

# Western Sydney University Farm Hawkesbury

## CASE STUDY



**Joe Kovacek began this cattle operation in 2015.**



Joe Kovacek runs a commercial beef cattle operation from the 900 ha Western Sydney University Farm (UniFarm) located at the Hawkesbury campus.

His grass fed and grass finished beef is sold to select butchers in the Hawkesbury and Sydney basin who are interested in sourcing ethically raised beef. For Joe, the operation is about producing healthy food while regenerating the land. He has achieved this by practicing holistic management.

Four years ago, Joe took over the commercial operation at the Uni Farm after completing a Holistic Management course. Weed density and ground cover issues were his main challenges. After he established new pastures through multi-species cropping, he grazed his livestock using rotational grazing. His livestock graze in one paddock for 24 to 48 hours and then move



onto another paddock. Joe mulches this grazed paddock, bringing different pastures to the same height and leaving the paddock to recover for three months. "The cattle are less fussy in this grazing system," Joe said reducing overgrazing of the more palatable species.

As part of the holistic management of the farm, Joe plans his paddocks in advance factoring in recovery time, available feed, stock numbers and so on.

"This is not the same farm that it was four years ago," Joe said. There is good ground cover of nutritional and diverse pastures that are now largely self-sowing so the occasional weeds that pop up are not a concern". Occasionally Joe top dresses with fertiliser when sowing is required. Joe also

plants summer crops such as sorghum and sudan to ensure there are other feed options as well as cutting hay and silage to conserve feed for dry periods.

Joe also believes minimising the impact on the environment through responsible farming is important. The soil on the farm is continuously tested as it is close to waterways and an endangered ecological community. "Reducing chemical inputs ensures any runoff into the local catchment is clean," Joe said

The farming operation also includes the breeding of a strong maternal cow herd of a commercial crossbred and small Angus and Limousin stud. The farm also is used as an educational resource for students.

### What is holistic management?

- Holistic management is one type of regenerative agricultural practice.
- A whole farm planning system that helps farmers to sustainably manage agricultural resources in order to gain environmental, economic, and social benefits.
- Restores grasslands by regenerating the natural soil and water cycles and enhance biodiversity, improving drought resilience.

For further information:



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Western Sydney University Farms



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