

Westwood



Property Snapshot

'Westwood' is a cattle grazing property located 60 km east of Guyra, on the NSW Northern Tablelands. Historically, the land has been used for cattle and sheep grazing on improved and native pasture, and some rotational farming activities to support grazing. There is also evidence of logging on the property. 'Westwood' is one of four properties run by Richard Ogilvie, his wife and two sons in an enterprise that includes the Te Angie Hereford stud with 600 breeding cows, 1500 trade cattle and some sheep.

Location: Wongwibinda, north-east of Armidale

Size: 653 hectares

Enterprise: Beef cattle, currently running 150 trade cattle

Challenge

Under the former legislation, 'Westwood' was only able to undertake minor thinning of timbered areas and a small amount of clearing in areas that had a history of rotational vegetation management activities. These limitations limited the productive potential of the property.

Richard Ogilvie and his family moved from South Australia several years ago looking for a rural investment.

Approval to thin woody native vegetation, continue rotational use and remove native vegetation was provided under the Pasture Expansion, Continuing Use and Equity Codes in the new Land Management Code.

Together the three approvals:

allow the clearing native trees and shrubs from a treatment area such that adequate vegetation is maintained

permit vegetation clearing for continuing rotational management activities that were established prior to 1990

enable the removal of native vegetation from areas with strong production potential in exchange for high value set aside areas.

Fact file:

- 'Westwood' received three Code authorisations from Local Land Services
- Rotational land management is reinstated on 21 ha of the property that had been taking place before 1990
- 83 ha identified as EECs, riparian, threatened ecological community and/or standard set aside areas

"This work is about making the enterprise more profitable and economic. I've got two sons coming back onto the land and I have to divide the farm. It is not fair if one half is viable and the other is not."

These works are going to increase our native biodiversity while still allowing us enough land to graze cattle and maintain our viability.

If you don't have biodiversity in your farming area it leads to increased pests, both insects and animal so if you have a balance in your ecological area, it's more sustainable in the long run."

- Richard Ogilvie, owner, 'Westwood'

CASE STUDY

Work undertaken

By implementing vegetation management under the Pasture expansion, Continuing Use and Equity parts of the Land Management (Native Vegetation) Code 2017, approximately 385 ha of 'Westwood' will be managed for increased agricultural production and biodiversity outcomes.

Mosaic thinning of woodland areas will occur on 200 ha of the property to improve the grazing capacity of 133 ha, with 67 ha maintained as retention patches within the treatment area.

Clearing 21 ha of native vegetation for the purpose of continued rotational management of grazing land.

To establish additional land for cropping and/or grazing, 81 ha of native vegetation will be removed with 83 ha of strategic landscape scale importance vegetation set aside for biodiversity.

On-ground achievements

'Westwood' has a successful history of land management with very little weed burden and only minor signs of feral animal disturbance on site. The reintroduction of rotational land management onto the property will allow the property to reinstate its historical productive capacity.

Vegetation clearing has allowed onsite productivity to increase through additional carrying capacity on both native and introduced pastures. It is estimated the work will double the amount of useable grazing land and allow the increase in stock numbers from 150 head to around 400 and to finish them to a much higher, slaughter-weight quality.

Local Land Services and the landholders have gone to great lengths to ensure that *Eucalyptus nicholii* and New England Peppermint Woodland are not directly impacted by this sustainable agricultural development, as both are considered to be of high conservation value in the region. In fact, their conservation has been significantly enhanced through inclusion in required set aside areas, whilst the location of the set aside areas have been selected to maintain existing links in the broader landscape between Guy Fawkes Gorge and the grazing areas of the Northern Tablelands.

Benefits

Social

- More than \$300,000 spent locally on the northern tablelands including on earthmoving and fencing contractors and purchases of fertiliser.

Economic

- Westwood anticipates a 100% increase in the property's gross margin, with a payback of approximately 9.5 years.
- The improved pasture on 'Westwood' is predicted to produce cattle weight gain of 1kg per day against the daily weight loss of 250 grams on native pasture.

Environmental

- 83 ha of set aside areas that will maintain vegetation in perpetuity and conserve local biodiversity through the regeneration of native plant species and the maintenance of fauna corridors and habitat.
- The established set-aside areas along riparian corridors will support healthy waterways
- Endangered ecological communities are protected: 3 ha of set aside accommodates Ribbon Gum, Mountain Gum Threatened Ecological Community. The areas set aside are of strategic landscape scale biodiversity importance due to the location in relation to other native vegetation in the landscape, and the composition of native vegetation within the set aside.

