



Establishing a multi-species rotational grazing system to improve soil and creek health

First generation farmers Jodie and Fabian established Woodland Valley Farm at Fernvale and have been producing free-range eggs since 2019.

They are strong believers and practitioners of regenerative agricultural practices and have worked hard to transform their farm's tired and degraded pastures after decades of set stocking.

In 2021 they received Tweed Shire Council's Tweed Sustainability Award in the Regenerative Agriculture category for their achievements.

Assessment of soils and pastures on the farm revealed very low organic matter and biological activity, heavy compaction and a lack of pasture diversity from years of overgrazing. Jodie and Fabian knew there was a more productive and sustainable way to farm based on good farm design and utilising the free services provided by nature and their farm animals.



Jodie and Fabian of Woodland Valley Farm, Fernvale.

How the project worked

The project involved the installation of both permanent and electric fencing in strategic locations to facilitate the rotation of cattle and chickens across the farm while also excluding livestock from their waterway, an important tributary of Dunbible Creek.



The fencing project has allowed Fabian and Jodie to focus on riparian zone regeneration with local, native species.

This system ensures pastures are well rested and provides time for plants and soil organisms to grow, leading to improved soil structure, water retention and reduced soil and nutrient run-off.

“Council’s Sustainable Agriculture Grant was instrumental in giving us the kick start we needed to get this project underway. This project will be the reason we achieve significant regeneration of the soils and pastures, creating a productive farm through sustainable agricultural practices.”

Fabian

Sustainable Agriculture Small Grants Program

Case study: Woodland Valley Farm

Through an additional River Health Grant from Council and a collaboration with OzFish, Fabian and Jodie started revegetating their creek lines with native species like weeping lilly pilli (*Syzygium floribundum*), blue quandong (*Elaeocarpus grandis*) and small-leaved lilly pilli (*Acmena smithii*).



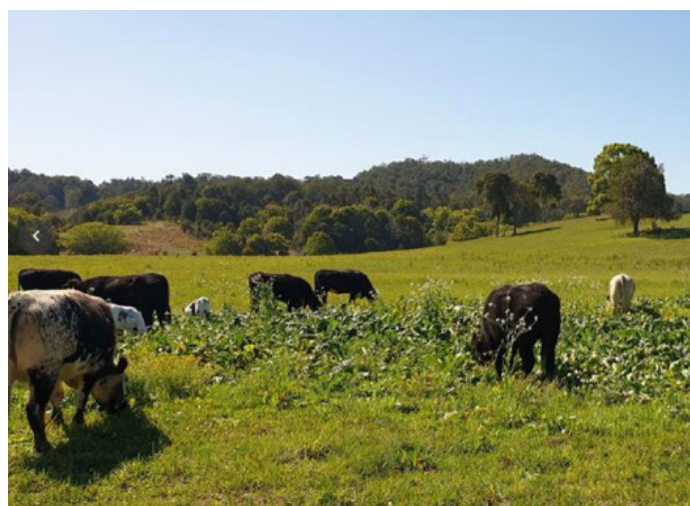
High-density multispecies rotational grazing.

An important consideration, and often limitation, when establishing rotational grazing systems and excluding cattle from waterways is the provision of infrastructure for livestock drinking water. Fabian and Jodie were able to overcome this through advice from local experts and designing a watering system based on their own research.

The rotational grazing system has resulted in almost immediate benefits. Jodie and Fabian have observed an increase in feed availability, healthier looking pastures and a reduction in weeds. The integration of chickens into the system has provided a much-needed addition of nutrients and organic matter that has stimulated pasture growth.

“We are thrilled with the fencing system we have implemented in the rotational paddocks, using insulated line posts combined with timber stays and strainers. The posts have been relatively low cost and simple to install and when needed, we can relocate the fence to adapt to a changing grazing pattern. We would recommend this post system for internal rotational grazing paddocks.”

Fabian



Cattle grazing the fertile area left by the hens.

The chickens disperse cow pats accelerating their breakdown and incorporation into the soil while also controlling livestock pests that develop in the dung. Jodie and Fabian plan to continue monitoring their pastures to determine the optimum size of paddocks and grazing periods and modify these to achieve further land improvements.