

# Fact Sheet...

**Grain & Graze**<sup>TM</sup>  
Profit through knowledge  
MURRUMBIDGEE

## Project Update:

(for more details go to [www.farmlink.com.au/gg.htm](http://www.farmlink.com.au/gg.htm))

### R&D trials

- a) **grazing wheats** (*Guy McMullen, NSW DPI*)
- lamb **liveweight gains** at the Marrar site were down on last year, averaging 160g/hd/day. Responses to the mineral supplements (magnesium, etc) are currently being analysed. A combination of the dry season and aggressive grazing to get sufficient feed intake to measure responses meant plant recovery was severely restricted, so there will be no grain harvest.
  - the **grazing wheat/canola agronomy trials** at Eurongilly and Ganmain will be harvested, although both have very low yield potential.
- b) **short term pastures** (*Felicity Gummer, FarmLink*)
- the trials at Henty and Illabo have now been fallowed after their 2-year phase. Final dry matter assessments in October showed Winterstar ryegrass and Winfred forage brassica to have the most feed at Illabo, whilst Sardi 10 was highest at Henty. Regeneration of Antas subclover was poor this year at both sites after being the standout performer in year 1.

### Focus Farms

 (*Craig Muir, DPI; Sheila de Lange, CMA*)

- October editions of **Focus Farm Facts** are now available on the web at [www.farmlink.com.au/gg.htm](http://www.farmlink.com.au/gg.htm). (Summary pg 2). E-mail [craig.muir@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:craig.muir@dpi.nsw.gov.au) to receive these directly.
- the spring **biodiversity sampling** has been completed on each Focus Farm, including measurements of soil fungus and invertebrate numbers. Results show very little fungal activity due to dry conditions.

### G&G Seminar Series

- 55 people attended the **Lamb Cost of Production Workshops** (funded by MLA) at Yerong Creek, Ardlethan and Grenfell last month (article this pg).

## Lamb Cost of Production Workshops

A series of half-day workshops to determine the **costs required to produce each kg of lamb** was held recently in Yerong Creek, Ardlethan and Grenfell. The workshops, which were funded by MLA, were co-ordinated by FarmLink on behalf of the Grain & Graze project partners as part of the 'G&G Seminar Series'. A total of 55 farmers and advisers attended the workshops which were delivered by Sandy McEachern of Holmes Sackett & Associates.

The workshops emphasised the point that calculating **Cost of Production (CoP)** is an important step in assessing flock performance and a first step to making change. This was put into practice during the workshops with participants having to calculate the CoP for 2 case studies involving a lamb enterprise, then discussing ways in which the costs could be reduced. These included changes to stocking rates, time of lambing, weaning %, genetics, targeted supplementary feeding, and more lambs on the ground per hectare.

The **MLA Cost of Production Calculator (lamb)** was used during the workshops. This was developed by Holmes Sackett & Associates for MLA and can be found at [www.mla.com.au](http://www.mla.com.au) → **information centre** → **animal production** → **MLA Cost of Production Calculator (lamb)**. (A beef version is also available). The calculator can help compare your own CoP with other lamb producers to determine how you're tracking (see yellow box). It is important to remember that CoP should be calculated over a number of years to avoid variability from rainfall, flock management changes, etc.

Feedback from the workshops was very positive, although a number of farmers thought it might be a little scary when they go to calculate their own CoP!

### How does your CoP compare?

- **most efficient 1/3 farms:** \$1.56 - \$2.01/kg dressed
- **middle 1/3 farms:** \$2.01 - \$2.51/kg dressed
- **least efficient 1/3 farms:** \$2.51 - \$3.34/kg dressed

(from MLA 'tips & tools - Calculating cost of production')



Cost of Production Workshop at Ardlethan - October 2006

Cost of Production Workshop at Grenfell - October 2006

Murrumbidgee & G&G

Murrumbidgee  
G&G partners:



## Feed quality

Despite the lack of feed now available, the **quality** of pasture and failed crops still remaining is relatively good. Samples collected from the Focus Farms in October (Table 1) give an indication of current feed quality and the corresponding modelled **liveweight gains**, which support how well stock are currently doing in paddocks. Generally, stock are performing better on lucerne and 'grazing wheat' (ie. failed wheat) paddocks, with greater feed available. However as both feed quality and quantity continue to decline, it's important to be aware of animal requirements to ensure any shortfalls are met through appropriate supplementary feeding strategies. This can be done using the computer model GrazFeed, accessible through many department and private advisers.

Table 1: October pasture data - Focus Farms

Feed Quality dig/protein%:energy MJ & Quantity kg DM/ha		Cool- amon	Euroley Bridge	Sebas- topol	Tarcutta	Tootool
annual	digest.	71	67	70	77	67
	protein	15	10	17	17	10
	energy	11	10	11	12	10
	DM	1420	1490	1650	830	1550
	(green)	(140)	(670)	(160)	(690)	(310)
	ewe LW*	-24	22	13	63	-70
lucerne	digest.	74	70	73	66	68
	protein	23	16	19	20	12
	energy	11	10	11	10	10
	DM	990	2090	1610	1450	1260
	(green)	(390)	(1030)	(180)	(1410)	(20)
	ewe LW*	21	79	21	94	-138
native	digest.	60	55	67	74	72
	protein	10	10	12	16	12
	energy	9	8	10	11	11
	DM	1800	1500	1920	1110	2540
	(green)	(440)	(410)	(70)	(680)	(790)
	ewe LW*	-47	-35	-85	36	55
grazing wheat	digest.	78	76	72	74	76
	protein	17	16	11	19	12
	energy	12	11	11	11	12
	DM	900	4360	3290	170 (170)	1870
	(green)	(760)	(4250)	(2380)		(1330)
	ewe LW*	111	133	124	-52	109
lamb LW*	digest.	53	80	99	175	14
	protein	116	194	114	227	-53
	energy	28	41	3	133	119
	DM	235	259	201	38	184
	(green)					
	ewe LW*					

\*liveweight gain/loss of 50kg dry ewe, or 1X weaner lamb

(source: Craig Muir, NSW DPI; refer October Focus Farm Facts for more detail on each location at [www.farmlink.com.au/gg.htm](http://www.farmlink.com.au/gg.htm))

### Minimum Feed Quantity (kg DM/ha) for Maintenance of Dry Stock

stock class	pasture digestibility		
	75%	68%	60%
dry sheep	400	600	1200
dry cows	700	1100	2600

source: Prograze™

## Feed budgeting through summer/autumn

With limited feed now available from pastures and failed crops, feed budgets are crucial to work out fodder requirements to get through to next winter (potentially) when pastures can support stock again. When budgeting over the longer term, it's important to remember to increase animal intake figures at critical times, eg. pregnancy & lactation. The following scenarios (prepared by **Greg Condon, Grassroots Agronomy**) compare feed requirements for 2 lambing scenarios.

### Summer/Autumn Feed Budgets

Assumptions:

- feeding wheat (13MJ ME/kg) @ \$300/t, excluding feeding costs
- fed part ration in December, then full ration in droughtlot (ie. contained area) from January to June

Scenario 1:

- 1000 merino ewes (50kg LW), 5 week joining February/March to lamb July/August
- fed wheat @ 0.5kg/head/day, increasing x1.7 during last 6 weeks of pregnancy. (Note that a low quality roughage, eg. straw @ 10-15% of ration is also recommended).

Month	Daily kg fed/head	Monthly kg fed/head	Monthly cost/head	Monthly cost/mob (cumulative)
Dec	0.3	9	\$2.70	\$2700
Jan	0.5	15.5	\$4.65	\$4650 (\$7350)
Feb	0.5	14	\$4.20	\$4200 (\$11550)
Mar	0.5	15.5	\$4.65	\$4650 (\$16200)
Apr	0.5	15	\$4.50	\$4500 (\$20700)
May	0.68	21	\$6.30	\$6300 (\$27000)
Jun	0.85	25.5	\$7.65	\$7650 (\$34650)

Scenario 2:

- 1000 1st-X ewes (50kg LW), 6-8 week joining October/November to lamb March/April
- fed wheat @ 0.5kg/head/day, increasing x1.7 during last 6 weeks of pregnancy, then x3 during lactation. (Note that a high quality roughage, eg. silage @ 20-30% of ration is also required to assist with colostrum production and reduce mis-mothering). Do not allow ewes to lamb in droughtlot - larger sacrifice paddocks are recommended.

Month	Daily kg fed/head	Monthly kg fed/head	Monthly cost/head	Monthly cost/mob (cumulative)
Dec	0.5	15.5	\$4.65	\$4650
Jan	0.68	21	\$6.30	\$6300 (\$10950)
Feb	0.85	24	\$7.20	\$7200 (\$18150)
Mar	1.5	46.5	\$13.95	\$13950 (\$32100)
Apr	1.5	45	\$13.50	\$13500 (\$45600)
May	1.5	46.5	\$13.95	\$13950 (\$59550)
Jun	0.5	15	\$4.50	\$4500 (\$64050)