

UPPER HERBERT SEDIMENT REDUCTION PROJECT



Graziers improving pastures, land and water quality

New grazing management practices are improving the land at Goshen Station in the Herbert River catchment. By reducing erosion, changes are also lessening sediment loads flowing down waterways and impacting the Great Barrier Reef.

Grazier Brett Blennerhassett runs 3,000 to 3,500 head of cattle on the family's 19,335ha property, which includes the Herbert River and the Herbert River Falls. The family's aim is to improve pasture and productivity while also improving the land.

Through Terrain NRM's Upper Herbert Sediment Reduction Project, funded by the partnership between the Australian

Government's Reef Trust and the Great Barrier Reef Foundation under the Regional Water Quality Program, Brett began a cattle and land management regime based on natural grazing practices.

CHANGES TO GRAZING MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Pasture improvement has been an ongoing focus for almost three decades on Goshen Station. In this time, the family has reduced the size of some paddocks and adopted

two-paddock to three-paddock rotation practices.

Brett was inspired to increase the paddocks in his rotational grazing system to five in his larger breeder paddocks after going to a Dick Richardson workshop on natural grazing practices at his neighbour's property, as part of this project.

The move to smaller paddocks and grazing in bigger mobs allows for shorter, more intense grazing



periods and variable rest periods for paddocks – with the long-term aim of creating better ground cover, more diverse and nutritious pastures and a more even grazing of paddocks. It also helps with weed control measures.

Through the project, Brett is putting in another 6km of fencing to divide a 3,000ha paddock into two paddocks. These will become part of a five-paddock grazing rotation system using two mobs of cattle over a 10,000-hectare area. He is also installing about 3km of pipe to connect with a header tank and to gravity feed water to a trough in both the new paddocks. These changes were made with contributions from both Terrain NRM and the grazier.



“Rotational grazing has been around a long time in different ways. Any sort of rotation is better than no rotation, and from past experiences we know that when you spell paddocks, even in the dry time, they still grow a little bit. So we can see the benefits of more regular rotation. Financial help made this happen quicker.”

– Brett Blennerhasset, Grazier

“With the new grazing system, the cattle are stimulating native grasses, keeping soil cover and allowing more water capture and that’s a better outcome for the whole eco-system.”

– Dick Richardson, Natures Equity

CHALLENGES

Providing enough water for stock:
 “We’ve got a lot more cattle drinking at these watering points at the same time. You’ve got to make sure you’ve got that in order.”

Different soil types:

“We don’t want to end up with a big mob in our black soil during heavy wet times because all we’ll do is walk a lot of it into the ground and the cattle won’t do well either. You need to match the climatic conditions to the grazing and to be in the paddocks, feeling it, seeing it, to know what’s going on and to make the decisions.”

Mustering:

“With two mobs instead of four you need to do things differently. All of a sudden, you’ve got 400, or we might end up with 500 to 600 cattle at once.”

RESULTS

Every year, the grazing management practice changes through this project are preventing an estimated 520 tonnes (or 17 semi-trailer loads) of fine sediment from flowing into the Herbert River catchment and out to the Great Barrier Reef lagoon.

In terms of land management results, the Blennerhassetts are

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also seeing improvements in weed control - with the ability to lock up smaller areas for longer periods and then use fire to control invasive weeds like lantana and to reduce woody thickening.

"A goal is to create minimal run-off, or no run-off if we can. Who wants to hurt the Reef? It's one of the most important, or nicest, things we have in the north. And it's good to be able to feel like you're doing the right thing."

- Duncan Buckle, Terrain NRM

"Our aim is win-win projects that meet landholders' management needs while also leading to practice change that reduces the fine sediment entering the river system and the Great Barrier Reef inner lagoon."

- Duncan Buckle, Terrain NRM



ABOUT THE UPPER HERBERT SEDIMENT REDUCTION PROJECT

This is a three-and-a-half-year project delivered by Terrain NRM in partnership with landholders. It has collectively led to 56,000 hectares of grazing land management change as well as engineered solutions at two gullies and a streambank (a rock chute, diversion bunds and a pile field), resulting in an estimated annual reduction of almost 4,000 tonnes of sediment in the Great Barrier Reef lagoon.

The project includes workshops on natural grazing practices, and soil health and its link to pasture management. It also includes one-on-one consultation with graziers on changes to improve pastures and cattle management.

For more information contact Terrain NRM at **(07) 4043 8000**, email info@terrain.org.au or visit www.terrain.org.au

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Great Barrier Reef Foundation

