

24 November 2008

WESTERN FAMILY NAMED CARBON COCKY OF THE YEAR

The Mosely family of Etiwanda and Manuka Stations near Cobar have won the prestigious title of NSW Western Plains Carbon Cocky of the Year 2008-2009.

Stuart Mosely represented his family, which includes wife Nancy, son Andrew and daughter-in-law Megan, at the award ceremony at the Carbon Farming Expo and Conference held in Orange on November 18 and 19.

Western CMA Rangeland Rehabilitation Officer, Chris Higgins, says the award recognised the Moselys' efforts to significantly increase the soil carbon levels on their property through constantly improving land management.

"The competition assessed three land management principles to judge whether farm soil carbon levels are increasing," Mr Higgins said.

"Experience and scientific research in other areas of Australia has shown these three management principles increase carbon levels in the soil.

"These are: maximising groundcover and biomass production, increasing plant root depth (with perennials or healthier crops), and reducing cultivation (ploughing) and compaction to a minimum when cropping or sowing pastures," Mr Higgins said.

The Mosely family, who are active members of the Buckwaroon Landcare Group, have used a combination of carbon-friendly practices on the 26,670 hectares they manage south of Cobar.

These include managing invasive native scrub, erecting total grazing pressure fencing on 14,000 hectares, rotational grazing with at least 150 day rest periods and conservation farming techniques such as pasture cropping.

They manage their properties under the family's holistic goal: 'To ensure our decisions are ecologically sound, socially responsible and economically viable'.

Recent scientific testing on Etiwanda undertaken by scientists from Trangie Research Station and University of New England, showing positive environmental indicator results are being achieved and these support the visual improvements the Mosely's are seeing across their property.

The data indicates increasing groundcover percentages, increasing soil carbon levels (0.6 to 0.88%) in 3 years and decreasing soil bulk density, that is, the soil is becoming softer and will continue to do so with continued planning and care.

Megan Mosely says Mother Nature approves of their new approach to grazing management.



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"We are seeing thick and vigorous establishment of native perennial grasses in country managed for regeneration," Megan said.

"We have not sown any grass seeds yet abundant grasslands are returning indicating that the right conditions have been created for the seeds naturally in the soil to germinate and flourish," she said.

It is now known that actively growing, healthy grassland has the capacity to sequester large amounts CO₂ from the air to the soil and has the potential to positively impact on global warming.

The Mosely's have identified three critical points for successful regeneration of perennial plants across their rangelands.

They are:

- The use of grazing charts to plan recovery periods
- Running animals in one mob for planned periods of time to maximise recovery periods
- Introducing pasture cropping in conjunction with planned grazing

"Two thirds of Australia and indeed the world is semi-arid or arid country and with this new knowledge all people have the ability to increase ground cover at minimal cost and have a massive impact on one of the biggest issues facing mankind - global climate change. And most importantly the change is do-able," Megan said.

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Caption: Western CMA Rangeland Rehabilitation Officer, Chris Higgins with Stuart Mosely at the Carbon Farming Expo.

