



2018 NATIONAL LANDCARE AWARDS

11 October
Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre

Nominee: Stonemeal Farm, WA

Category: Australian Government Excellence in Sustainable Farm Practices Award

Soil health is paramount for Stephen and Kerry Frost, who have been farming in Narrikup since 1979. Since they began using mineral fertiliser and soil microbial inputs, the couple has dispensed with broad-acre pesticides, nitrogen inputs for fodder crops, and stock mineral supplements. Other farm overheads, like liming and veterinary intervention, have reduced considerably.

In the 1980s, with limited available information on soil health in local libraries and the World Wide Web in its infancy, Stephen decided to travel the country to learn about best practice. Labouring for free on farms – observing the pioneering soil conditioning techniques used on the Kiwi Valley’s Wallace Farm, and the Keyline Farming system on another – he put together a vision for the future of Stonemeal. Also influential was the research of Nobel Prize-winning chemist Linus Pauling, which keyed into Stephen’s own experiences around soil remineralisation.

The Frosts conducted a series of trials, solidifying the principles that now drive the sustainability and profitability of their farm. Moving away from high input, high cost synthetic chemicals, they re-introduced minerals and microbes back into the soil. The couple also planted fire resistant fodder trees and perennial pasture species and adopted alternative land uses, such as commercial native cut flowers.

Stephen and Kerry also produce mineral-based fertilisers as an alternative to synthetic acid-based fertiliser. To prove the efficacy of reincorporating minerals into the soil and enhancing soil biology, the Frosts have also initiated over 30 independent evidence-based trial sites across Western Australia.

The farm is primarily self-sustaining in fodder production. The Frosts have moved to direct drilling of perennial grasses into established pasture without the use of herbicides. The reduction of pesticide use has seen an increase in dung beetles and beneficial predatory insect species.

Stonemeal is now a highly profitable merino enterprise producing prime lambs and wool. Lambing percentages are above average and the property carries approximately twice the average district stocking rates. Overheads are down and wool quality, with significantly higher tensile strength, has improved.

Since 2011, the Frosts have hosted over 511 farmers, students and research scientists at Stonemeal to share these practices and talk about the importance of soil biology and minerals to plant production, animal nutrition, soil carbon and fodder quality. There was some resistance initially within the local farming community; remineralisation and microbes were viewed as a passing fad. Kerry and Stephen have helped change attitudes, and local farmers are increasingly adopting regenerative land practices, leading to healthier farms and improved farm-gate returns across the region.

This program is supported by Landcare Australia and the National Landcare Network, through funding from the Australian Government’s National Landcare Program.





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Landcare is a grassroots movement that harnesses individuals and groups to protect, restore and sustainably manage Australia's natural environment and its productivity. Groups that fall under the Landcare umbrella work on a diverse range of environmental projects and include farmers embracing sustainable farm management and any community group that partakes in volunteer environmental activities. To find out how you can become a Landcare volunteer and for full details on all 2018 National Landcare finalists, visit www.landcareaustralia.org.au

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Web Summary

Since they began using mineral fertiliser and soil microbial inputs, Stephen and Kerry Frost have dispensed with broad-acre pesticides, nitrogen inputs for fodder crops, and stock mineral supplements. Other overheads on the Narrikup property they've been farming since 1979, like liming and veterinary intervention, have reduced considerably. To prove the efficacy of reincorporating minerals into the soil, the Frosts have also initiated over 30 independent evidence-based trial sites across Western Australia. The couple has moved to direct drilling of perennial grasses into established pasture without the use of herbicides, and the reduction in pesticide use has seen an increase in dung beetles and beneficial predatory insect species. Since 2011, the Frosts have hosted over 511 farmers and researchers at Stonemeal to share these practices and talk about the importance of soil biology.

Pull-out quote:

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