



Stock Containment Areas

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The biggest factor affecting resource damage during dry periods is the amount of vegetative cover retained to protect the soil.

The value of removing stock from vulnerable areas during such times cannot be over-stated.

Grazing and trafficking by stock can quickly reduce the cover to levels which set-up wind erosion problems.

One of the best ways of keeping vegetative cover from falling to critical levels is to remove stock from normal paddocks and 'feed-lot' them instead in a carefully selected part of the property.

It is important to act early as unconfined grazing and trampling will put considerable stress on land in already in a vulnerable state. If vegetation is removed so that only about one third of the soil remains covered then wind will start blowing soil particles away. Trampling will aggravate the situation. Further, the land will then be predisposed to water erosion problems when the rain returns.

Benefits of stock containment

- Protection of vegetative cover on majority of property
- Less stress on flora and fauna values of the property
- Facilitation of stock feeding, watering, monitoring and handling.
- Control of shelter and shade
- Better control of weed contamination associated with imported feed.

What is a stock containment area?

A carefully selected part of the property which is set up to hold, feed and water core farm-stock during adverse weather periods. It should be considered as part of the property management plan and once established should be maintained and be available for use during emergencies.

If there is any intention to convert a stock containment area into a feedlot for cattle then it will have to meet the requirements of the "Victorian Code for Cattle Feedlots". Information on this is contained in Agnote AG0563: Beef cattle feedlots: how to get approval; and Agnote AG0589: Planning requirements for feedlots of less than 50 head capacity.

What is needed for a stock containment area?

- An area of 2-5 square metres per sheep and 10-15 square metres per beast (lower figure to be used on light soils to reduce dust).
- Reliable fencing.
- Appropriate subdivision to separate different classes of stock.
- Watering troughs with a reliable reticulated supply of water, refer to Information Note LC0077: Water Supply for Stock Containment Areas.
- Stabilisation of soil around troughs through the use of stone or gravel where necessary.
- . May be better to refer to troughs being set up further apart from feed area ie opposite end of pen
- Trees within the SCA must be guarded.
- Shelter in the lee of trees is ideal, or provision is made for establishing shelter belts. Shade cloth or alternative can be utilized to provide shelter.
- Vehicle access for feeding and stock movement.
- 500 sheep constitute a maximum desirable working number for animal welfare and husbandry reasons. The establishment of additional areas may be necessary in some circumstances.
- Similarly 100 cattle constitute a maximum desirable number.

Location

- Readily accessible to homestead.
- Not within or including areas of native vegetation as irreversible damage will result
- On moderately sloping, well drained, stable soils such as a clay or clay loam.
- Where problems of noise and smell will be minimised.
- In the lee of shelter
- Consider privacy issues with regard to site selection.
- Close to shearing shed is ideal.



Other issues

- Water quality needs to be protected through the following methods:
 - The stock containment area should be setback from watercourses and water storages. A distance of 500 metres is desirable if no other management methods are to be used in combination with the setback
 - A nutrient filter should be established on the down slope side of the stock containment area. The filter may be provided by a vegetation buffer strip, or by constructing traps from wire netting or straw bales.
- It is important to closely monitor animals during the period of containment.

Stock containment area checklist

Area

2-5m² per sheep, 10-25m² per beast (lower figure to be used on lighter loams to reduce dust – higher figures for ewes and lambs, and cows and calves).

Water

Supply of clean cool water supplied by trough. Plan for an **average** of 6 litre/day/ sheep and 50 litre/day per beast. This can increase to 9 litre and 90 litres respectively for very hot days or lactating animals

Trough length

15 meters of trough edge available to 500 sheep, 100 cattle could require 5 m of trough edge. Anecdotal evidence from landholders is that less has been used satisfactorily. Flow rates are often more important, refer to Information Note LC0077: Water Supply for Stock Containment Areas.

Slope and soil type

Moderately sloping land with well drained and stable soils such as a clay or clay loam

Odour and noise

Some isolation from dwellings is necessary.

Feeding

Feeding apparatus to be used, do not feed directly on to soil. Use 15-20 metres of double sided trough for 100 sheep, 400-600 mm each for beef cattle

Old conveyor belt or corrugated iron between two logs and tractor tyres and 44 gallon drums cut in half have been used in the past.

Access

For feeding, watering, monitoring and getting stock in and out.

Shade

Cool sheep will drink less and be less stressed.

Runoff

Consider where runoff will go from the site. What are your options for avoiding contamination of off-site water quality.

Subdivision

For separating different classes of stock including shy feeders.

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