

# South West NRM Ticking Boxes for Graziers



The grazing business is hard. Sheep, beef and goat producers have to manage their land, animals, business and family, all while at the mercy of a supply-and-demand industry and our highly variable climate. Meat eaters are demanding increasingly more evidence to show that their lamb cutlet, steak or pot-roast was produced in an environmentally sustainable and ethical way.

South West Queensland has 550,000 head of cattle, 670,000 sheep and a significant number of goats. These animals are grazing on land that is the headwaters of the Murray Darling system and this means that graziers in the area have a growing responsibility to demonstrate to consumers that their product is produced on well-managed country.

But the grazing business isn't all about the consumer - what about the 'business' and the 'family' parts? A grazing business needs to be just that, a business. One that is profitable, and one that allows for a healthy family and social lifestyle. So how does a grazier do all of these things – be environmentally and ethically accountable, whilst making money and loving life? Grazing Best Management Practice (Grazing BMP) is a program that can help.

Grazing BMP is a free, voluntary program that was put together by the beef industry and is being adapted and improved for use in the sheep and goat industries. The program is applicable for any region and for any size operation. The Grazing BMP program is a partnership between the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF), Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA) and AgForce. DAF and South West NRM (SWNRM) have been delivering the program in the South West with funding from the Queensland Government's "Improving business resilience and drought recovery in Western Queensland" project.

Participation in Grazing BMP helps producers identify opportunities to improve their business and to access tools and support. The Grazing BMP program is made up of industry best-practice standards, collated into five modules: Soil Health, Grazing Land Management, Animal Production, Animal Health and Welfare, and People and Business. Graziers anonymously assess their business – are you operating 'at', 'below' or 'above' industry standard?

Graziers in the South West have completed three modules and will complete the remaining two modules in the next few months. After the program is completed, graziers can access their online account at any time and update the action plans they created, and re-assess the modules to document changes in their practices.



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Above: South West landholders listen in as guest speaker Col Paton discusses forage budgeting in the Mulga lands during a recent workshop hosted by South West NRM.



Participants hear from industry experts on the topics of weeds and pest management, grazing management, nutrition, genetics, soil health, business, record keeping, NLIS, improved pastures, cattle diseases and much more. A visit to the Grazing BMP website ([www.bmpgrazing.com.au](http://www.bmpgrazing.com.au)) will give you more information.

As a result of the Grazing Land Management module, graziers identified that there was a need for better mapping of their properties and South West NRM was able to implement a number of NRM Spatial Hub workshops to assist graziers to meet or exceed industry best practice.

The NRM Spatial Hub brings together the world's latest mapping and imagery technology to provide a simple web-based tool to allow Australia's rangelands to be managed more profitably and sustainably. The NRM Spatial Hub combines the latest geospatial mapping technologies with time-series satellite remote sensing of ground cover, in a way that's never been available before.

For the first time, the sheep and beef industries will be able to use and compare their own paddock data with government data in a consistent and interactive way. The initiative demonstrates how world leading time-series remote sensing of ground cover through an online interface, can optimise grazing pressure and land condition, and allow land managers to make better, more informed decisions.

One of the key products graziers can obtain from the NRM Spatial Hub is an asset list (which includes all fences, water points, pumps, gates, pipelines and the list goes on) which can be utilised when negotiating with financiers or determining future replacement programs, providing real time information for property planning.

One of the NRM Spatial Hub's greatest attributes is that it allows enterprises to see clearly where property development can take place and then assist in planning for that development. The outputs can then again be shown to financiers to support the case for funding. This proof of process can also be used to support applications to NRM bodies and others for project funding for protection of key environmental assets such as water courses. You can find out more on the NRM Spatial Hub at [www.nrmhub.com.au](http://www.nrmhub.com.au).

South West NRM has also been delivering a range of other sessions such as a Grazing Fundamentals workshop, Biodiversity field days and weed workshops. As you are reading this, South West NRM will be presenting Pasture to Profit workshops in Charleville and Tambo, and have more NRM Spatial Hub workshops planned along with a Flood Fencing field day. Currently in the planning is a Mulga and Nutrition workshop, and more field days.

To keep up to date with what's coming up, register for our newsletters at [www.swnrm.org.au](http://www.swnrm.org.au) or follow South West NRM on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/SouthWestNRM](https://www.facebook.com/SouthWestNRM)).

We would like to hear from any graziers who would be keen to be involved in the Grazing BMP, the NRM Spatial Hub or any of our other workshops or field days. You can contact the South West NRM office on (07) 4656 8500 or [office@swnrm.org.au](mailto:office@swnrm.org.au) to register your interest, or to find out more information.

- Kylie Hopkins and Darren Jennings