2017 GRAZING FIELD DAY CASE STUDY

Queensland Government

REEF CATCHMENTS

BACKGROUND

A Grazing Field Day, funded through the Queensland Regional NRM Investment Program, was held at Emerson Park, a property owned and managed by Darryl and Hannah Trimble.

Darryl presented an overview of the property, production goals and current management practices, followed by a paddock walk that allowed participants to see first-hand the pasture varieties and weed control measures being undertaken in practice.

"Cattle are our passion and our lifestyle."

FOCUS ON

- Weed control
- Establishment of productive pastures
- Grass and legume variety selection
- Livestock management
- Improved ground cover resulting in improvements in water quality

KEY POINTS

- Successful weed control requires a combination of management practices
- Pasture grasses and legumes can be used to out-compete weeds
- Regular fertilising of paddocks can aid in weed control
- Livestock rotations, quarantine and access to paddocks must be controlled to avoid weed seed movement

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

The Trimble's purchased the 114 hectare property in 2009. At the time, it was a working cane farm, producing 3000 tonnes of cane per year.

Over the next 5 years, the Trimble's set about converting the property from cane to cattle production. Cane paddocks were ploughed out, planted to pasture and fenced off. Cattle were excluded for 12 months to allow for pasture establishment.

Weeds have been a major hurdle in the conversion process but Darryl and Hannah have discovered successful weed control is a result of a combination of practices.

"Most important to our pasture development is not using the paddocks at all for at least 12 months after seeding. This is for long term gain rather than the short term."

"We need to thank all the people that have given us advise and help over the years as this is a culmination of a lot of trial and error for both us and others before us."

OUTCOMES TO DATE

The Trimble's have undertaken trial plantings of a variety of pasture grass and legume species in order to determine the most suitable for their operation.

V8 stylo has been instrumental in aiding the control of sicklepod. It outcompetes the weed and as it is tolerant to 2,4-D herbicides, the sicklepod can be sprayed without causing major damage to the stylo.V8 stylo has also been found to compete well with the more vigorous sown grass species such as humidicola (Brachiaria humidicola), signal grass (Brachiaria decumbens) and Mekong BrizTM antha (Brachiaria brizanthus).

Weeds such as thatch grass and snake weed are being successfully controlled through the planting of robust grass species such as signal grass, humidicola and V8 stylo, in conjunction with chemical application.

Fertilising paddocks with a proprietary blend containing phosphorus has aided in the control of less desirable invasive grasses such as wire grass, which prefer low-phosphorus soils.

Livestock management is a crucial part of the Trimble's pasture management strategy. Newly-purchased cattle are quarantined in a designated paddock for up to 5 days to allow them to empty and reduce the risk of weed introduction. Cattle are excluded from newly-sown paddocks for 12 months to allow pastures to establish ground cover for weed competition and develop a seed bank in the soil. Cattle are removed from paddocks when weeds are seeding in order to reduce spread.

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