

STEER FATTENING TRIAL GLEN INNES

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The following results were gained after only one year of a steer fattening trial on "The Downs" Glen Innes. They serve as an encouraging reminder that superphosphate is still one of the best investment alternatives open to today's grazier.

The trial, being run by AFL and the Department of Agriculture on previously well supered country, compared the weight gains of steers running on supered country, against those on non-supered country.

The soil is an acid granite based soil (pH CaCl_2 4.8 - 5.0). The pasture, sown in April, 1979, is a mixture of ryegrass, cocksfoot, phalaris, white clover and native species. Average annual rainfall is 864 mm (34") per annum.

Two uniform blocks, each 16 hectares (40 acres) were selected. Superphosphate was applied to only one paddock in February, 1987 at 125 kg/ha (1 cwt per acre). Twenty three hereford and hereford-angus cross steers were introduced at weaning to each site in April. This stocking rate (1.4 steers/ha) gave adequate feed on both blocks.

In the first 12 months of the trial, the steers running on the supered block gained an average of 24 kg more per head than those on the unsupered block.

The value of this extra production, (based on a liveweight price of 120¢ per kilogram) was \$41.40 per hectare. The cost of the fertilizer (based on groundspread super at \$190.00 per tonne) was \$23.75 per hectare. Thus, the margin due to fertilizer was \$17.65 per hectare, a 74% return on investment! Using airspread super, the net return would have been 58.6% on investment.

Not only were the steers on the supered paddock heavier, they were better developed, had better coat colour and generally looked healthier.

The trial will run for at least another 2 years, with new weaners introduced each 12 months.