

Statement of Environmental Effects

Reedy Creek Pastured Eggs

Submitted by George Main

2940 Dirnaseer Road

Dirnaseer NSW 2666

reedycreekeggs@outlook.com

0459588559

Proposal

I propose to establish a small, pastured egg business, integrated with my brother's cattle enterprise on my family's 682-hectare property at Dirnaseer. Hens prefer to graze short pastures, and they will follow the cattle in a regenerative, planned grazing system. Housed in two mobile caravans, the hens will be moved twice weekly onto fresh pasture that has been grazed down by cattle to a level that the hens prefer. The hens require supplementary feeding of layer pellets and shell grit. The pellets and shell grit are supplied to the hens in skid feeders (3 per caravan). Each caravan will hold 400 hens, and the hens are contained by electric fences and protected by maremma guardian dogs (one per caravan). Pastures are rested for long periods (6-12 months) after the hens have aerated and fertilised the soil. Within this regenerative, planned, multi-species grazing system, the aim is to always maintain 100 percent ground cover, build organic matter and carbon within soil, improve the capacity of land to hold moisture, and increase biodiversity above and below ground. Point-of-lay hens will be sourced from Junee Hatchery at Old Junee, and sold as backyard hens every 18-24 months, when their laying capacity begins to decline. Hens that cannot be sold will be humanely destroyed and composted on the property in accordance with established guidelines.

Site analysis

Since my family purchased the property in 1905, the land has been used for wool, meat and grain production. Since 2018, my brother has managed the southern part of the 682-hectare property, where he operates a beef cattle enterprise within a regenerative, planned grazing system. The northern part of the property (435 hectares) is under lease until February 2023. Cattle graze small areas intensively for several days, before the land is rested for 6-12 months. Under this proposal, cattle grazing will continue on the site, and the pastured egg enterprise will be integrated within the same regenerative, planned grazing system. The hens will be moved twice weekly, and pastures rested for 6-12 months. Pinchgut Creek, an intermittent waterway, passes through the property. The hens will not graze within 100 metres of the waterway. There are no neighbouring houses near property boundaries. Much of the property is gently sloping or flat, and suitable for the positioning and transfer of the hen caravans. The caravans will not be positioned on the steeper slopes or hilltops. There are no known records of any site contamination on the property. A small (approximately 6 ton) pellet silo will be installed on the property at 2940 Dirnaseer Road. Pellets will be supplied by Conqueror Milling Company, Cootamundra. At the same location will be a 40-foot shipping container in which the eggs are processed and stored.

Context and setting

As an enterprise integrated with my brother's planned cattle grazing enterprise, the proposed pastured egg business fits with the rural character of the Dirnaseer area.

Access and traffic

As the proposed pastured egg enterprise is small, I will have no permanent employees and there will no significant increase in traffic.

Air and noise

The proposed enterprise will not cause any significant air or noise emissions, as the scale of the business is small.

Privacy, views and overshadowing

There are no dwellings on neighbouring properties close to the boundaries, so the proposed development will not have any effects on privacy or views.

Permissibility

The proposed use will take place on land zoned RU1 Primary Production, and hence the proposed use is permissible and meets the objectives of the zone. As an enterprise that maintains 100 percent ground cover, adds organic matter and carbon to the soil, increases biodiversity and allows soils to absorb and hold more water, the proposed use directly meets the objective of RU1 'To encourage sustainable primary industry production by maintaining and enhancing the natural resource base.' As an enterprise that will be integrated with my brother's existing cattle enterprise and his system of regenerative, planned grazing, my pastured egg venture will also meet the objective of RU1 'To encourage diversity in primary industry enterprises and systems appropriate for the area.' Cattle graze pastures down to a level that hens prefer. By turning and fertilising soils, and increasing the water holding capacity of soils, hens increase the quantity and quality of pastures for cattle. So, the cattle and egg enterprises are mutually beneficial, and thereby my pastured egg venture will also meet the objective of RU1 'To minimise conflict between land uses within this zone and land uses within adjoining zones.'

Operational details

I will manage and operate the business myself, with no permanent employees. I may engage part-time or casual employees to help process and package the eggs, and to operate the business when I go on holiday. I will gradually build up hen numbers to a total of 800 hens within two separately managed flocks. 800 hens will produce up to 4760 eggs per week (at an 85% laying rate). This will equate to 26 boxes (each containing 15 dozen). I will deliver these twice weekly to retail outlets in Junee, Cootamundra, Temora, Harden, Yass and Canberra. A small layer pellet silo and one 40-foot shipping container will be installed beside an existing work shed on the property at 2940 Dirnaseer Road. When the hen numbers reach the maximum 800, approximately 2.7 tons of pellets will be required each month. Conqueror Milling Company will produce and deliver the pellets monthly. The insulated, air-conditioned, solar-powered shipping container will be used to process and store the eggs. Eggs will be collected daily, and processed and packed three days per week, in line with NSW regulations. No hazardous materials or processes are involved. As the hen caravans are moved twice weekly across a 682-hectare site, there will be no buildup of waste. If there are any excess eggs, or hens that die prematurely, they will be safely composted onsite, in line with established guidelines. Odour and vermin numbers will be controlled.

Chicken Caravan 450

I will be purchasing two Chicken Caravan 450 trailers, see: <https://chickencaravan.com/chicken-caravan-450/>. These are supplied by the company Chicken Caravan, based at Port Macquarie, NSW. The same company will supply the 6 skid feeders (3 per caravan) and electric fences.

Soil and water

This proposed enterprise will improve the fertility and structure of soils, increasing soil carbon and allowing soils to capture and hold more water. These positive effects will occur because the hens will turn and aerate soils in the vicinity of their caravans before they are moved and a long rest period of 6-12 months begins. During the rest period, perennial pastures grow vigorously. The establishment of 100 percent ground cover under a regenerative, planned grazing system allows for soils to build, enables soils to capture and hold more water, and reversing processes of erosion. Under a regenerative, planned grazing system, when perennial pastures are intensively grazed for short periods by cattle and

hens, plant roots die back. During the long rest periods that follow, as pastures grow back, so do root systems. This regular process of root dieback and regrowth brings an abundance of organic matter and carbon into soils, and enables water capture and retention.

Heritage

Several registered Indigenous sites are located on the property. These sites are highly valued by the landholders, and members of the local Wiradjuri community are regular visitors to the property. The hens will not be positioned within 100 metres of any registered site.

Flora and fauna

Existing flora and fauna will be enhanced by the enterprise, due to the positive effects on soil fertility, soil structure, and the capacity of soils to absorb and retain moisture. The long rest periods (6-12 months) between grazing by hens (and cattle) promotes the permanent establishment of diverse perennial pasture species.

Waste

As the hens will be moved twice weekly across the 682-hectare site, there will be no accumulation of waste in any area. At age 18-24 months, hens will be offered for sale to backyard egg producers from the local region. If any hens remain, they will be humanely destroyed and composted according to established guidelines (see *Mortality Composting: A Review of the Use of Composting for the Disposal of Dead Animals*, The State of Victoria, Department of Primary Industries, May 2006, https://www.uspoultry.org/poultry-health/files/Lit%20review%20mortality%20composting_AU.pdf). The composting would take place at least 100 metres from Pinchgut Creek and property boundaries, and would be managed to control odour and vermin.

Energy

Solar panels are mounted onto the mobile hen caravans to operate the doors and lighting. The electric fencing around the hens is solar powered. A solar system at 2940 Dirnaseer Road powers the air-conditioned egg processing and storage room (a converted, insulated shipping container). The solar system also powers an electric buggy which is used for daily egg collecting and the twice weekly transfer of the hen caravans.