



## THE HERDSCAPE COURSES: A CURRICULUM GUIDE

The **Herdscape Courses** articulate the **principles that underpin productive and regenerative farming**. These principles provide a stable foundation in a constantly changing environment. Without this grounding the tendency might be to default back to recipes or trends, which often fail when conditions shift.

Principles endure; practices must adapt.

The courses build an understanding of **soil health as the engine of the system**. Healthy soils are not simply a desirable outcome—they are the mechanism through which rainfall is made effective. When soil structure is intact and biological activity is high, rainfall infiltrates rather than runs off, is stored rather than lost to evaporation, and is cycled through plants more efficiently. This links directly to nutrient cycling and carbon sequestration. What does an improvement in soil function look like in the field, and how does management influence it?

This naturally leads into **biodiversity and the soil food web**. There is a need to see the land not as a collection of inputs and outputs, but as a network of relationships. Microbes, fungi, insects, plants, and animals all play distinct roles in maintaining system function. It is emphasised that productivity emerges from these relationships being in balance—not from maximising any single component. When one part is overemphasised (for example, a single grass species or a single production goal), the system becomes unstable.

Given the centrality of rainfall in grazing systems, there is a key focus on **understanding its variability and improving its effectiveness**. Rainfall cannot be controlled, but the impact of the rainfall can be profoundly influenced. Management decisions determine whether rainfall translates into sustained plant growth or is lost. This reframes drought from being purely a climatic event to being partly a function of how well the system retains and uses moisture.

The courses include **proven grazing management principles**, always grounded in local conditions. It is necessary to understand timing, intensity and frequency of grazing, but also to be encouraged to adapt these principles to the prevailing circumstances at the time. A rigorous explanation of the difference between **rest and recovery** (often misunderstood) is included. Recovery is not about fixed calendar periods, but about allowing plants to fully restore energy reserves before being grazed again. Misjudging recovery is one of the most common and costly errors in grazing management.

Closely linked is a solid grasp of **veld and animal nutrition**. Farmers must be able to assess not just how much forage is available, but also to assess the quality of the forage. This includes understanding the relationship between plant maturity and nutritional value, and how grazing management influences both. Building on this, the course should

explore **strategies to ensure both quality and quantity of forage** (including reserves), balancing utilisation with long-term productivity.

No grazing system operates without some level of **supplementation**, and this is addressed pragmatically. There is a difference between when supplementation adds value and when it masks underlying problems. It must be used strategically rather than habitually.

**Management of the breeding season** is critical. Aligning reproduction with periods of peak forage availability can significantly improve animal performance and reduce input costs.

A distinguishing feature of effective regenerative management is reliance on **monitoring, measurement and analysis**. The course teaches what to observe and what to measure and how to interpret these measurements. This links directly to the **value of benchmarks and continuous improvement**. Farmers need reference points to evaluate progress, but also the discipline to adjust management based on what the data is telling them.

All of this must be brought together through strong **planning skills**. How does the farmer develop adaptive management plans that integrate grazing, breeding and financial considerations while remaining flexible enough to respond to changing rainfall patterns and market conditions.

Planning is not about predicting the future perfectly; it is about being prepared to respond effectively.

A clear understanding of **the difference between finance and profit** is necessary. Many farm businesses confuse cash flow or asset value with profitability. The **Foundation Course** unpacks concepts such as solvency, liquidity, and true profit so decisions can be made to strengthen the long-term viability of the farm business rather than simply keeping it afloat.

Underlying all of these technical components is the often-overlooked influence of **paradigms**. The beliefs farmers hold about what constitutes “good farming” shape their decisions as much as any data. The course creates the space to examine these assumptions critically, recognising that “common knowledge” can both guide and constrain progress.

No farming system operates in isolation from people. The course must address the **nexus between farming family dynamics, farm management and business management**. Decisions are made by people with values, relationships and pressures that extend beyond the farm gate. Issues such as succession, communication, roles and responsibilities and conflict management can determine whether a technically sound system succeeds or fails.

In this context, **people skills are not optional—they are central**. The ability to manage labour, communicate clearly and align a team around shared goals is as important as any grazing plan. A regenerative system requires consistent, thoughtful management, and that depends on people working effectively together.

Taken together, these elements of the courses form a coherent whole. A course built on them does not simply teach farmers what to do—it equips them to think differently, to observe more carefully and to act with greater confidence in the face of complexity.

That is ultimately what regenerative grazing management demands: not just new practices, but a new level of understanding.