

# Coolringdon

## CASE STUDY

### Property Snapshot

Coolringdon is a grazing property with links to the earliest settlement of the Monaro district around the 1830s. Coolringdon was owned by the Casey family from the early 1900s to the 1990s when it was gifted to the Monaro community by the late Emily Litchfield, formerly Casey. It is run by the John and Betty Casey Research Trust as a working farm promoting best practice primary production and land management. Profits go to The University of Sydney's Faculty of Agriculture and Environment for research projects on the Monaro.

**Location:** Cooma, Monaro region, south east NSW

**Size:** 3,400 hectares

**Enterprise:** 10-14,000 Merino sheep as well as cattle trading when conditions allow.

### Challenge

Coolringdon promotes best practice land management. This includes ensuring there is good groundcover which provides benefits including soil health, water capture and retention, carbon sequestration and drought moderation. It can assist in preventing the incursion of invasive species such as African Lovegrass, which is a



major challenge for land management in the Monaro region. Isolated African Lovegrass plants have been found on Coolringdon.

Coolringdon aims to ensure this groundcover is maintained through a well-planned system of rotational grazing, moving stock between paddocks as seasonal conditions allow. To ensure optimal production levels and profitability without degrading the paddocks, Coolringdon's grazing system is based on a breakdown of 50% improved pasture, 10% lucerne and 40% native pasture.

In order to achieve the desired production levels, the enterprise needed to slightly increase the overall amount of improved pasture to bring it up to the 50% proportion. Two 40 ha areas of degraded native pasture were selected as being suitable for this purpose. These areas were part of two much larger paddocks which included substantial areas of native woodland that are planned to be retained for stock shelter and fauna habitat.

Coolringdon management was keen to

work within the legislative framework for management of native groundcover, but needed the right advice about identification and treatment options.

It approached Local Land Services officer, David Eddy, who has nearly three decades experience in grasslands management in the Monaro. He visited Coolringdon a number of times and conducted on-ground

"We wanted to work within the guidelines because we are setting up Coolringdon to be an example for how you should run a farm on the Monaro. Local Land Services and its Sustainable Land Management officer, David Eddy, played a very significant part in us developing the property as we wanted to. David has a really good appreciation of the Monaro and its native pastures. We worked with him to make sure we were operating within the guidelines and we had confidence in his expertise."

- Howard Charles, Trustee, Coolringdon



**Local Land Services**

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plot assessments, including species identification.

Local Land Services was able to determine that the areas assessed were of a significantly degraded quality, due to past factors including grazing practices dating back to the 1800s. These areas, classed as Category 1 – Exempt land under the Land Management Framework are allowed to be cleared without approval.

The information from Local Land Services gave Coolringdon management the clarity it needed to proceed with its plan to establish a greater area of improved pasture to achieve the desired production levels.

The data collected during field assessment was also used to obtain pre-referral advice from the Commonwealth that these areas were below the condition threshold for regulation as an endangered ecological community under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act.

## Work being undertaken

Coolringdon is establishing two areas of improved pasture of around 40 ha each. The paddocks will be sprayed and then sown down with oats and forage wheat to prepare them for sowing with improved pasture, including clover and phalaris.

The improved pasture areas are within larger paddocks of around 110 hectares which each include around 70 ha of woodland areas which will be retained.

The manager may also put in a subdivision fence to allow a more liberal stocking on the improved pasture, without putting pressure on the adjacent native pasture.



## On ground achievements

Coolringdon management is forecasting that once the improved pasture is established in the two additional paddocks, they will return 2-3 times what they currently do from around 2 DSE (Dry Sheep Equivalents) per hectare per annum to around 4 DSE/ha/pa and running a 4.5 DSE/ha/pa across the property as a whole.

Profits will continue to be provided to The University of Sydney for agricultural research, specifically on the Monaro. In the past two years, nearly \$770,000 has been granted to the University's Faculty of Agriculture and Environment.

The ability to expand the amount of improved pasture available on Coolringdon under its rotational grazing system will ensure achievable production levels without overstocking and potential erosion. Ensuring a good amount of groundcover is a key measure in reducing the risk of incursion of the invasive weed, African Lovegrass.

"Coolringdon has been a pastoral property since the 1830s and the job of the trustees is to manage it in perpetuity as a pastoral enterprise. The vision is producing a model farm that makes money and preserves the environment and also provides lessons through the research for the whole Monaro community."

**- James Litchfield, Founding Trustee, Coolringdon**

