



South West NRM

On-Ground Project Fact Sheet

MT ELLIOTT – PROTECTING THREATENED ECOLOGICAL COMMUNITIES

Landholder Name: Andromeda Cattle Company

Property Location & Lot on Plan: “Mt Elliott - 1694 PH1454 Parish of Bluff and Tickencote.
(Property & project location maps attached at the end of the document).

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

Andromeda Cattle Company is a family based partnership that operates 56 657 hectares (140000 acres) of country north of Mungallala. All of this country has been in the Handley family for over 100 years and we are fourth generation cattle producers. The partnership involves Rod and Ian Handley and their wives and 3 children (hopefully 5th generation graziers).

Mt Elliott has been in the Handley family since 1911, being purchased by us in 2004. It is located about 40 km North of Mungallala and is approx. 31 566 hectares (78000 acres). It consists of a strong mix of country with approx. 4654 hectares (11500 acres) of undulating Brigalow softwood scrub, 17 280 hectares (42700 acres) of Poplar Box flats, with 9308 hectares (23000 acres) of lighter hilly forest country . *Mt Elliott* is in a 550 millimetre (22 inch) rainfall area that has been very unreliable for the last 10 years. It has been fenced into five main paddocks with most watering facilities having holding squares for easy mustering, and a series of strategically placed smaller paddocks for holding stock. The majority of our 1500 breeders are droughtmaster / charolais cross cows running on *Mt Elliott* and *Andromeda*. Weaners are taken to *Eddington* for growing out and sale at about 16 to 20 months. Heifers are culled and sold or kept to meet breeder requirements. Cattle are rotated around paddocks preventing over grazing of heavier black soils.

Fire is used to keep regrowth under control in heavily grassed areas, whilst the virgin Brigalow country needs to be strategically grazed to reduce fodder amount and prevent wildfire damaging this Threatened Ecological Community area.

Partnership members often attend training days to keep up on new information and ideas for our business and are constantly seeking new and easier ways to do things, in an age of less labour availability, for example the intended implementation of a laneway system at *Eddington* for ease of mustering from spear trap holding yards, with the use of limited labour.



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Project Description

Establish a staged project commencing with 16km of cattle fencing located in Bush Paddock on Mt Elliott, subdividing areas used consistently for rotational grazing, from areas of Brigalow / Belah forest community. The Threatened Ecological Community will be strategically grazed maintaining production & enhancing biodiversity of the endangered ecosystem, promoting sustainable grazing practices, & highlighting the rationale that production & biodiversity conservation can coexist & compliment the operation of a substantial grazing enterprise.

Project Aim

Fencing of the Threatened Ecological Community area (HECTARES?) will enable us to enhance grazing management opportunities associated with the previously identified endangered ecosystems, (see attached map - Stage 1). This project will protect the Threatened Ecological Community from over stocking and grazing pressure on the heavier soil types, and strategically utilise grazing to benefit both the country (based on seasonal conditions) and return a flexible management ability to the Beef cattle enterprise.

Project Outcomes

This project will showcase the ability to integrate, manage and conserve, a Threatened Ecological Community, allowing producers to evaluate alternative and flexible management options to strategically graze an ecosystem whilst maintaining and managing a sustainable beef grazing enterprise.

Outputs

CB1.1 Events; 1 field day in conjunction with South West NRM, expected approx. 20 persons.
OG3.4 Enhanced terrestrial vegetation; XX ha direct enhancement; project will influence XX ha under property mgt through enhancing grazing management . **OG 14.5 Groundcover mgt;** Area (ha) of land where improved groundcover management practices have been adopted - (2495 ha direct enhancement of groundcover management; project will influence 26995 ha through strategic grazing practices) Number of land managers adopting improved management practices - (2 property managers 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 redevelopment of the grassed waterway and reduction in paddock size enhancing rotational grazing practices.

Indicators & 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.