

Pasture development at Undabri

JEFF CARTER¹ AND TONY ILLING²

¹ Undabri, Goondiwindi

² David Illing Pastures Pty, Drayton,
Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia

The Property

The Undabri aggregation is an amalgamation of properties owned by the Doyle Group. These Goondiwindi holdings include the properties of Undabri, South Giddi, Teelabar, Brentwood West, Uralaby and McGregor's. They cover mostly flood plains associated with the MacIntyre River and the creeks east of the Weir River, and are traversed and bordered by a number of creeks including Commoron Creek that forms part of the northern boundary and Yambacolly Creek that forms part of the southern boundary.

Land use is 2670 ha (6600 acres) of irrigation consisting of flood irrigation, centre pivots and laterals, 1500 ha (3800 acres) of dryland farming and 8000 ha (20 000 acres) of fully improved grazing country. These properties run about 2000 Angus breeders in total. Illing Pastures has been contracted for the pasture development and has been sowing a mixture of species, because the pasture paddocks grade from hard-setting box (*Eucalyptus populnea*) country to melonhole country and flood plains.

Since the soil types across individual paddocks are so variable and include some waterlogged areas, Tony Illing has used a 'one mix for all' strategy. This mix is 15% Bambatsi (*Panicum coloratum*), 10% Floren bluegrass (*Dichanthium aristatum*), 55% Finecut rhodes grass (*Chloris gayana*), 10% Premier digit grass (*Digitaria eriantha*) and 10% Bisset bluegrass (*Bothriochloa inculpta*), and planted at 3.5 kg/ha.

Land preparation

Virgin country

Black clay. The heavy black clay (vertosols) country is blade ploughed, if tree or shrub regrowth is a problem. If timber is not a problem, the land is worked once with a trash worker or offsets. Seed is applied as soon as possible after working and before rain.

Box or light tight-setting soils. These soils are blade ploughed and seeded in one operation. Offsets are not used to break the rough land as the soils set hard after the first couple of falls of rain.

Old cultivation

If grass weeds are not a problem, the land is cultivated (not blade ploughed) and seed spread by plane or pasture air-seeder. Weeds from previous cropping may have to be sprayed by ground rig.

If grass weeds are a problem, the land is farmed for a period to reduce the weed load and pasture is planted into residual crop stubble.

The heavier soils are now dominated by Bambatsi and Floren, with the other grasses dominant on the lighter soils.

(The Doyle Group, under Craig Doyle, is an established property development group specialising in commercial, industrial and residential properties and in agribusiness. The group purchased Undabri from the Sylvester family in December 2007. The Farming Manager on Undabri is Johnno Sullivan; Jeff Carter is Live-stock Manager.)