

Testing Tropical Pastures

Producer case study: Terlinga, Henty

Stephen Zweck operates a mixed farm near Henty in southern New South Wales running 200 shorthorn cows and 300 ewes, along with a cropping program of canola, wheat barley and lupins.



Image 1 'Terlinga', Henty NSW.

The farm is in a 550 mm rainfall zone with a variety of soil types, ranging from clay on the creek through to loams and low fertility gravel soils on the hills.

Making marginal country more productive

Premier Digit grass was planted over 15 hectares of marginal hill country in spring 2021, then over-sown with Serradella, a hard-seeded legume, the following Autumn. The serradella was carefully grazed and allowed to set seed.

Despite poor seasonal conditions in the following years both pasture species have established, increasing the capacity to graze a less productive part of the farm.

Opportunities to expand planting will be considered when seasonal conditions improve.

Key points

- Tropicals provide better utilisation of summer rainfall for pasture production.
- Over-sowing with Serradella provides year-round pasture growth.
- Premier Digit grass grows quickly after rain when soil temperatures are warm.
- Good option for marginal lower-fertility hill country.
- Large crowns of Premier Digit grass stabilise gravel soils.

"In a dry summer the Premier Digit was dormant, then we had 40mm of rain and you can see each plant is shooting out leaves."
Stephen Zweck, Terlinga



Image 2 Premier Digit plant in a pasture square, April 2026

Want to learn more about tropical pastures?

Visit the website for handy resources.



Tropical pastures and dry seasons

Pasture species

Premier 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. ⁽¹⁾



Image 3 Digit Grass plant

Serradella: An autumn, winter and spring growing annual pasture legume with a spreading growth habit. The plant sets several hundred seed pods which germinate after suitable rains in autumn. Serradella grows on extremely acidic or sandy soils, can grow on light soils that are neutral to slightly alkaline, but is not suited to heavy clay soils. Frost tolerant. ⁽¹⁾



Image 4 Serradella plant



Image 5 Left of photo, annual grass pasture and right of photo, premier digit and serradella pasture.

The NSW Southern slopes 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.

After a dry 2025/2026 summer on Terlinga, the dormant Premier Digit grass responded to 40mm of rain in March and warm soil temperatures - delivering fresh growth for livestock to graze in early autumn.

Another reported benefit has been the role of the dense crowns of the Premier Digit grass in holding together the gravel soil in hill country, particularly after rainfall.

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.

Reference 1. [NSW DPI Pasture Species and Varieties](#)

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