Managing Grazing Crops in 2014
Quick Reference Guide

With a tremendous start to the season and a large area of grazing crops going in the ground, and looking good, it is worthwhile revisiting some useful current and past research to make sure we get the most out of these crops in terms of grazing and grain.

The following are the key points to consider when managing dual purpose crops.

The Grain and Graze project between 2004-2008 and currently the CSIRO have investigated the management of grazing crops in a number of locations with the key findings being as follows:

**Dual purpose wheats – grazing and grain recovery**

- Grazing can be successfully carried out at significantly higher stocking rates (~30 dse/ha at Wallenbeen) than traditionally recommended to utilise the high quantity of dry matter produced during winter. Increasing mob sizes or utilising temporary electric fencing can help increase stock density and improve grazing management.

- High stocking rates combined with long grazing periods (~ six weeks) reduced grain yields, but losses may be offset by income from additional live weight gains, depending on prices. Stock should be removed before GS31 (stem elongation) to prevent yield losses.

- In drier seasons, limited trial data and anecdotal reports showed that grazing can result in higher grain yields, potentially due to water ‘saved’ from reduced leaf area then being available for grain fill later in the season. In wetter springs, yield losses from grazing can be limited by delayed maturity allowing the crop to utilise late rainfall.

- Grazing delayed flowering in winter wheats by up to 16 days, which can have implications for sowing times to manage frost/heat stress.

- Nitrogen fertiliser should be applied at sowing to ensure crops get a good start. Fertilisers should not be applied immediately before or during grazing as there is a risk of nitrate toxicity.

- Once grazing period is complete and heading into the Lock-up stage fine tune nutrition requirements of the crop to ensure the crop will achieve targeted yields, keeping in mind the Plant Available Water at lock-up and the 3-month climate outlook.

**Dual purpose wheats - liveweight responses**

- Young sheep grazing dual purpose wheats showed significant liveweight gains when supplemented with NaCl (salt), Lime and MgO (eg. Causmag) at a ratio of 1:1:1.

- Sheep showed no grazing preferences between different wheat varieties.

- Grazing wheats showed high nutritive values that would not be expected to constrain animal growth rates.

**Winter Type Canola**

- Retain >1000kg/ha dry matter at the end of winter grazing (lock-up). This will speed recovery period and maintain grain yield potential

- Maintain diligence with respect to weed control and observe herbicide grazing withholding periods

- Monitor insect pests including aphids and heliothis

- Nitrogen fertiliser should be applied at sowing to ensure crops get a good start. Fertilisers should not
be applied immediately before or during grazing as there is a risk of nitrate toxicity

► Once grazing period is complete and heading into the Lock-up stage fine tune nutrition requirements of the crop to ensure the crop will achieve targeted yields, keeping in mind the Plant Available Water at lock-up and the 3-month climate outlook

► Winter Canola types took a yield penalty when grazed very early, followed by a second grazing up until stem elongation. Allowing good establishment of the crop prior to the first grazing is essential to maintain high grain yield at the end of the season.

► Timing of stock removal is the most important decision growers will make during the season. Stock must be removed before the canola elongates to 10cm above ground level to prevent yield penalties.

Animal Health considerations (Riverina Local Land Services District Vets Liz Braddon and Rahul Shankar)

► Make sure you are up to date with 5 in 1 vaccinations (within previous 6 months) to avoid Pulpy Kidney, and do a Drench test and act on results prior to entering grazing crops.

► Introducing stock to any new paddock; move mid-morning to mid-afternoon. Check stock regularly on the following days for early detection of any possible issues which may arise from a sudden change in feed.

► Wet feet, soft ground and pregnant ewes/cows could increase the risk of foot abscess or inter-digital dermatitis. Allow a run off area in a lane way or similar if possible. Monitor stock to detect early signs of feet issues.

► Grass tetany, particularly in lactating cattle or sheep will be a risk. Definitely need to supply Lime, Salt and Causmag at 1:1:1

► Canola- photosensitisation is a risk when grazing canola too early. Need to wait until leaves show purpling on the margins or within the leaves before grazing can take place to reduce risk of this occurring.

More information:

- www.farmlink.com.au/_literature_145498/Grazing_Wheats_in_Southern_NSW

NSW DPI website

Acknowledgements:

2. John Kirkegaard, CSIRO-from GRDC and CSIRO Grazing Management Trial 2013

© State of New South Wales through Local Land Services 2014. The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing June 2014. However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that the information upon which they rely is up to date and to check the currency of the information with the appropriate officer of Local Land Services or the user’s independent adviser.

For updates go to www.lls.nsw.gov.au