



# FENCING FOR ROTATIONAL GRAZING

## The Brauers

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### BACKGROUND / ISSUE

Gordon and Merrill Brauer have been farming in the Burnett Mary region since 1985. Their sons Cameron and Dale work alongside them on the farm and as a family unit they work together in achieving their goals.

Part of the Brauers' property management approach has been to install new fencing to subdivide larger paddocks. Under this system, paddocks are more easily managed and provided to opportunity to rest during extended dry periods.

### THE SOLUTION

The Brauers were able to erect 3.7kms of fencing through funding support provided by the Burnett Mary Regional Group's (BMRG), 'Better Beef for the Reef' project. The installation of new fencing to subdivide one of their paddocks into four separate paddocks has allowed them to use these in rotation.

The Brauers were careful to position the new fences along ridgelines, avoiding crossing drainage lines where possible. An area along Gin Gin Creek was fenced off to ensure stock could be excluded from vulnerable areas, reducing erosion risk.

## DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The following 'best practice' principles regarding fencing were implemented by the Brauers in the design and construction of this project:

- Positioning fences to run along ridges avoids creating undue erosion as water will run on either side of the fence with no opportunity to build up volume or velocity. Ridgelines are usually clearer of vegetation and made of harder, less erosive material than surrounding country. This makes them suitable for tracks, allowing access and maintenance to the fence. Given that cattle tend to follow fence lines, fences can be particularly vulnerable to erosion as the cattle pads direct and concentrate overland water flow.
- As with vehicle tracks, whoa boys were constructed where necessary along fence lines, based on the slope and erosivity of the soil, to avoid concentrating water.
- Fences designed to minimise crossing over drainage lines. Depending on their position within the catchment, fences that cross drainage lines are at increased risk of damage during wet seasons and flood events. It can also make maintenance and replacement challenging. Through suitable planning these can be kept to a minimum.
- Paddocks should be fenced according to land type. This allows the fenced paddocks to be managed to their respective carrying and production capacity. Grazing pressure can be more evenly distributed because pasture quality and stock access is more consistent across the land type. In the Brauers' case, the proportion of the most productive land type - Blue gums on alluvial soils - was too small to warrant fencing separately from the less productive Ironbark and Spotted gum ridges. The tendency for cattle to over-utilise the more palatable country can be managed through other practices such as wet-season spelling.
- Matching the stocking rate to the expected carrying capacity of the paddock will help to maintain, monitor and manage current improve land condition and ensure sustainable productivity.
- Photo monitoring points can be installed to monitor trends in land condition. Capturing a benchmark when implementing new management techniques such as rotational grazing can be useful to measure its effect.



Completed fence line.

## PROJECT BENEFITS

Paddock subdivision has benefited the Brauers' operation by increasing their options for managing cattle and pastures. Multiple paddocks has also allowed a more strategic approach to weed management by designating paddocks for treatment to focus effort. With the additional fencing, cattle can be excluded from paddocks while weed treatment takes place.

Multiple paddocks also facilitate a change from continuous grazing to a rotational system and provide the opportunity to spell one paddock over the wet season in rotation.

Rotational grazing focuses on the ability to graze the plant at the optimal phase of growth. Cattle can be moved quickly between paddocks in the growing season, reducing the pasture's tendency to go to seed and senesce or go 'rank'.

This encourages the pasture to remain in phase 2 where there quality and yield intersect at their optimum.

Avoiding continuous stocking for long periods reduces the level of preferential grazing. This provides the 3P (productive, palatable and perennial) grasses a chance to recover and at times, establish, making a more productive pasture overall.

When cattle are moved out of the paddock, the pasture receives a rest period, allowing grazed plants to rebuild their root reserves, encouraging nutrient cycling and contribute to better soil health.

*"A well-designed rotational grazing system can also prevent uneven grazing across the paddock."* (Meat and Livestock Australia, 2019).



## RESULTS

This project has provided a starting point for future infrastructure and management changes on the Brauers' property. Further installation of new water sources and additional fencing will continue to even out grazing pressure.

Implementing a rotational grazing system has maximised the benefits of the new infrastructure and overtime, will improve pasture density and quality.



The Better Beef for the Reef project is funded through the Queensland Government Reef Water Quality Program and is delivered by the Burnett Mary Regional Group.

Special thanks to Gordon and Merrill Brauer for their commitment to this project.



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