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FORUM



Alpine Valleys

agribusiness forum

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'Australian Alpine Valleys - Where the Best Grows to Perfection'



Jim Moll is an agricultural scientist/economist, based in Benalla. Originally from a family wool property in Western Victoria, Jim has worked in Griffith NSW, Toowoomba and Mount Isa in various aspects of agricultural research, extension and consultancy.

He has recently been involved with the Farm business & biodiversity research projects funded through Land Water & Wool, which devised ways wool growers could improve native biodiversity and farm profitability at the same time.

He has experience in agricultural economics and whole farm planning, with a recent emphasis on grazing and pasture management.

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EverGraze

More livestock from perennials

EverGraze is a new program which aims to develop grazing systems to increase profits and improve catchment health in different environments across southern Australia.

The North East Victorian program is the result of funding and resources provided by the National Landcare Program, Australian Alpine Valleys Agribusiness Forum and North East Catchment Management Authority in conjunction with Future Farm Industries CRC, Meat and Livestock Australia and Australian Wool Innovation Limited.

With more perennials and better livestock, **EverGraze** aims to increase the profitability of livestock enterprises by up to 50% while simultaneously improving natural resources such as water management, perenniality, biodiversity and soil health.

The project comprises of two site types:

Proof sites where experimental testing into innovative grazing and livestock projection will determine environmental impact and farm profitability.

Six research teams at Proof Sites in three states, one of which based in Chiltern, are testing new farming systems, measuring soil, water, pasture and livestock inputs and outputs to enable accurate modelling of

their impact catchment outcomes and farm profits. Three sites are focussing on sown exotic perennial species with the remaining three working on existing native perennials.

The Proof Sites investigate :

- using more summer active perennials
- grazing management to enhance desirable native species and increase ground cover
- integrating native and introduced perennials into farming systems
- rotational grazing systems to improve biodiversity and pasture production

Support site networks allow groups of livestock producers to trial new grazing practices or perennial pasture systems with the potential to meet the **EverGraze** aims of increased profitability and improved environmental outcomes.



FOCUS ON

North East Victorian *Support Sites*

Jim Moll, an agronomist appointed by the Australian Alpine Valleys Agribusiness Forum, is currently managing eight EverGraze Support Sites in the North East. The outcome of these sites should demonstrate economical ways of improving farm profits and environmental benefits through improved perennial pasture and better stock management.

Support Sites in the North East are located at :

- Taminick Gap
- Wangaratta
- Murrungee
- Tallangatta Valley
- Cudgewa (Corryong)
- Benambra
- Cobungra
- Indigo Valley

Native pastures in northern Victoria and southern NSW are usually dominated by annual species. They occupy a considerable proportion of the landscape and are mostly used in wool and beef production.

Attempts to boost productivity by using fertiliser have been successful but nearly always at the expense of the native perennial grasses that are integral for sustainability. Much of the landscape cannot be and will never be sown, therefore keeping and improving the current perennial base is essential.

EverGraze research is testing inexpensive management strategies that can be adopted on-farm that will improve the contribution of native grasses to profitability and NRM outcomes across the whole farm.

SUPPORT SITES OF THE NORTH EAST

TAMINICK GAP

Taminick Gap is a hill country Support Site which will demonstrate the benefits of land-class fencing, and improved pasture on the lower slopes.

The upper hill portion of this paddock will be Defer Grazed (sheep de-stocked) from November to the autumn break in order to improve ground cover and the occurrence of native perennial pastures. The lower, flatter part of the paddock will be re-sowed in a perennial pasture to improve carrying capacity year round. Soil nutrient and acidity deficiencies on the re-sown area will also be addressed.



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WANGARATTA

Situated in fertile, river country the Wangaratta Support Site will demonstrate the benefits of simple rotational grazing on an undulating paddock comprising a mix of introduced annual and perennial pastures.

This site will demonstrate how to improve perennial pasture composition and carrying capacity as a result of rotational grazing (sheep) alone, without re-sowing.

MURMUNGEE

A fertile, lower hillside paddock carrying cattle which contains areas of native perennial pasture is the chosen Support Site in Murrumbidgee. This site will be Defer Grazed during summer months to encourage native perennial pastures such as *Microlaena* (weeping grass) to increase in abundance.

Soil nutrient and acidity deficiencies will be addressed to increase pasture growth and carrying capacity, without re-sowing.

TALLANGATTA VALLEY

The Tallangatta Valley Support Site will also demonstrate the benefits of land-class fencing, which will enable resting of the hill portion of this paddock from November through to the autumn break, which should increase ground cover on the hill-top. The lower paddock will be re-sowed with a perennial pasture mix to improve sheep carrying capacity year round.

CUDGEWA (CORRYONG)

An undulating, fertile site has been chosen at Cudgewa that will demonstrate the benefits of rotational grazing after a simple paddock sub-division, combined with re-sowing of exotic perennial pasture species to improve carrying capacity for cattle year round.

BENAMBRA

The Benambra Support Site is an undulating hill location that will demonstrate the benefits of simple rotational grazing after a single paddock sub-division. It is also planned to address soil nutrient and acidity deficiencies with a fertiliser application of phosphorous and other nutrients.

COBUNGRA

It is expected this undulating high-country Support Site at Cobungra will demonstrate the benefits of re-sowing an exotic perennial pasture mix to improve cattle carrying capacity during summer and the very cold winter months.

INDIGO VALLEY

A paddock containing a high proportion of native perennial pasture (dominated by *microlaena*) will be managed to provide more winter pasture growth and year-round productivity. Management strategies including incorporation of a winter active perennial pasture species coupled with fertiliser and lime application, are currently being considered.





Chiltern PROOF SITE

The **EverGraze** Chiltern Proof Site was officially opened on Tuesday November 27 with an introduction field day held by the Site Leader, Meredith Mitchell from DPI.

The Chiltern Proof site will investigate whether it is possible to increase the productivity of native-dominated pastures and ensure the persistence of native perennial grasses by combining fertiliser application with appropriate grazing management.

“One of the deliverables will be regional guidelines to help livestock producers improve and/ or maintain the persistence of perennials in their native based pastures

Working in collaboration with the North East Catchment Management Authority, the experiment in Victoria will combine higher superphosphate use with a rotational grazing management strategy system on a mixed wallaby grass / weeping grass pasture.”

Meredith Mitchell, Proof Site Leader

EverGraze Chiltern Proof Site information includes :

- Investigating inexpensive management strategies that can be adopted to improve native grasses leading to greater profitability and natural resource management
- Viewing a 36ha grazing site investigating sheep production systems based on native perennial pastures
- How to recognise common native grasses
- How to become involved in this national project

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE CHILTERN PROOF SITE CALL MEREDITH MITCHELL ON T : (02) 6030 4500 OR E : meredith.mitchell@dpi.vic.gov.au

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BECOME A MEMBER- visit:
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VISION

The North East of Victoria is widely recognised for its attractiveness to agribusiness, and there is growth in the economic value and sustainability of agribusinesses.

The contributing role of the Agribusiness Forum to making this vision a reality is widely recognised.

MISSION

The role of the Forum is to:

- foster and stimulate the development of viable and sustainable agribusiness in the North East
- create the right climate in which agribusiness can successfully operate.

