Building a resilient beef business

Chris McQueen with Ed Archer
Background
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About the farm

• Location — Emita Flinders Island

• Rainfall — 650mm (450–1000mm)

• Soils — Sandy loams to heavy clay

• Area — 922ha grazing

• Stock — 950 breeders, 830 followers and 30 bulls
Farming system

• Target markets
  – Feedlot steers
  – Fatten dry cows and empty heifers (if possible)

• Breeding strategy
  – Self replacing
  – Medium-frame angus cow
  – Highly fertile
  – Low birth weights and high growth rates
  – Grass only
Cow herd
2–3 year olds
Calves
## Performance (and price adjusted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2013-14</th>
<th>2014-15</th>
<th>2015-16</th>
<th>2016-17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stocking rate (MW)</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef production(kg/ha)</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUE (DSE/FTE)</td>
<td>10,700</td>
<td>12,139</td>
<td>12,800</td>
<td>17,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profit/ha ($)</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROC (%)</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Profit/ha</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROC</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef price</td>
<td>2.66</td>
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</tr>
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</table>
### Growth

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area (ha)</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>818</td>
<td>885</td>
<td>922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle numbers (hd)</td>
<td>1,170</td>
<td>1,374</td>
<td>1,746</td>
<td>1,810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity (%)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Development process

• Soil fertility
• Wallaby fencing
• Internal fencing and water
• Pasture renovation
  – Stomp, chomp, shower of shit
  – Cultivation (brown top and Parramatta grass)
From this...
Via this...
To this...
Wallaby fencing critical
Management strategies

• Target cow condition score
• Target liveweight heifers
• Average pasture cover targets
• Pasture monitoring
  – Leaf emergence rate
  – Growth rate
  – Intake rate
• De-stockling and early turn-off
• Limited supplements
Measure
Nitrogen
Where to from here?

Everything is bigger and better on Flinders.

Half-serve!!
Top three take-home messages

1. Keep it simple — don’t over complicate
2. Use the support of your peers and invest in professional development
3. Don’t procrastinate — make and implement decisions in a timely manner
Tools, resources and training

• Pasture Principles
• Any available training opportunities that come your way
• Peers
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