

Private Native Forestry at Pine Ridge

CASE STUDY

Property Snapshot

Pine Ridge has been in Norm Arkell's family since 1978. He began running the property around a decade ago, and now manages it full-time since the retirement of his parents. Mr Arkell, his wife and two sons run a diversified operation with just over half managed under a Private Native Forestry plan and the remainder grazed for beef cattle and Boer goats.

Location: Mendooran, North-East of Dubbo in Central NSW

Size: 420 hectares

Enterprise: Beef cattle, Boer goats and Private Native Forestry

"The Private Native Forest has been excellent because it has given us extra income we can use to feed stock during drought. The forest is a very important part of this property, I want it to be ongoing and sustainable right into the future for my sons."

Norm Arkell, owner,



Challenge

Drought has significantly affected the productivity at Pine Ridge, which would normally carry up to 60 cattle and 120 goats but has been significantly de-stocked. Dams on the property are running low and the Arkells have been hand feeding remaining stock for the past two years.

The ongoing drought has also affected the health of the Private Native Forest area which has been exacerbated by overcrowding due to a past absence of forest management. Some species are beginning to struggle from the continuing conditions, including a species of native oak used as a feed source for a colony of Glossy Black Cockatoos known to live on the property.

The Arkells are keen to improve Pine Ridge so it is sustainable and viable in the long term as a farm and forestry operation and ensure it is better equipped to survive dry times. They approached Local Land Services to help reverse some of the historical impacts of overgrazing such as poor soil fertility and high acidity levels. The family attended courses on livestock management methods such as cell grazing. They are also working

with Local Land Services on sustainably managing and integrating their forest and farming resources and received assistance in transferring ownership of the Private Native Forest plan from one generation to the next.

Use of Private Native Forestry

The Private Native Forest on Pine Ridge operates under the Cypress and Western Hardwood Code. The timber, mainly Ironbark, is harvested for fencing, decking and firewood.

The income stream from the forest harvesting is very important to the overall viability of the property, helping fund fodder and extra water troughs during drought and other farm improvements in good years.

The absence of Forest Management since the last harvesting operation had caused the forest to become overcrowded. Competition for nutrient and water resources meant trees were of poorer quality for timber production. However, good forest management is now in place, in part due to the strong relationship that has developed between the Arkells and harvesting contractor, Dan Clissold of Pilliga Natural Timbers.



Local Land
Services

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Harvesting is now done sustainably with the overall aim of improving the long-term quality and health of the forest. At each event, a low-intensity approach ensures a profitable amount of timber is removed but not overharvested. Younger or smaller trees are identified and retained for future harvests. The thinning effect of the harvesting provides the light and space for them to grow to a viable size. Existing and potential habitat trees are marked and conserved.

On-ground achievements

Sustainable management of the Private Native Forest will produce a regular harvesting event every 20 to 30 years. This provides an ongoing timber source for Tamworth based company, Pilliga Natural Timbers and jobs for several of its employees during a two to three week harvest period on Pine Ridge.

The income generated from timber harvesting provides cash flow for the Arkells in tough times such as drought. The low-intensity approach to harvesting ensures harvesting and the income it provides is long-term.

A section of the Private Native Forest was cordoned off from harvesting because it had a high concentration of She oaks (*Allocasurina*) which are a key feed source for Glossy Black Cockatoos. All She oaks within the harvesting area were also retained as a requirement of the Private Native Forestry code. These She oaks have been impacted by drought and overcrowding of the forest, however harvesting adjacent to these trees will not only encourage germination of new seedlings but will also promote the health and growth of the existing trees, providing ongoing food resources for the cockatoos.

All parts of the harvested trees are used and value adding is applied as much as possible. The main products are sawlogs for construction, fencing and landscaping timbers, fence posts, decking and flooring

as well as commercial firewood. The remaining excess timber is left for use by the Arkells and the bark is mulched and spread over the forest floor.



"We harvest so that the forest is here for tomorrow and the next day, and so on. We don't want to turn up and only have one shot at it, that's not in anyone's best interests, including the health of the forest."

Dan Clissold, Pilliga Natural Timbers

Fact file:

- 420 ha integrated farming and forestry operation
- Private Native Forestry provides important ongoing income to help the farm in tough times
- Timber harvested for a range of products including fencing, decking and firewood
- Improved forest health through best practice Forest Management
- Observed Glossy Black Cockatoo habitat left undisturbed and key feed trees retained in the harvested area
- A strong working and information sharing relationship between all parties, including the landholder, contractor and Local Land Services