



*Our country, Our future.*



## Riparian fencing

### Maximising grazing areas by using smaller paddocks

*It might seem like a simple change, but by installing riparian fencing and creating smaller paddocks that are segregated according to land type, grazier Jim Curran and his wife Janet are able to manage their herd better and maximise the use of previously under-used pasture. And they are encouraging others to do the same.*

The Currans run Warwick Park, a 10,140 hectare grazing property about 10 kilometres north of Middlemount. Jim grew up on the property, having moved there with his parents in 1975, and taking over ownership at the beginning of 2015. "There's no better place to be," he said, adding that he plans to hand the property down to his four girls in the future.

It should be no surprise then, that Jim and Janet are managing their property to ensure a long-term, sustainable and profitable business for themselves and their family. They had always planned to improve their grazing practices by preventing cattle accessing their property's creeks, and separating land types; however, as Jim says, that was a long-term plan.

In 2012 though, Jim heard about funding opportunities supported by FBA through the Australian Government's Reef Programme (formerly known as Reef Rescue).

Suddenly, it was possible to complete their seven-year plan to install riparian fencing and create smaller paddocks within a few months. With the help of Three Rivers Sub Region (now known as Capricornia Catchments), Jim has since secured funding for two projects through the Australian Government's Reef Programme. His first project was completed in 2013, which resulted in over 22 kilometres of fencing, and 11 kilometres of poly pipe to supply water to four off-stream watering points. Jim completed his second project in June 2015, installing almost 7 kilometres of riparian fencing, and he has additional riparian fencing projects planned.

Prior to the projects, cattle were preferentially grazing the paddock's open areas. This was decreasing the availability of palatable pasture species, leading to declines in ground cover and increasing weed infestation.



*By building smaller paddocks, and implementing rotational grazing techniques, Jim and Janet Curran have been able to better manage their herd and maximise their assets by ensuring their cattle graze previously under-used pasture.*

Firstly, he fenced the heavier black soils in the paddocks and separated them from property's forested areas. By fencing the paddocks to land type, Jim was able to better control grazing. "I can look after my forest country better. I usually graze it during winter and let it come back over the wet season," he said.

Next, Jim installed fencing along Rolf Creek, which runs through the middle of the property, as cattle would preferentially graze the sweeter grasses in the riparian area, which had resulted in erosion, a decline in land condition and a subsequent increase in weed infestation. "I installed fencing along the creek system, so the cattle can't keep walking across the creek all the time. And I can keep a bit more grass on top of the creek bank so it doesn't erode when it floods," he said.



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By fencing the creek, he has also been able to encourage cattle to graze elsewhere, thus protecting its banks from erosion and improving its water quality. After the project was finished, the results were immediate. "We had a lot more water in our paddocks, so we weren't walking so far to water them. Fencing made it a lot better for mustering and keeping cattle spread out where you want them spread," he said.

For Jim, the funding assistance was about more than just improving the water quality in his creeks, and reducing erosion and impacts on the reef. "It's not just about the creek system, it's about everything like healthier grass, weed management, it's all things rolled into one, really," he said.

Jim says that the projects' development was very easy and that the funding assistance had resulted in better management practices. "It was so easy. They're not there to tell you what to do, they're just there to help you do what you want to do with your place."

"It wasn't someone coming and saying 'do it this way,' or 'do it that way,'" he said. "It was a lot easier than I thought and not daunting in any way."

Jim says that others should also consider working with FBA and Capricornia Catchments to improve their practices and help protect the reef.



*Installing fencing to separate land types has made a big difference to the way the Currans manage their Middlemount property, Warwick Park.*



*Jim and Janet are managing Warwick Park with the long-term future in mind, so they can pass on a sustainable and profitable business to their four girls.*

***"Don't be scared of going to FBA and doing it. It wasn't like I thought it was going to be. I'm glad I did go there now, otherwise I would've missed out on so much stuff."***