

GRAZING BMP NEWSLETTER

Edition 1, December 2013

Welcome to the first edition of the Grazing Best Management Practice (BMP) Newsletter. This publication is designed to keep industry stakeholders up-to-date with the latest news and information from the Grazing BMP program, including case studies, industry achievements, milestones and other useful information about the program.

WWW.BMPGRAZING.COM.AU

WHAT IS GRAZING BMP?

An online, self-assessment tool that allows graziers to benchmark their current grazing and business practice against an industry-developed set of standards. It allows graziers to identify opportunities and develop a plan to improve their business performance, and have access to relevant information and support to achieve their plan.

WHO RUNS GRAZING BMP?

The program was developed by Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA), AgForce Queensland and the Queensland Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (QDAFF) along with a producer reference group, and is supported by the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (DEHP).

In development since 2009, the program uses the same framework as the successful myBMP Cotton and Grains BMP. After technical input from QDAFF grazing extension staff, each of the 156 benchmark questions across five modules have been developed and piloted by a panel of producers.



Grazing BMP – moving the industry forward

With ever increasing pressure on the grazing industry to validate its outstanding environmental stewardship and animal welfare standards, industry support for a Grazing BMP program has never been so critical.

Grazing BMP is an industry-led, proactive, voluntary approach to facilitate and promote the adoption of good farm management practices. Enterprises benchmark their practices with confidentiality, compare their performance with others across the region or state and identify opportunities for continuous improvement. On a broader scale, the program will continually demonstrate to government and the community the ongoing development and progressive nature of the grazing industry today.



Support from government and industry

After gaining the support of the Queensland Government earlier this year, graziers are now throwing their support behind the program. Within the first 12 months of the program being piloted more than 400 graziers have signed on and self assessed their performance against industry averages. Feedback from graziers who have completed the first assessment is very positive. Participants have said the program is the best way to move the industry forward and have called on the rest of industry to get on board and help shape the future of Queensland's beef industry rather than have it shaped for them.

At an AgForce Cattle Policy forum in mid-2013, AgForce Projects Manager, Sue Dillon, reiterated that Queensland graziers need to stand together to correct community misconceptions about grazing practices by demonstrating the exceptional and ever evolving, world class standard of the industry.

‘Other industries are either already engaged with, or in the process of developing an industry specific BMP program,’ Ms Dillon said.

‘Now is the time for the grazing industry to get on board and drive this BMP to meet their needs - a window exists to develop and deliver an industry wide tool based on industry derived information. Without it we can only expect more of the same constraints and pressures previously experienced.’



AgForce Cattle Policy Forum, Charters Towers.

L-R - Cattle producer Peter Anderson, AgForce Cattle Director Michael Mactaggart, AgForce Project Manager Sue Dillon and AgForce Policy Officer Marie Vitelli.



WHY DOES THE INDUSTRY NEED A BMP?

- » Agriculture is under increasing pressure to prove its environmental performance and animal welfare credentials.
- » There is government and community misconception that farmers are not sustainable land managers, particularly in relation to agricultural runoff of sediment and nutrients into the Great Barrier Reef Lagoon.
- » Farmers require a method to benchmark and communicate they are the best environmental stewards of agricultural land so as to correct public perception and to avoid onerous and unrealistic regulation.

THE FACTS

- » The Queensland grazing industry is valued at \$3.4 billion.
- » The Queensland cattle herd is 12.6 million head (2011) and produces 50 per cent of Australia's beef and veal production.
- » In excess of 70pc of Queensland's production is exported.
- » Australia is a world- leader in environmental performance and achieves this in an extremely dynamic and difficult climate.
- » Australia has in place exceptional animal welfare standards and regulations to ensure best practice is occurring in animal welfare.
- » Grazing BMP was piloted across 200 graziers in 2012, predominantly from the Fitzroy catchment in Central Queensland. More than 90pc of graziers were found to be at best practices or above best practice for Grazing Land Management and Soil Health.

THE SOLUTION

- » The best way to increase the adoption of best management practices is continued government support and investment in good RD&E and industry initiatives to keep the industry striving to do better.
- » Grazing BMP helps producers benchmark their own practices, identify opportunities for continuous improvement and demonstrate their high level of environmental stewardship to the community and government.
- » The industry needs government investment and support along with market drivers, to help increase the adoption of these systems and demonstrate real on ground outcomes.
- » Grazing BMP may help graziers move from reef-regulation to an industry designed system using industry derived information to help demonstrate the high adoption rates of sustainable practices that are important for monitoring reef health.

NEWS



245 modules completed

The initial Grazing BMP development contract between QDAFF and FBA has been completed. From the first workshop in September 2010 to June 2013, 245 modules were completed over the Fitzroy, Burdekin and Mackay/Whitsunday Basins. These modules represented 738,292 ha of grazing hectares in the three basins. These figures have almost doubled in the last six months. A new up-to-date report on these figures will be available in the next Grazing BMP Newsletter.

Module reviews

Grazing Land Management and Soils have been reviewed by the normal processes utilised by QDAFF and technical advisors.

Last month the two modules were successfully reviewed by the Reef

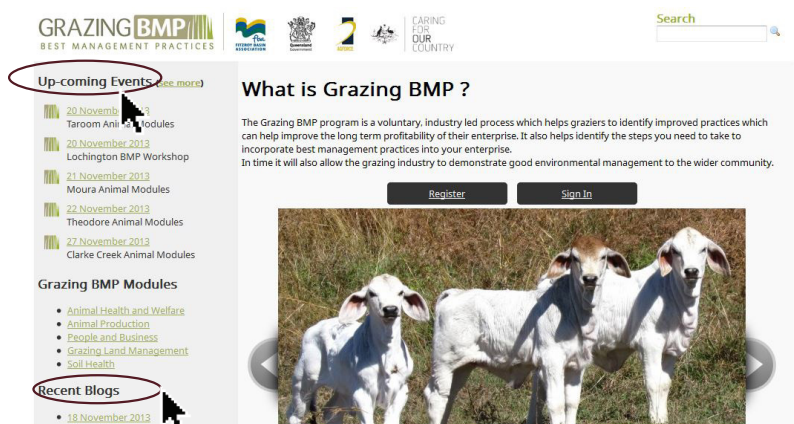
Plan Independent Science Panel (ISP) Review Board. The ISP is a panel of leading scientists and water quality specialists who are working to improve reef water quality.

The ISP endorsement of the Grazing BMP program solidifies the integrity of the program internationally.

Grazing BMP website

The Grazing BMP website has undergone a facelift to make the site more user-friendly. You can now find out about the latest workshops under "Upcoming Events" or keep up-to-date with what is happening on the ground under "Recent Blogs".

Visit www.bmpgrazing.com.au



"Grazing BMP was piloted across 200 graziers in 2012, predominantly from the Fitzroy catchment in Central Queensland. Over 90pc were found to be at best practices or above best practice for grazing land management and soil health."

PROFILE



Name

Peter Long

Position

Project Manager
Grazing BMP, FBA

Location

Rockhampton

Industry experience

Long term QDAFF and DPI employee. Worked in meat inspection, fisheries and management roles. In the past ten years I worked across the beef, grains, horticulture, cane, forestry and sheep and wool sectors.

What is your responsibility?

As Project Manager of the Grazing BMP program my focus is on coordinating the delivery of the project including ensuring all organisations, including NQ Dry Tropics, are effectively collaborating and communicating, reporting to our funding bodies, financial management and positioning Grazing BMP to have a life beyond June 2014.

Why Grazing BMP?

The immediate focus for the program is that it is useful and attractive to graziers. In time, the supply chain and governments (State and Commonwealth) will see the benefits beyond the life of this project. In that way there are positive market and policy signals for those who implement Grazing BMP. In summary, it is acknowledged as the premier beef industry program from the paddock to the plate.

If you could do any job in the world, what would it be?

My dream job would challenge me beyond my current experiences and knowledge. It would involve working with a team and industry and would involve regular travel.

Favourite famous quote?

The Roar of the Everyday and Ordinary. In his novel Middlemarch, George Eliot writes, "If we had a keen vision and a feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing grass grow and the small animal's heart beat and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence." Happy are they, who have a keen feel for everyday human life, whose ears are attuned to the roar of the ordinary.

INDUSTRY PARTICIPATION

It was a great start to the 2013/14 year with 377 modules completed in July and August across the two pilot catchments, Fitzroy and Burdekin. These numbers are on the back of 171 modules completed in the Fitzroy and 28 modules completed in the Burdekin by the end of June 2013.

The results demonstrate that graziers are seeing the benefit of completing the BMP modules. All involved need to be congratulated for a job well

done. From those facilitating producer participation, to those organising and hosting awareness raising and information events and the delivery of module workshops.

Another milestone was the sign-off on 17 businesses (seven in the Burdekin and 10 in the Fitzroy) that have completed all five modules and the presentation of their Recognition of Self-Assessment Certificate.

SNAPSHOT

Catchment	Businesses		Modules	
	To June '13	July/Aug '13	To June '13	July/Aug '13
Fitzroy	127	169	171	323
Burdekin	7	37	28	54
Mackay/ Whitsunday	16		46	
TOTAL	150	206	245	377

REPORTING TOOL

Behind the Grazing BMP self assessment and producer development modules is a powerful industry reporting tool that collates aggregated data from enterprises whilst maintaining their confidentiality. This aggregated information on land stewardship, industry practices, animal welfare and occupational health is essential for demonstrating industry performance to the supply chain, government and the wider community.



WHY GRAZING BMP?

By AgForce Projects Grazing BMP Project Officer Mick Taylor.

Over the next 50 years Australian beef production is expected to double through the combination of evolving western style diets across Asia and increased demand in existing markets (ABARES 2013). The sector's growth is critically important to many regional areas and national export income, but market prices do not reflect the full environmental costs of production.

Protecting the sustainability of the grazing industry into the future is a key responsibility for producers and is vital to ensuring the ongoing success of both individual businesses and the broader industry.

Expectations of the industry to demonstrate good corporate citizenship will continue to grow over time. This issue must be addressed through an open, honest and informed debate that continually reviews practices at farm-level while improving consumer understanding of the realities of farming and food production.

Designed by industry, for industry

Now more than ever the industry needs to collectively develop and engage in an environmentally sustainable system of natural resource management or it can continue to expect externally developed regulation and negative narrative to undermine the social license to operate.

The Grazing BMP Partnership and a panel of graziers designed a set of sustainable production standards that can clearly demonstrate equitable, sustainable production and enhanced environmental and animal welfare outcomes to the broader community.

Unlike past attempts to develop best management practices for the grazing industry by a host of stakeholders, the Grazing BMP program has been developed from the 'bottom up' - by graziers, for graziers. This time there is a clear emphasis on continuous improvement in the triple bottom line performance and realistic ways to improve environmental sustainability.

The Grazing BMP Partnership wants to contribute to developing a grazing industry that is environmentally and economically sustainable and has broad public support. Thus Grazing BMP is a tool that aims to respond to these growing concerns with real, current data developed and ratified by independent industry professionals that ensure progression and development of the industry is focussing on delivering real on ground benefits to all stakeholders.

An evolving program

Grazing BMP has identified standards that focus on grazing principles, not

regional specific issues. It is envisaged that as uptake and engagement with the program grows, standards will evolve. Grazing BMP Standards are designed to change to create constant improvement and be adjusted to what is feasible as community, scientific or legislative pressure demands.

The Grazing BMP Partnership, in conjunction with the Producer Reference Group will provide direction for these changes as appropriate and focus on changes that strive for more sustainability, productivity, and broader support in society.

New market opportunities

Although it is apparent that adaptation to meet changing demands and regulations usually results in higher costs, anticipating changing consumer preferences and views of sustainable grazing will ultimately offer enhanced commercial opportunities as well.

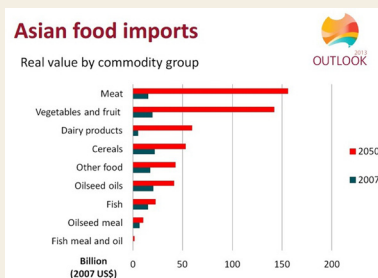
The ultimate aim of the Grazing BMP program is to satisfy supply chain requirements. It can differentiate between the industry leaders, those operating above industry standard, and develop opportunity to supply differentiated new products that take such preferences and views into account. Specific education, information, labelling, farm sales and open days, for example, can motivate the consumer to pay more attention to sustainability, and therefore stimulate demand for the differentiated product.

The Grazing BMP program will continue to evolve and develop innovative ways of accurately measuring and communicating the positive work being undertaken, utilising a robust, scientific/evidence-based approach. These systems will provide producers with a voluntary, user-friendly vehicle, facilitating, where appropriate, changes in management practice, to demonstrate the sector's credentials to the broader community.

Creating a competitive industry

The industry must ensure the consumer is well informed of the extent to which beef producers are addressing concerns and how the industry performs relative to overseas competitors.

The Australian beef industry's environmental and ethical credentials, as perceived by government, the community and its customers, are of immediate and future importance. Grazing BMP delivers a collaborative, whole of industry strategy, which delivers on community and industry expectations for standards of animal welfare and the environment, and is a great tool for individual businesses to assess their performance.



Source: ABARES Outlook 2013

Want more information?

Grazing BMP hotline: (07)3238 6048

Fax: (07) 3236 3077

Email: taylorm@agforceqld.org.au

www.bmpgrazing.com.au



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