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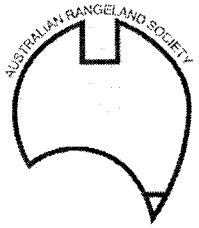

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TACTICAL GRAZING MANAGEMENT WORKSHOPS A PRODUCER ENDORSED COURSE

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INTRODUCTION

Tactical Grazing is an approach to grazing management based on a four- part framework involving establishment of paddock management objectives, identification of appropriate management strategies, tactical decision making and monitoring of pasture and landscape condition for productive and sustainable pastoralism. NSW Agriculture has successfully launched Tactical Grazing Management Workshops (TGMW/S) for land managers in south-western NSW to promote this philosophy and assist landholders develop achievable assessment and monitoring skills.

Four half day workshops were run as part of the program in SW NSW in 2001/2002. There were four half day workshops. The half day sessions concluded with a question time and a feedback sheet. West 2000+ Commonwealth funding has been secured to deliver future courses. Each monitoring technique is explained and demonstrated to include any background knowledge behind the technique.

Producers had the opportunity to apply the techniques in the field with a discussion on the practicality of each techniques application occuring at the conclusion of each exercise. In the workshops presented to date Balah/Rosewood and Chenopod land-types have been focused on using "The Glove Box Guide to Tactical Grazing Management for the semi-arid woodlands" (Campbell and Hacker 2000).

Each technique is defined below, with feedback from those participants to date being recorded as dot points following the definition.

WORKSHOP 1

A power-point presentation was delivered on the importance of setting an objective for a paddock, either to improve or maintain its condition. A strategy to manage the paddock using objective measurements was made. A key component of this introduction was the balance between risk, resource and return. Objectives and strategies were revisited at each workshop.

Landscape function summarises the landscape organisation by determining the number of obstructions, the distance between the obstructions and the size of the obstructions. The second component of landscape function was to determine soil surface health. Indicators are given a rating which is converted to a number for both the patch (An area where physical resources such as water and nutrients are concentrated) and the inter-patch (An area where physical resources move to a different part of the landscape).

- The majority of participants rated the workshop very useful.
- Data collated was subjective depending on who did the recording and how an obstruction was defined.
- It would take some time to collate a data base that gave useful comparisons.
- Once a year or once every three years would be sufficient monitoring for landscape function.
- Landscape function would be best incorporated as part of long term monitoring sites.

WORKSHOP 2

Biomass and dry-matter of grasses and small herbs are determined using photo-standards, with a median quadrat being used to determine an accurate measure of biomass to demonstrate this approach of dry matter assessment. This technique is beneficial for calculating the carrying capacity of the paddock using a conversion table to animal unit days or alternatively allowing you to calculate fuel loads in a paddock, in order to do a control burn on woody weeds. (Hurrah at least it has a point)

- Variation between photo-standard and median quadrat measurements can be great and can cause problems in accurate assessments.

- The need to measure carrying capacities for chenopods was raised. A Jessop stick measurement and a conversion table of plant number and diameter into edible dry matter has since been introduced.

Estimation of the level of utilisation of key species was carried out using photo standards of grasses occurring in the semi-arid woodlands. A rule of thumb of 30% utilisation (70% remains by weight) or less is required to maintain perennial grasses in times of drought.

- Producers were keen for standards of common species specific to Belah/rosewood communities such as spear grass to be developed.

The shrub cover technique presented in this workshop was mainly aimed at the assessment and control of woody weeds. There were two techniques explained, the photo standard technique and the use of a Bitterlich gauge. This enabled shrub impact on production to be quantified.

The step point technique for soil cover and the quadrant technique were demonstrated. Maintaining 40% cover or greater will ensure no significant erosion.

- A quick technique that has been readily implemented by producers.
- Participants found Workshop 2 quite useful and reasonably easy to understand.

WORKSHOP 3

Biomass, shrub-cover, utilisation, and soil cover were all reviewed. How to establish a long term monitoring point using a photo point was demonstrated. Estimation of the relative grazing pressure of sheep and kangaroos used a step point transect procedure to collect raw data. Formulas were used to convert the raw data into predicted Dry sheep Equivalents (DSE) for sheep and kangaroos. Calculations incorporating forage availability of each forage type, seasonal factors, paddock condition and total grazing pressure of domestic and non-domestic animals were all incorporated into an easy to follow procedure, which enabled the calculation of a stocking rate for a specific paddock.

- A useful workshop.

WORKSHOP 4

The concept of an objective, a strategy and the associated techniques were reviewed by the producers. Condition scoring of livestock (fat scoring) was also covered in this workshop. Implication of animal production and this style of management were indicated as desirable for future possible workshops.

- A useful workshop.

OVERALLL FEEDBACK

- The techniques in the workshop are robust enough to be applied widely.
- Each halfday session, having been carried out on an individual property enabled a variety of land-types, management and history to be discussed.
- Initial preparation of each workshop allowed an interaction between the presenter and the land-holder.
- All participants have been enthusiastic to finish the four workshops and have recommended the workshops to other people.

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Campbell, T.A. and Hacker, R.B. (2000). The Glove Box Guide to Tactical Grazing Management for semi-arid woodlands. NSW Agriculture. Dubbo.