

A case study – horse keeping on the Doig property

(with headings based on the HorsesLandWater Action Planner for Horse Properties)

When we started we were two ordinary working people. We worked on the property mainly on weekends and after hours. It is not the ideal horse property, mainly because of the high rainfall in the Adelaide Hills, so there were issues to be dealt with. We kept an open mind, went to courses and we worked hard.

Whole of property management:

- 1 Property management plan
We set five-year goals and prioritised what needed to be done.
- 2 Horse keeping systems
We have found it is better to understock for greater flexibility and for maintaining soil integrity as well as groundcover.
- 3 Development and related approvals
- 4 Siting of stables, yards and intensive work areas
- 5 Fire prevention planning
- 6 Emergency response planning
- 7 Habitat for native plants and animals
We are doing extensive and ongoing revegetation, both through Trees for Life and our own seed collection.
- 8 Storage and transport of veterinary products and chemicals
Easy to buy an old office cupboard. We bought a triple one. Each door is labelled and locked.
- 9 Application and disposal of veterinary products and chemicals
- 10 Preventing weeds entering or leaving the property
The entrance to the property is fenced off from the rest. It serves as a carpark, float loading and tractor area. Any surplus hay or manure is removed in this area. There is a designated yard for new arrivals.
- 11 Pest animals
- 12 Disposal of deceased horses



Paddock management

- 1 Maintain ground cover
We use cross grazing and also rotation of stock, depending on the season.
- 2 Pasture composition
- 3 Weed identification and control
Had to boom spray by a contractor in the beginning. Now we mostly hand spray. Have also oversown with clover etc to provide competition for the weeds.
- 4 Proclaimed pest plants
Blackberry (contractor at first, now minimal hand spraying), Salvation Jane (mustn't give up) and feral olives (difficult).
- 5 Seasonal wet areas, wet seeps and drainage lines
We live in a 1000 mm area (approx 40 in) per annum. The horses can be stabled and yarded 16-24 hours if necessary. There is a massive road run off which dissipates reasonably quickly. We just restrict horse access where needed.



6 Steep slopes

7 Management of manure

Daily pick up of manure. The whole exercise usually takes one of us 1 hour (depending on how far we have to walk!), with both of us doing it is only half an hour. It is used for compost for the vegie patch, some bare areas and three of our neighbours will take manure as well. We haven't had to sell it yet.

8 Fence line tracking

We have found that by running the horses as a herd, it reduces the tendency for fence tracking.

9 Management of horse feeding, watering and congregating areas

Hand feeding sites are moved around to reduce wear and tear on ground cover. Watering points are away from fence lines. If possible, it is handy to have more than one watering point. We have also put gravel in traffic areas. The kikuyu grows through it and the gravel disappears, but still provides a firmer base. This reduces soil compaction and thereby reduces tendency for weeds to take over.

10 Shade and shelter

11 Management of watercourses

The creekline has been fenced off for revegetation and stock restriction. Water points are also separate.

12 Stock crossings



Management for intensive horsekeeping

Although we are set up for medium input, our stable complex can be used for intensive horse keeping. The horses can be locked in or have walk in/walk out access. Stables can be closed to reduce drafts depending on wind direction.

1 Horse exercise areas and yards

2 Stable/yard waste storage

3 Cleaning and disposal of waste

4 Storage of feed

We have a large storage shed far from the stable area. Within the stables there is a small storage area for hay as well as some vermin-proof bins. We keep vermin bait underneath the pallets where the hay sits. That way it is away from the dogs or other domestic animals.

5 Cleaning out horse floats and trucks

6 Washdown areas



When did it all happen?

Mostly while both of us worked, so most of the work was done at weekends.

We worked hard, we were optimistic and we didn't give up.

We were willing to seek help.

Now, in retirement, we reap the benefits, although maintenance is ongoing.

* Sandy Doig is a member of the HorsesLandWater Peri-urban Project Steering Group and is President of a local horse owners' group 'Horse Owners of the Southern Mount Lofty Ranges Inc'. This group, made up of local horse property owners and owners with horses on agistment in the area, promotes good land management and works with the City of Onkaparinga on horse trails and public riding arenas.



Horse Owners
of the Southern
Mount Lofty Ranges