Gladstone Conservation Council

NATURE'S WAY Version 2 – Jan 23

By Brent Lashford, Peter Van Beek

From 30 steers in 2000 to 90 in 2020
with soils and pasture still improving.

This is the story of Brent Lashford 's change to regenerative grazing, starting in 2000.

Brent bought his property in the Machine Creek area behind Mt Larcom, Qld, 25 years ago, after looking around for 18 months. That included getting to know and learning from people like Peter Andrews and others who have pioneered natural approaches to landscape and farm management. By adopting their approach, this year he was the last to experience the drought and the first to come out of it. His paddocks recovered instantly when it finally rained.

The 400-acre property is subdivided into 27 paddocks. Over the years, starting in 1998/9, Brent ripped each paddock once, to break the plough pans. He used a D6 and specially adapted tines that shatter the plough pan with little disturbance of the vegetation.

The ripping was done on the contour, using a laser level with toilet paper as markers to guide the driver. This spreads the water as well as breaking the plough pans and thus enables much faster drainage of surface water. As a result, run-off from his property is much reduced as he keeps most of the rain where it falls.

The local Landcare group viewing the results of working with nature, rather than against it.

He built dams in each paddock where that was practical and installed watering points in the other paddocks. He also built weirs in gullies to hold back more run-off water so it can seep sideways into the adjacent soils.

He also aims to increase pasture diversity, ideally 20 – 40 different grass, legume and other species. He seeds additional species with a disc seeder. In wet areas he planted Pangola grass through runners, as this grass has no fertile seed. Having enough diversity meant that when his blue-grass suffered from die-back, the pasture as a whole did not reduce as other species took over.

Brent fattens only steers which means he can adjust stocking rates a bit easier than with breeding animals. The stock is rotated through many paddocks and stays in one paddock for a limited time. Thus, the pastures are being cropped, rather than grazed into the ground.

That means that each plant can recover far quicker and also has more time to put more carbon into the soil. Nature has done carbon capturing and storage via plants for billions of years and does it for free.

The carrying capacity of his property has steadily increased over the years. He can now carry up to 90 steers. When he bought the place, it could only carry about 30.

A walk through the paddocks demonstrated the results of working with nature, rather than against it. Thank you, Brent, for your talk and the walk around your sheds and paddocks.

Peter & Brent

This a very good example of management changes to favour soil biology increases, and hence production and returns to the farmer. The short grazing and long regrowth times allow all pasture species to survive and produce seed. During one visit, observation showed over 10 plant species per square metre.
Trevor