

Murray View Pasture Trial Notes, 18th June 2013

Presenters: Dean Harrington, Harrington Ag Consulting

Notes Summary:

The pasture trial site had nine different varieties of forage crop species planted and covered the following;

- cost per Ha of sowing / establishment,
- dry matter cost for each kg of dry matter,
- dry matter quantity per Ha,
- How to use the pasture ruler to estimate pasture quantity and quality required to achieve targeted production rates of livestock.
- growth rate of sheep grazing on the trial site,

Notes taken about the pasture trials;

There were large maturity differences evident between the plots. Quick maturing types such as Appin leafy turnips and Southern Ryecorn bulked up rapidly early, with later maturing types such as cereals and Greenland Rape providing a longer growth period, making the decision of when you need feed critical to matching the correct variety to your needs.

In relation to \$ spent / Ha one of the more expensive varieties to sow had one of the cheaper dry matter / kg rates due to the large amount of dry matter produced. This needs to be looked at in a holistic manner as some varieties offer more than forage (e.g. cereals) and some varieties offer multiple grazings over longer periods.

A Pasture Ruler can tell you how much energy is required depending whether you have lambs, ewes, ewes with lambs or whatever. Weight will go backwards otherwise. The preferred height of pasture to start grazing is @5-10cm. If pasture is too high, dry matter losses occur due to trampling and quality declines.

Cereals are low in Ca, mg, Na, etc. so it is suggested to add a supplement such as a mineral lick which is inexpensive.

Feed tests costs @\$65.00 each. Maybe good to do a feed test to check mineral and energy levels before grazing to determine supplement needs for cereal grazing.

Barley straw good to have as roughage with rich pasture. Don't use hay that is too good though, as livestock may choose this in preference to pasture.

Ryecorn fits better in a mix with other varieties.

Moby Barley is good feed early, but what do you do with it in spring (if you don't use it as a cereal crop?).

If include the turnip root (which is eaten by the stock), it may add 30% weight to the dry matter produced above ground.

Livestock will learn to forage for and eat the turnip root.

Barley, like ryecorn bulks up fast to fill the feed gap early, but peaters out quickly in feed value.

Protozoa in the gut of a sheep takes about two weeks to adjust to new feed types, so there is a better conversion with the second graze.

Electric fences can double production by strategically grazing small areas to optimum levels.

Trial Feed Conversion Calculations on the brassica;

120 Merino ewe weaners on 2.5ha brassica equates to a stocking rate of 48 ewes / Ha for 17 days.

Sheep averaged 1320g weight gain over the 17 days. Using carcass value of \$4.20/kg and conversion of 42% carcass to dressed weight, this equates to \$2.32 per head or \$111.77/Ha over 17 days.

The ewes averaged 55.68 kg at weigh in. If you were looking to allocate feed at the rate of 7% of the bodyweight/head/day, you need 3.89kg/head/day. This calculation is based on 70% utilization of dry matter (what is actually eaten vs what is left behind as wastage). The mob of 120 head would require a feed budget of 467.71 kg/day for liveweight gain.

“It’s about matching varieties to fit your feed gap needs. Choose early maturing varieties such as Ryecorn, turnips and brassicas for early bulk feed, and later maturing varieties such as cereals and rape for a longer growing period.” – Dean Harrington