

The ACT Rural Grants



The following provides a snapshot of the National Landcare Programme-funded ACT Rural Grants project.

Background - ACT rural sector

The ACT's 160 rural landholders collectively manage 38,887 ha (15%) of the ACT. Most of this land is managed for extensive grazing of cattle and sheep and for horse agistment. Of the ACT's 152 landholders, 23 have holdings greater than 400 ha, and 10 have holdings of more than 1000 ha.

The ACT Rural Grants - project aims

The ACT Rural Grants project, funded under National Landcare Programme - Regional Delivery, aims to support ACT rural landholders to implement on-ground works, which:

- improve groundcover, native vegetation, soil health, water quality;
- minimise off-site impacts of farming activities;
- protect biodiversity and improve biosecurity;
- demonstrate coordinated regional and landscape-scale partnerships to address priority issues; and
- prepare for climate variability and climate change.

What the ACT Rural Grants fund:

- Natural Resource Management advice to support farm planning, farm biosecurity plans and implementation of sustainable farming practices – advice to groups of farmers are also considered.
- On-ground works to increase the adoption of sustainable farming activities – up to \$10,000 for individual landholders; up to \$50,000 for groups of landholders.

Snapshot - Round 1, 2014/15- ACT Rural Grants

- Fourteen project applications were received
- Eleven landholders were provided \$113,924 to implement on-ground works across 10 projects.
- Landholders matched this funding with cash or in-kind contributions of \$151,042.
- This round has had a positive impact on 1520 ha.

Funded projects under Round 1 included:

- innovative 'porous' fencing to manage kangaroo overgrazing at Majura;
- cropping/pasture establishment to reduce African Lovegrass infestations and improve farm productivity at Tharwa, Naas and Point Hut Crossing;
- cooperative control of serrated tussock impacting on endangered ecological communities across two Hall farms;
- construction of internal farm fencing/provision of stock water supply for more strategic grazing of pastures across five ACT properties at Point Hut Crossing, Paddys River, Naas, Belconnen and Kambah;
- rabbit control to protect streams/biodiversity, Tharwa;
- fencing for riparian protection Paddys River catchment.



ACT Rural Grant funded work at Kambah which supported construction of internal farm fencing and provision of alternative stock water supply for more strategic grazing of pastures. Also shown is part of the fencing plan the landholder developed before implementing the fencing



Snapshot - Round 2, 2015/16 - ACT Rural Grants

- Sixteen project applications were received.
- \$158,061 was disbursed across 14 projects involving 16 landholders.
- Landholders matched ACT Rural Grants funding with cash or in-kind contributions of \$167,321.
- This round will have a positive impact on 2056 ha (landholders are finalising their project implementation at present).



Funded projects under Round 2 include:

- a drought lot feeding facility at Tidbinbilla;
- construction of internal farm fencing and provision of alternative stock water supply on five properties at Paddys River, Majura, Kambah, Tharwa, Murrumbidgee corridor;
- cooperative cross-landscape serrated tussock control across three properties in north Canberra
- a cooperative/cross-landscape African Lovegrass/ Serrated Tussock control project across 4 Naas properties

How the grants are assessed

Each grant round is assessed against the grant selection criteria, by a panel that includes representatives from ACT NRM, a representative from Biosecurity and Rural Programs in the ACT Parks and Conservation Service and an independent agronomist from Cooma.

NRM/Agronomy advice

Many ACT rural landholders have done courses such as Landscan or Prograze to help them manage their properties. To assist landholders take the leap from learning to doing, under the advice component of the grants they are supported to engage a specialist (such as an agronomist) to do a 'farm visit' and develop an action plan and a timeline for implementation the plan. This is also supported by Greening Australia and the ACT RLF program. This was first offered in Round 2 of the ACT Rural Grants.

Snapshot - NRM and Agronomy advice

In 2015/16 Natural Resource Management Advice was provided to nine landholders, three who successfully applied for ACT Rural Grants (Round 2 – 2015/16) based on the advice they received.

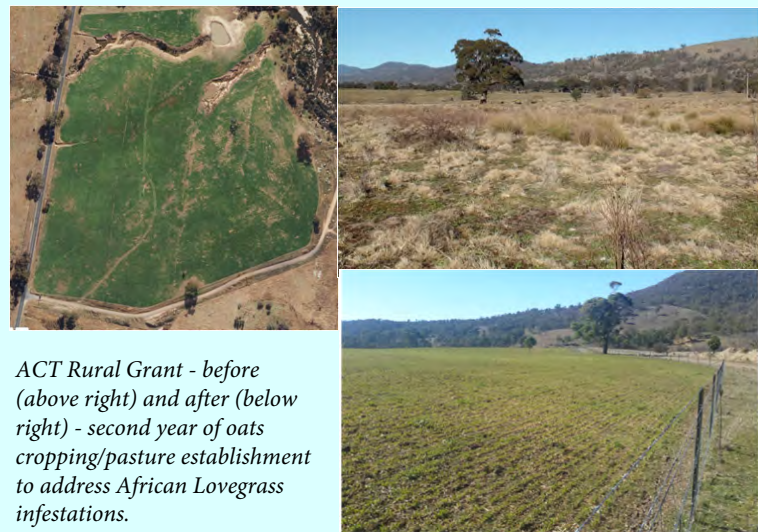
Gross Margins table (right) shows the difference between the gross margin of grazing three weed infested paddocks and grazing the same three paddocks after they are sown with fodder oats or brassica (funded under the ACT Rural Grants). Landholders earned between \$182-\$728 per hectare more in the fodder paddocks, compared to African Lovegrass infested paddocks.

Snapshot Round 3 - 2016/17

- 11 applications were received
- 10 on-ground projects were funded.
- In total \$72,799 was provided to landholders
- landholders matched this funding with contributions of more than \$80,000
- This work will have a positive impact on across 1041 hectares,

Funded projects Round 3

- Seven projects supported landholders to subdivide large paddocks and install watering points enabling them to implement strategic grazing management to improve pasture composition, reduce weeds, maintain groundcover and develop more sustainable grazing systems.
- one project protected a riparian area; two aimed to use fencing to manage and reduce erosion on horse agistment paddocks; and one protected *Blakelyi* seedlings



ACT Rural Grant - before (above right) and after (below right) - second year of oats cropping/pasture establishment to address African Lovegrass infestations.

