



Case Study: Boonal Downs

Queensland Regional NRM Investment Program

Boonal Downs is a 2,273ha property north of Capella on Magenta Creek. The mixed enterprise cropping and cattle property is home to Andrew and Leonie DeBonis. Andrew works in the mines as well as on the property, with their adult children and contractors also providing occasional labour.

BACKGROUND

Boonal Downs is a mix of open downs and mountainous Coolibah woodland. Since the DeBonis settled at the property in 2014, they have focused on the implementation of a conservative stocking rate and a rotational grazing system with the clear objective of increasing ground cover. Historically on the property, low ground cover has contributed to erosion and soil loss, particularly as cattle water and graze on approximately 60ha of the riparian zone along Magenta Creek. Cattle access to Magenta Creek has resulted in increased sediment loss and stock bogging in waterholes.



(rotational grazing system) allowing faster recovery, increased ground cover and moisture retention. A rotational grazing system was implemented early in the DeBonis' ownership of Boonal Downs. As a result, they are witnessing improvements in ground cover and a reduction in erosion. Fencing and off-stream water points at Magenta Creek have proven vital in the integration of this area in the overall grazing system and management of the riparian zone.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The next step for Boonal Downs is investigating the installation of a bore to supply water to the new tank and trough, instead of accessing the existing dam.

This will progress water infrastructure and, therefore, drought resilience. Detailed mapping assistance, including the location of water and cropping areas, will support future plans for the property. Andrew and Leonie were informed of the project through CHRRUP and attribute the realisation of their action plan to the project and funding support.

OPPORTUNITIES

The DeBonis have observed improvements to ground cover and erosion since implementing the rotational grazing system. This regeneration highlighted the need to take further action in protecting the area around Magenta Creek in Cultivation Paddock 3, previously used for both cropping and grazing. To assist in implementing this plan, the DeBonis family accessed funding from Fitzroy Basin Association Inc. (FBA) under the Queensland Regional NRM Investment Program. This project provided a 50% dollar contribution, allowing Magenta Creek to be fenced off from the rest of Cultivation 3 Paddock, providing an off-stream water point, fed from a dam in a nearby paddock. Restricting access to the riparian zone has allowed the DeBonis to spell this area to improve ground cover, reduce erosion and sediment loss. The risk of cattle being bogged has also been eliminated. Installation of fencing and an off-stream water point will also strengthen Boonal Downs' resilience in recurring times of drought. This will be achieved by cattle accessing the riparian area only for short periods

“The project gave us the momentum to start and a timeframe to stick to, so we were keen to be involved”. **Andrew DeBonis**

Completion of fencing and water installation around the demands of sowing chickpeas has been a challenge for the finalization of their project, yet they are looking forward to seeing the widespread results of improved grazing practices. The landholders hope maintaining a rotational grazing system and executing the best management of the area along Magenta Creek will be sustainable, to enjoy a long and prosperous future at Boonal Downs.