

Geoff Stuckey

Candlebark

Kyeema

"It's a great thing to be improving soil health without too many inputs, just the grazing and the fencing and the water, getting that right."



Enterprise: Beef cattle



Property size: 272ha



Annual rainfall: 800mm



Why regenerative agriculture?

I used to run a conventional farm in the South East with sheep, cattle and crops. I realised that with crop yields much lower than the Reg French model suggested, (although still good for the time) that we needed to change.

That brought about some education in the form of Resource Consulting Services (RCS) through their 'Grazing for Profit School' in 1999. I also learnt about the Albrecht soil balance approach at that time. We radically changed our grazing system and that brought about massive change.



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

Here at Kyeema, we started off with some cell grazing or just rotational grazing. Now we're using Dick Richardson's Grazing Naturally principles a lot more.

We put in a new water system rather than having dams and from there we've got an articulated system now, which has turned 10 paddocks into about 40.

We are trading cattle, and we match the stocking rate to the carrying capacity.

We added quite a bit of lime, and I guess that started us going in the regenerative direction, where we weren't using chemicals or artificial fertilisers, just lime.

No artificial fertilisers or chemical herbicides are used broad acre, except when establishing a new pasture.



What have been your greatest challenges?

The greatest challenge has been the cost of the fencing and the water. Extra fencing and a reticulated stock water system are very expensive to implement, but essential for a better grazing system. So you have to be prepared to outlay, but the rewards are great because it's a lot better lifestyle and a lot less work.

There are challenges with seeding our steep and rough terrain. Getting a lot more species in the pastures will be a costly exercise. We have found finding a reasonably priced drill for sowing pastures and justifying the price of seed also a challenge!



What have been your biggest successes?

I, and a lot of others have been involved with RCS for a long time now. That started us off in being able to enjoy farming a lot more without chemicals, whilst also making it easier to farm profitably with less mobs of stock.

Through adopting the Grazing Naturally principles, combined with low stress stock handling techniques, our stock are very happy and healthy, and our soil health is improving.

Although we still have a very long way to go with our soils, we have got some pretty good results. Using a simple tool like a penetrometer, we have seen that the soil hard-pan has now gone. Soil biologist, Dr. Christine Jones was here at Kyeema a few months ago and gave us a good report also, stating these are some of the best soils she had seen.



Where to from here?

The next step is to sow some mixed species pastures to increase biodiversity in our pasture. We need something that can grow over summer, such as Lucerne, Chicory and Plantain, if we can get them to establish, but I have not experimented with that yet. We also aim to get a greater diversity of annual species into the pastures.

The way we do things now with regenerative agriculture makes Jan and I feel very relaxed about farming day to day, and are very positive about the future of farming.



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