



Improving productivity and performance

Business snapshots

Protecting the Reef by unlocking the potential in Fitzroy Basin grazing enterprises

For the next two years, Fitzroy Basin Association Inc. (FBA) are working closely with **a group of graziers across the Fitzroy Basin to help increase their knowledge, boost their profitability and improve their performance.** By working across high sediment source priority areas there will also be significant impacts on local water quality and the long-term health of the Great Barrier Reef.

FBA has developed a **new concept to look at profit, performance and water quality outcomes in grazing** and are partnering with NQ Dry Tropics to deliver the project across the two natural resource management (NRM) regions - the Fitzroy Basin and the Burdekin. The project is funded by the Australian Government and delivered through Reef Trust.

The new project focuses on providing **tailored mentoring, training and support to increase graziers' knowledge and skills.** In-person training, field days and workshops will allow graziers to share what they learn with other project participants as well as across the broader industry.

A wide cross-section of Fitzroy Basin graziers are participating in the program, from early career graziers to those who have been leading the industry for decades. Allow us to introduce them.

Mt Elsa

Steve & Claire Farmer

- 1,200 head
- Commercial and stud breeder herd
- 3,885 hectares
- 60km N Rockhampton



Steve and Claire Farmer, pictured here with their three children, believe that leaving their property in the best condition they can is crucial for the future of grazing.

Steve and his wife Claire run Mt Elsa, 25km north-west of Yaamba, where they breed beef and stud cattle on the 3,885 hectare property. The opportunity to learn more about managing their land and improving their business skills prompted them to get involved in the program.

"I want to improve our land management ... and business management," Steve said. "I see it as an opportunity to do more training in that area."

Steve and Claire have been running Mt Elsa since 2014. They believe they have a lot to learn and are looking forward to building their knowledge.

"I'm on a steep improvement and infrastructure curve at the moment," he said. "We've got most of the grazing management up to where we need to be now, but we've still got a bit more of that to do."

About half of Mt Elsa is dedicated to rotational grazing, and they hope to irrigate pastures in the near future, to provide better quality and more feed for their cattle.

"You hope that you leave the place in better condition than what it is for future generations, and for our kids, and their kids and it flows on. It's part of sustainable agriculture."

Daunia Station

Jarrold & Leanne Deguara

- 3,000 head
- Breeding and fattening enterprise
- 13,355 hectares
- 75km SW Nebo



Jarrold Deguara knows that losing valuable top soil through erosion will reduce his business's productivity, so learning about new and more effective erosion control methods is a high priority.

Jarrold Deguara and his wife Leanne run an aggregation of three grazing properties in the Nebo district: Daunia Station, Moorvale and Everton. Initially running a breeding and fattening operation, they now keep about 70 per cent of their steers and grow them to bullocks, as well as selling feeder steers, grain-fed steers and weaners.

Jarrold and Leanne have been implementing erosion control methods for a number of years, yet they believe they still have more to learn.

"If we're losing our topsoil and it's ending up on the Reef we can't be as productive as what we should be," Jarrold said. "There are better ways to control erosion and better ways to handle our grass cover so that we can stop erosion."

The opportunity to learn more about grazing land management will have a big impact on the future of Jarrold and Leanne's business, but looking after their properties for the long term is their biggest goal.

"It's important to look after the land so that we've got it for our kids later on. If they decide that they want to come home or if they don't, later on maybe we've got a saleable piece of land, otherwise if we destroy it we'll end up with nothing."

Barnett

Peter Frame

- 3,000 head
- Backgrounding enterprise
- 8,900 hectares
- 240km W Rockhampton



Peter and Toni Frame, pictured here with their four children Kasey, Bob, Luke and Malcolm, believe that improving their sustainability will have a big impact on the future of their grazing enterprise.

Alongside wife Toni, Peter Frame has been running Barnett, 40km north of Blackwater, for the past 16 years. The 8,900 hectare mixed enterprise property is mainly dedicated to backgrounding, but they also produce grains such as sorghum.

Improving their profitability and learning from other graziers influenced their decision to participate in the project. "We're on a major river so it's good to know what's going on in surrounding areas and what we can do better," said Peter.

"We're only a little fish in a big ocean really, but — whatever we can do — certainly goes towards helping the Reef."

Peter has already begun implementing rotational grazing, in an effort to improve productivity while improving ground cover and preventing erosion.

"We're currently doing rotational grazing, we keep the ground cover up which helps look after the soil whilst resting country," he said. However, he believes there is room to further improve Barnett's sustainability by improving the positions of his stock watering points and investing in technology.

"We are always looking for ways to do things better and save time, money and labour. But trying to keep our grass to a certain level where we reduce our run-off is something I'd like to work on."

Dovecot

Louis Moore

- 550 head
- Fattening and trading enterprise
- 4,700 hectares
- 30km SW Rockhampton



Louis Moore (right), pictured here with FBA's Reece Brooks, believes the training opportunities offered through Reef Trust are not only good for himself, but good for his business and good for the environment.

Louis Moore's goal is to run a sustainable and profitable grazing enterprise on Dovecot, his 4,700 hectare property about 25km south-west of Rockhampton. He previously worked Dovecot jointly with his family for about 15 years, before taking over the reins about four years ago. He believes that taking advantage of training opportunities as they arise is the key to building his knowledge and protecting the Reef.

"It's good for yourself personally, it's good for your business and it's good for the environment. There are no losers in it."

His advice to other graziers is simple. "Approach everything

with an open mind. It's just such a good opportunity to learn new skills," he said.

Louis aims to use every tool that is available to him and make the most of it. In the coming two years, he is hoping to learn more about rotational grazing and implement his ideas, especially with spelling paddocks.

"I'm starting to implement some ideas. I'm mapping out paddocks and changing around watering points, and reducing grazing pressures on some areas. The change has to start with us, the producers. Any tool we can use to promote an industry with so much untapped potential should be embraced," he said.

Alligator Flats

Geoffrey Urquhart

- 650 head
- Breeding enterprise
- 2,235 hectares
- 60km N Rockhampton



Learning new grazing methods through Reef Trust means Geoffrey Urquhart can draw on a knowledgeable support team and a network of local graziers who can help him make the most of his move from brigalow country to the coast.

Geoffrey Urquhart took up Alligator Flats, a 2,235 hectare grazing property about 19km north of Yaamba, just two short years ago. Although he has been grazing further west in brigalow country for over 15 years, he is keen to access local knowledge to help him make the most of his new property. In his own words, he has “a list as long as my arm” of things he would like to learn, so participating in Reef Trust was an opportunity he was not about to pass up.

“I’m new to the area and I don’t know a lot about the coast because I come from brigalow country,” he said. “I don’t think I’ll make it [Alligator Flats] as good as the brigalow country but I think I can make it a lot better than what it is already. There’s certainly miles and miles of room for improvement here. I was up for a challenge so I said ‘righto.’”

As Alligator Flats is so near to the Fitzroy River, his lower paddocks are prone to flooding, meaning he must move his cattle to higher ground until the flood waters recede. This presents challenges in ensuring there is enough available fodder and cattle don’t over-graze the higher paddocks.

“Alligator Flats has got a fair bit of flood-prone country that runs straight into the Fitzroy, so it’s an area that you need to know a bit about, and know how to manage.”

Geoffrey is keen to learn everything he can to make sure his grazing enterprise is sustainable and profitable, and keeping an open mind about new techniques is crucial to improving his operations.

“I’ve learned that I don’t know everything,” he said.

Annandale

Warren & Elaine Neilson

- 2,500 head
- Breeding enterprise
- 12,158 hectares
- 40km E Moranbah



Together with husband Warren, Elaine Neilson runs Annandale a 12,158 hectare commercial cattle property 60km south-west of Nebo. They have been on the property for almost 50 years and despite their longevity in the grazing industry, they still believe they have plenty to learn.

“I have been involved with FBA for many years, firstly through Nebo Broadsound Landcare Group,” said Elaine. “I have always tried to attend any workshops being conducted, and my involvement with Reef Trust was initiated from these workshops.”

A more productive and environmentally sustainable enterprise are her main aims.

“I am happy to be involved as I see the importance of managing what happens on our land, and anything we can learn can only be beneficial in this area.”

Elaine and Warren Neilson hope their involvement with the Reef Trust program will ensure a productive and sustainable future for Annandale.

Calliweera

Nathan Warnock

- 500 head
- Breeding enterprise
- 3,800 hectares
- 50km NW Rockhampton



Despite being a fifth-generation grazer, Nathan Warnock believes there's always something new to learn to improve the profitability of his business.

Nathan Warnock is a fifth-generation grazer and runs Calliweera, about 50km north-west of Rockhampton. Although he comes from a long line of successful graziers, he believes there is always something new to learn and opportunity for improvement.

"I reckon you can improve on anything, and you should always be striving to make it a little bit better," Nathan said.

"I love going to workshops and learning different things. By attending the Grazing BMP workshops I've been able to learn about new tools and see how my business compares to others in the industry."

Through his involvement in the grazing industry, Nathan knows a lot of other graziers and is willing to listen to what they have to share. "There are a lot of people willing to share their ideas and what they do, so you can learn from other people's mistakes," he said.

Over time, Nathan is hoping to apply new techniques that will improve the profitability of his beef breeding enterprise. However, the opportunity to learn new skills by accessing specialised training was a big drawcard.

"The main reason I jumped on board was because I could see the benefit in learning new things to improve my business for the long term," he said.

Wongabray

Kirstie and Mitchell Olive

- 1,000 head
- Commercial breeding and finishing enterprise
- 3,080 hectares
- 160km NE Rockhampton



Mitchel and Kirstie Olive are working to make sure their property is both sustainable and profitable for their children's future.

Mitchell and Kirstie Olive began managing Wongabray, a breeding and finishing property about 160km north-east of Rockhampton, in 2011. They believe there is always something to learn about increasing sustainability.

"We hope to further our grazing management knowledge and capacity to improve our business practices and our land management practices. Hopefully it will have a financial and sustainable benefit for our business and our family in the long term," Kirstie said.

"We're so close to the Reef. We're probably only 15km off the coast and with quite fragile

soils, so it's always in the back of our mind to manage the land most appropriately, and try not to cause any further damage to the Reef."

Mitchell and Kirstie are working towards being the very best land managers they can be.

"We've been given a really great opportunity to work on the land," Kirstie said. "There's a quote by an old American colonel, Eli Lilly, who said 'take what you find here and make it better and better'. So that's what we hope to do — take this wonderful opportunity we've been given and make it better, so our children might one day have the same opportunity to return to the land."



GET IN TOUCH

FBA provides access to resources and equips you with the knowledge and skills to help you run a more productive, profitable and sustainable business. A broad range of workshops including Grazing Best Management Practices, field days, one-on-one support and much more are offered throughout the year. Please contact our team to learn more about the support available to you or visit our website.

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