

Holbrook Landcare Network's MLA funded Producer Demonstration Sites (PDS) are investigating how tropical pasture species can be incorporated into southern NSW grazing systems to utilise summer rain.

Why consider tropical pastures?

The Southern slopes of NSW has a winter dominant rainfall pattern but with a changing climate, it's now experiencing more summer rainfall.

Tropical pastures provide an opportunity to complement the winter perennials and annual species that are traditionally used in NSW southern slopes grazing systems.

- Boost production of higher quality feed in late spring, summer and autumn
- Retain groundcover and provide competition for weeds over summer
- Reduce supplementary feeding
- Improve livestock growth over summer
- Increase the feed base ahead of winter

Species

Digit grass



A drought-tolerant, spring and summer-growing perennial suited to a wide range of soil types. It performs best on light-medium soils. It also performs on low fertility and medium to heavier textured soils but doesn't tolerate waterlogging. Very palatable and somewhat frost tolerant.

Kikuyu



A perennial that has most growth in spring, summer and autumn. With rainfall, kikuyu can be invasive via its runners, making it a good option for erosion control. Suited to very fertile and well-drained soils.

**Visit the project website
for more resources**





Tropical pastures in action

Three Producer Demonstration Sites (PDS) have been established to assess the use of tropical pastures and the management practices needed to successfully integrate them into beef and lamb production systems.

Yerong Creek PDS Dry matter production and quality of a Digit grass and Kikuyu mix and the impact on liveweight gain on merino and crossbred sheep.

Henty 1 PDS Performance of a 2021 sown Digit grass stand and the role it plays in an Angus cattle operation for both breeder and weaner weight gains.

Henty 2 PDS Investigating the performance of a Premier Digit and Serradella pasture as a companion species to determine its role in supporting the feed base via dry matter production.

Scotts Angus at Henty has found that introducing Digit grass paddocks into the grazing rotation has provided greater flexibility, in particular having fresh green paddocks to wean calves in February.

"If you only get so much rain for all the year, you should try and harvest and utilise every millimetre."

Steven Scott, Scotts Angus

What we've learnt

Tropical pasture species can be good options for livestock maintenance and growth over summer.

- Careful grazing management is required to maximise feed quality and digestibility
- Tropical pastures don't produce the same livestock growth rates as Lucerne but they have performed well on 'secondary' country (lighter soils and hill country) where temperate species struggle
- Investment in tropical pastures over-sown with temperate legume pastures can deliver good results on investment but is dependent on management, the livestock system and requirement for feed supply over summer
- Good weed control and paddock preparation are key for successful establishment of tropical pastures

