

Key Messages

Ag-Focussed Projects 2017-2020



Key Messages development were derived from producer and stakeholder feedback, case studies, presenter PowerPoints over 2 years, from MLA, National Landcare Program (NLP2) and other partnership projects of Tamar NRM. Note that key messages have been developed to guide extension services and project topic selection. They are not intended to contain the full level of detail or context necessary for stand-alone distribution or topic understanding.

Pasture utilisation

*Adopt leaf stage based rotational grazing for grasses
Aim to grow the best quality pasture
Set the right stocking rate to optimise pasture utilisation*

Pasture species identification

A 2018 Tamar Valley pasture species identification survey showed that confidence in identify in pasture grasses was low. 41% of respondents said they could identify 50% or more of the 22 species listed in the survey. Many rely on agronomic advisors for identification.

Pasture management

Plant tissue testing is the more accurate method for diagnosing micronutrient toxicities, deficiencies, and imbalances for plants and for corroborating animal nutrition.

Ensuring nutrient and good grazing practices are in place to support persistence of existing desirable pasture species. Better than having to renovate your pasture.

A survey of landholders showed some difficulty in calculating DSE values vary for different classes of livestock at different live weights (e.g. DSE value for a 300kg steer growing at 1.0 kg/day). It is important to know livestock DSE values, so landholders can manage feed budgets

Fertiliser management

It is important that fertiliser application occurs at the right time in the production cycle – when the nutrient will be rapidly taken up by the plants.

Nutrients are constantly being removed as you go about the daily business of growing pasture for grazing animals for the production of meat, wool and dairy and when making hay or silage.

Applying macronutrients and micronutrients to pastures - There are 17 essential nutrients required for healthy plant growth, a deficiency in any one of these 17 will reduce growth, production and profit, even though the others may be abundantly available. Get the balance right.

Management of soils

Waterlogging can limit agricultural productivity in many areas of Tasmania as the state enjoys relatively high rainfall which normally occurs with an excess of rainfall over evaporation in winter and spring. A range of soil orders experience parts of the year when they are saturated due to high regional water tables, low rates of water conductivity, perched water tables or seepage.

Feed lotting when paddocks are wet and utilising laneways for part of the day will reduce pugging.

Managing soil variability in Tasmania requires different management across different paddocks (Tamar NRM commenced a Healthy Soils Demonstration site at "Wenlock", Rosevale in October 2019).

Soil testing should be seen as an integral part of your regular fertiliser and pasture management program within the animal production system.

❑ Animal nutrition

Feed Conversion Ratio - Measuring of the efficiency with which the bodies of livestock convert animal feed into the desired output (meat or milk) is essential. In the cooler Tasmanian climate, it is possible for animals to lose condition.

Variations on Fodder Crops, timing and best types selected to maximise production (including grazing fodder crops).

❑ Worm burden and breaking the contamination cycle on irrigated pastures.

Irrigated permanent pastures become inexorably contaminated when grazed by finishing lambs during the summer and autumn, and ewes with lambs at foot during the late winter and spring. Strategic drenching does little to reduce contamination (compared with strategic drenching on dryland pastures). The only proven way to break the contamination cycle is to spell the paddocks spring and early summer when there is rapid larval die-off. Without additional contamination the pastures become (relatively) worm free.

❑ MLA tools and resources

MLA have a number of useful tools to be profitable and sustainable including:

<https://www.mla.com.au/research-and-development/Grazing-pasture-management/>

<https://mbfp.mla.com.au/pasture-growth/tools/>

<https://www.mla.com.au/research-and-development/Environment-sustainability/Sustainable-grazing-a-producer-resource/healthy-fertile-soils/>

