

MFS Seasonal Outlooks / Farm Walks

Among the most common questions we are almost always asking here on the Monaro are:

Do I have enough feed?

How long will the feed last?

What stocking rate can I run on this paddock and for how long?

How will my stock "do" in this paddock?

The answer to these – and other questions – will be addressed at a series of field days / farm walks which Monaro Farming Systems will be holding over the coming year(s) at start of **May, Sept, Nov.**

These field days are being planned to coincide with key decision making times of the year which can be "make or break" in terms of our seasonal feed prospects.

The first of these series of field days is to be held on **Thursday 19th May and Friday 20th May** which will focus on the crucial winter period.

- **Thursday 19th May at 10.00 am** at Ned and Anne Kater's "Redcliff" Bombala
- **Friday 20th May at 10.00 am** at Jim Litchfield's "Hazeldean" Cooma (also hosted by Mark Eccleston).

****Lunch included at both venues****

These field days / farm walks are to be conducted by Stuart Burge and are going to be "a mix of the practical with a touch of theory" and as such will provide something for everyone.

A feature of these field days will be the use of Grassgro (a modeling, decision support tool) to help in farm decision making coupled with a major focus on demonstrating some simple but effective practical ways of assessing feed availability and determining paddock stocking rates.

GrassGro can be used in combination with other methods to help plan for the future and make decisions such as;

If I get this much rain, how much pasture will I grow?

How much stock can I carry in this scenario?

Should I keep, sell or buy in stock?

Will I need to supplement stock?

What trading opportunities might I have?

As well as this, there will also be an opportunity for participants to undertake a **farm walk** whereby both **Ned Kater and Jim Litchfield will discuss various aspects of their approach to pasture and livestock management.**

Both field days are scheduled to last about **three hours** and are sure to be both interesting and informative. We encourage your participation.

Stuart Burge and MFS



Evergraze Trial paddock – "Cobana"

CSIRO Dual-Purpose Cropping Trial Delegate 2010 – Preliminary cereal yield data

Below are some preliminary results from the CSIRO trial. Please note this information will be combined with costs and prices, grazing & yield data to get a final Gross Margin (GM) figure for the Final Report.

Trials have again been sown for 2011 which include evaluation of rotations of canola following cereals and vice versa and the potential benefits in disease control and yields.

LAMBPRO
linking genes and markets

Commonwealth Bank
Regional and Agribusiness Banking



Sowing 1 [Sown 11 March, grazed twice during 14-29 June and 17-28 August]

Estimated average lamb production **490 kg/ha**

Table 1 Dry grain yield (t/ha) for a range of cereals sown early (March). Brackets show standard error of mean for 3 replicates.

Cereal type	Variety	Ungrazed	Grazed
Winter wheat	CS170	6.9 (0.6)	6.1 (0.4)
	Mackellar	6.9 (0.4)	6.0 (0.2)
	Revenue	6.9 (0.4)	5.0 (0.2)
	Naparoo	6.2 (0.6)	4.5 (0.5)
Facultative winter	Wedgetail	3.6 (0.4)	3.8 (0.3)
Spring wheat	HRZ03	3.2 (0.3)	3.5 (0.1)
	Preston	4.8 (0.1)	4.8 (0.2)
	Bolac	3.0 (0.4)	3.7 (0.3)
Triticale	Endeavour	4.8 (0.2)	4.5 (0.3)
Barley	Urambie	5.5 (0.2)	4.4 (0.2)
	Yambla	2.4 (0.1)	4.6 (0.1)

Note: Data from 2 hand quadrat plots per plot (4 rows x 30 cm) in each of 3 reps

Sowing 2 [Sown 14 April, grazed once during 17-28 August]

Table 2. Dry grain yield (t/ha) for a range of cereals sown in April. Brackets show standard error of mean for 3 replicates.

Cereal type	Variety	Ungrazed	Grazed
Winter wheat	CS170	8.8 (0.3)	8.6 (0.3)
	Mackellar	11.7 (0.3)	10.3 (0.1)
	Revenue	8.7 (1.6)	8.2 (0.2)
	Naparoo	7.1 (1.0)	8.2 (0.5)
Facultative winter	Wedgetail	8.1 (0.3)	7.1 (0.2)
Spring wheat	HRZ03	8.9 (1.6)	6.5 (0.1)
	Preston	9.8 (2.2)	8.7 (0.3)
	Bolac	7.1 (1.2)	6.2 (0.3)
Triticale	Endeavour	10.5 (1.5)	12.3 (0.1)
Barley	Urambie	8.7 (0.3)	7.2 (0.2)
	Yambla	7.3 (0.1)	6.7 (0.1)

**Treatments with high standard error are shown in red to highlight their uncertainty

Preliminary findings...

Sowing 1

- Demonstrates the superiority of the winter wheats in terms of yield
- Appears Urambie outclassed Yambla, Preston did the best of the spring types and Wedgetail hasn't performed. Revenue and

Naparoo have suffered under grazing more than most.

Sowing 2

- Everything did quite well in the mild finish but Endeavour and Mackellar are standouts.
- The Sowing 2 data is likely to be an OVERESTIMATE of absolute yield although Dr John Kirkegaard is confident the yields were quite good. Caution is applied because of the small harvest sample taken.

Please note that at each sowing time ALL varieties were grazed together so that some varieties were disadvantaged (ie if one could graze them all separately according to their own timing we might have had different results).



Recent events....

- **Feb 2011, Rob Napier – Future of Family Farm Business**

Thirty people attended an extremely inspiring day presented by Rob Napier, a communication specialist who works with leading farmers around the world. Rob covered several topics including how to improve the resilience of family farm businesses to better manage threats in a volatile climate but also to recognise and take advantage of opportunities.

Some tips from leading farmers in the world included written family and business goals, regular meetings, seeking out and embracing new technologies, plans to make the user pay for environmental services, active involvement in the marketing and supply chain of their product and continually looking for opportunities to grow the business.

The good news is that Rob firmly believes there is a strong future for family run and owned business in the growing world of corporate investment due to the sound business structure underpinning successful family farms.

There will be a follow-up to this day planned for August 2011.



- **More funding Success for “Soil Club”**

MFS has recently been successful in securing approx. **\$40,000 funding from MLA** under their “Producer Demonstration Site” scheme to establish some soil fertility trial’s on three soil types, basalt, granite and shale. This will underpin future “Soil Club” activities and demonstrate the benefits of regular soil testing and use of the P-Tool to better “target” fertiliser applications resulting in long-term fertiliser cost savings and improved stocking rates. This trial will also look at the link between soil fertility and improving legume production and persistence on these three soil types.

Dr Richard Simpsons (CSIRO) analysis of MFS member soils in Nov 2010 (107 samples) showed that approx. 50% of topsoils were below optimum in P (phosphorus) on the granite and shale soils and a significant % of topsoils were below optimum in S (sulphur) (67% on the granite and 62% on the basalt).

- **Evergraze Perennial Pasture Trial's well and truly established**

MFS continues to collect data from both trial sites at Bombala (“Cobana”) and Nimmitabel (“Bellevue”) which are looking at different perennial pasture mixes and their animal production potentials and persistence.

The trial at Bellevue is looking at different sowing and grazing techniques to promote successful, long term establishment of lucerne in a traditional phalaris based pasture.

Now that both trials have been established, pasture and animal measurements will now be collected and documented for members’ information.



Trial paddock at “Bellevue”, looking at ways to restrain the dominance of phalaris and improve competitiveness of lucerne.

Upcoming Events

- ❖ MFS / Stuart Burge Seasonal Outlooks - May, Sept, November 2011 – SEE FRONT PAGE
- ❖ Carbon Day Out Two - Wed June 29th Cooma Speakers.....
 1. **Professor Ross Garnaut** – Climate Change Advisor to Aust Govt. - will present aspects of his updated 2011 “Garnaut Climate Change Review” and carbon tax argument.
 2. **Mick Keogh** – Australian Farm Institute – financial impacts of carbon tax and carbon farming initiatives at the farm level.
 3. **Doug Alcock & Phil Graham** – NSW I & I Livestock and Pasture Specialists – what will the Monaro climate look like over the next 30 years? Likely shifts to seasonal rainfall and temperature patterns.

4. **Lachlan Ingram** – Researcher, Sydney University – preliminary results from lucerne trials at “Coolringdon”, building soil carbon, how much is possible...

❖ **Building Family Farm Resilience – 2nd session – Rob Napier – Aug 2011**

❖ **MFS Wether Trial – start Mid Oct 2011**

We have 25 teams entered in the wether trial to be held at Tombong in October. There is a good mix of teams from the Bombala, Cooma, Nimmitabel, Berridale and Yass districts with three local studs entering teams. Entrants will be assessed for both fleece and carcass characteristics with measurements taken over a three year period.



Useful websites and Calculators

*This is a very useful tool for calculating paddock sizes, or any type of area calculations using Google.
<http://www.daftlogic.com/projects-google-maps-area-calculator-tool.htm>
Just zoom in on the location and mark the points around the area to be measured.

*Useful Calculators...

-MLA Pasture Growth Outlook Tool
-P-Tool
<http://www.mla.com.au>

-Pasture Picker (Pastures Australia)
<http://www.pasturepicker.com.au>

-Ram Value Calculator (Sheep CRC)
<http://www.sheepcrc.org.au>

-Pasture Renovation Value Calculator (Evergraze),
<http://www.evergraze.com.au/tools.htm>



**GENETICS OF LAMB SURVIVAL:
A STUDY OF MERINO RESOURCE FLOCKS IN
SOUTH AUSTRALIA**
F.D. Brien, M.L. Hebart, K.S. Jaensch, D.H. Smith and R.J. Grimson

South Australian Research and Development Institute,
Roseworthy, SA, 5371

SUMMARY

Estimates of genetic parameters and variance components were made for lamb survival and correlated traits on data from the SA Merino Resource Flock (1988-1997) and the SA Selection Demonstration Flocks (1996-2006).

Very low estimates of direct heritability were obtained for lamb survival, with values of 0.071, 0.044, 0.043, 0.032 and 0.032 for surviving birth, up to 3, 7, 40 (marking) and 91 days (weaning) after birth, respectively, indicating only slow progress would be likely from genetic improvement. Birth weight had low positive phenotypic correlations with lamb survival (values from 0.112 to 0.224), with the genetic correlations being negative to near zero (values from -0.137 to -0.025), indicating little would be gained in lamb survival from genetic manipulation of birth weight. The phenotypic correlations between lamb survival and birth coat score were virtually zero in all cases, however the genetic correlations were low and consistently positive (values from 0.071 to 0.192), being highest for survival to 3 days of age.

Exerts from an article on “*Mycotoxin in beef cattle*” by Dr Rod Manning (veterinarian in Mansfield, Vic)

“WARNING TO CATTLE PRODUCERS OF DEADLY GRASS FUNGUS”

Due to a worm wet spring and high pasture growth, particularly Phalaris grass, once it matures with large seed heads and is not grazed off, can become infected with a fungus, *Claviceps Phalaridis*. Although several other *Claviceps* species may be involved and can affect several grass species such as cocksfoot, paspalum, grain etc

The uncommonly wet humid conditions is conducive to spread this fungus that produces a toxic compound to livestock and can exhibit a wide range of pathological conditions.

A common occurrence is a 'honey dew' exudates from the seed head that covers the front of a vehicle or motorbike and leaves a sticky, sugary cover on all it touches. This

“honeydew” is most apparent around the time of flowering .

This is a sure diagnosis of ergot infection of the plant and seed head.

Individual seed heads turn black and contain pigmented seed that is highly toxic and contains the mycotoxin.

The mycotoxin causes a wide range of conditions and the clinical syndrome can be varied depending on the mycotoxins produced

In Mansfield , Swollen briskets were an early sign that cows have been infected.

Other symptoms can be poor animal production and poor weight gain, even whilst on good feed. This has been apparent , especially in young stock post weaning.

The toxin also interferes with the production of the hormone Prolactin, released by the brain.

Prolactin is responsible for the birth process and the development of udder and milk production and any disruption of this process can lead to a range of severe outcomes

Affected cattle and sheep can suffer abortion storms, stillbirth and failure of milk production so newborn starve to death.

Another common occurrence is development of central nervous system disorder with hyper excitability, nervous behavior and acute spasms leading to death, similar to Rye grass toxicity.

Any animals grazing this affected pasture need to be removed onto a paddock with different grasses to lower the toxic ingestion.

Topping of all affected pasture is recommended at this stage and removal onto clean paddocks.

IN retrospect, the real economic cost is in the poor production in live weight gain that has occurred, particularly in the young stock. Over the last 10 years our weaned calves from early October to Late December would have averaged around 1.2-1.4 kg day onto highly improved pasture, this year average around 0.4 kg/day.

Say 60 days at loss of 0.8 kg/day correlates to reduced sale weight of 50 kg at \$2.00 kg equals \$100/head potential loss. We should have been feeding grain.

We are hopeful that after a break in the season and new green feed will change the conditions.

