

Nomination for Award of Excellence in Rangeland Management

Tom Mann “Hillgrove” Charters Towers (Jan 2022)

Length of time associated with the rangelands.

In the early 1950s Tom Mann commenced his working life as a first year jackaroo with Scottish Australian Company, an English company at “Nive Downs”, a large sheep and cattle property near Augathella in Qld. After a six month tour to Europe with his parents, Tom returned to the Scottish Australian Company at Eastmere (Lake Galilee) and Kynuna Station where he rose to overseer.

In 1958 Tom drew the Charters Towers block “Lochwall” in a land ballot and proceeded to develop the property. After marrying Eve Allingham in 1965, Tom worked with the Allingham family to establish Hillgrove Pastoral Company in the Charters Towers district, which expanded with the acquisition of an additional five cattle stations that gave the next generation the option of a life in the beef industry.

Nature of the commitment to the use and management of the rangelands.

- Tom Mann is a prominent figure in Australia’s beef industry. He has given presentations in many forums across the country as his views and suggestions for the industry are widely respected. However, he also “walks the walk”. This has been demonstrated to many visitors over several decades that have had the opportunity to inspect “Hillgrove” and hear of Tom’s approaches and see first-hand the management practices appropriate for an extensive beef enterprise in Northern Australia.
- During Tom’s tenure all Hillgrove Pastoral Company properties were managed for environmental sustainability and economic viability. This was done by understanding the markets and managing the available feed in the paddock by adjusting stocking rates.
- As part of a regional “needs assessment” conducted by QDPI, Tom provided much valuable information on the type of work that the department should be doing locally. The link between land condition and profitability was one of the areas that were highlighted by the needs analysis. An economist undertook this challenging project. Tom’s active participation by providing up to 10 years of production and financial performance data, plus feedback on the method of data collection, made this one of the better such studies undertaken in Queensland up to that point in time.
- Many individuals and groups have visited Hillgrove over the years. Some of the higher profile groups and individuals include:
 - International groups such as the 1993 International Grasslands Congress (Rockhampton) and the 1999 International Rangelands Congress (Townsville) post conference tours
 - Under-secretaries of federal government departments including treasury, primary industries and education as members of the Commonwealth “Rural Awareness Tours” in the mid 1990’s
 - Ambassadors to Australia from the USA, Russia and South Africa during the 1980’s and 90’s

Contribution to building capacity in the rangelands community.

- When discussing the management of Hillgrove Pastoral Company with visitors, Tom adopts the open book approach and is willing to cover taxation and debt management, issues that many other producers are reluctant to talk about.
- Tom was an inaugural member of the North Qld Beef Research Committee (NQBRC) and became chairman in 1997 for three years. During his chairmanship, the NQBRC organised a Meat Profit Day in Charters Towers. Tom has also suggested and actively promoted/supported several other NQBRC events since 1993, including:
 - Meat Profit Day in Townsville
 - Beef marketing forums in Bowen & Charters Towers after several market place trade missions to a range of countries. Tom was one of the key presenters with the former chairman of the Queensland China Council, the late Tom Burns AOM at these forums.

○ Bankers forum & field-day in Charters Towers (see details below)

Tom realises that for the beef industry to continue to thrive, organisations such as the NQBRC needs new and young industry players to become members. This was one of Tom's passions during his time with the committee, and the proportion of younger aged members on the NQBRC has increased as a legacy of Tom's term as chair.

- Much of the focus of beef industry R&D organisations is on the production and environmental aspects of the industry. As Tom has always been cognisant of the need for financially viable beef production enterprises, he actively supported and participated in a joint NQBRC/QDPI&F Bankers Forum & Field Tour in 2005.
- At a local and regional level, many fellow producers seek out Tom's views on issues as important as property purchases, market conditions, share-trading and industry contacts on a wide range of issues. He is viewed as a knowledgeable person in the northern beef industry.
- Tom willingly accepted invitations by MLA to be the producer speaker at many MLA Beef-up Forums in Qld, NT & WA. The producer feedback from these forums indicates that Tom's presentations have been the most highly rated.
- Tom has always encouraged younger beef producers to get involved in industry affairs. Tom employed ten young trainees through the local training provider RITE (Rural Industry Training and Extension) during his time at Hillgrove.
- Tom has made a substantial contribution to the Dalrymple Shire community and the Northern beef industry since arriving in the district in 1958. This includes:-
 - Dalrymple Shire councillor for 21 years
 - Towers Pastoral, Agricultural & Mining Assn (Show Society) management committee member
 - North Qld Beef Research Committee member, including three years as chairman
 - Meat Quality Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) advisory committee member. Tom also donated 150 head of cattle for research purposes to the CRC in 1999.
 - "Fletcherview" Research Station Advisory Committee member (James Cook University). Tom provided advice to the university on the selection of a suitable property in 1978.
 - United Graziers Assn member
 - Cattleman's Union of Australia member; Tom was one of a group of northern producers who was instrumental in the formation of the CU.
 - AgForce member
 - Several market place visits to SE Asia, China, Mexico, USA, the Middle East and South America - including tour leader for some visits
 - Board member All Souls & St Gabriel's School
 - Over the years Tom and Eve have made substantial cash contributions to All Souls & St Gabriel's School and the building of The World Theatre in Charters Towers.
- Due to the rural lifestyle and good working conditions, Hillgrove Pastoral Company staff tend to stay with the company for long periods of employment. Appropriate levels of responsibility are given to employees to engender enthusiasm and a strong work ethic. Tom organised a hands-on workshop at "Hillgrove" on personal financial planning for family members and employees and their spouses.

Unique contribution to the science and/or art of rangeland management.

- Tom has always walked the walk.
 - Land condition on Hillgrove has always been good as evidenced by a history of the continuous use of fire as a management tool, both before and during Tom's tenure on the property. The opportunity to burn is greatly reduced under heavy stocking rates.
 - Fire has minimised the increase in woody plant density of Hillgrove and controlled most of the invasive weed species present in the district.
 - As Tom was a regular cattle trader, he had a natural ability to ensure adequate pasture was on-hand to improve cattle condition and maintain good pasture health.

- Over-sowing with legumes across parts of Hillgrove increased carrying capacity and individual animal performance.
- An extensive laneway system improved the movement of cattle around the property to manage stocking rates and readily sell cattle as marketing opportunities arose.
- Tom Mann had a long involvement in R&D at a number of levels including local, regional and national. The following is not a complete list:-
 - In the early 1980's, CSIRO moved the focus of its research to study the effect of land and grazing management on land condition. Tom agreed to a comprehensive trial "Ecological Studies in the Semi-arid Tropics" (ECOSSAT) to record the impact of a range of stocking rates, sown pastures, fertilisers and tree clearing on pasture composition and yield. This trial, which ran for 12 years, generated a huge amount of useful data which has been extensively published by Dr John McIvor and others. The information is widely used in the Burdekin version of the EDGE GLM package.
 - Some of the treatments from the ECOSSAT trial were then used in a short-term trial to compare animal production from land in good condition with that from land on a neighbouring property in poor condition. This trial ran for only a couple of years and produced inconclusive results.
 - A further long-term MLA funded trial (EcoGraze) by CSIRO and DPI then ran from 1993 to 1999 to assess the resilience of basalt country pastures by studying the change in land condition from good to poor, or poor to good using various management techniques including stocking rates, wet season spelling, fire & sown pastures. The data from this trial was published by CSIRO and DPI in the EcoGraze book which has been widely read and the findings adopted by industry – particularly the wet season spelling.

Tom always made these trial sites available for individuals, small groups and large tour groups. He was regarded as an ideal co-operator for hosting on-property research work.

- As well as the trial work, Tom rarely declined a request to host a field-day for the northern beef industry. Some of these events since 1990 include:
 - A Dalrymple Landcare Committee field-day "Managing Basalt Country in North Qld"
 - A QIDC (forerunner of QRAA) seminar during the early 1990's drought
 - A meeting of the Dalrymple Landcare Committee
 - NQ District Landcare Conference field tour (conference was held at "Gainsford")
 - NQBRC meetings
 - Delivering the "Occasional Address" at the JCU Graduation Ceremony in 2015
- Prior to the formation of the NQBRC, many researchers and extension officers would send draft project proposals to Tom for comment and suggested changes; this feedback invariably made the projects more practical and aligned with the needs of the beef industry.
- In the late 1970's, James Cook University decided to establish a research station in the Upper Burdekin area. Tom provided advice to the university on the selection of a suitable property "Fletcherview" in 1978. He been a member of the "Fletcherview" Research Station Advisory Committee from 1982 to the present. This station has become a high priority facility since the establishment of a veterinary school at JCU in 2006.
- When the Commonwealth Government established the Cooperative Research Centre program across Australia in the mid 1990's, the beef industry lobbied successfully for a Beef Cattle (Meat Quality) CRC. The beef industry had to match government funding by raising its own capital. The big pastoral companies made substantial contributions to the CRC and a few family owned cattle operations also contributed. Hillgrove Pastoral Company was one of these generous supporters with a donation of 150 head to use in a study of beef breeds and cross breeding. Tom was also a member of the advisory committee for a period. The CRC for the Management of Tropical Savannas was also established at this time and Tom was the pastoral sector representative on the consultative committee in the late 1990's.
- Many producers are critical of their industry body, MLA, and try to stymie any attempts to increase transaction levees for marketing and R&D. Tom has always recognised and fought for an increase in levees to match the requirements of the red meat industries. He is also a strong believer in allocating significant funds to "Blue Sky" research work to make those rare but revolutionary discoveries that can have a major impact on the industry.

- As already mentioned, Tom’s cattle marketing skills are highly effective. These skills were further enhanced by overseas market based tours to SE Asia, China, Mexico, USA, the Middle East and South America, Tom has addressed many groups including, beef producers, landcare groups, tertiary students, financiers and DPI staff on the type of product that is required for the various markets and provided suggestions on which actions the industry needs to take to stay competitive.
- Two components of research have been of particularly high priority for Tom Mann:
 - Phosphorus nutrition of cattle – although much has been done by agencies and adopted by Hillgrove Pastoral Company, Tom still recognises the problems of inadequate intake by cattle in some situations.
 - Breeding a poll Brahman before animal welfare issues force the industry’s hand in restricting the practice of dehorning. The Beef CRC have funded a gene discovery project to eventually breed a poll herd for zebu cattle. Tom is one of the cooperating graziers and has made 400 heifers from the “Hillgrove” herd available for a two year research project.
 Both of these fields of work are of vital importance to the future of the northern beef industry.
- After acquiring “Reay” and “Warianna” in the Hughenden district, Tom has made cattle available for a Toorak Research Station live export feedback trial that prepared cattle for live export and then followed their performance through SE Asian feedlots.

Tom received the NABRC Producer Medal Award in 2008 in recognition of his services to the northern beef industry.

Marjorie Gilmore’s book “2JA The Allingham Family in North Qld 1859 to 1975” includes a detailed account of Hillgrove from settlement to the mid-1970s. Hopefully the next phase, “The Hillgrove Pastoral Company Story” will be written to document Tom’s management of Hillgrove.