

Landcare technique bringing bare earth back to life in the Kimberley

By Matt Brann Monday, 23 April 2012



Kimberley pastoralists gathered at Larrawa Station for a field day to learn more about ponding. (Matt Brann)

If you've got patches of hard, bare, scalded country on your station... then waterponding might be the answer.

The method is being trialed on Larrawa Station in the far north of Western Australia and the results have been impressive.

Matt Fletcher from the WA Department of Agriculture and Food says the idea of ponding is to slow down run-off water, and give it an opportunity to soak into the soil and promote vegetation.

"Water has just been running off this country and into the creek, so we're not trying to stop it, we're just want to slow it down and give it every opportunity to soak into the soil," he said.

"That'll give coloniser plants a chance to germinate and create some organic matter, and from there hopefully we'll see more biomass on the ground."

The department has calculated this type of work costs around \$150 a hectare.

Kevin Brockhurst from Larrawa Station says it's money well spent and he will be doing more waterponding on his station.

"If you don't do anything you're certainly not going to go forward, so you've got to look at the long term returns on it, not just the short term, and look at what the value of this land is once it's productive again over 10 years,

"We certainly hope to do more of this, because there's more areas that need doing and I think we've got to stop the country from going down the river."

The Department of Agriculture says some of the key things learnt from the Larrawa trial have been:

* A 16G (grader) was more economical than a 12G to build waterponds, and won more dirt per pass.

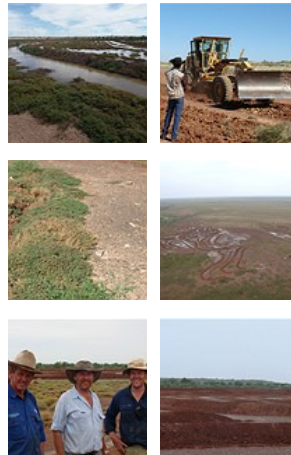
* Banks built with the opposed disc plough were too small to be effective at ponding water.

* Surveying for ponds is best completed by a professional experienced in surveying ponds.

* An experienced machine operator is essential to get full value out of "machine hire".

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