

Visit To Greg and Jon's Farm at Parkesbourne in the Southern Tablelands

This visit was part of the Regenerative Agriculture Mentorship Program (RAMP) on 10th September 2022.

Firstly, and most importantly, a huge thanks to Greg and Jon for hosting the visit to their farm, Nurrenyen of some 100 acres, and for their generous hospitality, evidence of which is below.



To avoid the visitors overstaying their welcome, John was guarding the pantry.

In addition to the monthly RAMP online mentorship sessions, there is a complementary program of monthly farm visits, with Greg and Jon's farm the second off the rank. See this link to the RAMP overview:-

<https://1drv.ms/b/s!AmkgLZ0xX6yQ3U0QAbYuXxHAg96K?e=tLxCXI>

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The idea of the farm visits is to offer group members the opportunity to meet face to face to build stronger relationships and to reinforce the online learning. The faces missing from this meeting were Emma and Andrew who unfortunately could not make it.

This time the weather was good and all enjoyed a good tramp around the property. One of us, no names, seemed to have got the address a little wrong but eventually got to the right place. Greg and John's farm-house was a masterpiece of modern architecture and made the most of the amazing views. Of course, as well as the farmhouse there was a large shed without which no farm or farmer could survive.

Greg and John's aims for Nurrenyen are:-

- Develop a small profitable beef cattle enterprise through:
 - Developing highly productive modified pastures
 - Applying sustainable agricultural techniques
 - Regenerating portions of Yellow Box communities
 - Breeding stud Belted Galloway cattle

As with Emma and Andrew, it seems that Greg and John have been hiding their light under a bushel, or as known to one of my former managers, used to say, under a bucket! The visit to the shed revealed a very large number of show ribbons, the result of pioneering work to breed white Huacaya Alpaca starting in 2009. The fleece from the alpaca was to be sold for processing. After some ten years with both the demise of the alpaca meat market and the drought, they decided to shift away from alpaca breeding to breeding Belted-Galloway beef cattle (NB this shift is being kept away from the alpacas to avoid upsetting them overly).

One of the first steps in the Belted Galloway journey, finding a buyer of the meat, is completed and is Feather and Bone, but as they want three-year old steers, this means that the number of cattle will increase to the point that either the quantity of the pasture needs to be increased, without sacrificing quality, or more pasture needs to be found and maybe both. Feather and Bone have strong ethical standards about the treatment of the meat they buy that fits the beliefs of Greg and Jon. Also important requirement of Feather and Bone was that the cattle came from a regenerative farm.

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One of the Belted Galloway's wondering who all these people are?

To help progress the above issue, Hannah McNerney, Landcare Goulburn Mulwarees's Regenerative Grazing and Farming Group's Project Officer has visited the farm and, as a first step Greg and Jon are planning to be part of the existing Soil Improvement Project, initiated by Craig Hunt, a neighbour. At the same time, more land on an adjacent farm has been found.

Greg and Jon's comprehensive slide describes their journey and plans for the future. The walk around the farm showed the benefits of their regenerative work so and

There are a number of creeks on the property that are important source of water.

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Passing the main dam in search of the good work that had been done on the farm

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Some deep conversation on the finer points of the pasture and the shelter belts that had been planted. Many contributed to the conversation, but not all present seemed to be engaged?

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Greg seems to be wondering where his cattle have gone and whether it is too-late to go back to breeding alpacas. In the picture are Greg in the foreground and then left to right we have, Mike, Robert, Donna, Craig's better half, Huw and then Craig. Or it maybe that Greg was working out how he could move the motely crew along to avoid being eaten out of house and home?

Nurrenyen was a fine example of the benefits of taking the next steps down the regenerative journey, with the starting point of solid achievements with the alpacas, with that expertise now to be applied to breeding of the Belted Galloways. This included not just improved pastures but building the farm's biodiversity. So here is a good case study where regenerative does not just secure the future of the farm but delivers better returns on the sale of the livestock. A clear plan based on Greg and Jon's vision for the farm, will help ensure that the project stays on-track.