

## CASE STUDY

**Region:** Darling Downs, Queensland

**Location:** Jimbour

**Industry:** Grazing

**Issue:** Rundown grazing lands

**Outcomes:** Farm renovation achieving positive agricultural and environmental outcomes



*“Some people like to renovate houses, I like to renovate properties”*



Jimbour grain grower St. John Kent is venturing into the grazing industry, after the purchase of the 250 hectare ‘Juan’ in October 2015. At the time of purchase, as well as being drought affected, ‘Juan’ had been heavily overgrazed and had significant erosion, weed and soil health issues. “When we took over, the property was a sea of yellow (African turnip weed), with (erosion) gullies deep enough to lose a car”, St. John mentioned. Immediately, St. John implemented a 12 month spelling period to start addressing the groundcover and weed issues.

**The Progress:** During this 12 month period, tumbledown fences were removed and access roads put in to facilitate the control of key weeds including Lantana and turnip. St. John then set to work preparing one area of the property for the highly productive legume crop Leucaena which in addition to improving productivity also helps restore soil fertility through nitrogen fixation. Gully erosion was repaired and the area prepared for planting Leucaena in spring 2017. “I am treating my Leucaena like I do my grain crops. The ground was hard as a rock, ruined by cultivation. I applied Phosphate twice, and have planted a barley cover crop, which will be sprayed to form a zero till stubble bed for the Leucaena”, St. John said. Taking a slightly different approach to others, there will be 12m between the Leucaena rows, as “people run out of grass before they run out of Leucaena”, St. John noted. This 60ha will be split into 4 paddocks, and St. John aims to rotate 100 head through this area, plus through the remainder of the property.





On the opposite side of the property, St. John confronted the challenge of repairing a washed-out dam, and revegetating and stabilising the stock damaged banks of a stream. On this side of the property, the contours were kept, and the riparian zone fenced to allow better management of grazing pressures. Using Google Earth, St. John mapped out his new fences, water lines and troughs, fencing to soil types and placing troughs in areas that allowed them to be gravity fed. “We got most of the fencing done using just 3 coils of wire and 3 days of work by 3 people”, St. John explained.



Using a simple hot wire approach, with solar electric fence energisers and recycled star pickets, the fences and troughs are strategically placed to allow access from multiple paddocks to one place. St. John has also implemented a method which stems from plains of Africa, to avoid cattle loitering around the troughs and causing the area to become flogged out and compacted.

**The Future:** The aim is for 12 to 14 paddocks, and with the cattle being moved every 10 days, so each paddock will be grazed for no more than 4 weeks of the year in total, ensuring no bare ground. St. John’s vision is for “300kg/year for 100 to 150 head”, while sustainably managing his land.



*‘Juan’ was on show in July 2017, with a field day hosted by CFI*