

Planning stock containment areas

Through the Northern Victorian Grain & Graze 2 program, BCG ran a livestock health, nutrition and stock containment areas forum at Donald in June 2011. The forum aimed to increase farmers' knowledge and skills in livestock management, nutrition, animal health, marketing and logistics, with a particular focus on the strategic use of stock containment management practices which can help prevent soil health degradation.

Jenni Bryan attended the forum and was one of four farmers who successfully applied for a grant to receive one-on-one support from a livestock industry specialist to increase her skills in productive and profitable stock containment.

Location: Barnadown

Livestock enterprise: Stud Dorper

Mean annual rainfall: 450mm

Soil: sandy loam

Jenni Bryan, who farms at Barnadown near Bendigo with her husband Garry, considers herself a novice farmer, having bought the remnants of a small Doper stud in 2010.

The Bryans were keen to replace their 'trial and error' approach to farming with a more knowledgeable and informed set of practices. This includes an improved understanding of the nutritional demands of pregnant ewes as well as the different nutritional requirements for grain-fed contained sheep.

The Bryans plan to intensively feed about 600 lambs per year and recognise the need to establish stock containment areas for two mobs for three months each year, organised around stud joining and lambing times.

The original plan was to build a stock containment area on the side of a hill over two paddocks joined by a gate that could be



left open so sheep could move between the paddocks. The containment area was to be located at the rear of the property heading down to the Campaspe River floodplain, which provides some shade.

Key learning

Jenni said field days have been invaluable for hearing from other farmers about their experiences. Following the forum at Donald,

she received a site visit from industry specialist, Hamish Dickson, who provided good advice for the stock containment area design.

"As a consequence of this site visit, we spent a lot of time re-thinking the stock containment design," Jenni said.

"The key factors in site selection were proximity to the shearing shed, the slope of the land, and drainage. We were advised that



proximity to the river must be managed and to ensure that a minimum separation distance of 200 metres was maintained.

“Runoff from the site should not be allowed to contaminate the river.”

A minimum of two feeders per pen was recommended to ensure that all ewes and lambs have access to grain and to reduce issues associated with dominant animals.

If significant numbers of sheep are to be fed and/or the facility is to be used for production purposes (such as a feedlot rather than a containment area), the council should be consulted to determine if any requirements exist relating to site selection and construction before any further development.

“It was definitely worth seeking professional help to plan our stock containment area,” Jenni said.

“Having an experienced person work through the design with us has helped a great deal, and saved us time and money in the long-run.”

The Bryans also received information about grain and graze options.

“We’d been looking at a mixed feed palette, as we thought this was the best way to meet nutrition requirements,” Jenni said.

“However, we were advised to keep it simple. For example we could separate feeds of oats, lupins and beans with good quality hay. This is also a lower cost option.”

Jenni said she learnt that it wasn’t necessary to mix the feed to enable sheep to get the right nutrition.

“They are self-selectors, so the feed can be separated – they’ll go to the feed they need to get the nutrition they require,” she said.



An example of a shade structure and feeding trough set up in a livestock containment area.

Photograph courtesy of B. Lawson, SA MDB Board.

In terms of water, the supply needs to be clean and cool.

“We need to be diligent about keeping the troughs clean,” Jenni said.

“We originally bought a series of 900 litre troughs, but may now change to smaller troughs so that water is refreshed more often.”

Next steps

According to Jenni Bryan, the advice received was very timely in terms of their long-term planning.

“We appreciate that we received this information before we built our stock containment area,” she said.

“It’s probably set us back 12 months, but will save us money in the long-run because we now have the right site and design, and won’t have to make major changes at a later stage.”

“ *Having an experienced person work through the design with us has helped a great deal, and saved us time and money in the long-run.* ”

Find out more

For further information about the Northern Victoria Grain & Graze 2 program, including opportunities to get involved, contact:

BCG

Phone (03) 5492 2787, www.bcg.org.au

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www.northernvictoria.grainandgraze2.com.au

For further information on stock containment management and soil health contact **Mallee Catchment Management Authority** at: www.malleecma.vic.gov.au