

Alistair Just Ashley Park

Selicks Hill

"The fundamental principle for the property is to be productive and to leave it in a better state than when I took over."



Enterprise: Sheep and cattle



Property size: 1400ha



Annual rainfall: 700mm



Why regenerative agriculture?

Initially we looked into how we could reduce the cost of production.

It was a natural progression to go from synthetics to using chicken manure as a fertiliser substitute. We could buy chicken manure at a lower cost than superphosphate, and we had the added benefit of nitrogen and all the trace elements at the same time.

Since then, we've progressed our natural farming enterprise from there, and over the last 12 years, it really has been just one step at a time to get us to where we are now.



What practices and principles have you introduced to make your farm more regenerative?

Initially we started out reducing paddock sizes to increase stocking density in the rotations. This was facilitated by fencing-off a number of water courses and revegetating gullies, and as we discovered, without loss of production. Since then we have been reducing chemical inputs, by avoiding the use of synthetic fertilisers, and replacing them with alternatives.

Adopting rotational grazing has improved pasture cover and diversity and in the past few years we have had a go at seeding a multi species mix into existing pasture for increased diversity, with the aim to also extend the feed growing period.

Early on, to build soil health, we introduced dung beetles, but have noticed that by having a regenerative farming system where we are not using certain chemicals for drenching or synthetic fertilising, we seem to be building up dung beetle populations naturally.



What have been your greatest challenges?

The main challenges we have experienced getting into regenerative agriculture is advice and confidence to adopt these practices when it's still seen as something alternative.

I think it will eventually become mainstream, but when we started out 12 years ago, it was still seen as very alternative.

Fencing into smaller paddock sizes is challenging in our hilly terrain.



What have been your biggest successes?

The biggest regenerative agricultural successes has been reduced cost of production and less reliance on outside inputs.

We are now making our own compost, and don't have a fertiliser bill except the cost of spreading.

Seeing a greater diversity of species in our pastures, an increase in biodiversity across the property and establishment of shelterbelts, have been really beneficial to improving animal health, but it's very hard to measure. The animals just appear in a healthier state with less reliance on drenches.

We're now starting to see the roots in our plants having sort of a dreadlock look, suggesting an increase in plant root exudates and biological activity, which is building soil and creating healthy plants.



Where to from here?

Future plans for the property include more of the same, building on what we are doing well.

My goal is to establish more paddock trees and fence-off all water courses. I would like to get paddock sizes down to an average size of 10 hectares. Once I get there, we'll take it another step and get them down to 5 hectares.

Through holistic grazing management, we aim to more intensely managed multi species pastures, increasing pasture diversity and production.

We will continue to make our own compost, and someday maybe we will also introduce chickens



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Water and the Environment



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*This program received funding from the Australian Government's
Future Drought Fund.*

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