

Alana & Karl
Carter

'Cheyenne' and
'Bonlea', Banana

**Informing
decisions**



Location: Banana

Size: 1276ha

Herd: Growing and finishing cattle

Average Rainfall: 615mm

12 Month Rolling Rainfall: 397MM

Green Date: 9th December

Forage Budgeting in the Fitzroy

Achieving positive production and land condition outcomes on your property

CHRRUP Limited, the Department of Environment and Science (DES) and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) partnered to provide graziers in the Fitzroy, and more recently in the Belyando sub-catchment with a forage budgeting service, delivered by fellow graziers.

The aim of forage budgeting is to match stocking rates (number of animals) with a paddock's carrying capacity (available feed). This assists in maximising pasture utilisation and ensures there is enough residual pasture to maintain and improve land condition.

A pasture's capacity to respond to rain is imperative to production. Our graziers delivering the service are keen forage budgeters at home and understand the benefits, but also the challenges involved, acting like a mentor during this process.

The service has been delivered to twenty three participating graziers in the Fitzroy and six in the Belyando. An open field day was also held in May 2021. If you would like further information about this project please contact CHRRUP on 07 4982 2996 or email admin@chrrup.org.au.

This project is funded through the Queensland Government's Reef Water Quality Program.



About the participants

When Alana Carter was assisting her father in the running of the family properties her role was in the bookkeeping and making sure the office was functioning.

After a near fatal accident left her father incapacitated, Alana has now assumed responsibility for the day to day operations of the business and the management decisions that go with running the properties.

It's been a "boots and all" experience for Alana as she takes on the challenge of a steep learning curve while also running the family home with three children at the local Banana school and assisting her husband Karl who's machinery fitting business places heavy demands on his time.

About the properties

Bonlea, along with a breeding block at Calliope, have been in the family business for Twenty years. Bonlea has a strong buffel influence.

Cheyenne, which is conveniently located adjacent to Bonlea, was purchased three years ago. Cheyenne's loamy scrub soils and heavier creek flats are capable of growing a good body of feed.

What impact did this service have?

Alana is focussed on using new skills, tools and resources to allow her to make informed decisions when it comes to grazing Bonlea and Cheyenne.

Alana's challenge at Cheyenne is that the current pasture mix is heavily dominated by couch. While the couch is not a preferred grass species, it has afforded a good layer of ground cover and hosted a surprisingly good presence of the native legume, rhynchosia.

Other signs of overgrazing and areas of less desirable land condition has heightened Alana's interest in how she can apply forage budgeting as a tool to bring about positive changes over time.

Future plans

Alana's focus is on what she can do in the paddock to bring about change and how forage budgeting can assist in making those informed decisions.

She reflects that by saying "I am getting closer to being able to do our feed budgets and Amy's presence and guidance has been invaluable."

"We have a long way to go before Cheyenne meets what my father thought its potential was. Karl and I want to do that in a considered and planned way. A lot of our energy will be invested in improving the density of the 3P grasses that we know can grow in this district."

Conclusion

The aim of forage budgeting is to match stocking rate to carrying capacity, leaving the land highly responsive to rainfall at the end of the dry season. An overgrazed pasture will lead to delayed responses to rainfall, decreasing production and causing erosion, capping or hardening of soil and loss of palatable, productive and perennial species.

A grazing enterprise which manages for their most desirable species of grass, controls unevenness of grazing pressure, estimates feed and builds their skills to best match their stocking rates will not only improve the condition of their land over time, but will minimise the effects of drought and reduce sediment loss into waterways.

