



Collaborative Area Management: Exclusion fencing in South- West Queensland

Background

The seven existing Collaborative Area Management or 'cluster' groups were formed as part of a South West NRM (SWNRM), QLD state government funded initiative. These groups of landmanagers came together and formed associations, allowing them to purchase fencing materials at a reduced cost. These groups then built exclusion fences surrounding their properties, helping each other and sharing fencing equipment. Once these fences are completed, the groups will work to mitigate shared issues within the clusters. Some of these issues include non-domestic and feral animals which apply an unsustainable grazing pressure and wild dogs who predate on livestock.

The Collaborative Area Management project aims to increase diversity on properties, allowing landmanagers to continue with or return to sheep. The sheep and wool industry can then benefit local towns through increased employment.



Why do we need it?

Predation

In Queensland for 2008/2009 alone, the major economic costs associated with wild dogs and the grazing industry added to over \$67 million. Wild dogs are a declared pest under Queensland legislation and techniques for control include trapping, shooting and baiting. Exclusion fencing allows landmanagers to work together in a defined area to target wild dogs and reduce predation on livestock and small native animals.

Total grazing pressure (TGP)

Grazing by wild species including kangaroos and feral goats can increase grazing intensity by up to 50% in some areas. Exclusion fencing can assist in reducing the total grazing pressure allowing landmanagers to undertake rotational grazing and spelling paddocks. A reduction in TGP can lead to increased ground cover, reduced weed invasion, reduced erosion and an increase in refuge for small native species, leading to an increase in biodiversity.



How to go about it

Existing cluster groups are generally based loosely on wild dog baiting syndicates, social groups or pre existing groups such as fire fighting units. These clusters then seek other interested properties in the surrounding area who plan to conduct wild dog control and will assist in mitigating other shared issues.

Once a group is decided upon, all landmanagers need to sign up to form an incorporated association. A president, treasurer and a secretary need to be selected and decisions can be made about which fencing design is most appropriate for the land type. By forming this association, the group is able to use their collective buying power to purchase fencing materials at a reduced cost.

The group can choose to work together to construct the fence or may wish to complete sections independently. Once the fence is completed, landmanagers can work together to remove wild dogs, feral pigs and other invasive animal species while the fence prevents reinfestation.

It is important for the group to hold regular meetings to discuss ongoing issues such as weed and pest animal control. The group might decide that members are to pay a pre determined amount (per acre etc) into a centrally managed account to cover any ongoing maintenance for the fence and to cover natural events such as floods or fire that may damage the integrity of the structure.