



ISSUE 30 SPRING/SUMMER 2017

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# CO BEEF

Information for rural business in Central Queensland

## Improving the use of high quality forages in East Queensland



QUEENSLAND Country Life

### IN THIS ISSUE

- Editorial
- Non-herbicide GRT on farm demonstration
- New EDGE packages
- Our first GBMP re-accreditation

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**CQ BEEF**

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# Welcome to CQ Beef 30

Welcome to the spring issue of the CQ BEEF feature for 2017.

## Well hello wet season, let's hope it's a good one!

When you brand your calves this summer remember the correct formulae for calculating a branding percentage is;

Branding % = Number of calves branded in 365 days x 100

Number of cows mated in last year's 365 days

Also some important questions to ask at branding time are; How many conceptions did you lose from your pregnancy testing to branding? What was the pattern of conception like, when did the calves come and how many calves dropped after Christmas this year? Are the cows in a body condition score of three at calving?

Our central Queensland beef extension team includes;

Mick Sullivan, Rockhampton	4843 2623
Matt Brown, Rockhampton	4843 2611
Kylie Hopkins, Rockhampton	4843 2615
Jim Fletcher, Mackay	4967 0731
Lauren Williams, Mackay	4967 0732
Carly Johnstone, Biloela	4808 6887
Byrony Daniels, Emerald	4991 0867

The central Queensland FutureBeef team would like to take this opportunity to wish all our readers a very Merry Christmas and a green prosperous new year.

Byrony Daniels  
Beef Extension (FutureBeef)  
DAF Emerald  
07 4991 0867 or 0427 746 434

## What is the potential for non-herbicide control for Giant Rats Tail Grass and Parramatta Grass?



- Local Governments are looking for a toolbox of options for the control of Giant Rats Grass and Parramatta Grass
- More than maintenance levels of fertiliser can be profitable and help control these weeds
- At two sites in Coastal Central Queensland, known profitable fertiliser levels have made Giant Rats Tail Grass and Parramatta grass palatable to livestock

Local Government pest officers in coastal Central Queensland spend a lot of time explaining and demonstrating the herbicide options for the control of Giant Rats Tail and Parramatta Grass to landowners.

Both Gladstone and Livingstone Regional Councils were happy to financially support the demonstration of new options for the control of the weeds.

Since 2013, there has been an attempt to improve the performance of herbicides on Sporobolous grasses by using above maintenance levels of phosphorous and nitrogen fertilisers for increased pasture growth and to significantly change how the cattle graze this unpalatable grass.

Giant Rats Tail Grass and its relation, Parramatta Grass are not palatable and produce large volumes of seed. Demonstration sites at Miriam Vale and Byfield have both shown that improved grass species can out compete these grass weeds, and that cattle can eat them. The biomass of the fertilised, grazed Parramatta grass is 80 per cent less than ungrazed and unfertilised Parramatta grass at Byfield.

The fertiliser rates used are at the top end of the above maintenance level rates and are proven to be profitable in an above 900mm rainfall area. These levels (180kg nitrogen per hectare) were chosen to clearly demonstrate the potential of the technology.

At the Miriam Vale site, in the first year 50 extra days grazing were demonstrated on the fertilised site, a definite decrease in the presence of Giant Rats Tail Grass was also evident.

At the Byfield site in the first year, a significant increase in the grazing legumes made a difference to the palatability of the mixed sward of grasses that included Parramatta Grass. In the second year, at Miriam Vale with another application of the same fertiliser, the amount of organic matter produced and the increase in palatability of the Giant Rats Tail Grass made it impossible for any weed seedlings to establish.

At Byfield after another application of fertiliser the highly competitive grass, humidicola, became 95 per cent of the pasture present even while grazed and after a cyclone.

After two years of fertilising three things are obvious:

- you can improve the management of sporobolous grasses using your livestock
- you can dramatically change the amount of time you spend spraying established weed sites
- at the same time you can improve the performance of your livestock by either generating extra income, decreasing costs of herbicides and purchased feed, and reducing the demands on your time.

## Partnering together to strengthen Western Queensland's grazing industry

GrazingFutures is a new four-year project working with industry partners to promote a resilient grazing industry across western Queensland.

The GrazingFutures project brings new opportunities and new faces to the west. These new team members bring a wealth of knowledge and experience around animal production, grazing land management and business planning.

Andrea Wiles at Charleville, Jane Tincknell at Longreach and Robert Caird at Mareeba have joined the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) to help bolster local extension teams that serve western Queensland grazing businesses.

Andrea is a vet by trade and has worked in New South Wales, Queensland and Northern Territory where she developed her understanding of common animal health issues facing producers and their impact on production.

Jane is a rangelands enthusiast, having spent the past 20 years in a variety of roles within grazing businesses or supporting them via community or government agencies.

Rob has a strong finance background and was an agribusiness consultant working with beef producers in Far North Queensland prior to his new role with the GrazingFutures project. Rob has a comprehensive understanding of key production, profitability and sustainability drivers of the North Queensland beef industry.

GrazingFutures is managed by DAF with a strong collaborative approach with partners. Many activities are led by partners such as AgForce or NRM groups. For example in the central west:

- AgForce and DAF collaborated to bring mapping workshops to the region
- Desert Channels Queensland and DAF, along with graziers, developed a grazing and weed management planning tool and workshops, and
- Rural Financial Counsellors worked with producers to build financial and business knowledge and provided relevant training, such as using Excel and financial software.

The GrazingFutures project has been made possible, thanks to funding from the Queensland

Government's Drought and Climate Adaptation Program (DCAP) and a partnership with Grazing BMP.

GrazingFutures will deliver a range of research, development and extension projects, improve seasonal forecasting and provide tools and systems that will support producers in their decision-making.

Keep an eye out for GrazingFutures events in your local area or call a team member if you have any ideas for resilience building activities.

To find out more about DCAP and GrazingFutures visit [www.daf.qld.gov.au](http://www.daf.qld.gov.au) or [www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au](http://www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au) or call a DAF extension officer on the details below.

### Central West

Kiri Broad 07 4536 8301

David Phelps 07 4536 8344

Jane Tincknell 07 4536 8308

Jenny Milson 07 4536 8347

Ian Houston 07 4536 8326

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# Re-accreditation: a Grazing Best Management Practice (BMP) first

## Key Points

- Grazing BMP is a useful tool that allows landholders to evaluate how they are tracking against industry benchmarks
- Becoming Grazing BMP accredited allows landholders to quantify on-property practices and demonstrate the standard at which they operate
- There is support available to landholders through the entire Grazing BMP process
- Grazing BMP is a way to tell the positive story of today's grazing industry.

Just two years before the infamous cattle crash in 1975, the Mayne family purchased Penrose property, a 3726ha Brigalow block north-east of Rolleston. The Mayne family have been at the forefront of practice change since the beginning – constantly seeking new and improved ways of managing their evolving business. Arrawarra was purchased in 2003 and is utilised to help adjust stock numbers to match stocking rate and carrying capacity.

Jack and Liz Mayne became involved in Grazing BMP in 2010 as pilot producers for the program. Over seven years of involvement, Leucaena and rotational grazing have been introduced at Penrose to increase the productivity of the property.

“BMP was a tool we used to evaluate where we sat in relation to the rest of the grazing industry,” Mr Mayne explained.

“Grazing BMP has made us realise that we were ticking most of the boxes but there were also a



F1 Wagyu being moved to a fresh paddock.



Three generations ready to go mustering.

couple of areas in our business that we could work on to turn things up a notch.”

The decision was made in 2013 to become Grazing BMP accredited. Mr Mayne said this was to ensure their on-property practices met industry standards across all areas of the business. The family worked closely with Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA), to prepare for their first BMP audit.

“This support included on-property visits to help us implement practices such as forage budgeting, mapping and monitoring.”

One of the first businesses to renew their Grazing BMP accreditation, Penrose demonstrates an ongoing commitment to the program and are identifying practices to improve the long term profitability of their enterprise.

“It is nice to be recognised as first class custodians of our land. It's also nice to know we are doing our bit to help the grazing industry's perception in the broader community.”

Recently, an adjoining grazing lease opportunity arose. Jack and Liz Mayne have used Grazing BMP as a tool to ensure involved parties operate at the same high standard maintained by the Mayne family.

“BMP means stakeholders can be reassured that the reactive element of our industry has been noted and reduced,” Mr Mayne said.

“Grazing BMP helps to underpin product integrity and businesses can confidently and proudly promote what they are doing. We need to be mindful of where we want the grazing industry to stand on the national stage.

Becoming Grazing BMP accredited will definitely help us tell our story in the future.”

### PENROSE

LOCATION: 63km north-east of Rolleston  
 PURCHASED: 1973  
 MANAGERS: Baden and Sheena Crittle  
 AREA: 3726ha  
 RAINFALL: 650mm/year  
 COUNTRY: Brigalow-Blackbutt with Buffel, Blue, Green Panic and Bambatsi Grasses  
 ENTERPRISES: Wagyu breeding and backgrounding operation including F1 to F4 cross bred Wagyu, purebred and fullblood production.

### ARRAWARRA

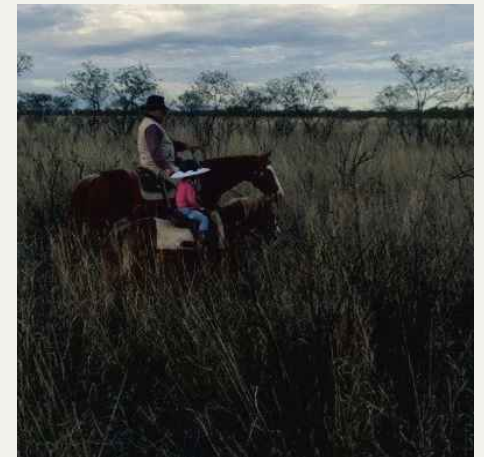
LOCATION: Between Emerald and Comet  
 PURCHASED: 2003  
 AREA: 998ha  
 RAINFALL: 550mm/year  
 COUNTRY: Brigalow-Blackbutt with Buffel, Secca Blue and Spear Grasses  
 ENTERPRISES: Backgrounding and trading operation for dry cattle. Also taking on occasional agistment cattle in order to match stocking rate with carrying capacity of the country.

If you are interested in completing Grazing BMP or becoming accredited please contact Katie Crozier. Contact details below.

**Katie Crozier**  
 Fitzroy Grazing BMP coordinator  
 Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA)  
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 0408 874 0421



Penrose manager Baden Crittle recording birthweights of wagyu calves with his daughter.



Jack Mayne and his granddaughter checking the pasture between the Leucaena.

### Editorial committee

Byrony Daniels, Michael Sullivan (DAF)

### Enquiries

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# Identifying the best way to use high quality forages in CQ

## Key points

- Grazing steers on leucaena-grass pastures from weaning until they reached feed-on weight was found to be the most profitable growth path for steers in central Queensland
- The seven most profitable growth paths all incorporated leucaena within the growth path of steers
- Incorporation of forage oats in the growth path of steers always reduced business profitability compared to alternative buffel or leucaena-grass growth paths
- There was no direct relationship between the quantity of beef or weaners produced by a growth path and its profitability.

Beef producers generally have only a limited area of suitable soil for growing high quality forages such as perennial legume-grass pastures or annual forage crops.

Producers need to make choices about how best to allocate high quality forages amongst different classes of cattle in their herd. This involves considering the resultant effect of the high quality forage on the cattle growth path, age and time to reach target market weight, and on enterprise profitability.

Twenty-two growth paths (liveweight change over time) for steers from weaning to marketing were considered for steers grazing buffel grass with and without access to leucaena-grass pastures or forage oats, for varying periods of time.

The growth paths were then applied within two discrete beef enterprises, one a steer turnover enterprise and the second a breeding and finishing beef enterprise, both examined over an investment period of three decades.

The effect of implementing each alternative growth path was modelled by starting each farm investment at the same point (that is, a buffel grass finishing system) and changing from this base scenario to the alternative.

The impact on beef production, age of turnoff and the breeder herd due to changing the



growth path of steers was quite dramatic. For example steers grazing leucaena-grass pastures from weaning reached feedlot and abattoir target entry weights (474 and 605kg paddock weight, respectively) at 19.3 and 26.0 months of age. Compared to the base scenario of grazing steers on buffel grass the age of turn-off for feed-on and finished steers was seven and eight months earlier, respectively.

For the breeding and finishing enterprise, the growth path that produced the greatest annual beef production for the whole herd (31kg/ha) was that where weaners were grazed on leucaena-grass pastures until sale as finished steers. This beef production was an increase of 30 per cent over the base scenario which produced 24kg/ha.

The scenario of producing yearling steers by providing oats in their first dry season resulted in the greatest average liveweight gain from weaning: 0.81kg/d over 146 days and the greatest annual beef production (345kg/ha) for the steer turnover enterprise.

For the breeding and finishing enterprise, this same growth path resulted in the greatest number of cows and heifers mated, calves weaned and cattle sold per annum, of all growth paths considered.

The impact of the growth paths on the profitability and riskiness of the beef businesses was also significant. The analysis showed that for both enterprise types, placing steers on to leucaena-grass pastures from weaning until feed-on weight was substantially more profitable than any other growth path.

For the steer turnover enterprise this was an improvement in profitability of 121 per cent compared to the base scenario of producing bullocks off buffel grass. For the breeding and finishing enterprise, the optimal growth path resulted in an improvement in profitability of 37 per cent compared to the base scenario but required purchase of additional breeders to maximise utilisation of the leucaena-grass pastures immediately.

The seven most profitable growth paths for both enterprises incorporated leucaena-grass pastures. However, implementing a leucaena-grass system substantially increased peak deficit levels and financial risk, with payback periods of eight and 14 years for even the most profitable leucaena-grass growth path, for the

steer turnover and the breeding and finishing enterprise, respectively.

While providing a high quality forage for any period during the growth path of steers reduced the age of turn-off compared to that expected on average from buffel grass-only pastures (26.2 and 34.0 months for feed-on and finished steers, respectively) it was not always more profitable to do so.

For example, the growth path providing forage oats twice, in dry season one and two and with leucaena-grass in between, resulted in the youngest age of turn-off at finished weights of any scenario (22.8 months). However, this growth path was only marginally more profitable than the base scenario for the steer turnover enterprise (\$2,015 extra profit per annum) and resulted in \$28,236 less profit per annum than the base scenario for the breeding and finishing enterprise.

Any growth path that incorporated forage oats, in either a turnover or breeding and finishing enterprise, resulted in a lower economic and financial performance than a similar growth path that incorporated leucaena.

Furthermore, incorporation of oats into a buffel grass growth path always reduced the profitability of a steer turnover or a breeder and finishing enterprise. Additionally, implementing forage oats into either beef enterprise substantially increased peak deficit levels and financial risk. These findings do not indicate that beef enterprises that incorporate forage oats are unprofitable, only that they are likely to be less profitable than the alternative buffel grass-only beef enterprise.

In our analysis we did not account for the years likely to be unsuitable for planting oats (30 per cent of years) which would further reduce the profitability of the oats growth path scenarios. The poor relative profitability of utilising oats forage was seen despite oats enabling a younger age of turn-off and despite filling the apparent 'feed gap' resulting from the poor quality of available forage over the winter dry season.

The analysis provides both challenging and interesting insights. The production of slaughter weight steers off good quality buffel pastures has been seen as the most profitable beef production system for many CQ beef producers.

The recent change in the price differential between younger and older steers has largely not been included in this analysis but it still shows that shifting to a younger age of turnoff is likely to be more profitable when steer nutrition is significantly improved from weaning. The underpinning reason is the inclusion in the analysis of an accurate method of measuring the relative intake of forage at different ages and in different seasons by steers to gain weight.

When this is balanced against the costs of changing the growth path and the herd structure, the consistent message seems to be that profitable investments in high quality forage in CQ may involve the production of significantly younger steers.

It was also apparent that every strategy to incorporate high quality forages in the growth path increased the riskiness and potentially the indebtedness of the beef business. The consequences of too quickly implementing potentially highly profitable alternative growth paths that involve significant operational change and investment need to be carefully considered.

Another insight provided by the analysis is that even where limited areas of high quality forage are available, it may still be equally as profitable to stock the area with sufficient weaner steers so that they make a target sale weight, not to 'finish' groups of steers.

The results of these analyses should be considered as examples and a way of understanding the factors that are important in the decision-making process. However, the relative and absolute value of alternative investment strategies varies significantly between beef enterprises and analyses specific to each individual business should be conducted.

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries adheres to the *Leucaena Network Code of Practice* in its research and demonstration trials, and the promotion of responsible, sustainable and productive development of Leucaena/grass pastures in its extension activities.

*Maree Bowen Research scientist, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries Rockhampton 07 4843 2607*

*Fred Chudleigh Economist, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries Toowoomba 07 4529 4186*

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# EDGEnetwork Training Packages Revamped!

Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) are offering producers the opportunity to attend the new and improved EDGENetwork training packages designed to provide tailored, comprehensive, practical learning opportunities. The EDGE packages available are Grazing Fundamentals, Breeding EDGE, Business EDGE, Grazing Land Management EDGE and Nutrition EDGE. Each package complements and connects; providing producers with the skills and knowledge to enhance business and livestock management and positively influence profitability, sustainability and productivity in their business.

Knowledgeable industry leaders and technical experts were consulted and directly involved in the review process. The packages now include the most up-to-date knowledge, research findings, best practice recommendations, and tools and strategies.

To suit a wider audience the three-day workshops (Grazing Land Management, Breeding, Nutrition, and Business EDGE) now have different delivery options. They can be run over three consecutive days, three separate days (a week to a fortnight apart), or as two consecutive days plus another day at a later date.

## Grazing Fundamentals

A new one-day workshop called Grazing Fundamentals has also been developed. The principles covered at the Grazing fundamentals workshop provides links to the more detailed and skills-based EDGE workshops and Stocktake package.

The Grazing Fundamentals workshop aims to give the producer a broad understanding of the environment in which they operate and the core principles behind successfully maintaining grazing land condition and long term productivity.

The workshop topics include:

- environmental regulators of pasture growth and quality
- long and short-term carrying capacity
- basic principles behind successful grazing systems
- local pasture growth patterns
- how soil type influences pasture growth
- land condition
- forage budgeting

## Breeding EDGE Workshop

The Breeding EDGE workshop has been developed to enable beef producers to improve herd reproductive and production performance and business profit, through refining and improving current breeder herd management and genetic improvement programs. The specific benefits to beef businesses are:

- more calves weaned from the same number of breeders mated in a given 12-month period;
- more breeding females cycling and getting back in calf, and less reproductive wastage in foetal, neonatal and calf loss
- fewer breeder and heifer losses
- more strategic, and less costly, nutritional management for heifers and breeders.
- more fertile bulls plus elimination of sub-fertile or infertile bulls
- a breeder herd management plan, including bull management, specific to your business;
- Selection of bulls with measured genetic merit for key traits
- genetic improvement strategies and systems that compliment your production system
- breeding objectives designed for your own genetic improvement program
- improved knowledge in reproduction and genetic improvement principles.

The workshop activities are directly applicable to each participant's own beef business. Workshop activities provide opportunities for individuals to work on key areas of herd management and genetic improvement in one's own beef business.

## Business EDGE

The Business EDGE was developed by MLA to meet producer demand for improved financial literacy and better business skills. It is the key training product for developing the business skills of grazing business managers nationally.

Workshop topics include:

- key management accounting concepts
- how to generate and interpret key financial information on your business
- how to set up your financial system to provide key information for management
- to determine if your debt is creating or destroying wealth and how much of it your business can afford
- to determine if all the family needs and aspirations can be funded by the business

- how to assess and manage agricultural business risk
- to understand and manage enterprise performance, including what the key profit drivers are, how to influence them and what effect they have on overall business performance.

## Grazing Land Management EDGE

The Grazing Land Management (GLM) EDGE package is designed to provide producers and other land managers with the tools to manage pastures in a way that improves beef production and meets suitable ground cover levels essential in promoting infiltration and conserving soil. An understanding of grazing ecosystems, soil health, land condition and perennial pastures (and their role in maintaining land condition) are key when designing the best practical approaches for grazing land management. The ability to assess carrying capacity and adjust seasonal stocking rates using forage budgets are skills that empower producers to achieve productivity whilst maintaining resilient landscapes and viable businesses.

### Workshop topics include:

- the major climate influences in northern Australia and how they affect pasture growth;
- how to allow for climate variability when planning livestock management
- how to build a seasonal climate profile for your property
- how land types influence productivity and how to recognise dominant land types in your region
- how soil properties influence plant growth
- soil health and the factors that impact on it
- what pasture plants comprise the grazing system and how to identify key plant species in your region
- perennial grasses and their role in land condition and pasture stability
- what land condition is, how it's assessed and how to manage livestock to maintain or achieve good land condition
- selective grazing, it's function and how to reduce its impacts
- assessing long-term carrying capacities of paddocks and properties, accounting for land condition and distance from water
- forage budgeting to manage variation in pasture available

- the main impacts of trees on the grazing land ecosystem
- the role of fire in grazing land management
- the role of sown pasture
- the principles and planning steps for successfully managing weeds.

## Nutrition EDGE

The Nutrition EDGE workshop is the most comprehensive nutrition workshop program for ruminant cattle in northern Australia. It has been designed to enable producers to:

- establish the value of their pasture feed base including the amount of available feed and the quality of the diet
- determine animal nutrient requirements for various classes of stock and the gap between what the pasture is providing and the animal requirements. This forms the basis for how animals are managed nutritionally
- identify the most cost-effective and practical means of addressing nutritional deficiencies or targeting higher fertility or growth rates
- evaluate options for addressing nutritional deficiencies or targets rather than defaulting to a supplementary feeding program
- understand what the supplement types are and what nutrients each group effectively provides, then to be able to assess various supplements on their ability to deliver effective levels of nutrients
- calculate cost comparisons between supplements on a nutrient basis rather than a tonnage basis based on the primary limiting nutrient in the diet.

In the recently revised edition of the Nutrition EDGE workshop notes, the modules have been split into 7 modules from the previous 5.

All of the information in the Nutrition EDGE package is based on rigorous scientific research and well-established ruminant nutrition principles. The new package includes more comprehensive information on water quality, diet quality, phosphorus research outcomes, and the factors that affect pasture and diet quality.

The Nutrition EDGE workshop takes a systematic approach to addressing nutritional issues on-property, and looks at all aspects of management, including activities to evaluate possible technologies, or supplementary feeding program.

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## VegMachine tool showcases Queensland cloud based technology

An online land management grazing tool developed by the Queensland Government is now becoming popular in other Australian states.

Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) senior scientist Dr Terry Beutel explained that Vegmachine is a relatively new cloud based tool that has been developed for Queensland graziers.

"VegMachine can be used by graziers and land managers to identify which paddocks need more attention. It can generate reports that provide historical paddock-by-paddock, landtype-by-landtype analysis of ground cover change, from 1990 to the present", said Dr Beutel.

"Our data analysis shows that although we designed it for Queensland graziers, about 30 percent of enquiries are coming from outside Queensland showing the need for this kind of tool for graziers throughout Australia.

"By using VegMachine, graziers can access the longer term trends in their grazing properties and it provides easy access to ground cover data derived from nearly 30 years of Landsat satellite imagery.

"VegMachine provides users with an objective tool to understand the relationship between their management and their erosion vulnerability, summarised in simple to read reports. This is valuable information for grazing enterprises interested in sustainable property management, monitoring and evaluation."

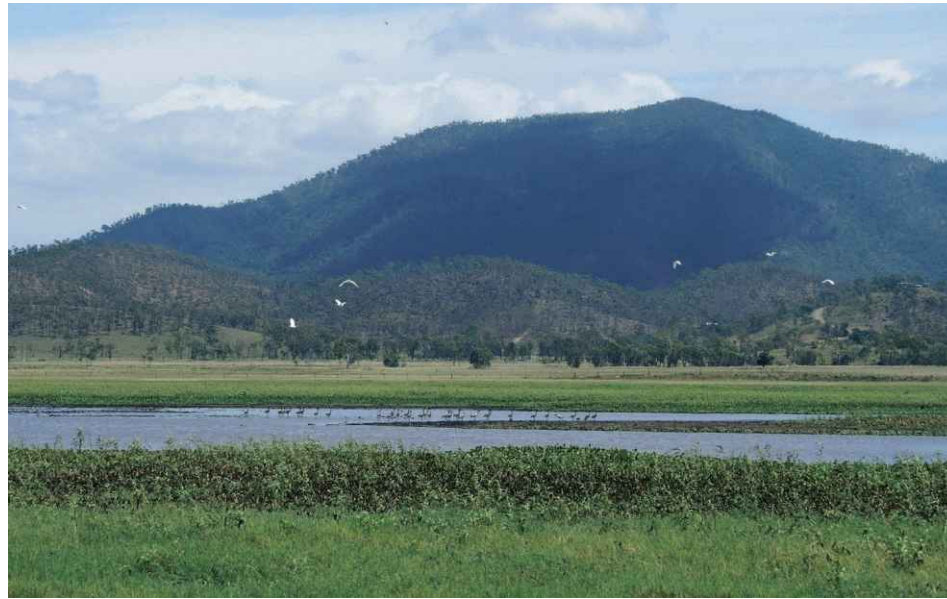
The VegMachine website was developed by the Queensland government through funding by the Fitzroy Basin Association. It is free to use, open to public access and does not identify individual users.

Most importantly VegMachine® has been designed for ease of use, with a simple layout, a short user guide, and a YouTube channel to guide users.

Graziers interested in finding out more should contact DAF on 13 25 23 or visit the website at <https://vegmachine.net/>.

## Wetlands and cattle co-existing in harmony

Broadmeadows is one of the earliest areas in Central Queensland to be used for grazing cattle.



It sits on the floodplain of Nankin Creek before it meets the Fitzroy River estuary and has a history of sustaining cattle and wildlife on its well-watered marshes.

Over the past 150 years, a viable stud and commercial cattle business has been built up that co-exists with thousands of waterbirds, including swans and broilgas that regularly nest in the wetland.

The current managers, Robert and Michele Lang, are at the forefront in adopting successful strategies to reduce soil erosion on vulnerable slopes in the wetland catchment.



Grazing at Broadmeadows occurs on the floodplain, much of which is occupied by a swamp or 'marsh', as well as on low slopes draining to the floodplain.

Water couch *Paspalum distichum* is a mainstay of the enterprise because the wide shallow marsh where it grows remains wet or damp for most of the year, especially if there has been winter rain.

Prime weight gain is usually achieved by October each year. Stocking rate is generally around one beast to 1.5ha, or higher in the marsh pastures for short periods.

Rob Lang's primary concerns in managing the property are to improve ground cover, control salt and reduce erosion to create better grazing practice. Some of the sloping upland areas of Broadmeadows are subject to gully erosion and increased salinity, and so are a focus of management planning.

"The principal intervention so far has been to create low bunds across some of the gullies, using C Class fill (with rock to 20cm) sourced on the property. These bunds slow and spread water flow across the slopes and thus reduce erosion. Native wetland plants including beetle grass have established above the bunds," he said.

Maintaining good ground cover and remediation of erosion in these shallow gullies have

economic benefits for farm production, ensuring localised feed and drinking water for stock during the dry season when surrounding dryland pasture has declined from its peak quality.

The small ponds above the low bunds also have the additional benefit of providing multiple small patches of habitat for wetland animals.

"After many years of attempting to stabilise erosion in the salted areas on Broadmeadows with the onsite parent material, which proved unsuccessful, we began using a 'C' Class product sourced on the property. The results have been extremely successful and have, to date, not resulted in the failure of any bunds we have constructed," Mr Lang said.

Low bunds to slow runoff on slopes have reduced gully erosion and provided wildlife habitat and seasonal feed. Further work in progress at Broadmeadows includes the development of additional low bunds that slow and spread water flow on slopes (reducing erosion and increasing ground cover). The short low bunds are proposed for shallow gullies without well-defined channels and, during heavy rain and floods, fish could bypass them.

**"Low pressure grazing and strategic fencing have minimised labour costs and the impact of dry-weather. Ongoing restoration of areas currently unusable, such as eroded gullies and salted areas, is essential for the future sustainability of our beef cattle operation at Broadmeadows," Mr Lang said.**

A case study on Nankin Plain and the Broadmeadows property has been completed by Fitzroy Basin Association and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries through the Queensland Wetlands Program.

Further details: <https://wetlandinfo.ehp.qld.gov.au/resources/static/pdf/resources/fact-sheets/fs-nankin-plain.pdf>



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# FLOCK TALK



## Leading Sheep

– equipping progressive and thriving producers for the future

Have you thought about a career in the sheep and wool industry? This edition of Flock Talk focuses on a couple of different ways you too can get involved in the industry.

The first is a story about a young shearer from Barcaldine, who is now running his own shearing team. Andrew Ross gives his tips for becoming a shearer and why he loves it and reckons others should try shearing.

In the second story, Dave Owens talks about how he turned his dream of owning his own property into a reality. And in particular how he set up his own crutching team to finance the property and give him cash flow.

Hopefully these two stories will inspire you to get involved in the sheep and wool industry – who knows you may just love it!



Members of the regional Leading Sheep committee voting for future priorities of Leading Sheep

On another note members of the three regional Leading Sheep committees met in Charleville a couple of months ago to identify their priorities for Leading Sheep's future. This information was presented to the project advisory panel who used it (as well as other sources) to determine the vision, objectives and targets of a 'new' Leading Sheep project.

Thanks to all those who were involved in these meetings and to the many others across Queensland who provided their feedback via a phone or on-line survey. Your thoughts and ideas are appreciated and were used to shape the direction of Leading Sheep going forward. Watch this space for more details about the future priorities for Leading Sheep.

You can connect with Leading Sheep on Facebook and join our mailing list at [www.leadingsheep.com.au](http://www.leadingsheep.com.au).

Nicole Sallur, editor, Leading Sheep project manager and senior extension officer Department of Agriculture and Fisheries

# Barcaldine tradie swaps wood for wool

Barcaldine's Andrew Ross is candid when asked why he became a shearer. It was about money, and he jokingly adds, proving to his mum he could endure the heat and hard work.

The young tradie from western Queensland was a qualified cabinet maker before he opted to follow in his father's footsteps and become a shearer. He hasn't looked back since.

He is one of a growing number of young people joining the wool industry as sheep make a comeback across the state.

"I took a break from cabinet making to work in the sheds for my parents' contracting business," he said.

"Then, a couple of New Zealand shearers who were working in the team started to teach me to shear and I really enjoyed it.

"So I asked Dad if I could work in the shed as a shearer and he happily offered me a shearing job in his team. Mum wasn't quite as keen on the idea, she didn't think I would handle working in the heat."

But in the two years since he stepped on the board he hasn't seriously thought about returning to his first trade.



Andrew Ross from Barcaldine loves being a shearer and encourages anyone who is interested to give it a go.

"When sheep numbers started falling a decade or so ago so did the jobs in the industry, but now as sheep numbers increase so are the opportunities for employment, particularly because there aren't that many shearers around now," Mr Ross said.

"The drought had a big impact on sheep numbers, but good winter rain and the construction of exclusion fencing to protect sheep from wild dogs, has resulted in more sheep coming back into the region.

"More shearers are needed here right now. In the past we have had to split into two teams to meet the demand from industry and it is looking like it will reach that stage again."

Shearing is not just another job for the young western Queenslander, who says the 'social' environment of the shed makes it more than a workplace.

"I really enjoy it as a job. You are meeting new people all the time and there is a great sense of satisfaction when you complete one shed and head on to the next.

"I also like the travel: you are shearing in a new environment, a new place, every week.

"People come from all over Australia and even across the world to work in the sheds so you make new connections from anywhere."

Then there is the issue of economics: the former tradie says working as a shearer pays 'significantly' better than cabinet making.

"You just can't beat the money and because shearers are low in numbers in the industry at the moment they are in demand, so the job security is great."

It is one of the reasons he has become a quietly spoken advocate of the industry.

"If you have a good work ethic and want to give it a go and get involved there are a lot of job opportunities. Just in our team alone, we are always looking for rouseabouts or wool pressers to fill in.

### Why try shearing?

- Increasing job opportunities as sheep numbers rise.
- Shearing can pay more than conventional trades, like cabinet making.
- Shearers are in demand so job security is high.

"They can be long, hot days, but doing a job well and being paid well can be very rewarding."

He has now taken over his parents' team and is committed to encouraging others to get involved in the industry.

"I am loving it. It is a great industry to be a part of and if anyone out there is interested I would really recommend giving it a go."

Watch this short video (2mins 40secs) to hear more from Andrew Ross about why he recommends anyone giving shearing a go: <http://bit.ly/2fZeuyH>



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# Right starter business can help you buy your own rural property

Like a lot of young people working in rural industry, Longreach's Dave Owens dreamed of buying his own property. Today his dream is a reality thanks to some strategic business ventures.

The western Queensland sheep and wool producer advises others with the same life goals to be prepared to start in businesses with a quick monetary turn-over, like shearing, sheep trading and selling wool.

Today he owns Somerset, a 10,000ha grazing property, 70kms south of Longreach, running up to 8000 Merino ewes. For the past nine years he has also operated his own contract crutching team travelling and working throughout western Queensland.

He admits managing two businesses at once could be challenging, but he credits an ability to juggle a hectic schedule with helping him achieve his goal of buying his own property.

"There are so many opportunities to get ahead in the wool industry. Before I bought my own place, I was trading sheep because they were affordable and were a more reliable option than cattle – there has always been money in them," Mr Owens said.

"If you start off creating quick turn-overs through sheep trading, shearing and selling wool it can help you get ahead and it was these businesses that helped me make enough money to buy Somerset.

"When I first bought Somerset it was a low input property with nearly every paddock having



Longreach's Dave Owens turned his dream of buying his own property into a reality by starting out in a business with a quick monetary turn-over.

access to an open water source. So this meant I was able to keep travelling away with my contracting business, because I could be gone for five to six days and know the sheep had access to water.

"It also meant I had a profitable off-farm business. The income I was receiving from contract crutching gave me a quick cash flow and having that second income meant the bank took me seriously. It also allowed me to develop and make improvements on Somerset, which meant I could grow that side of my business financially."

When it came to property ownership, Mr Owens said a focus on improving sheep production rates proved a key driver to increasing profitability. He is also a staunch advocate of

effective record keeping, both on-property and in the office.

"From the start it is important to keep an eye on costs: you need to crunch hard numbers. It's also a good idea to speak to someone else in the business who has had some experience and tips for keeping on top of expenses," he said.

"For example, when I first started out, I spent a lot of time with stock on agistment before I realised the finances weren't working out for my business. If you're going to get into the agricultural game, work out your numbers and finances first. It can make a major difference to success or failure, especially when you are first starting out."

At a personal level he said operating multiple businesses has also allowed him to spread risk to a certain extent and there was an upside to juggling the roles of sole producer and running a contracting team.

Looking forward, Mr Owen has plans to continue to improve his Merino flock and expand his property portfolio. And his advice for those weighing up a future in agriculture?

"To get ahead you really have to love the industry. It's a tough environment but can pay off if you work smart."

Watch this short video (4mins 28 secs) to learn more from Dave Owens about owning his own property and running a contract crutching business: <http://bit.ly/2guJPK2>

## Three tips for buying your own property

- Start in a business with a quick, monetary turn-over, eg shearing, sheep trading
- Be prepared to continue to work off-farm
- Be an effective record keeper, and develop your financial knowledge.

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