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Testing "Rangelands Self Herding" at Kidman Springs (VRD, Northern Territory)

What is Self Herding?

Self Herding is a livestock management approach that uses positive reinforcement to influence grazing behaviour

Our trial aims to demonstrate that Self Herding techniques can be used to modify grazing patterns in paddocks, thus creating a form of rotational grazing that does not rely on expensive permanent fencing

What have we done so far?

- Completed pasture measurements in the trial paddock
- Received training in Self Herding theory and techniques
- Completed a 3-week training period with the cattle to familiarise them with the attractant station, food rewards and cues
- Attached GPS tracking collars to 10 heifers in the trial
- Introduced the cattle to the trial paddock in July 2018
- Regularly moved the attractant station to new areas of the paddock and recorded the behaviour of the cattle

Results

In the first weeks the cattle naturally demonstrated a very strong attraction to the historically overgrazed areas of the paddock

The project team "ramped up" the Self Herding techniques to attract the cattle away from the overgrazed areas and into other areas of the landscape that were not being utilised

The GPS data show that the techniques have been able to influence the grazing locations of cattle in the paddock

Summary

At the conclusion of the trial in 2019, we will be reporting on:

- Paddock utilisation patterns and pasture utilisation
- Observations on cattle behaviour
- Cattle productivity
- Labour, vehicle and feed rewards costs

Keep an eye out for updates in the Katherine Rural Review and Territory NRM newsletters!

The trial paddock has wide contrasts in land condition and grazing utilisation



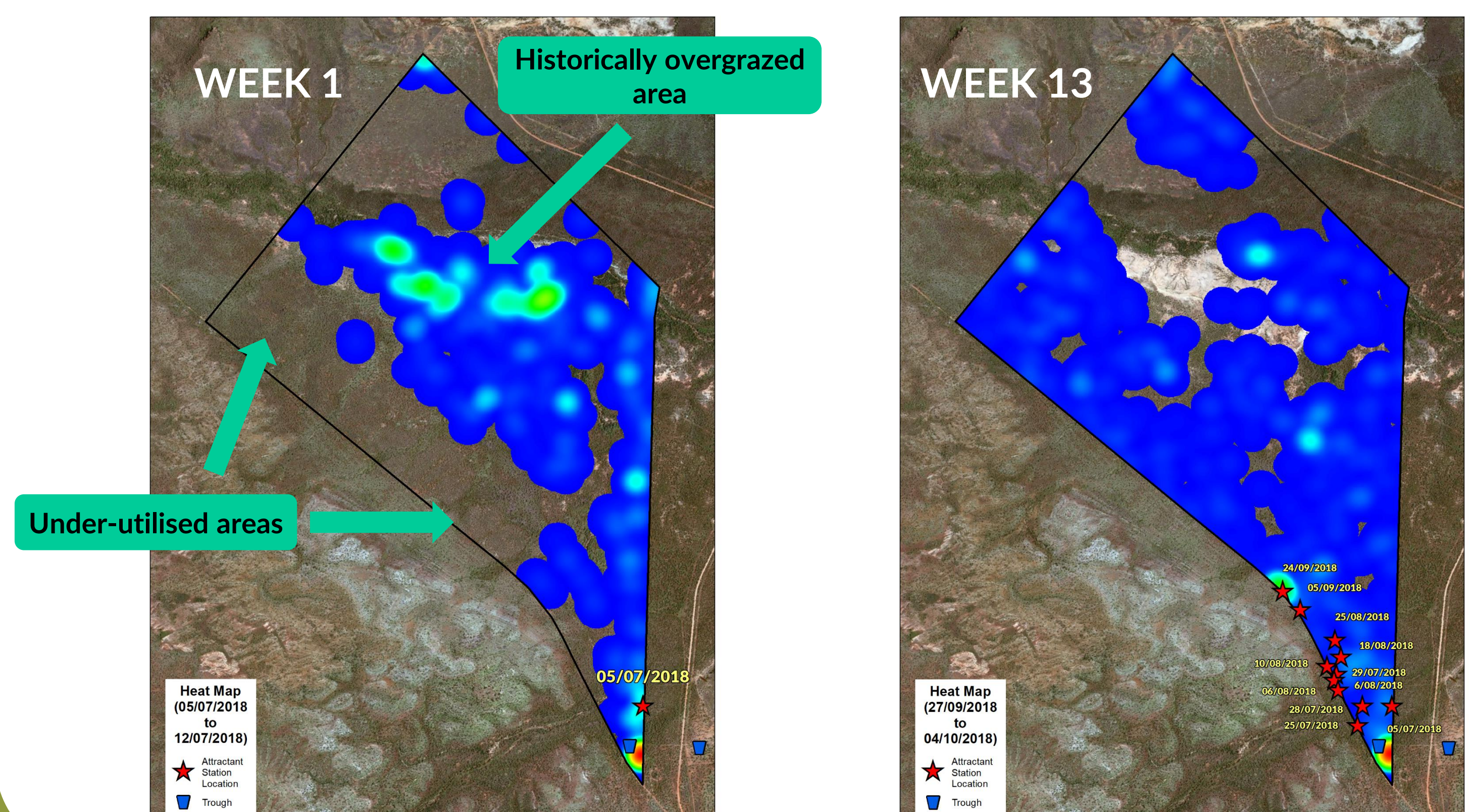
We aim to encourage cattle to use areas that have previously been under-utilised whilst reducing the usage of areas that have poor land condition

An "attractant station" comprising four feed tubs is used to provide small food rewards. We have used shipper pellets, molasses, salt, grains, "Bruce's Brew" and commercial urea supplements as rewards



Visual cues (such as witches hats) and audible cues (e.g. a whistle or wind chime) are used to help the cattle find the attractant station when it is moved around the landscape

GPS "heat maps" show that Self Herding techniques have influenced grazing patterns



This project is a collaboration between Revell Science, Stress Free Stockmanship, NT DPIR, Territory NRM, Rangelands NRM (WA) and Oxley Grazing

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Want to know more about Self Herding?

Scan the QR code to visit <http://selfherding.com/>

