

Longford Red Meat Group – Producer Demonstration Site update

There is a huge opportunity to lift productivity and profitability of grazing systems under irrigation. Pasture utilisation of 1 T DM (3.3 DSE) /100mm rainfall/1 ML irrigation is an appropriate productivity benchmark for Tasmania grazing systems, however this target is often not realised. Best practice can be as high as 1.5-2T DM (5-7 DSE) /100mm rainfall. With an expansion in irrigation into areas which cannot sustain continual cropping, maximising the profitability of the pasture phase will be critical to farm profitability.

The Longford Red Meat Group (LRMG) is a group of young, progressive red meat producers looking to lift their profitability by improving their pasture and grazing management skills to increase pasture production and utilisation. In 2016, the LRMG was successful in securing funding from Meat and Livestock Australia for a three year Producer Demonstration Site project which is being coordinated by Macquarie Franklin and supported by TP Jones.

The question the group wants to answer from this project is:

'Under irrigation, what is the annual return from proactively managing feed using a rotational grazing system, compared to set stocking? And what is the difference in profitability of ryegrass and clover production systems over a 12 month period?'

The first year the trial was hosted by Andrew Archer at Chester, Westwood. A summary of the year 1 results are available at <http://www.macquariefranklin.com.au/current-projects/>

The year 2 trial host is John Ramsay from Ratho at Bothwell. This trial is well underway, with the different treatments stocked with twin bearing ewes in the last week of August ready for lambing. Trial lambs were marked on 4 October, and the results are presented below.



	Pasture cover at start lambing (kg DM/ha)	Pasture cover at marking (kg DM/ha)	% lambs at marking	Ewe CS	Lamb liveweight (kg)	SR (ewes/ha)
CR	1635	2269	155	3.0	12.8	9
CS	1590	2504	163	3.1	13.5	9
GR	1739	1294	158	2.8	12.0	14
GS	1227	948	146	2.7	12.7	11

Mobs going onto the rotational grazing treatments will start their rotations straight after marking, with additional ewes and lambs added to increase the grazing pressure, and maintain pasture quality up until weaning in early December.

A field day at the trial site is scheduled for Thursday 30th November – put the date in your calendar now as this will be a great opportunity to see the results firsthand.