

BushBroker[®]

Standards for management – Ecological grazing

Information sheet No. 13

In Victoria, grassland Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs) are grouped according to 'high' and 'low' rainfall.

High rainfall grasslands (i.e. rainfall areas above 500mm per annum) are often dominated by Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda* spp.).

Low rainfall grasslands (i.e. rainfall areas below 500mm per annum) are dominated by a range of grasses including Wallaby-grasses (*Austrodanthonia* spp.), Spear-grasses (*Austrostipa* spp.), Windmill Grass (*Chloris* spp.) or Spider-grass (*Enteropogon* spp.).

Dryland grassy woodlands often occur naturally as a mosaic of two structural components, 'woody' areas containing mature trees, regenerating trees or woody understorey interspersed with 'grassy' areas lacking woody vegetation.

Different management approaches may be required to maintain and enhance native vegetation quality within these different grassy vegetation types. Each BushBroker Landowner Agreement (Landowner Agreement) will specify the management actions for each site. The following provides a summary of the typical desirable grazing management regimes for the different grassy ecosystem types identified above.

High rainfall grasslands

In 'high rainfall' grasslands, the absence of periodic biomass removal (e.g. fire, grazing) increases the risk of the native grassy sward becoming dominant over time leading to a loss of the inter-tussock spaces that are important as habitat for a range of plant and animal species. If biomass is not removed then there can be a dramatic decline in overall vegetation quality within a 10-year period.

As such, for 'high' rainfall grassland EVCs, avoiding a decline in site condition requires some form of active biomass management. The preferred grazing management for 'high' rainfall grassland EVCs is to graze the site from late Summer to early Winter while ensuring that the total vegetation cover does not fall below 70%, and then remove stock to allow native seed set.

In some cases, grazing into early spring may be used in addition to targeted weed control in an effort to reduce weed cover (and will be specified in the Landowner Agreement). In such cases grazing into early spring will only be allowed after monitoring of the site by the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) establishes that the proportion of weeds is equal or greater than 25% of the total vegetation cover, and the total vegetation cover is at least 70%.

A less desirable grazing management strategy is to not restrict the grazing period/frequency but still ensure the total vegetation cover does not fall below 70%.

Low rainfall grasslands

'Low rainfall' grasslands do not have the same problem of native biomass build up, and therefore do not require regular biomass removal. However, this type of vegetation is often impacted by annual weeds which may need to be controlled.

The preferred management for 'low rainfall' grassland EVCs is to exclude stock, and undertake targeted weed control at the site. In some cases, grazing in autumn to late winter may be used in addition to targeted weed control in an effort to reduce annual weed cover. In such cases stock should be excluded and grazing only allowed after monitoring of the site by DSE in Autumn establishes that the proportion of annual weeds is equal or greater than 25% of the total vegetation cover.

Grassy woodlands

If the Landowner Agreement specifies that grazing of the grassland areas within a grassy woodland is appropriate for the site, the site map will clearly identify the zones where you will need to exclude stock, and zones where grazing management will occur. You are required to exclude grazing from an area twice the canopy diameter of any tree(s) to protect the tree from the impacts of stock and allow natural recruitment to occur (see figure below). This is likely to involve some form of

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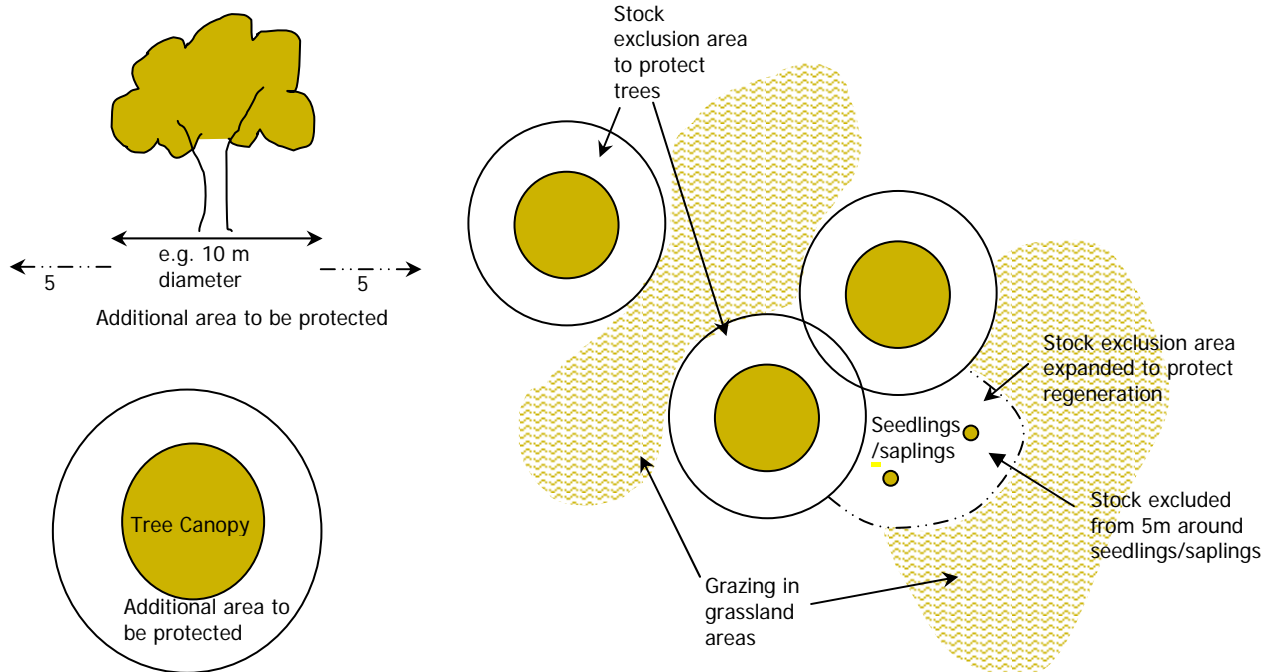
fencing and will also typically include targeted weed control within this area to manage the weed response post-grazing.

Each year, you will be required to expand the boundary of the stock-exclusion zone to a minimum of five metres from each recorded new seedling/sapling(s). This will be determined in consultation with the BushBroker Project Officer following monitoring.

Weed control

To reduce the risk of introducing and spreading weeds, livestock will be required to be kept in a holding paddock for a minimum period of 24 hours prior to entering the site. For more information please see the BushBroker Information Sheet No. 8 – *Weeds*.

Stock exclusion zones for woody vegetation



Health and safety

You are responsible for ensuring all works required in implementing the management actions are conducted in a safe manner and comply with the lawful requirements of any Authority, and with all Acts, regulations and other laws which may be applicable to the Landowner Agreement.

To determine whether there are any underground pipes or cables on your property, you may wish to consider calling 1100 - "Dial before you dig". This is a free referral service from anywhere in Australia.

Further information

For further information on BushBroker, please contact the DSE Customer Service Centre on **136 186** or visit the DSE website at: www.dse.vic.gov.au/nativevegetation. All BushBroker Information Sheets are available on the website.

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Published by the Victorian Government Department of Sustainability and Environment, Melbourne, September 2009
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Authorised by the Victorian Government, 8 Nicholson Street, East Melbourne
Printed by Stream Solutions
ISBN 978-1-74242-181-0 (print - set)
ISBN 978-1-74242-182-7 (online - set)
For more information contact the DSE Customer Service Centre 136 186

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