

CASE STUDY

Joe and Jane de Pledge - Badgingarra

FLOODING on their pastoral property, Mandora Station in 1999 prompted Joe and Jane de Pledge to go in search of a farm in the Mid West to complement their Broome station.

“Huge areas on Mandora were inundated and we needed some country to retain our breeding herd and to finish our steers,” Joe says.

“We were looking to spread our climatic and market risk.”

Mandora covers 89,000ha and has been run by the de Pledge family for over 60 years.

Joe bought Jandawanning, a 1,510 hectare property five kilometres north of Badgingarra in 2000.

An undulating property which straddles the Hill River, the soil types on Jandawanning vary from sand over gravel to rocky gravel and clay.

Fulfilling their long term expansion plans, the family bought a further two stations south of Onslow in 2006 – Yanrey (255,000ha) and Koordarrie (117,000ha).

The Onslow properties are about 1,000km north of Badgingarra and 700km south of Mandora.

Annual average rainfall on Jandawanning is 600mm, with 275mm the average on Yanrey and 337mm the average on Mandora.

The three properties, located in three distinct geographical areas and covering more than



Joe de Pledge bought his Badgingarra property to spread climatic and market risk

618,000ha afford the de Pledge family a range of opportunities, with stock moved north and south as the season unfolds.

The bulk of cattle are destined for live export out of Broome, Port Hedland and southern ports.

Because it is closer to the end market, the Badgingarra property has allowed them to hedge their bets, with cattle going to abattoirs or feed lots. “Jandawanning is used for finishing cattle, in particular steers, cull heifers and ‘out of spec shippers’,” Joe says.

“It has the capacity to take about 1,500 head of cattle – that is 300kg animals - in the spring and there is also the opportunity to trade cattle.

“We have not pushed it to its limit, grazing-wise.”

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The de Pledge family run 5,500 breeders on Mandora and Yanrey and calve year-round.

“We run Droughtmasters at Mandora and the herd at Yanrey is Shorthorn but we are crossing over to Droughtmaster,” Joe says.

“If live export goes, we will have to think about some cross-breeding.”

The entire 1,400 hectares of grazing country on Jandawanning has been refenced for cell grazing. Average paddock size is 26 hectares and each of the cells centres around a central watering point.

Stock are run in big mobs but moved daily, a practice that involves just opening the gate.

Pastures on Mandora and Yanrey are mainly perennial with the principal ground cover buffell grass, Mitchell grass, birdwood and woolly butt. Year round green pastures and the ability to make use of out of season rainfall encouraged Joe towards perennial grasses on Jandawanning.

He has sown nine paddocks, a total of 200ha to Rhodes glass, Splenda setaria and panic.

Despite there being little summer rainfall in recent years, the perennial grasses have remained green, suggesting the roots have tapped into soil moisture at depth.

Newly sown perennial grass paddocks are not grazed for about nine months, ensuring that plants are well anchored.

Achieving good weed control has made a vast difference to establishment of perennial grasses on Jandawanning.

Paddocks with a high proportion of couch now have very sparse plantings of the Rhodes grass mix.

A small area on the Badgingarra property has been planted to tagasaste but with disappointing results.

Joe is keen to test the potential of his paddocks sown to subtropical perennial grasses and investigate the cost – benefit of these grasses.



About 200ha on Jandawanning has been established to subtropical perennial grasses

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