



Renovating pastures in the South West slopes

Background

Maddelin and Sebastian Berg took over Rosewood from Maddelin's grandparents in 2010. The property had a limited history of pasture improvement, depleted soils (low phosphorus, potassium, magnesium and pH), and there was a significant reliance on feeding hay and silage to fill winter feed gaps. The Bergs aim was to develop a system less reliant on feeding silage.

Solutions

The Bergs prioritised a program of paddock regeneration with the worst paddocks addressed first. Their general approach includes:

- Subdivision of larger (40–50 ha) paddocks for more effective grazing management.
- Summer fallowing with weed control.
- Oats and ryegrass crops for winter grazing and baling.
- Lime applications (2.5–3 t/ha) incorporated or top-dressed into the soil.
- Strategic use of dolomite and fertiliser.
- Annual maintenance with single superphosphate and lime as needed.
- Sowing improved pasture mixes (phalaris, perennial ryegrass, sub clover).
- Ongoing weed and pest management.



Farm Snapshot

Owners: Maddelin and Sebastian Berg

Location: Rosewood, New South Wales

Farm size: 364 ha

Enterprise: mixed-beef and sheep



Challenges

- **Knowledge gap:** Starting with limited experience and agronomic support. Expense: Pasture renovation costs, along with machinery investments.
- **Contractor availability:** Delays in securing spreading and baling services.
- **Weather:** Wet conditions hindering weed management and full paddock use.
- **Weed control:** Dealing with persistent weeds like silver grass and fog grass.

Benefits

- **Feed improvement:** Marked increase in winter feed availability and overall feed quality.
- **Pasture utilisation:** Smaller paddocks (20–25 ha) allow for better grazing management and less wastage.
- **Resilience:** Pastures recover more quickly after controlled grazing.
- **Increased capacity:** Able to support a significantly larger herd (from 80 breeders to 250 breeders + replacements).

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Future

The Berg's plan to continue their paddock renovation program. They will continue to work with their agronomist to determine targeted fertiliser and lime applications for maintaining optimal soil health and supporting their resilient and productive pastures.

Lessons learnt

Investment and expert advice payoff

Whilst costly, the transition to improving pastures has resulted in increased productivity and carrying capacity. Professional advice has supported development of an effective renovation plan.

Patience and flexibility

Pasture renovation is a multi-year process. The systematic, phased approach, albeit met with weather setbacks and contractor delays, demonstrates that long-term improvements require sustained effort.

Soil health and weed control is paramount

This case emphasises the vital role of addressing soil deficiencies and tackling invasive weeds. Additional fertiliser applications and lime have created productive pastures and continuous management is the focus for weed control.

For more information

Find out more about Holbrook Landcare Network's involvement in the FDF Resilient Pastures project.

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