



Decisive early action turns bare ground into stable, productive paddocks

- Don Bradshaw, the Manager of 'Jutomara Park' (north Badgingarra) observed there was a perfect 'low groundcover' storm developing in the first few months of 2021 and acted decisively to address the emerging issues. He turned paddocks with low groundcover which if left untreated would have lost valuable topsoil and provided little or no grazing value into stable, highly productive pastures.



A stable paddock with good groundcover and excellent pasture regeneration (~450 seedlings/m²) following 65mm in late March to early April (Photo taken 21st April '22)

PLANS FOR 2022

- Defer grazing of these paddocks in Autumn until after the break of season.
- Allow pasture to re-establish from the seed bank and cereal seed on the ground.
- Consider subdividing main paddocks to facilitate rotational grazing.

BACKGROUND

'Jutomara Park' is a grazing operation which only runs cattle, predominantly station cattle brought down from Yanrey Station near Exmouth. Cattle numbers on the property fluctuate depending on the seasonal conditions on the station.

The landforms and soil types are typical of the north Badgingarra area with undulating hills with a range of soil types including pale and yellow deep sands and shallow gravel over duricrust. The affected paddocks had a pale sand to a depth of 80+cm.

The property has a considerable area of perennial grass-based pastures and an ongoing program to sow perennial grasses each year (~200ha/year).

THE PROBLEM

Don recalled a series of events over the last two years. He observed that cutworm caused pasture loss in 2020, at a time when they were carrying high stock numbers. In February 2021, a large rainfall event caused some water erosion*. The bare ground was then subject to wind erosion from the remnants of Cyclone Seroja and other strong wind events. Subsequently, grasshoppers (~12/m²) were damaging the emerging annual pastures.

KEY ACTIONS TAKEN

Don received timely advice from Simon Brockman who advised of his nearby property having a similar problem. This advice triggered Don's immediate response.

Action One

Annual pasture paddocks or areas within paddocks with low or no groundcover were boom sprayed with insecticide and sown into cereal-pasture mix.

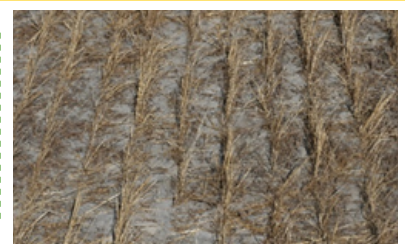
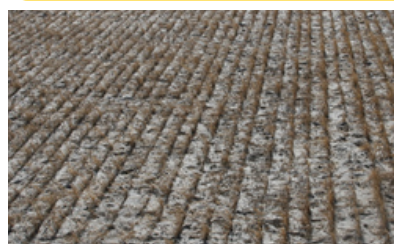
Action Two

330ha were sown to a mix of oats (50kg/ha), annual ryegrass (12kg/ha), clover (0.8kg/ha) and French serradella (3kg/ha) in June 2021 and another 70ha showing marginal stress sown with Grant Bain's perennial mix in August 2021.

Action Three

Area subject to water erosion filled in and sown. Contouring and diversions formed to prevent further erosion. JennEll mister used to spray mist any sightings of grasshoppers, mostly areas surrounding the sown paddocks.

Generally, there was a good germination and very good groundcover. These paddocks were productive over the growing season and then rotationally grazed over the 2021/22 summer.



The standing oat stubble and ryegrass ensured stable paddocks over the dry Summer and into Autumn(photo taken in early March '22 prior to any rainfall)

*Most probably also a large false break including loss of any sub clover present.