



South West NRM

On-Ground Project Fact Sheet

Pasture Improvements on Robina Downs

Landholder Name: Mike Kelly, Kelly Family Trust

Property Location & Lot on Plan: South West of Cunnamulla on the Jobs Gate Road
L3SP228356

Property Outline:

“Robina Downs” is located 130 kms south east of Cunnamulla on the Jobs Gate Road; it is fertile Mitchell Grass downs in the Warrego flood plains. The property was purchased by the Kelly Family Trust in 2002 and is managed by Mike and Dot Kelly.

“Robina Downs” is on the Noorama Creek System in the Warrego Catchment and is 13770 hectares of Wooded Alluvial Plains (54%), Sandhills (35%) and Open Alluvial Plains (11%). The country is in excellent condition after the run of good years, receiving rain of 447.5 mm in 2009 and 690mm in 2010. The grass species and ground cover also benefit from periods of rest from grazing and grazed with high stock densities.

Currently the property is stocked with 3500 Merino ewes, producing 3000 lambs a year and 150 bales of wool. The Kelly’s run 3000 weaners or 3000 to 3500 ewes in large mobs in 1700 to 2000 acre paddocks for short periods of time (up to 3 weeks) to achieve holistic management of their stock. Stock is moved to the next paddock when feeding availability is beginning to decrease. The country has benefited from long periods of rest, perennial grasses species being stimulated by grazing and stock impact from high densities of stock in the paddock for short periods of time. Large mobs in one or two paddocks also allow for easy mustering and effective pest control.

Mike completed a Futurescapes project with South West NRM in 2007 to reduce paddock sizes and is a strong believer in Holistic Management Training.



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Project Description

The project is to install three water tanks and six troughs into six paddocks to allow high density stocking. The entire property is currently under rotational grazing with around 3000-4000 sheep in 2000 acre paddocks for up to three weeks. Moves are based on availability of perennial grasses, and stock are moved when there is still plenty of feed left in paddock.

Currently one water in each paddock suits adult sheep, but lambs don't water well and then need to be split in to smaller mobs. By putting these extra water points, the landholder will be able to keep the lambs in larger mobs and increase stock impact to achieve even grazing of pastures across the paddocks and increase the resting time of other paddocks.

Project Aim

To have two watering points for stock in these three paddock, this will take pressure off the existing single watering point and increase stock impact and decrease grazing time in the paddock. This will help greatly with ground cover through more even grazing of the paddock and allow the Kelly Family to rotationally graze in large mobs of lambs as well as sheep.

The increased stocking rates and high density grazing, promoting even grazing of perennial grasses, and improved resting of plants will promote robust pastures. Since implementing rotational grazing Mike Kelly, the landholder has already noticed a substantial increase in grasses and ground cover percentage and he believes we will continue to see even more improvements.

High ground cover, improving pasture species and increased stocking rates will benefit "Robina Downs" greatly in dry times to achieve better weight gains. Stock will have less distance to go to water, therefore increasing feed to weight efficiently; Less worms due to moving out of the paddocks quickly; and more waters mean less dust in wool, increasing wool prices.

Project Outcomes

Rotational grazing based on feed availability will continue to be implemented and improved at "Robina Downs". Expected outcomes include improvements in pastures species and ground cover and increase in stock grazing days per hectare across the property.

With formal monitoring of this grazing system with photo sites and grazing charts we will be able to show others what is happening at "Robina Downs" and the holistic benefits of this grazing system.

Outputs

CB 1.1 Events; 1 field day in conjunction with Noorama Landcare Group; expecting 20 land managers to attend.

CB1.2 Project Fact Sheet; 2 Factsheets produced and distributed to 100 land managers.

CB1.4 Media opportunities; 1 news article written to promote adoption of planned grazing in the Mulga lands.

OG14.4 Ground Cover Management; 3 paddocks directly improved with Rotational Grazing practices, influencing 13,941 ha with planned grazing by one land manager and influencing 20 others.

P3.2 Property management plans; 1 management plan with mapping for "Robina Downs".

PS1 Biophysical, economic or social plans; 1 Monitoring and Evaluation plan.

Project Monitoring:

Objectives:

Monitor ground cover response, presence of pasture species and diversity, and production benefits in rotational grazing, and reviewing plan based on monitoring data.

Methodology & Indicators:

Indicators: 3P pasture species, percentage of ground cover, rainfall, grazing days and land condition.

Methodology: 'Stocktake' Land condition monitoring, grazing charts

Monitoring Schedule:

Establish baseline data prior to commencement of the project.

The landholder has agreed 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).

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

One pasture monitoring transects considering pasture species and ground cover established within the project area.

10 photo monitoring sites, at least one within each paddock on "Robina Downs" representative of the major land types.

Analysis: Return on Investment. Develop a case study on the return on investment of the rotational grazing system monitored under this project, and consider the holistic outcomes – economic, environmental and lifestyle.