



The Derwent Catchment Project

Increasing Productivity. Restoring Landscapes

Derwent Pasture Network: Dryland grazing course

The Derwent Pasture Network is a three-year program of work funded by NRM South through the Australian Government's Regional Land Partnerships program. The Pasture Network will deliver a package of information and management/learning activity that we'll present in the form of a course on dryland grazing. The course addresses the issues and environment of the region and is tailored to the specific needs of livestock enterprises.

Paying more attention to dryland pasture and grazing can be fertile ground for improvement. While irrigation can rightly be a focus of interest, dryland grazing primarily deals with the principles of input and output.

Dryland need not mean beige. It could be gold.



On farm

The course is intended to be conducted on-farm, in-person, with application in mind, and shared experience, knowledge and understanding at the forefront of all that is delivered. There is a great deal to be gained by meeting with a group of grazing practitioners. Being like-minded is not required, though being interested in learning, sharing, improving and challenging, most definitely is.

When being together is not possible, for instance during the COVID-19 situation, we'll explore other means of delivery.

Visiting paddocks, problems and successes is fantastic ground for learning and inspiration. Sharing helps everyone learn from hard won experience. We'll address a mix of things we think we know, things we probably don't know, and things we don't know we don't know.

A new look

A goal of improvement does not mean just waiting for something new. It could mean *doing* something new. Take the pasture plants we grow as an example. Having better plant options is a longstanding desire of many pasture managers and work is continually being undertaken to achieve this. But as any plant breeder will tell you, new plants are not a speedy undertaking.

Getting the most out of the plants we already have access to is a much shorter path to improvement. This can include both using valuable plants we may have not previously considered or fully appreciated, or making more out of the pasture that already exists by addressing constraints in the growing and grazing environments. Much improvement can be pursued without waiting for any breakthrough. The Derwent Pasture Network will seek to address issues worth a new look throughout the course.

Course content

The course is constantly developing but typically focus on a set of themes:

- Assessing pasture condition, identifying and addressing key limits
- Understanding and managing pasture species, changing composition
- Managing ground cover, weeds and slopes
- Energising production, increasing legume and nitrogen fixation
- New pasture options and making a change
- Effective nutrient management
- Graze what's grown, grazing plans and strategies
- Adding rest, reaping reward
- Making dry feed count
- Understanding pests, managing impacts
- Understanding feed on offer, budgeting supply, filling gaps
- Pasture plans; for improved pastures, native pastures and runs
- Partners in profit, managing pasture and livestock targets
- Seasonal variation, stocking rates and decisions
- Measuring success, monitoring progress.

By addressing issues together and building layers of strength, our intent is to build pasture and livestock management systems that are increasingly more robust in the face of seasonal challenges, and capable of delivering sustainable production and landscape management outcomes.

This program is funded by NRM South through the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

