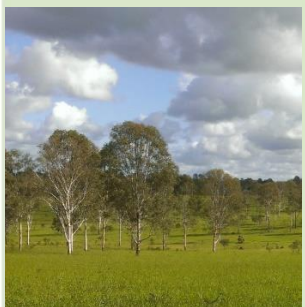
The planned improvement activities will be conducted over a number of years as not everything can be done at once. However, creating their Property Management Plan has helped to identify activities that will create a more efficient, resilient & viable cattle-breeding operation.

## The future

Some of the items listed in the 'Action Plan' section of their Property Management Plan have already been started. Impact of the planned changes and actions on pasture & land condition and animal performance will be monitored over time.

***Are you keen to know more about how to manage methane emissions in your grazing operation? If so, the National Livestock Methane Program may be of interest; more details can be found at -***

***<http://www.mla.com.au/Research-and-development/Environment-sustainability/National-livestock-methane-program>***



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