Think long-term and act short-term

It is easy to get bogged down in the day-to-day activities of your business and lose sight of the big picture.

Planning will help you to achieve the long-term goals of your enterprise and ensure that decisions made day-to-day are consistent with where you want to be in the future.

Successful pastoral enterprises are increasingly embracing the ‘triple bottom line’. For these businesses, financial gains are balanced against the social and environmental costs of the property’s activities, products and services. Sustaining the natural resource base of pastoral enterprises is now generally accepted as crucial for long-term success.

The ability of the land to produce forage for stock in the future will be dependent on how well the land is managed today. However, implementing best management practices can often involve significant upfront costs and the results can take many years to achieve.

There may be a number of steps to reach the final outcome and adequate planning is critical. Completing a property management planning course will help to assess your situation now and identify relevant short-term actions to get you, your business and the environment where you want them to be.

Good maps also assist in planning future development and management. Simple, purpose-designed farm mapping software is now available and when used with GPS allows accurate mapping of property infrastructure and natural features.

Invest in yourself. You are a resource too!

Increasing your skills and knowledge is one of the best investments you can make. Knowledge is a powerful tool, especially when you are dealing with pastoral enterprises where no one season or day is the same. Seek out farm financial advice and take advantage of market research to find gaps in supply and demand. Well-planned and structured enterprises can react positively to seasonal and market variability instead of being controlled by fluctuations.

When seasons are good, make use of the various farm deposit/banking schemes or pay off debt.

The ability of enterprises to cope with future market or seasonal downturns can be improved by:

- investment in new management, business and technical skills
- implementing key actions in business and property management plans
- seeking out appropriate new or innovative technology
- allowing the natural resource base to develop greater resilience.

The Mosely family of Etiwanda near Cobar have actively sought new farm and business planning skills and are benchmarking their enterprise performance against other farm businesses across Australia.

Investment in their management skills, as well as substantial infrastructure, enterprise diversification and property build-up expenditure, has resulted in:

- greater financial stability
- improved livestock production
- more operational flexibility
- better natural resource management
- the ability to lead a more relaxed and less stressful lifestyle.

Figure 1: Increasing your own skills and knowledge is an investment.
Dry season and drought management

Recent long-term drought conditions have led to the development of climate risk modelling and pasture growth calculators. Using these decision support tools may well give you the edge in anticipating how seasons will develop.

Frequent dry seasons and droughts can be better managed through:

- improved management of total grazing pressure
- use of practical indicators, such as available forage, to make the critical early decisions on stocking rates to protect production potential
- careful management during and after drought to ensure that pastures survive and recover well, which helps business recovery as well
- building flexibility into the enterprise to limit the financial cost of dry season management responses.

Figure 2: Planning will help you to achieve the long-term goals of your enterprise.

Further reading

Other fact sheets in this series
No.1 Actively control feral animals
No.2 Control access to watering points
No.3 Maintain and improve groundcover
No.4 Manage for drought
No.5 Manage invasive native scrub (INS)
No.6 Manage pasture species
No.7 Total grazing pressure
No.8 Match stock numbers to feed availability
No.9 Rest pastures regularly

Case study

Good management, less stress – the Mosely family

DVD

Looking over the Fence – grazing management in the rangelands, Western Catchment Management Authority, 2013

Other publications

Best management practices for extensive grazing enterprises – NSW DPI, 2005

General enquiries

1300 795 299
admin.western@lls.nsw.gov.au
www.western.lls.nsw.gov.au