

Harmony & Balance

Article for *The Buzz* – AWiA March 2005 edition.....

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Theme focus – *Sustainable agriculture and organics*

From Clair O'Brien, NT member

I guess my life's philosophy of "*harmony and balance*" has evolved over the past 50 + years as I have grown up, worked, raised a family and derived a substantial living from the land in what some people would call, isolated parts of northern Australia. The past 15 years have cemented that philosophy more than ever for me, as my family and I grapple to define the meaning of "sustainable agriculture". We are graziers in the wet/dry tropics and yet we use little to no chemicals in our day-to-day lives. Alternatives are there to be sorted, tried and tested. Stock wise it's a matter of horses for courses, so for nearly 30 years we have maintained a 3000 head herd of high grade Brahman cattle. In order to achieve the depth of purity that gives us the exact type of carefree stock that will handle the climate and the environment, we stick to genetic lines tending more to the pure Zebu strains that were used initially to set the Brahman breed itself. Then our management tools of monitoring, sire selection, lick supplementation (based on what's lacking in our soils) and culling allow us to run such a herd without chemical applications of pesticides and insecticides on "Numul Numul" station, the 500sqkm pastoral area that we currently lease from our local Aboriginal traditional owners.

With three of my four now adult children, home full time and running that property, last year I started building my first real house, on our new block closer to Mataranka – semi- retirement, 10kms from town – suburbia for me! "Coodardie" is a 2080ha freehold agricultural property that I have in the process of being organically accredited through ACO / BFA. I went through my first audit last July and so am on a steep learning curve with OMP's etc etc (organic management plans) AND am very interested in becoming an active member of the AWiA Organic Reference Group in anticipation of hearing / learning from fellow members' first hand experiences rather than ploughing my way through books and text on websites or the like!!

So when I started this new property that was virgin Savannah bushland, I felt it was the ideal opportunity to put into practice what I truly believe in – *harmony and balance* - living and working with nature - not against it. Currently we don't have any organic markets for our stock as they go live export to Asia or are sold as stud breeding stock to other producers but this has not deterred me from my aim to be a fully accredited property. By doing this I feel that I am protecting the land and it's natural resources as well as the environment as a truly clean green place to live and work for myself, family and friends who visit. I also intend opening my new homestead to guests as Coodardie Station Stay, in order to have others experience the feeling of nature's tranquility from the harmony and balance the property exudes. My vegetable garden will be an added bonus and if my start last year was any indication, I'll have plenty for the family and friends who really appreciate that flavour of a great tomato. I am still working on the main garden landscaping and that is a challenge as I am aiming to maintain that native theme and keep the amazing bird species we have already documented – 42 species spotted from the table on the verandah.

"Come and share the story... It'll never never leave you!"

PS .. Sept 2007 – Coodardie was fully organically accredited in 2005 and about the same time - over two years ago started utilizing holistic management practices /decision making in our endeavours to build healthy soils, retain moisture, harness sunlight for pasture nutrition and thus better production results = *sustainable agriculture* = healthy lands; healthy people & animals; healthy profits!

www.holisticmanagement.org or www.kachana.com.au

