



South West NRM

On-Ground Project Fact Sheet

MONITORING MITCHELL GRASSES ON PLEVNA DOWNS EAST

Landholder Name: John and Karen Elmes

Property Location & Lot on Plan: County is Burenda, Parish of Fleming Lot Numbers: Lot 90(SP203535), Lot 2 (SP162529), Lot 4 BND24, & Lot 3 BND24
(Property & project location maps attached at the back of the document).

Property Outline:
(E.g. Property description, size in hectares, enterprise, annual rainfall, and current management practice)

Plevna Downs East covers 6263.6 ha of extensive grazing land. The dingo barrier fence is part of our Eastern boundary. The remaining boundary is fenced with a Dingo proof fence. Plevna Downs East is an EU Organically accredited property. Access to town is 40km east of Augathella on the Mt Tabor Road which is a sealed road. (GPS location: S25.68 and E 146.90). Average rainfall is 21inches (525mls) for this area; we have received 40 inches in the last twelve months.

The enterprise is an organically accredited property. We are very careful with our stocking numbers as we are not able to use supplementary feeds, and use a rotational grazing system, grazing as much natural grass as possible. The property is split into 20 paddocks; of no more than 810ha each. Each paddock has an access built around watering points with laneways to the yards enabling easier mustering.

We are currently looking to run 100 head of breeder cattle with the outlook of selling the calves to the weaner market. We also have 2700 dorper cross breeding ewes and we sell the wether lambs as weaners hoping to increase the breeding ewes to 4000 and 5000. We also have the option, with a good season, to background steers.

The entire property has been stick raked, which was finished in 2009. We have also completed 2700 acres of blade ploughing, approx 500 acres of *grassland* has been done in 2010 - this paddock was taken out of organically certified production. Pending results of the *grassland* we may do another 500 acres.



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Project Description

This project will divide a north eastern paddock (Plain Paddock) consisting of 1942 ha into approx. 4 x 485 ha sheep proof (hinge joint) paddocks, producing grazing cells, which can more easily be managed through a rotational grazing system. The fencing under this project will allow the main divisional fence of 3.3 kilometres to be constructed, (see Project Diagram), as a basis for further rotational grazing blocks to be fenced and established by the landholders in the future.

Project Aim

The project aim is to use rotational grazing to improve the cover of Mitchell grass by allowing a graze and spell regime to be expanded and enhanced. The specific paddocks will also be monitored to define the response to this regime, and subsequent success of the project.

Project Outcomes

To have the ability through infrastructure placement to be able to totally lock up country for spelling under a rotational grazing regime. This will let grasses reseed, and if required to be supplemented through introduction of new seed if necessary.

The likely net effects will be enhanced cycling of carbon back into the soils across these paddocks resulting in improved ground cover, biodiversity, water infiltration and pasture productivity.

We will monitor how Mitchell grasses and the downs country improves under the rotational grazing system.

Outputs

CB1.1 Events; 1 field day in conjunction with South West NRM; expect approximately 20 persons.

OG3.4 Enhanced terrestrial vegetation; 1942 ha project area, influencing 6264 ha through rotational grazing practices.

OG14.5 Groundcover management; 1942 ha project area, influencing 6264 ha through rotational grazing practices; 2 property managers adopting improved management practices and influencing up to another 20 through the field day.

Project Monitoring:

Objectives:

Monitor ground cover response, presence of pasture species and biodiversity, and production benefits in response to installation of sub divisional fencing and expansion of rotational grazing practices covering 1942 ha.

Indicators b& Methodology:

Indicators: 3P pasture species, percentage groundcover, pasture quantity, rainfall, grazing days, and land condition.
Methodology: Transects and photo points, standing dry mass, use of grazing charts, *Stocktake* monitoring.

Monitoring Schedule:

Establish baseline data prior to the commencement of the project.

To assist project collaboration and holistic data analysis under the project, the initial collection and onforwarding to South West NRM, of rainfall and ongoing production monitoring data (e.g. grazing days / location etc. incorporating actual rest periods for each paddock, yields: stock days / ha, stocking rate), will be the responsibility of the landholder.

Biophysical monitoring every six months in which South West NRM will be responsible for collecting, collating, interpreting and reporting data.

Two pasture monitoring transects considering pasture species and ground cover established within the project area representative of the major land types.

Two photo monitoring sites within the project area representative of the major land types.

One pasture monitoring transect and one photo monitoring site located upon the property, external to the project site, as a comparison site.

Analysis: Return on Investment. Develop a case study comparing return on investment of rotational grazing systems as developed under this project, and comparing the economic return on investment to the project comparison site.