Productivity Highlights

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Improving pasture utilisation

The optimum utilisation of pasture is the key to efficient and profitable farming of stock in any district.

Increasing pasture utilisation can be done at relatively low cost, does not require a significant increase in inputs and the gains in profitability can be significant.

Example

Consider the paddock that grows 7 t/ha of dry matter. Increasing utilisation of this pasture by just 5% will mean an additional 350 kg/ha is consumed. Assuming energy levels in the pasture of 9 MJ/kg, an additional 3150 MJ/ha is being consumed by the flock or herd.

Using lamb production as an example, we know that 45 MJ is required for every 1 kg of liveweight gain. Therefore, 3150 MJ/ha has the potential to produce an additional 70 kg/ha of lamb. At $2.20/kg, this equates to an extra $154/ha - possible without having to grow any more pasture!

Stock Management is the Key

Pasture Production (t/ha)	Pasture Utilisation (%)	Extra Pasture Utilised (kg/ha)	Extra Lamb Produced ($/ha)
7.0	65	-	-
7.0	70	350	$154
7.0	75	700	$308

July/August Lambing/Calving

Lambing/calving in late winter rather than earlier will time the periods of greatest feed demand with that of highest pasture growth rates. This should result in greater utilisation of the spring flush while relieving the pressure on pastures trying to get established earlier in the year. It should also help to maintain balanced pasture composition.

Grazing Pressure

Grazing pastures before excessive shading occurs (canopy closure) will mean efficient utilisation of that pasture. Rules of thumb are maintaining grazing pressure so that feed on offer ranges between 1.4 and 2.5 t/ha.

Rotational Grazing

Rotational grazing (or spelling paddocks) allows pastures to recover and ryegrasses to maximise production. Set stocking, particularly early in the season, puts establishing pastures under enormous pressure to the detriment of production.