

Bauman
Family
'Monklands',
Alpha

**Focus on
grass**



Location: Alpha

Size: 18,093ha

Herd: Mixed breeders and growing stock

Average Rainfall: 493mm

12 Month Rolling Rainfall: 503MM

Green Date: 26th January

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.



**Queensland
Government**

About the participants

Reid and Julie Bauman, along with their son Dillon, are definitely not allergic to growing grass although Reid admits that “in the past I wondered about that, but it is certainly now the centre of our focus”.

The family have set stocked in a traditional management style for many years as Reid’s grandfather and then father had when they developed Monklands.

“I started rotating in a fashion a few years ago after hearing about the benefits from spelling country” Reid said. “As we did more with rotations, I felt I wanted to get better at making decisions around when to move stock so I needed better information”.

Reid had been having conversations with a few people about forage budgeting and the information it can provide. “I came to understand that there is a bit to it, but as the saying goes we are grass farmers not cowboys, so I figure if I’m spending time in my paddocks to become more aware of my grass supply and stock needs, then that’s not all bad” Reid says.

About the property

Monklands is 10 kilometres north of the Capricorn Highway near Alpha in central Queensland. The property straddles the Tallarenha Creek which runs into the Belyando River.

Sandy loams on box and ironbark country with scattered brigalow supports thickening stands of buffel and a diverse range of desert blue, black spear, kangaroo, forest mitchell, barley Mitchell grasses and spinifex.

What impact did this service have?

Recording grass volumes has shown the Baumans the benefits of rotating cattle. A few more paddocks have been developed and currently all breeders (around 1,000) are in one mob rotating through 8 paddocks over 7,500 hectares. The rate of water delivered to paddocks is the limiting factor to mob size on Monklands.

“The feed budgeting service provided by our supporting grazier has been very useful to our business. The extra contact and support in the paddock has been spot on for me.”

An example of the impact of the service is Reid’s approach to stocking rates for the upcoming dry season. “At the moment I have a bit of feed around and it could be easy to bring some stock on but having done the budgets and with our current herd I will have a bit of grass up my sleeve after the breeders have calved out in late spring. I feel pretty good about that” he said.

Future plans

Reid has moved to basing his stocking rate decisions on objective measurement of feed on hand. “I’ve got my stock book in order as well so I can determine the demand of the herd at any given time. I’ve recently subscribed to Maia Grazing and with some help, found it informative. Time will tell if I maintain that but the habit is now well entrenched. It is a different style of doing things for us and the information is very useful”.

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 (3P).

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.

