

# Testing Tropical Pastures

## Producer case study: Scotts Angus Henty

Steven and Cindy Scott operate a registered Angus stud and commercial beef cattle operation west of Henty in southern New South Wales.



**Image 1** Cattle grazing Premier Digit pasture at Scotts Angus

Along with stud bulls and females, the Scott family turn off 14-month-old steers at 400 kilograms (kg) at 14 months old. The farm is in a 550 mm rainfall zone with red loam, grey clay and granite soil types.

### Tropical pastures in the grazing rotation

The Scotts planted 150 hectares (ha) of Premier Digit grass in October 2021 at a rate of 4kg/ha. Since then, more paddocks have been sown.

Tropical pastures are used by Scotts Angus to provide flexible grazing and improved feed during summer and autumn.

A key benefit has been having fresh, green pasture to wean calves onto in February.

### Key points

- Tropicals provide better utilisation of summer rainfall for pasture production
- Tropicals, at the vegetative growth stage, may provide higher quality feed production in summer and autumn, compared to native pastures.
- Tropical pastures, at the vegetative growth stage, on light textured soil may provide similar feed quality to lucerne on a loam soil.
- Summer active grasses provide competition for weeds
- Careful grazing management is required to maximise feed quality and digestibility



**Image 2** Steven Scott (Scotts Angus) standing in a premier digit pasture

*“If you only get so much rain for in a year, you should try and harvest and utilise every millimetre.” Steven Scott, Scotts Angus*

## Comparing pastures

A [2024 study](#) by agricultural consultants, Agrista, on the Scotts Angus Producer Demonstration Site (PDS) compared the weight gain of steers grazed in rotations of Phalaris pasture, lucerne/ryegrass and Premier Digit grass between February and April<sup>(1)</sup>.

Feed test data was collected, and pasture cuts were also taken during February 2023 to assess the feed inventory.



Image 3 Premier Digit grass in a pasture ring, 2023.

## Feed test outcomes

Feed test results showed that Lucerne had the highest energy content in both March (9.2 ME/kg dry matter) and April (13.2 ME/kg dm).

The Digit grass pasture energy content increased from March (7.8 ME/kg dm) to April (10.8 ME/kg dm).

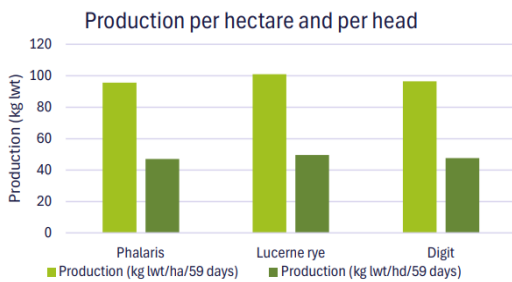
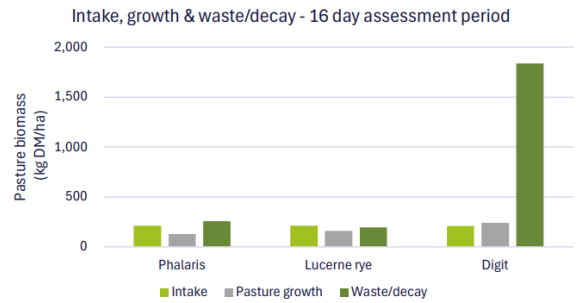


Figure 1 Production per hectare vs per head across pasture types

## Balancing demand and supply

Very high levels of waste and decay were experienced in the Digit grass pasture relative to the Phalaris and Lucerne/Ryegrass pastures.



Intake, pasture growth and waste/decay across pasture types (16 days)

The findings indicate that feed demand must be matched to feed supply to capture the benefits of high tropical pasture biomass over summer.



Image 4 Spring 2022 pasture walk

## Project partners

This Producer Demonstration Site is funded by Meat & Livestock Australia and Holbrook Landcare Network.

Holbrook Landcare Network (HLN) has over 500 members across farming families, businesses and individual membership.

This PDS was delivered from 2022 to 2026.

## Want to learn more about tropical pastures?

Visit the website for handy resources.



Reference Graphs used in this case study are from: (1) Francis J, 2024, '[Sub-tropical pasture assessments demonstrate a need for feed budgeting to deliver value](#)' completed by Agrista for HLN.

## For further information:

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