

Weather Vale Pasture Program

"Control and Management of African Love Grass"

Overview

The Weather Vale pasture program incorporates a system of managed grazing, soil monitoring, strategic fertilizer use and invasive weed control, which leads to sustainable, productive and diverse pasture of both native and introduced species. Reduced weed (or non-desirable plants) infestations, particularly African Love Grass results in more diverse, healthier and stable plant population.

Soil health is improved because of deep rooted plants and increased soil organic matter. The risk of soil erosion is minimal because no ploughing takes place and not less than 90% groundcover (usually 100%) is maintained all times. Rainfall use efficiency is enhanced and run off is reduced.

Background

Property Description

"Weather Vale" is a 136 hectare granite property located approximately 10km east of Glen Innes. The property is owned by Jim and Yvonne Benton. The property is sub divided into 20 paddocks ranging in size from 3 to 13ha. The property is stocked principally with young cattle from April to January each year and is lightly stocked from January to April to allow for pasture to build up and seed set.

Pasture History

"Weather Vale" has been fertilised with single superphosphate for the last 30 years and pasture establishment until 2002 followed traditional methods. The results were, at best, just satisfactory. Invasive weeds, particularly African Love Grass were becoming dominant.

In early 2002 heavy rains on newly ploughed ground resulted in severe soil erosion and the complete failure of new pasture in a couple of paddocks. A conscious decision was made to discontinue traditional ploughing methods.

Today's Pasture Management

In 2005, spot spraying for ALG was commenced and in the autumn of 2006, a Swingwiper was purchased. Following various trials and observations, a managed grazing and wiping system was developed. In general the current system is as follows:

1. Cattle are grazed rotationally in one mob (usually 150 -200 head) for 3 to 4 days per paddock eating down quality pasture both native and introduced.
2. Selected paddocks are wiped with a Swingwiper during the weed growing season using glyphosate. The rate of chemicals applied varies according to the ALG height and density. Only target species have chemicals applied to them as the desirable pasture has been eaten.
3. The paddock is spelled for 6 to 10 weeks depending on the season. This allows grazed paddocks to grow, develop root systems and set seed. New pasture seedlings can germinate in the dead mulch.
4. Selected paddocks are top dressed with perennial pasture seed, fertilised and harrowed. If deemed suitable, these paddocks may be omitted from grazing rotation to encourage pasture seed set and seedling establishment.

Between the summer of 2006/07 and 2007/08 12 20-litre drums of glyphosate have been used and 50 hectares treated. The average chemical use per hectare is 4.8 litres.



Native and introduced grasses and legume regenerating through wiped dead African lovegrass tussocks. The paddock to the right of the picture is untreated.

GLENRAC
Tel: 02 6732 3443
Fax: 02 6732 6628

PO BOX 660, Glen Innes, NSW. 2370
Email: glenrac@glenrac.org.au
web: www.glenrac.org.au

Jim & Yvonne Benton
Weather Vale
Gwydir Highway
Tel: 02 6732 3935
GLEN INNES NSW 2370

This project supported by:



Control and management of African lovegrass

Paddock - Horse - area - 2 ha - 5 acres

Date	Rate	Treatment	Glyphosate Qty
14 th Oct 03	50:1	Multiple Pass	1.0
1 st Feb 07	50:1	Multiple Pass	1.0
8 th april 07	50:1	Multiple Pass	1.6
			Total 3.6 litres



October 2006



April 2007

GLENRAC
Tel: 02 6732 3443
Fax: 02 6732 6628

PO BOX 660, Glen Innes, NSW. 2370
Email: glenrac@glenrac.org.au
web: www.glenrac.org.au

This project supported by:

