



Native Vegetation and Shelterbelts

Maintaining and improving vegetation and biodiversity on farms.

Background

Maintaining and enhancing native vegetation on farms offers livestock, crops and pasture protection from adverse climate conditions while ensuring persisting habitat for native fauna species. Native shelterbelts are a way of incorporating vegetation into systems where remnant vegetation is absent or requires connection.



Benefits of Native Vegetation

Improved Livestock Welfare

Native vegetation provides protection from inclement weather conditions, decreases livestock's energy expenditure, and reduces the risk of lambing mortality and liveweight losses.

Improved Pasture and Crop Growth

When vegetation is present in paddocks, it minimises evaporative soil moisture loss, particularly in the summer months. Winter soil temperatures also remain relatively warmer in these paddocks, where exposure may usually occur. Warmer, moister conditions encourage earlier germination, plant growth and improved water efficiency. Additionally, trees assist with nutrient movement from subsoils to the topsoil in their surrounding area.

Reduced Soil Erosion Risk

Vegetation alters wind speeds and direction, reducing the severity of impact on soils and pastures/crops.

Beneficial Native Wildlife Habitat

Native vegetation provides crucial habitat for native fauna, including threatened species such as eastern barred bandicoots and Tasmanian devils.

Improving Vegetation and Biodiversity on Your Farm

Managing Invasive Weeds

Native vegetation has a greater chance of surviving and regenerating when not competing for nutrients, water and light. Weed control methods could include chemical intervention, mulching, weed matting, slashing, and burning.

Livestock Exclusion

Over grazing, compaction and nutrient input can result when livestock has extensive access to native vegetation areas. Livestock should be excluded from areas where seedlings are present as these are most vulnerable to grazing pressure.

Maintenance and Enhancement of Understorey Vegetation

Understorey vegetation, such as tussocks or shrubs, offer habitat for native fauna and emerging seedlings. If planted between larger trees and fences, understorey vegetation also provides a buffer, where branches can fall without damaging fences.

Providing Connectivity

Revegetating areas with shelterbelts or targeted plantings for the landscape can provide areas of connectivity for native wildlife to use as protected corridors for travelling between areas of more extensive vegetation. Planting corridors can be strategically planned to benefit your farming enterprise.

Undertaking Controlled Burns

Burning can serve multiple purposes, including weed control. Burning can also be an effective way of promoting the regeneration of native vegetation. Take care when burning, seek professional advice and follow legislation when conducting controlled burns.

Planting a Shelterbelt

Plan

Plan where your shelterbelt is most needed. This could be an area that is lacking connectivity or battered by prevailing winds.

Design

Design your shelterbelt with thought to the type of vegetation you are planting. Influencing factors of shelterbelt effectiveness includes the density, height and number of plants, layout and connectivity of the planting. Consider the future height of trees and root depth in relation to infrastructure.

Species Selection

Select the appropriate vegetation species for your property and plant them at the correct time of year. A mixed-species shelterbelt with upper-, mid-, and understorey are most effective.

Site Preparation

Before planting, preparation activities may need to be undertaken, including weed control and soil preparation such as ripping or mounding.



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References

North-West Environment Centre n.d., *Native Shelterbelts for North West Tasmania*, North-West Environment Centre, Launceston, Tasmania.

NRM North et al. n.d., *Revegetation Projects: Best Practice Guide for Tasmania*, NRM North, Launceston, Tasmania.