

Identifying the best “bang for the buck”: comparing your development options

Attending the GLM course helped AAco staff in the Victoria River District to improve property development plans and increase carrying capacity.

Grazing Land Management workshops

Grazing Land Management (GLM) workshops provide you with the skills and ability to assess the health of each paddock and manage stocking rates to optimise the carrying capacity of your enterprise.

The workshop will assist you to:

- Assess the condition of your paddocks and improve carrying capacity
- Understand the relationship between pasture, water, soils, woodlands, biodiversity, fire and weeds
- Investigate pasture restoration techniques
- Determine the financial impact of grazing management options

The workshop, one of MLA EDGE^{network}® training packages, pools scientific and landholder knowledge specific to northern Australia.

The workshop consists of open discussions and builds on the wealth of knowledge and experience that already exists within the industry.

Technical information is demonstrated both in and out of the ‘classroom’ therefore a ‘hands on’ approach is used.

A GLM workshop will help you to develop grazing management strategies to optimise land condition, production and profit.

Producers:

Mick Tasker (Group Manager)
Carley Bidstrup (Rangeland Officer) – Camfield, Montejinni & Delamere Stations

Location:

Victoria River District, Northern Territory

Property area:

Camfield 2,772 km²
Montejinni ~3,080 km²
Delamere 3,003 km²

Enterprise:

Live export cattle to south-east Asia

Goal:

“To reach the high quality end of the live export specification by producing 330kg steers and 310-320kg cull heifers at 18 months”

Livestock:

Brahman

Annual rainfall:

About 650 – 950mm, summer predominant

For further information contact

Department of Regional Development, Primary Industry Fisheries and Resources, Katherine Research Station, Northern Territory.
Phone: 08 8973 9763

How can a GLM workshop help your enterprise?

Case Study: Camfield, Montejinni & Delamere Stations

Background

Mick Tasker has spent his career in the northern pastoral industry and has been with AAco for 12 years. Mick attended GLM because he felt they were at a stage where they needed to start honing management for the future.

Mick was also looking for a way to match the practical side of management with the paper-trail required to back up what they were doing.

Carley Bidstrup, who assists the AAco managers with their pasture monitoring and natural resource management wanted to fine-tune long term benchmark carrying capacities and yearly stocking rate predictions to add value to the pasture monitoring they were already doing.

How GLM has changed them

“All the managers now understand concepts such as Stage 2 and Stage 3 growth when talking about grass” says Mick. “We can look at a paddock and say it needs to have the cattle taken out because the grasses are at Stage 2.

“GLM gave us a more rigorous way of explaining what we already knew, and justifying our decisions to management. That’s the big thing I got out of GLM.”

The issues

One of the key issues for many pastoral businesses is how to sustainably increase carrying capacity. A difficult part of this process is identifying the property development options that will get the best return on investment.

Carley and Mick found that the GLM course gave them the tools to do this by showing them how to calculate the carrying capacity and cost implications of various development options. Mick notes that as a direct result of attending GLM they have put a new water on the southern end of Camfield to improve the use of a particular paddock.

“This would not have been a priority before, but during GLM we realised it was very good country that wasn’t being used properly. The things we learnt at GLM helped us to justify the investment to management.”

Mick, Carley and the other staff from AAco also picked up some new ideas about managing woody weeds and fire management.

“After going to GLM, we locked up a paddock that was full of woody weeds and burnt it just after the first storms. In the past we would have waited until the end of the year to burn it with a hot fire. Using this new plan, we’ve now got a lot more control of the gutta percha on Montejinni.”

The future

Mick notes that as a result of attending GLM, they will manage yearly stocking rates more closely, based on rainfall and carrying capacity.

“Rather than just saying we’ll run X numbers, we’ll adjust our numbers more closely depending on the rainfall pattern we’ve had” says Mick. “This will generate sounder cattle in better condition and of better weight. It will also result in a lot better land management.

“Land is the investment – the cattle are just the interest. The capital growth will be in the land so we have to look after it” says Mick.

Final word

“GLM has definitely changed our thinking – if we look after the land then the cattle will follow. This way of thinking would have been unheard of a few years ago.”