



case studies

Jeanette McPetrie

Killara Park, near Wellington, NSW

Acknowledgements

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In 1998 Jeanette McPetrie purchased 'Killara Park', located approximately 18km south east of Wellington. This 386ha property had been managed using very heavy grazing and was infested with noxious weeds such as Bathurst Burrs, Scotch Thistle, Tiger Pear & Prickly Pear, St Barnaby's, Horehound and Johnson Grass.

The soil varies across the property with dark reddish brown clay loam, steep stony shallow soils fine sandy loams and loam soils. The average rainfall is around 610mm.

Jeanette runs a mixed farming system of Angus and Hereford cattle. She currently uses an oats/cereal crop rotation to assist livestock production. She uses pasture cropping for livestock where the pasture base consists mainly of fescue, phalaris, cocksfoot, lucerne and a mix of three clovers.

Motivating factors

Jeanette spent some time observing various no-till options and initially started by using minimum till. Jeanette could see the advantages of weed management options using the direct drill farming systems.

Jeanette hired a Silver Streak machine to sow crops, then, in early 2007 Jeanette applied for 'On-ground Implementation of Conservation Farming Project' funding to convert to no-till by lifting her combine harvester by 0.2m so as to fit narrow points and press wheels.

Benefits

Jeanette sees the main benefits as:

- improved fallow moisture storage
- improved soil structure
- improved microbial activity
- reduced erosion.

Jeanette also appreciates that this system helps prevent soil from becoming fragile and enables her to better monitor native pasture. The reduction of labour cost is also important for her.

Unforeseen problems

Two key problems have been the use of hired spray units and the presence of wiregrass in the system. Jeanette is working to address these problems.

The current costs of fertiliser and chemicals are impacting on many landholders. To reduce the impact of these costs on her business Jeanette intends to minimise cropping for the time being.

Plans for the future

Jeanette hopes to create her own native grasses seed stock paddock. She also wants to plant a 3000 tree Hazelnut grove under-sown with pasture suitable for sheep. She plans to maintain groundcover and her soil by de-stocking in dry times or by using holding yards to feed stock.