

“YOU’VE GOT TO HAVE TREES!”

Peter Reeckman talks about the value of trees and other projects at ‘Umbango’

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Peter Reeckman has been farming at ‘Umbango’ for 28 years. Together with his wife Debbie, they run a self-replacing merino flock and beef cattle on their 1,200 hectare property.

Driven by some major salinity issues in parts of the property, Peter planted a series of tree lots and also took part in a significant farm forestry project. This project, commencing in 2003, involved planting an area of 9.5 ha to a range of tree species, including many Eucalypts along with some Acacias. The majority of these plantings have been very successful, and are now showing excellent growth (see photo below).



The farm forestry lot on ‘Umbango’

The salty soak downslope from the tree plot has shown much improvement and, as a further potential benefit, Peter is excited about the opportunity of the forestry plot attracting bees to the property, when the trees begin flowering.

As a further strategy for dealing with the dryland salinity areas on the property, Peter commenced a Perennial Pasture Management Plan with the then Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Authority in 2006. This provided the Reeckman’s with a grant to sow perennial pastures, including phalaris, white clover and sub clover.

These pastures complement the native pastures which the Reeckman’s have on many of their hilly paddocks. The native pastures include weeping grass (*Microlaena stipoides*), red grass

(*Bothriochloa macra*) and kangaroo grass (*Themeda triandra*), and are an important part of the grazing system.

While the drought had a significant impact on many of the improved pastures, much of the phalaris and sub clover survived and continues to offer beneficial feed to the stock on the property, while also helping to improve the areas affected by salinity.

The Reeckman's have been members of the Tarcutta Valley Landcare Group for many years, and most of the projects on their property have stemmed from their involvement with the Landcare Group.

In recent years, Peter and Debbie have been involved with the Cross Property Planning project. Their involvement in this project has allowed them to plant scattered trees, with the goal of ultimately creating wildlife corridors to improve connectivity between areas of native vegetation within and across properties in the region.

It may be some time before the trees are big enough to provide this cross property linkage, but Peter believes that the connections are a really good idea, and are the best means of providing valuable habitat for native birds and other wildlife. Says Peter: "You've got to have trees!"



The Reeckman's cattle graze on perennial pasture, near an area previously severely affected by dryland salinity