

Melinee Leather  
“Barfield Station”

## Implementing Lessons



Location: Banana

Size: 6108 ha

Herd: Breeders, growing and finishing  
cattle

Average Rainfall: 600mm

Green Day: 9<sup>th</sup> December

# Forage Budgeting in the Fitzroy

## Achieving positive production and land condition outcomes on your property

Central Highlands Regional Resources Use Planning Cooperative (CHRRUP), Department of Environmental Science (DES) and Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) partnered to provide graziers in the Fitzroy region with forage budgeting service, delivered by fellow graziers.

The aim of forage budgeting is to match stocking rates (number of animals) with a paddock's carrying capacity (available feed). This assists in maximising pasture utilisation and ensuring there is enough residual pasture to maintain and improve land condition.

A pasture's capacity to respond to rain is imperative to production. Our graziers delivering the service are keen forage budgeters at home and understand the benefits, but also the challenges involved, acting like a mentor during this process.

The service will be delivered to twenty participating graziers from across the region and an open field day will be held in 2020. If you would like further information please contact CHRRUP on 07 4982 2996 or email [admin@chrrup.org.au](mailto:admin@chrrup.org.au).

*This project is funded through the Queensland Government Reef Water Quality Program.*

## About Amy Holcombe – Forage Budgeter

Amy has a passion for regenerative agriculture, with a vision to “profitably leave the landscape in a better place than we found it”. In 2013, Amy and her husband Richard purchased their own property “Kinma”, at Moura, Central Queensland. They background heifers for feedlot markets and use a time control rotational grazing system of which forage budgeting forms the backbone of many decisions made.

Amy has a Bachelor in Applied Science, Animals Studies, is a Rural Leadership Bootcamp Graduate and has completed many courses including Business Edge, RCS Executive Link, KLR and Tarwyn Park Training.

Within their trading business, forage budgeting is imperative to match stocking rates to carrying capacity and has been used to effectively manage overgrazed country and maintain the desired minimum level of ground cover. This process is completed at least 3-4 times during the dry season.



## About the participants

“Barfield Station” is situated approximately 24km from Banana and is owned and run by the Leather Family. Here, Melinee and Robert Leather run a breeding to finishing enterprise, with EU and Organic markets available to them. The predominant landtype on Barfield is silver-leafed ironbark on duplex soils. It is mostly open grassland, with the major pasture species being buffel grass.

Melinee & Robert appreciate the importance of maintaining residual pasture at the end of the dry season, having done courses in the past highlighting this. They engaged the service to implement some past learnings and have a practical and effective way to monitor pasture across several properties and people within their business.

## Benefits to the Leather's

- Amy helped us implement skills we had previously learned
- Gave us a formal process for recording information to be used across properties and different people in the business
- Deeper understanding of FORAGE reports including; Groundcover regional comparison report which show how your groundcover fairs against a 50km radius

## What impact did this service have at the time?

During Amy's first visit to Barfield the Leathers were facing some decisions about removing animals from their other block, and whether they would come to Barfield or be sold. The feed budgeting allowed them to shuffle cows for drought purposes and gave them confidence to make decisions about where to put them and for how long, without taking a toll on the land. It also changed how certain classes of animals were sold.

As they take faecal samples at the start of every season, this skill will allow them to match these results with available feed and seasonal conditions for a more comprehensive picture of what the animals require.

## Future Plans

The Leather's plan to continue this process with some more help from Amy, and would recommend it to others to learn. Melinee currently leads a producer group in the Banana area and will share this knowledge with others in the area, inviting Amy along for a meeting.

Future plans for Barfield include development of more infrastructure, including new fences and waters. This will improve how cattle graze the landscape and help them move to a more rotational grazing system.

## Conclusion

The aim of forage budgeting is to match stocking rate to carrying capacity, leaving the land highly responsive to rainfall at the end of the dry season. An overgrazed pasture will lead to delayed responses to rainfall, decreasing production and causing erosion, capping or hardening of soil and loss of palatable, productive and perennial species.

A grazing enterprise which manages for their most desirable species of grass, controls unevenness of grazing pressure, estimates feed and builds their skills to best match their stocking rates will not only improve the condition of their land overtime, but will minimise the effects of drought and reduce sediment loss into waterways.

