



Book Club Book of the Month: August 2019 ***The Wooleen Way*, David Pollock (Scribe)**

Summary

David Pollock's engrossing read tells the story of his passionate mission to renew his family's massive pastoral property in Western Australia's southern rangelands. It follows on from his appearances on ABC TV's *Australian Story*. Pollock outlines the ups and downs of his journey, which is filled with stubborn bureaucrats, mistrustful neighbours, declining government services and fair weather financiers. There's a bigger story here, though, about the ecological degradation of a huge part of the Australian landscape, and how dedicated landholders like Pollock can be part of the solution. This is an inspiring and highly readable story; it will make many readers want to visit Wooleen as soon as possible!

About the author

David Pollock is a second-generation pastoralist from Wooleen Station in the Murchison region of Western Australia. He took over the 153,000-hectare property when he was 27, and was soon joined by his now wife Frances as they embarked on a quest to transform Wooleen into a sustainable grazing enterprise. They run a station-stay tourism business to help pay for repairing the ecological damage caused by historic overgrazing, and have

appeared on the ABC TV's *Australian Story* program four times. David loves Frances, palatable perennial grass, Wooleen, their four kelpies, and happy cows. In that order.

Questions for discussion

1. Has this book changed your attitude towards how we manage pastoral and farming land in Australia? How so? Did this book leave you feeling hopeful for the future of pastoralism and food production in Australia?
2. Life in the rangelands is often accompanied by physical, emotional and financial hardships. What personality traits do you think are necessary for a contemporary pastoralist?
3. The environment was allocated one-third of one percent of Australia's budget expenditure for 2018-19. David Pollock asserts that pastoralists are managing a resource that is in perpetual decline. Considering the financial and bureaucratic limitations the author faced in renewing Wooleen, do you think more should be done to assist pastoralists?
4. The Native Title Act was established in 1993, following the landmark Mabo High Court case of 1992. This legislation recognises Aboriginal people as traditional landowners, however the inefficiencies of the legal process can delay the realisation of their claims. What do you think about the current way native title is negotiated in Western Australia and of the author's opinion about this?
5. Through tourism, David and Frances Pollock have created and maintained close relationships with people from all over the world. Did the depiction of daily life at Wooleen challenge your assumptions about rural living?
6. David Pollock suggests that the majority of mine-site rehabilitation efforts do not change Australia's local biodiversity. Were you surprised by the author's attitudes towards the mining sector?
7. David Pollock attributes some of the government's inefficiencies to its cyclical nature. The government changes every few years, responsibility passes onto new people, and progress is lost as old schemes are discarded. Have you encountered something similar in your workplace or local government? How might we as Australians change this?
8. Feral goats and kangaroos account for 61% of grazing pressure on pastoral land. David Pollock believes that dingoes are the only effective way to manage their populations. Were you surprised by the attitudes towards dingoes expressed in the book?

9. *The Woolleen Way* blurs the lines between traditional memoir and ecology textbook. Why do you think David Pollock chose this writing style? What do you think his motivation was for writing the book?

If you liked this book, you may also like...

Call of the Reed Warbler: A New Agriculture, a New Earth, Charles Massy, University of Queensland Press

Back from the Brink: How Australia's Landscape Can Be Saved, Peter Andrews, ABC Books Australia

Dark Emu, Bruce Pascoe, Magabala Books

A Place in the Country, Chris Ferreira, Fremantle Press