

## Gra\$\$ to Dollars grazing course assists to increase stocking density and create a pasture plan.

NAME: CARLYLE HOLDINGS

LOCATION: ANGASTON & MENGLERS HILL

ANNUAL RAINFALL: 525MM

FARM SIZE: 700 HA

SOIL TYPE: LOAM OVER HEAVY CLAY

Carlyle Holdings run a sheep enterprise across two properties – one east of Angaston and one at Mengler's Hill in the Barossa Valley.

They run 970 breeding ewes, 800 ewe and wether hoggets and 1000 mature wethers for wool production.

### Enterprise

Pete Mitchell runs a self-replacing merino enterprise with a strong focus on wool production. They are currently running 970 breeding ewes on their Angaston property and 800 hogget ewes and wethers. The ewes lamb down in May / June. 900 to 1000 older wethers are retained for wool production and run on the Menglers Hill property until they are cast for age.

### History

The property has traditionally been run predominantly with set stocking grazing management, with livestock grazing unimproved pastures.

### Improving Pastures

#### Upskilling

Pete Mitchell enrolled in the Gra\$\$ to Dollars course as he was keen to educate himself further on pasture varieties, look at opportunities to broaden his horizons and to manage the land better while improving his gross margins.

#### Soil testing

Soil tests were taken on many paddocks around the property as part of the Landscape SA Hills and Fleurieu's Soil Acidity project, this has been helpful to help diagnose problem areas and look at options to remediate these areas.



*The first Gra\$\$ to Dollars session held at Pete Mitchell's place in February 2020.*

### Cleaning up paddocks

To increase pasture production, Pete chose to sow cereal crops to clean up paddocks which had major problem weeds in the form of barley grass, soursobs, geranium, and capeweed. Pete's approach has been to use low-cost cover crops as competition to weeds initially, rather than outlaying large amounts of money on chemical control and perennial pastures immediately.

This year he has also sown vetch as a clean-up crop to control grassy weeds and to cut for hay, however he had a pest problem with cut worm so did not achieve the hay yields he was hoping for. He will continue to use cereal crops in the future to clean up paddocks.

### Pasture planning

During the individual coaching session as part of the Gra\$\$ to Dollars course, a property plan was formed which included choosing paddocks to sow new pastures into and utilising grazing pressure in others to improve the pasture composition and control grass weeds.

It was also concluded that the stocking rate could be increased on the Angaston property and gross margins improved by increasing kg wool produced per ha which Pete will follow up in the coming years.

### Outback oat crop for weaned lambs

Pete sowed 17ha to Outback oats in late May to provide high-quality feed to wean his lambs onto – with the added benefit of cleaning the paddock up to sow a Phalaris pasture in 2021. The oats were sown at 80kg/ha along with 100kg/ha DAP at seeding, 80kg of urea/ha was also spread over the growing season. The paddock generated a large amount of feed due to a favourable season, high seeding rate and adequate fertiliser application.



*Pete Mitchell in his Outback oat crop which he successfully weaned and grew out lambs on.*

Pete put his lambs onto the pasture in August when it was measuring 3500kg of dry matter per Ha. The paddock managed to carry 650 weaned lambs,(plus an additional 200 lambs added in October) from August until early December. It was grazed at an average of 42DSE/ha during this time and the paddock still has plenty of bulk dry feed.

Pete noticed a significant weight gain in his lambs compared to previous years, a minimal tail in the weaners and an ability for him to sell off lambs at good weights if he required. He also had less than 1% post weaning loss which has been lower than previous years.

### Water Quality

On the Angaston property, water quality due to high salinity, has restricted effective grazing and reduced stocking density in some paddocks. Pete has drilled a new bore this year and now has good quality water reticulated around the property which will allow more effective grazing and utilisation of the whole property into the future.

### Containment paddock

Over the last few seasons, which have seen early finishes and late starts, Pete has utilised a 7ha sacrifice paddock as a containment area for his single bearing ewes. This has taken the pressure off the rest of the property and allowed him to maintain groundcover over the late summer and autumn period and to spell paddocks in early winter (for later lambing ewes). Once the ewes were taken out of the sacrifice paddock in early May to lamb down, the paddock was sown to ryegrass and Outback oats.



*Weaned lambs going onto the Outback oat crop.*

### The future

On the Angaston property the paddocks which are earmarked for pasture upgrade will be predominately sown with an annual Italian ryegrass whilst one paddock will be sown to phalaris, and cereals will continue to be sown for grazing and hay.

There is a good existing clover base over most of the property,

so paddocks that are not to be improved immediately will be subdivided to decrease their size and to improve the pasture species by effective grazing.

Soil testing will continue in December to check soil acidity along with available phosphorous, sulphur and potassium levels and enable soil fertility deficiencies to be corrected in early autumn.

An increase in stocking density within paddocks, and stocking rate across the whole property, will not only improve the gross margins of the merino enterprise, but also allow Pete to focus on pasture improvement across priority paddocks and give him the ability to manage other paddocks using grazing.

*The Gra\$\$ to Dollars training course was supported by the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board and Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA). The course was presented by Tim Prance (T Prance Rural Consulting) and Deb Scammell (Talking Livestock).*