Saleable Stock from Stable Pasture Project

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The *Saleable Stock from Stable Pastures* is an advisory project aimed at improving the efficiency of livestock production in the central and northern Slopes, near Plains and upper Hunter areas of the state (Figure 1), by developing and maintaining pastures that are both profitable and sustainable.

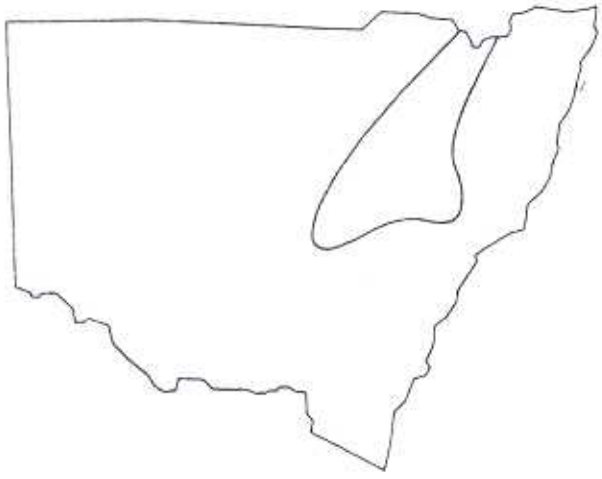

Figure 1: Target area for "Saleable Stock from Stable Pasture Project".

It is supported by The National Landcare Program, NSW Agriculture, The Department of Conservation and Land Management, the University of New England, and agribusiness.

The project promotes three aspects of pasture management. It combines the current knowledge on optimum grazing management to maintain a persistent and productive well utilised pasture, with recent research results showing: (1) the amount of pasture cover needed to prevent significant soil erosion, and (2) the need for adequate nutrition to maintain a vigorous productive pasture.

Pasture Cover

Research at Scone and Gunnedah by the Department of Conservation and Land Management has shown that soil erosion will be significantly reduced if pasture cover is maintained at around 70% for the highest risk period (November to March) on the slopes (see Walker, Figure 1, this conference, p). This critical level of cover will vary slightly with many factors and will be lower on the plains and slightly higher on the tablelands. It is important for producers to be aware of this result, be able to estimate 70% pasture cover and endeavour to manage country to achieve this target as far as practical.

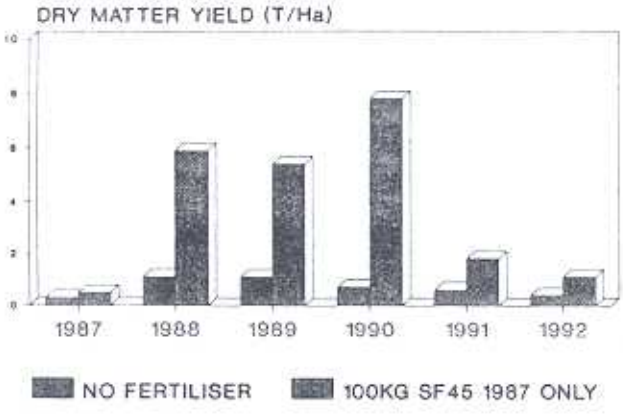

Figure 2: The effect of SF45 fertiliser on sulphur decificent pastures at Ulamambri (Freebairn, 1992).

Soil Nutrition

Agronomists from NSW Agriculture have conducted more than 38 field trials in this area over the past 10 years, looking at the nutritional status of pasture soils. The results show that sulphur was deficient at 90% of sites and phosphorus at 50% of sites. In most cases, both nutrients were deficient. Addition of nutrients had a marked effect on production, pasture composition and cover.

A timely outcome of these trials was that some country can be improved by use of low rates of fertiliser, at low cost resulting in large production increases extending over a very long time (Figure 2)

Managers are encouraged to identify the nutrient deficiencies on their properties, establish a priority listing of paddocks for top dressing based on the likely response and returns for their investment, and work out a long-term strategy to optimise nutrient use.

Grazing Management

Current knowledge on grazing management needs to be assessed by managers and implemented where appropriate to ensure better utilisation, persistence and productivity of our better pasture species.

A greater understanding of the requirements of our better pasture species for survival as well as for pasture and animal production will assist in ensuring a greater level of sustainability and profitability.

References

Lang, R.D. (1990). The effect of ground cover on runoff and erosion from plots at Scone, New South Wales. *M.Sc.(Hons) thesis, Macquarie University. University.*

Freebairn, R.D. (1992). Best bet fertiliser strategies - Part 1. *Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Conference of the Grassland Society of NSW, Tamworth,* p 45.