

Regenerative practices forge the GRAZING MASTERPIECE



Taswells Creek at a glance

Location: 35km outside of Kingaroy

Property size: 1816ha

Average annual rainfall: 725mm

Enterprise: Predominantly breeding



'Taswells Creek' a 1,816 hectare South Burnett property about 35km outside of Kingaroy was, in many ways, a blank canvas when its new owners, Fiona Tessmann and Roger Elliott, arrived in August 2017.

Cut into only two large paddocks that were patchy and inconsistently grazed, and with limited watering points fed from old windmills and bores, there was plenty of work to be done. Fiona and Roger had a vision for replenishment of the land using regenerative agriculture.

Within 12 months they had laid six kilometres of pipe to connect nine new watering points and divided the block into 24 paddocks, allowing them to complete their first round of rotational grazing.

It was a rewarding moment, and one that marked a new chapter for the property which had been managed under set-stocking practices for more than 100 years.

"We have watched our land move towards a much better state, it's looking vibrant, healthier and we have noticed the changes have had a huge impact on our cattle. As our pastures are on track, it's really showing in the condition and fertility of our herd," Fiona said.

Regenerative journey

Much of the motivation to transition to regenerative practices had come from Fiona and Roger's completion of a series of Resource Consulting Services (RCS) workshops.

This knowledge was finessed in 2021 when they participated in the Grassroots Project (Grassroots) –funded through the Queensland Government's Reef Water Quality Program. Grassroots has the dual aim of both increasing grazier profitability and reducing run-off to the Great Barrier Reef in the Fitzroy, Burnett-Mary and Mackay-Whitsunday regions.

Back in 2017, before embarking on their plan to establish new paddocks and watering points, the couple spent hours in the saddle, riding the new block to get a feel for the country and learn which areas needed attention and which needed rest.

They married their observations with information from Google Earth, and data they generated using RCS tools like grazing charts, to help determine accurate stocking rates.

They soon realised the priority task was improving the water infrastructure so cattle could roam across the full scope of the property, ensuring the overstocked areas were spared, and greater productivity could be gained from the unutilised patches.

Two 25,000-gallon tanks were bought and placed on higher ground so water could be gravity fed into the new concrete troughs.



“Although we know there is still a long way to go, and more improvements need to be made, talking with Andrew through Grassroots has assured us we will fully execute our plan.”



“We didn’t want to rely on surface water at all, as we prefer to have our cattle on clean, piped bore or creek, water,” Roger said.

Fiona described the impact of the new watering system as transformative.

“Using our cattle to landscape the property has built so much resilience in our land,” she said.

“They have helped create really productive areas, and we are seeing a wider biodiversity in the grasses. Every time we have rain, it’s exciting to see the new germinations that are sprouting.”

Today, the breeding herd on the property, including about 300 head of mixed-breed Bos indicus cows joined to high-quality Angus bulls, is a picture of productivity compared to when Fiona and Roger arrived.

In fact, just recently, their homebred maiden heifers returned a 100% in-calf result.

“I believe the relationship between the land and the cattle, is what is giving us an improvement in our fertility,” she said.

“There is such a connection there, and it helps that when we ride up on a horse, the mob psychology is them knowing they will be getting moved to fresh, new pasture, so they start following us around.”

In a move to further perfect their pastures’ biodiversity, Roger began placing legume seeds in stockfeed to use livestock to help disperse the seeds of desirable plant species, including seca stylo, Progardes Desmanthus, siratro, serradella, woolly pod vetch and Biserulla.

“As some of our country is undulating and rocky with a lot of trees, we can’t physically get the seeds out ourselves, but our cattle can. We know increasing the biodiversity will increase the ground cover, which helps retain more water and improve our soils,” Roger said.

“It’s looking promising so far as we have seen some germination in our cattle manure. If this works well, we will keep doing it, if it doesn’t we will try something else. We have learnt this through our RCS training, you need to plan for constant flexibility.”

Power in mentorship

Through Grassroots, Fiona and Roger were assigned an RCS mentor, Andrew Zerner, who thoroughly examined their business and worked with them to assess the value of the changes they had made to date in 2021, and what more could be done.

“We were able to show Andrew what we have completed so far, he had a thorough look and could let us know we were on the right track,” Roger said.

“He saw our property at the start of the growing season and will see it again at the end of our growing season. He also sat with us and went right through all of our data to see if there was room for improvement.

“I think with regenerative ag, people want to do it, but trying to find a starting point is the difficult part. When we came here, we knew what we were going to do, it was just a matter of executing the plan.

This project is funded through the Queensland Government’s ReefWater Quality Program.

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