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Demonstrating best practices

Graziers lead by example through proactive planning

Being able to easily demonstrate that they are managing their grazing enterprise in a way that protects the environment, ensures their cattle are healthy and meets workplace health and safety obligations was a driving factor for Richard and Adele Acton's decision to complete Grazing Best Management Practice (Grazing BMP) and become Accredited Producers.

Richard and Adele run Ambleside Droughtmasters, a commercial and stud beef cattle operation over two properties, Ambleside just south of Biloela and Bardia, approximately 40 kilometres from Banana. Having recently completed the five Grazing BMP modules, the Actons are now taking the next step after accessing one-on-one support.

"It was basically just going through the full process to ensure we got the full value out of it," Adele said of their decision to become accredited. "The main reason we are looking to go through the Grazing BMP audit process is to be proactive in meeting our environmental and social responsibilities for our business.

"The live export saga and the proposed vegetation management legislation changes are prime examples of the critical need for the grazing industry to show that we do take our responsibilities seriously and are incorporating them into our business," she said.

Help to prepare

A one-on-one property visit from FBA Grazing Land Management Officer Johnelle Stevens was offered by Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA) through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme to help the Actons prepare for their accreditation audit.

"The one-on-one property visits help graziers implement the things they've learnt through the Grazing BMP modules and get them ready for accreditation," said Johnelle. "We start the visit at the kitchen table by mapping out their action plan to help them meet or exceed the different standards that are identified in Grazing BMP," she said.

"From there, we then go out into the paddocks for land condition assessments, forage budgeting, pasture utilisation rates and plant identification."

Johnelle said the property visit allows a full day of dedicated support and covers all aspects of each grazier's enterprise. "We also set up monitoring points to evaluate pasture and track grazing management. All this will help the Actons make decisions earlier and be proactive about demonstrating their enterprise's commitment to best practice within the industry."

Action planning

Adele and Richard spent a significant amount of time to prepare for the property visit to ensure they got the most value out of it. "Adele spent about five days in the office, just collecting and getting everything together," said Richard. "We had some processes already in place that helped us through the audit. We had the basics but we had to fine tune it. Developing documentation to support our evidence, that was the biggest thing."

Adele said she and Richard had previously discussed their goals and overall property plan, but admits they did not have a written action plan in place until preparing for the Grazing BMP audit and the one-on-one property visit helped them formalise their plan.

"We had a lot of goals and actions that we'd talk about and were floating around in the air, but the process of getting it down has organised us a little bit more, or got us on the same page in terms of when and how we're going to get those things done," she said.

"The one-on-one property visit gave us the direction, or what was required, for the evidence to fulfil the question," added Richard.



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Tools and support

The biggest strength of Grazing BMP, according to the Actons, is the tools and support that are available to help them achieve their business goals.

“We were getting bogged down in the everyday demands of balancing family needs, off-farm work and our cattle operation and couldn’t see whether we were progressing our goals or not,” said Adele. “Grazing BMP gave us some easy tools to use to step back and plan out and prioritise our goals and activities, and to measure our effectiveness in working toward these goals.

“We’re dealing with such a diverse range of issues that all the tools and all the assistance that you can get to pull it all together and manage it, is a lot of help.”

Richard also believes that increasing their support network and accessing additional support such as the one-on-one property visit has also been a huge benefit of the program. “All that advice and getting to know what is available outside of our circle, that can help us in the decision making: like mapping and any of the other programs that have been mentioned to us,” he said.



Developing an action plan through Grazing BMP means Richard and Adele Acton can make decisions that will benefit their operations as well as the environment into the future.

Leading by example

Proactively planning ahead is important to the Actons. “As a business, we want to have flexibility in deciding our future so that we can continue to be creative and innovative in the ways we improve production,” said Adele.

“We have to try and keep our standards up and lead by example. But we’ve got to have evidence that our efforts are working well. If we don’t have that evidence then we’re never going to be able to prove to people that what we do does work.

“We want people to have confidence in what we do.”



Grazing BMP has helped Richard and Adele Acton develop a profitable and sustainable future for their grazing enterprise.

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