



Over The Fence Newsletter

MAY 2009/ BEEF EXPO

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FEATURES

Manage the Fungi and they will manage the nutrients



Other Articles

Quiet Achievers lead the way at Mt Larcom



Blackall Innovations Forum

Have you done your FEED BUDGET for the season?

SUCCESSION by CHOICE

Farm Ready Courses

“Technology of Growing Grass” course being held on 9th & 10th May 2009 at Rockhampton. TOGG is fully subsidised by Farm Ready for approved primary producers. If you are in town for Beef 2009, then stay on for a couple of days and attend the most valuable grazing management course in Australia. Grazing BestPrac has the first fully approved 2 day grazing management course, ready to go. Have a read of some of the comments from participants who have already attended. This course covers:

- How grass grows?
- Importance of microbes
- Property planning
- Gross margins of grass
- Grazing systems
- Managing for more grass
- Strategies for carbon.
- Compost teas/ brews

If you are interested, please call the office or Mick’s mobile above.

Editors Desk....

Welcome to the May edition of “Over the Fence”. Please read and enjoy the following articles and let us know your thoughts. In the past few months, the discussions on carbon sequestration and soil health have signaled a complete new era for the grazing and farming community. In fact, so new is the knowledge that scientists cannot even agree on a way forward. A good way of learning more about the science of healthy soils and carbon would be to go to Rockhampton for Beef Australia 2009 Expo, next week. From all discussions, this year promises to be the biggest yet with some of the most innovative speakers, focused on improving pasture and soil. Some good sessions to get to would be:

- Ray O’Grady (Healthy Soils Specialist from Lismore)
- Shane Joyce (Dukes Plain, Theodore) speaking on Biodynamics.
- Henry and Maria Townsend, (East Mathison Station, NT)
- Glen Williams “Granville” Jericho speaking on rotational grazing

And some inspirational property visits:

- Moora Plains, Glenprairie, Paradise Lagoons and Henderson Park.

Grazing BestPrac will be involved with the McCrackens display and the CQ University display during Beef 2009. So come on down to catch up or give us a call on 0438 395255.

Blackall BestPrac Group —

Wins top Innovators award for central west Qld in 2009.

Group members were presented with the award at a gala dinner in Longreach in February. The well known Electronic Sheep management (E-Sheep) project, funded by Agfund was the winning entry for the group of 7 businesses. The group believe the project has been a huge boost to the district and has highlighted the value of working as a BestPrac group. The E-Sheep equipment is a combination of Tru-Test, Allflex and Prattley equipment and can enable producers to draft and weigh stock without manual handling or recording. The system is on display at Beef Aust 2009 and a field day will be held at “Kenya” Muttaborra in June. Photo courtesy—Sally Cripps



Show casing the best in Landcare and NRM:

Manage the Fungi and the Fungi will manage the nutrients.



Michael Brosnan, Emerald and Paul Murphy, Capella, inspecting the brew.

We are all dependant on the Fungi and other microbes in our soils to grow more grass and better high yielding crops.

More than 30 graziers, mining and industry specialists attended a two day healthy soils workshop at Emerald Agricultural College last month, to learn about managing for healthy crops and pastures. CHRRUP Field Officer, Vicki Horstman organised the workshop as the first in central Queensland for 2009. The workshop was

presented by soil specialist, Ray O'Grady and grazing specialist, Mick Alexander, as the first in a series of workshops for CQ aimed at improving the community knowledge on carbon, soil health and regenerative farming. Mr Alexander said, "It was the first time graziers had been given the opportunity to hear the full story about soil health. In the past specialists only speak about the NKP theory, managing the nutrients by adding some more fertilizer. However, they generally do not realize, the fertilizer is a band-aid, as the best way of managing the nutrients is to manage the microbes (fungi, bacteria, protozoa and nematodes, etc) in the soil. In fact, increasing the microbes will also have enormous side benefits of improving carbon sequestration, improving water holding capacity and neutralizing the greenhouse gas issues." He added, "The answer is right under our nose, but we cannot see it, because it is microscopic"

The program featured, Professor Kerry Walsh, "Plant Sciences" Central Queensland University, who explained the life in the soil and demonstrated the use of microscopes to assess compost teas.

The large group also visited "Emerald Downs", the home of well known grain growers, Derm and Michael Brosnan. The Brosnans demonstrated their new soil management techniques at the workshop, as well as the specialised planting and spray equipment. Michael explained, "There is a need to improve the nutrient cycling by feeding the microbes in the soil and then we have been able to reduce the amount of fertilizer used. The program is a win/win as our soil is becoming more healthy and the structure is improving, with less cost. One of the exciting innovations they have undertaken includes a liquid injection of nutrients and microbes at planting. This brew is a food source for the microbes and the seed, rather than a dry fertilizer. Thankyou and congratulations to the Brosnan family and CHRRUP for being true innovators.

The program included sessions on –

- Stubble management
- Pasture breakdown
- Compost Tea production
- Microbe feeding
- Grazing Management
- Planting equipment



Emerald Agricultural College staff, Brad Wittington and Geoff Bahnisch also attended, to assess the most appropriate way in which the college may move forward to improve overall soil health. Mr Alexander, continued, "It is an exciting period when we are able to work with industry specialists, the Australian Agricultural Colleges, Central Queensland University and key producers in the state."



David Comiskey, "Melton" Alpha and Peter Hunt "McCrackens, Rockhampton.



Geoff Bahnisch, AACC, Rachel McDowall, Emerald and Mark Salmon, Wowan.



The planting tyne on Brosnans planter, with liquid injection tube at the back of the boot .



David Comiskey, "Melton" Alpha testing the penetrometer—measure soil strength.



Peter and Simone Lawrie, "Esher" Westwood.

Work together – WIN together.

Succession planning is all about people working together and winning together. Sometimes we think the business is about cows and crops and land. All we have to do is manage the cows, the crops and the land and everything will be OK. We all know a lot about how to manage those areas of the business, but people, now that's another matter. The country is strewn with unhappy families. Many were good farm managers and now have poor relationships with their loved ones.

And often I hear the same words repeated,

- "They wanted too much" or
- "It was just too hard" or
- "They just didn't understand" or
- "We just couldn't work together" or
- "They don't need to know about everything"

I'm afraid, that's often a cop out and every one of those statements is an excuse for not wanting to work through the issues. Not one member of your family or your employees wants to do a bad job or see the business suffer or see you suffer personally. No-one wakes up in the morning and says "I wonder what I can stuff up today". The reality of any situation is that there are always going to be personality differences and conflict. So be prepared for it and know what to do when it happens.

However, we would have a boring old world if everyone thought like you or me. We actually need different personalities in the business to create opportunities for growth. The different thoughts and ideas in any family business are a god-send. These thoughts and ideas may be the breakthrough your business has needed to succeed in the future. Yes, that city girl or nurse or teacher the young fellow married, might just

have the best ideas you've heard. Or maybe a friend who visited for holidays asked the question, "Why did you do it, that way"? Just forcing yourself to ask questions of yourself may be the change you are needing.

Often, the person with the least personal insight (knowledge) into your business and the least emotional attachment to the past can be the most objective about business strategy (future direction). A good management accountant or consultant can help you with cashflow and growth strategy and a solicitor who understands your business can assist you with legal structure to establish a new direction. These people should form a team to grow or develop the business. Often, it is more effective to have a new accountant or solicitor who does not know the old business, as these people will have a new set of eyes to see opportunities in the business.

The most valuable input you can have for planning business strategy is to have all of the members of your own family and senior staff involved in the planning discussions. Remember, ownership of the direction equals commitment. If we share in decisions, we share in the vision. If we share in the vision, we will all work together in the same direction and that means motivation.

Often I hear the comment, "I tell them what they need to know". This one belief causes more arguments than any other single issue in families, especially when they are in business together. Imagine being in

business, when you don't know what is actually going on, or where the business is heading? All you have been told is, "trust me, I know what I'm doing" and maybe even, "someday, this will all be yours". Some people will accept this and would rather just work in the business. These people are rare today and will last a few years and eventually explode, once they have had enough. Then you'll hear the expression, "That little thing was the straw that broke the camels back".

The younger person with motivation, enthusiasm and drive for the future will want to be part of the direction of the business. However, that person needs nurturing, to mature and that is all about "succession". I have many clients who have commented that "I would love to have that enthusiasm of the kids and the wisdom of my age - That would be magic". Here's your chance, combine your wisdom with your children's youth and enthusiasm. Remember, "The only way to avoid resistance to change is to involve people right from the start". Now, the families that work together, with no secrets are the families that win together.

Over the next few editions, we will look at some more of the people, legal and financial issues in succession planning. To find out more about succession planning and to start your family in the right direction, call Mick on 0438 395255.

SUCCESSION by CHOICE
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BEEF 2009...

Come and see Grazing BestPrac at the Beef Expo from 4-8th May. We will be available at the McCrackens stand and the CQU display.



Dung Beetles important time of year...

In the past few weeks, the populations of dung beetles have been extremely high in the western regions as well as on the coastal strip of Queensland. This is still an important time of year to be monitoring beetle populations and taking care with using drenches. The simplest way to check for beetle populations is still to float a few fresh cow pats, as shown in the photo's. Place a pat or two in a 20 litre bucket, fill to 80% full with water and stir the pot with a shovel. The beetles will float to the top and you can retrieve them and identify them quite easily. The latest identification booklets are available from the Grazing BestPrac office or by contacting Lucyvale Beef Group in Victoria. In a recent inspection of properties at Mt Larcom, Emerald,



Barcaldine, Blackall, Muttaborra, Springsure and Tambo, we found good activity (4—7 species) up until 24th April. However, activity will be slowing down with the cooler weather. If you would like to know more about dung beetles, please call GBP office.



BestPrac Groups— innovation in grazing

The most successful producer group networks in Australia are about to expand in Queensland. Regional coordinator of BestPrac in Queensland, Mick Alexander is duplicating the highly successful network into other regions of Queensland. BestPrac began in the central west and south western regions and has proven to be a highly successful process with ex-

citing outcomes for those involved.

The network was originally established by AWI for sheep and wool producers and later supported by MLA. However, due to overall cuts in funding from all industry and government departments, the program will now rely on its ability in Queensland to source funds externally.

The basic guidelines of the network are to have a :

- Minimum of 5 businesses in any group
- Operate on a local level with a facilitator
- Develop own ground rules
- Aim at Best Practice

If you would like to join a group, form a group or learn more about BestPrac, then give us a call ASAP. 49383919

If you want to really succeed in your area, then join a BestPrac Group NOW.

New Courses approved by Farm Ready

- Technology of Growing Grass (Healthy cattle, Grass and Soil)
- Feed Budgeting
- Succession by Choice
- Strategic Planning
- Benchmarking

A full program is available on the website. For bookings, call 0749 383919.

www.grazingbestprac.com.au



John Hardie, "Verastan" Muttaborra assessing pasture yields on Verastan with the Muttaborra BestPrac Group in April.

Quiet Achievers lead the way at Mt Larcom

Brent Lashford is a quiet achiever, managing his pastures, improving his soil health and creating an exciting grazing operation to the south west of Mt Larcom.

In early April, the Boyne Calliope NRM group ran a two day grazing management workshop for the local landcare and grazing groups at Brent Lashfords property, Mt Larcom. Brent has managed the land superbly to create a lush healthy pasture, with better than 90% ground cover in every paddock". "He has managed this by improving the pastures, establishing a rotation and managing the height which stock graze the grass and is now able to take advantage of market conditions." Brent Lashford explained, "We have some extremely steep and stony land which was deep ripped by Bill Chapman and level contoured to reduce runoff and erosion. Then, once the pasture was established, we started a rotation and the land and pasture is getting better every year. It seems simple to us and it's just the way we manage the land."

More than twenty graziers attended the two day, "The Technology of Growing Grass" workshop, to learn the latest science of growing grass, improving nutrient cycling, managing carbon and managing microbes in soil. It was an action packed program including:

- Gross margins of grass
- Strategies for growing more grass.
- The science of healthy soils.
- Feeding microbes and compost teas.
- Grazing management and rotational grazing.
- Property Development Planning.



"This is an essential workshop for all producers to attend as the gains from simply understanding why and how the systems work will help everyone involved in grazing adapt their management. It is producers like the Lashfords who truly give the grazing industry a good name, achieving all they have and without the government and industry support and transferring their passion from the stock to the grass". For more information and to find out more about the courses, catch up at Beef Expo. Next courses are on the 9th and 10th May, Rockhampton. A big thankyou to Sarah Steele and Vicki Dart for organizing the venues and being innovative.



Vicki Dart, Boyne Calliope Field Officer, Brent Lashford discussing strategies.



Murray Bullock, FBEC, Sarah Steele, FBA Biodiversity Officer and Chantelle James, Yeppoon.



Brent Lashford and Dennis Martin, discussing the mulcher/ mower used to incorporate excess pasture for microbe use and soil health.



The large group who attended the day could not fault the Lashford's grazing management as there was very good ground cover and the pasture was in excellent health..

Strategies to improve pasture soil health—

- Improved pastures
- Deep ripping
- Rest Pasture
- Rotate stock
- Match SR to CC
- Ground cover min 70%
- Mulch the soil
- Slash to use grass
- Spray Molasses brew
- Spray a compost tea.
- Treat your grass like you would the garden.



Some of the Blackall BestPrac Group—Back row- Rachel Noble, Bill Cripps, Rick Keogh, Jack Banks, Front Row—Ranald Noble, Helen Heath, Rhonda Banks and Mick Alexander



Blackall BestPrac Innovations Forum

Congratulations to the Blackall BestPrac Group for running an awesome Innovations Forum on the 21st April. More than 90 people attended to hear speakers such as Simon



Campbell (Satellite imagery and pasture monitoring), Steve Eussen (Tru-Test demonstrated the electronic sheep management system), Mick Alexander (Gross margin of cattle and sheep in the central west), Phil Kemp (Prime Lamb Australia spoke on the value of lamb feed-lotting), Natalie Williams (Granville, Jericho, spoke on rotational grazing and NIRS sampling), Rick Keogh (Blackall spoke on wild dog management), Peter Hunt (McCrackens spoke on water developments), Will Harrington (USee Telemetry spoke on telemetry), Peter Schmidt (OBE Beef, spoke on marketing beef) and Lisa Wright (North West Primary Health Care spoke on managing depression). There were several displays including Desert Channels Qld, McCrackens, Grazing BestPrac, Telstra, USee Remote Sensing,

The day was sponsored by Woolworths, Landcare, Desert Channels Queensland and a myriad of other supporters. Thankyou to those who attended and especially to DCQ for organising support..

THE DRY SEASON is upon us—

Time to do your Feed Budget:

How much GRASS do you have right now??

Could save you or cost you thousands??

Onfarm course—Fully subsidised to approved primary producers. Be quick to arrange this one.

It is imperative to carry out at least one annual (more often if possible) feed budget, to assess the ability of the land and pasture resource to adequately feed the desired stock numbers for the full period until the next expected rain. In the past we have used experience to help us make decisions. However, in many cases, experience is a poor teacher as we are sometimes too conservative and sometimes too hard on stock numbers or amount of grass.

Three basic methods:

- Photo standards (Kg/Ha)
- Cut and weigh pasture biomass
- Estimate standing feed in stock days

Not sure, give Mick a call 0438 395255.



Above -Hume Turnbull Landsdowne, Tambo and Elizabeth Clark, Leander at the Innovations Forum. Below— Dick James and Ben James, Glencoe Station Jericho at the Blackall Innovations Forum—photo courtesy of Desert Channels Qld.

