



Our country. Our future.



Improving productivity

Bringing rotational grazing goal to fruition

When Kellie Humble's father Rob Jenkinson tragically lost his life while retrieving cattle from a neighbouring paddock, it could have also meant the end of his improvement plans for Radleigh, the property he owned with wife Julie.

Instead, Kellie and her husband Glen are continuing his legacy by taking over Radleigh's management. Together with Julie, they are implementing Rob's plans for the 6028 hectare cattle property, 12 kilometres south-west of Ubobo.

Rob had started the Grazing Best Management Practices (Grazing BMP) program just prior to his death in 2013. He was looking into options for how he could reduce his herd size but still maintain his profitability.

When Kellie and Glen arrived at Radleigh to help manage the property alongside her mum, Kellie also became involved in Grazing BMP. "It was really good to pick up on. We'd had our own ideas, because Glen had done rotational grazing before we'd come here. We'd assessed the grass, and thought 'how are we going to improve everything?'" Kellie said.

Glen's experiences with rotational grazing helped turn the property around. "He learned a lot about the grass size—it's not just how much water you have but how much grass you have for maintaining the cattle for the whole year," Kellie said.

Over-grazing and erosion

Radleigh contains mountainous country, with rocky hills and not many flat areas; however, the cattle were preferentially grazing those flats – resulting in over-grazed pasture.

"Couch was the only thing growing and we had no length to the grass. The grass was short and they just continued to eat the same flats. It was relatively easy mustering because they were always in the same spot, eating the same grass," Kellie said.

"Radleigh was run as one paddock when we purchased it," said Kellie's mum Julie. "As a consequence, some areas were very degraded and rundown, and over-grazing and erosion were major problems."

"We've got to protect the Reef and to us, tourism is actually really important, even though it's a completely different thing to grazing. The whole country survives around that Reef. Backpackers come, they pay money to go and see that Reef."

Smaller paddocks equal more grass

With the support of Fitzroy Basin Association Inc. and Capricornia Catchments through funding from the Australian Government's Reef Programme, Kellie, Glen and Julie began to split the large paddock into smaller paddocks, and spell the areas that were most degraded. Kellie says their long-term plan is to spell each smaller paddock for a full year.

"Because it's been over-grazed for a long, long time, it's taking a longer time to recover. Of course, it hasn't had as much rain as it really should have," Kellie said. Despite the lack of sufficient rain, Kellie has seen significant improvement in ground cover since the project was completed in November 2015.

"There's now grass cover over the top of dam banks. We've never had that before, and that's within six months, without the proper rainfall."

"When we went and had a look around, it was amazing the difference this year. And where the creek runs, there's still grass and yes, there is still some hanging over and you can see root systems, but the grass is still there. It's held and it didn't wash away. It's been a big improvement."



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Power to choose

Their hard work is paying off in other ways too, with their project receiving the award for Best Project in the Boyne-Calliope Region by Capricornia Catchments. In speaking about their experiences, Julie shared that participating in the project has had wider benefits on their business.

"Improved pastures have led to an improved product. Better feed equals better cattle. This has given us greater power to choose our markets, greater power to take advantage of specific niches and greater power to hold onto stock just because there is extra pasture," Julie said.

Being able to choose markets and hold on to cattle during dry times ensures that their cattle are able to fetch good prices, which increases profitability. This means Kellie, Glen and Julie are able to run fewer cattle but maintain their profits.

"We want fat cows, year round," Kellie said. "Our goal is to have long-term feed and to be able to send cattle when the market's picked up. We want to be able to say, 'right, we've got fat cattle throughout the whole property.'"



Protecting Radleigh's waterways is vital to ensuring a healthy Reef, as well as healthy profits, according to Kellie Humble.

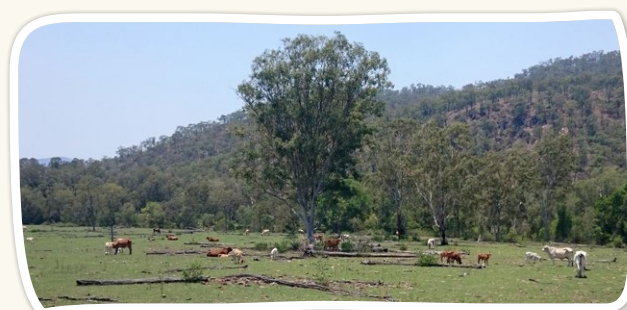
Protecting water quality and the Reef

It's not all about profits though. Protecting their waterways and looking after the Great Barrier Reef is a high priority, too.

"By fencing off the riparian areas and with the creek banks and pasture soils being protected by extra coverage, erosion is prevented or greatly reduced, which in turn helps to preserve the ecosystem from our property right out to the Reef," Julie said.

Kellie adds, "We've got to protect the Reef and to us, tourism is actually really important, even though it's a completely different thing to grazing. The whole country survives around that Reef. Backpackers come, they pay money to go and see that Reef."

"They don't pay money to go and see a farm. I believe that the Reef is an essential part to the Australian economy, full stop."



Rotational grazing has improved groundcover on Radleigh, helping ensure fat, healthy cattle.



Glen Humble is using his previous experience with rotational grazing to help improve land management on Radleigh.

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