



Pastures - need rest to recover

In the past week, grazing specialist, Mick Alexander, "Grazing BestPrac" has been inspecting pastures to assess the potential for plant recovery during the remainder of the growing season. He was discussing the situation facing many producers at a recent workshop. Mr Alexander said, "There is a huge variation in damage to plants across paddocks and across species". "In some paddocks, there is little damage and pastures are recovering fast as they were either not inundated for long or the plants had their leaves above the water level", he said. "These pastures require sound grazing management including rest and rotational grazing to regrow throughout the year".



New tillers struggling to grow.

He continued, "However, there are many paddocks along water courses and on flood plains where the pasture was submerged for up to two weeks with up to three metres of water and then covered in a layer of silt, so the plants have been decimated". "And plants which we would expect to handle the flooding such as Bambatsi and many legumes have also been killed". "The flooding and overland flow has given the plants a tripple wammy in that the plants are now dead and it is difficult for new plants to germinate through the silt layer and nitrogen and other nutrients have been lost from paddocks via leaching and denitrification".



Patchy Recovery

Mr Alexander continued, "These areas covered in silt may be slow to recover at first, and will require rain to settle the crust, but may be the most productive paddocks in coming seasons as the silt is similar to a layer of nutrients (top dressing)". "The damaged pastures will require careful management to enable recovery this year", Mr Alexander said. "The outcome of this flood is very similar to a raging hot fire where plants are destroyed and must regrow

from either seed in the soil (seed bank) or from new pasture seed". He added, "In some cases, there are some grass plants which have survived enough to push up new tillers and that is the green tinge we can see across much of this country". "If stock are allowed to graze those young struggling plants, they will slow the chance for recovery and maybe kill the plants".



Urochloa seedlings are the first to establish.

"We have had reports that the native pasture plants (Bluegrass, kangaroo Grass) are responding ahead of the introduced species, such as Buffel grass". "Many paddocks also have large numbers of broadleaf weeds beginning to shoot and some annual grass plants including Urochloa have been the first to create ground cover". Mr Alexander said, "the biggest hurdle to overcome is the patchiness of the damage, with small areas of big paddocks surviving and the temptation to graze that paddock".

Mr Alexander explained, "It is a good time to conduct a full property audit of the damage to pastures and cropping paddocks, to enable a full year plan to be developed". "This plan will help farming families to have confidence moving forward as pastures which are summer dominant will have a lower than average chance of recovering this summer". He continued,



Some pastures had their leaf above water & survived at Bindaree Garnant.

Most graziers have several options to work through including:

- Sowing pastures
- Resting country (destocking)
- Rotational grazing
- Pasture Cropping (direct drill oats in winter)

We will discuss more about options in next weeks edition.

Rotational Grazing and many other exciting grazing management tools will be discussed at the coming Rotational Grazing Field Day being held at "Albeni" Springsure on the 21st February. For more information, on the field days and workshops or for more grazing management information, contact Cathe or Mick at Grazing BestPrac on 0749 383919 or 0438 395255.

Healthy Grass, Cattle & Soils Workshops

'Make the most of your rain & grass in 2010'

CQ Best-Practice Group & CHRRUP present:
ROTATIONAL GRAZING FIELD DAY

What – Grazing Management – Rotational Grazing

Where – Albeni, Springsure, Graeme & Susan McDonald

When – 21st February 2011

Development planning/ Water plans/ Layout/Mob size/ all issues discussed.

Book Early for catering.

A once in a lifetime opportunity.....

Bookings – Noela/ Cathe on 49 383919

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