

Shelterbelts in the hills – stock protection and wildlife benefits

Tracey & Wayne Standfield, Fish Creek South Gippsland

This Case Study has been developed as part of the *Profitable Dairying in a Carbon Constrained Future* project.

It is one in a series of resources developed to profile practices that profitably reduce greenhouse gas emissions from dairy farm systems, embedded in the context of every-day farm management decisions.

The Australian dairy industry has committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions intensity.

Shelterbelts can enhance productivity on farm by keeping cows comfortable and allowing them to put their energy into milk production. They also provide opportunity for sequestration of carbon on farm and consequently contribute to the efforts of reducing emissions on dairy farms.

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Their dairy business

Tracey & Wayne Standfield have been dairy farming at Fish Creek since 1995. The couple run a successful farm business focusing on a seasonal calving, pasture based system. When they arrived at the farm there were some golden Cyprus hedges in place for wind protection but little other tree shelter for their herd in the undulating hills north of the Fish Creek township.

Planting design and approach

Stock movement through waterways and gullies proved difficult in the early days for the Standfield's and it was not long before the couple decided to fence out the waterways that flow into Waratah Creek and eventually Fish Creek.

Steep gullies and soaks were difficult and unproductive areas that were also fenced out and filled with native trees and shrubs. This was the beginning of the network of vegetation that has since changed the landscape and offered winter shelter against the westerly winds as well as shade protection in the summer.

Fine tuning planting techniques and their choice of species, Tracey and

Wayne have learnt a great deal about what works for them over the years.

The young couple took inspiration from some of the early Landcare farmers in the area who were at the time pioneering techniques for planting indigenous species of vegetation to enhance their farming properties, provide shade and shelter for stock as well as gain the benefits of having wildlife on their farms.

Gaining knowledge from their own trials and working with a local nurseryman, Wayne and Tracey are now enhancing their run off block to protect their young stock. They involve their two children in helping with the tree planting on both properties and gain great satisfaction from achieving a healthy environment together.

Initially the whole tree run area was sprayed for weeds and tube stock planted in autumn only to be swamped with weeds in the spring. Now the areas to be planted are spot sprayed with planting taking place in spring. Tracey and Wayne find this change ensures less weed competition and greater success rates with their planting.



Benefits of shade and shelter

Over the years, the shelterbelts have widened. Initially they were two rows deep allowing for a taller eucalypt row and a lower row of melaleucas. Now three or four rows of vegetation are planted offering a dense belt of vegetation which results in a more effective wind break.

All areas are fenced with a minimum of two wire electric fences to ensure stock are excluded from the treed areas.

Looking across the milking area and the run off block today it is inspiring to see what can be achieved in a twenty year period.

The farm is a picture of green grass, contented cows and a zig zag of vegetation filling gullies and sitting atop ridgelines offering protection to pastures and stock. Koalas, kangaroos, a multitude of birds and reptiles and countless other animals also call the Standfield's property home.



Photo: Tracey & Wayne Standfield's property at Fish Creek

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Acknowledgments

*Photo – supplied by Gillian Hayman

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