



# High Country FARMING

## Old fashioned soil fertility - naturally

Landcare groups on the Darling Downs have been helping farmers to better understand how their soil works, and how improved soil produces better crops and pastures.

The ability to improve soil carbon levels with pasture and some cropping has been studied at workshops and field days, and recently at Goombungee, methods to improve soil structure, soil fertility and soil microbial life have been looked at.

The manager of Wormtec, Greg Plevy, told the recent Landcare function at Goombungee, that three factors were required to diagnose the condition of soil, the pH of the soil, the level of compaction, and earthworm activity.

Mr Plevy, whose business is based on the Gold Coast, said all factors can be modified or improved by increasing the microbial life in the soil.

While there were "good guys" and "bad guys" in the microbe world, microbes were essential in converting soil elements into soluble substances that can be taken up by plant roots.

Earthworms eat soil microbes, adding to the cycle by producing worm castings.

However, synthetic fertilisers contain a lot of salt and "knock-out" microbes, Mr Plevy said.

He said research conducted by Wormtec over the past decade, had resulted in the company leading the world in the production of organic microbial worm based fer-



Greg Plevy of Wormtec, with Jan Rankin from the Gomoran and Doctors Creek Catchment Landcare and Richard Armstrong from TerraMax.

High tech developments of old fashioned farming practices involving the addition of compost and natural substances to improve the microbial life, structure and fertility of soils, are gaining ground among farmers and rural groups.

lisers both in liquid form and as a pelleted product plus high grade worm castings.

"The technology utilised is unique to Wormtec Worm Farming and Vermiculture, as are the methods of production," Mr Plevy said.

"We are the only company using this process world wide as we have developed this technology in microbe extraction and storage over the last 10 years, with constant research and development and onsite farm and garden trials."

He said Wormtec worm extract can also be used as a bio-control to help control pest and disease attacks, and the com-

pany's organic fertilisers had no negative impact on the environment, while being price competitive.

Mr Plevy said Wormtec worm extract was a liquid fertiliser containing all the benefits of high grade composts and worm castings without all the bulky organic matter in an easy to apply liquid spray.

"Our worm extract contains microbes, nutrients and minerals all in plant available forms ready for the job of fertilising and rebuilding soil health and vitality."

"Our worm extract also has soil wetting properties that retain moisture in the root zone; once the microbes become active

they will consume the nutrients and minerals in the soil, so retaining this in the upper soil column and in the root zone to stop them from leaching out of the soil."

A further benefit of using microbes is that they live on the soil particles opening up the soil to allow air and moisture in, thus breaking up compacted soils.

Mr Plevy said his company originally started out making compost tea.

But he said with this product there were difficulties in controlling the products composition and life span, and further research led them to developing their work based



Residents of the Cutella district, near Kingshorpe, Nicki Laws and Peter and Moya Panzram.

A Landcare function at Goombungee featured two commercial organisations which have built on natural processes with

products which can streamline the organic development of soils and make farming more efficient. - Miles Noller reports

products. He said their fertilisers were used, not only by farmers and gardeners, but also by local authorities.

He said the Gold Coast council used them to de-thatch their sporting fields and to improve the health of the turf on these ovals.

Also at the Goombungee seminar was managing director of TerraMax, Richard Armstrong.

Mr Armstrong was involved in developing the composting industry on the Darling Downs for 15 years, working from a base at Jondaryan.

He managed a large scale composting business using feedlot manures, cotton gin trash

and other organic wastes. The materials were composted in large rows and large machines used to turn the material in the rows.

Mr Armstrong said one row turner was made in Italy and cost \$625,000.

Large scale composting required large quantities of water, applied with a travelling irrigator, and the heat generated in the compost row had to be controlled to ensure pathogens were killed.

Some materials required up to 22 weeks in the row to be composted to the required organic and HACCP standards. Mr Armstrong more recently established the

Terra Max business producing and marketing organic soil conditioners and fertilisers.

He said the company also produces growing media and sub-strates for agriculture, horticulture and landscaping including specialist media for green walls and green roofs.

"We offer a range of products and will design custom blends to meet specific needs."

Mr Armstrong said, TerraMax Sustain and TerraMax Bio were the core products supplied to the agricultural industry.

They are processed in windrows where it is combined with organic carbon sources and pro-

cessed for a minimum of 16 weeks until the material is fully composted.

The temperature is generated (up to 68°C) kills pathogens and weed seeds.

"Our standard compost is screened through a 10mm screen.

Careful management of the raw material consistency and the composting process ensure the consistency and quality of the finished product."

Mr Armstrong said fully composted products provided:

- Immediately available and slow release plant nutrients.

- Improved aeration, water penetration and soil water holding capacity.

- Increased organic carbon levels, double those available from raw and aged manures.

- Buffered nutrient draw down caused by other uncomposted organic matter such as raw manures, crop residue and poorly composted or raw mulches.

- Reduced chemical fertiliser requirements and may supply total potassium needs for most crops.

- Built stable aggregates that improve soil structure.

- Buffered soil from abrupt pH changes and helped reduce soil sodium.

- Provided charged particles that hold and exchange nutrients.

- Contained beneficial micro-organisms for soil improvement and control of soil-borne plant diseases.
- No offensive odour.

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### Crows Nest sale



Ron Price, Stanmore, with six to eight-months-old Angus/Brangus steers that sold for \$430 a head at Rick Zeller's Crows Nest cattle sale.

**Rick Zeller Livestock** Pty Ltd  
Livestock & Property Agent  
6 Dale St, Crows Nest  
**CROWS NEST CATTLE SALE**  
**Saturday, July 12 - 10am**  
**Bookings to hand**  
10 Euro steers - 15 mths  
5 Angus steers - 15 mths, Acc Breeder  
20 D/Master x steers - 8-10mths, Acc Breeder  
15 Charbray steers - 8-10mths  
15 D/Master steers - 8-10mths  
10 Angus calves, Acc Breeder  
**ACC LOCAL BREEDER HERD DISPOSAL SALE**  
10 Murray Grey cows & calves, by Angus Bull  
30 Murray Grey cows, running with Angus Bull  
10 Murray Grey heifers, running with Angus Bull  
Cows all 3-4 years old.  
15 Shorthorn x cows with calves, by Charolais Bull  
1 Red Charolais bull - 5 y/old, quiet & sound  
5 cows running with Red Charolais bull  
5 Hereford heifers with calves at foot by Santa Bull  
30 Angus heifers, 8-10mths, acc breeder  
10 Angus heifers 6-8mths, acc breeder  
20 Mixed cattle to be drafted  
*This is a quality yarding of local cattle. Please attend!*  
For bookings or more details  
Phone Rick 0428 879 531

**O'SULLIVAN AUCTIONS**  
PROPERTY - LIVESTOCK  
Harristown Saleyards  
**Cattle Market Report**  
**Monday, June 30**  
**COMBINED YARDING OF 646 HEAD**  
Overall numbers increased a little with last sale for financial year, limited numbers of heavy cows & bullocks were yarded again with the majority of the yarding being made up of young cattle. Bullocks sold to a shade better while sales in cows showed signs of 3-5kg better. Restockers played up to 199.2 for quality weaner steers, while light plain types met limited competition. Heavy feeder steers sold to a few cents better. A good panel of buyers were again in attendance. Red Poll cows 505kg sold for 125c for \$631, Brahman cows from Taroom sold for 131.2c for \$774, Droughtmaster heifers 490kg sold for 145.2c, 570kg Santa cows sold for 128.2c for \$730, Limousin feeder heifers 315kg sold for 152.2c for \$479, Angus steers 267kg from Oakley sold for 177.2c for \$473, Hereford steers 376kg from Goombungee sold for 176.2c for \$662, Lino cross steers from Kingshorpe 432kg sold for 180c for \$778, Murray Grey heifers 665kg sold for 140c for \$917, Guernsey cows 495kg sold for 102.2c for \$505, Droughtmaster steers from Yarraman 427kg sold for 183.2c for \$783, Murray Grey steers 288kg sold for 179.2c for \$513.  
**PAUL O'SULLIVAN..... 0400 910 088**

**TOOWOOMBA CATTLE & PIG MARKET REPORT**  
**Monday, June 30**  
**REDUCED NUMBERS**  
**CATTLE:** Numbers reduced slightly to 728 head at Elders Harristown Saleyards last Monday 30th June. Prime quality cattle were in short supply in all sections. These classes met a dearer market, light-weight plain cattle experiencing limited competition and were cheaper. Best bulls from Glencoo topped at 150.2c/kg. Only one pen of heavy bullocks yarded, these sold to the trade for 188c/kg for 615kg a/c John & Carol Wilkes, Pittsworth. Heavy feeder steers were also lightly supplied, the best reaching 184.2c/kg. Heavy imousin heifers also a/c the Wilkes family realised 181.2c/kg for 555kg. Heavy cows 735kg from Bosdun topped at 146.2c/kg to return \$1067. Store cows met spirited competition, best pen reaching 115.2c/kg. Trade steers 347kg a/c Mark Earl, Greenmount topped the day at 195.2c/kg. Best heifer vealers from Jondaryan reached 184.2c/kg. Lightweight angus steers ex Bunya Mountain realised 194.2c/kg. Cows and calves sold for \$600 per unit.  
**PIGS:** 343 pigs yarded with all quality pork and bacon selling to excellent rates however lesser quality eased, backfatless sows sold to very strong competition as did the quality store and weaner pigs with poor quality hard to sell. Prime pork \$2.98-3.44/kg. Prime light bacon \$2.95-3.10/kg. Prime bacon \$2.90-3.08/kg. Goats 15-19c/kg. Sows to \$1.07-1.13/kg. Forward does \$110-132. Weaners \$58-92. Sucklers \$34.  
**NEXT SALE Monday, July 14**  
**FOR BOOKINGS**  
Contact Darren Hartwig 0428 736 470  
**MAKES MORE POSSIBLE**

**LIVESTOCK AGENT A & LO STARIHA**  
**CROWS NEST CATTLE SALE**  
**CROWS NEST SHOWGROUNDS**  
**Saturday 12th July 10am**  
**Early bookings include:**  
• 30 Angus cows & calves  
• 12 Euro cows & calves  
• 30 Santa/Droughtmaster steers, 9-10 months  
• 15 Angus steers, 6 months  
• 15 Droughtmaster steers, 6-8 months  
• 12 Droughtmaster heifers, 12-14 months  
• 6 Hereford steers, 8 months  
• 10 Droughtmaster x steers, 10 months  
• 12 Santa Hereford x steers, 12-14 months  
**Further bookings welcome & appreciated**  
For all enquiries please contact  
David Stariha: 0412 794 456  
Leo McMahon: 0448 351 872  
Brendan Schick: 0409 487 259  
www.StarihaAuctions.com.au  
Email: david@starihaauctions.com.au  
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