

# A guide to making more from pastures

The 'Turn Pasture into Product' module in the *Making More from Sheep* manual is a tool for helping woolgrowers understand the value of pastures in driving profit

Understanding feed supply, animal demand and how to match the two together are the keys to turning pasture into profit, according to Geoff Saul, national coordinator of the AWI-funded EverGraze - More Livestock from Perennials project.

"If you've been on a farm for 20 years then you might not notice a gradual decline in productivity," Geoff says. "Using pasture management tools allows you to ask questions like, 'How am I really performing in relation to my district?' 'Is the quality and quantity of pasture I'm growing really as good as it could be?'"

Tools such as those available in the 'Turn Pasture into Product' module from *Making More From Sheep - A sheep producer's manual* are designed to help users answer these questions to benchmark production, minimise risk and maximise profit.

"We're using the MLA Feed Demand Calculator from the 'Turn Pasture into Product' module in EverGraze because it's easy to look at a 'what if' situation," Geoff says.

"What if I grew some lucerne and I had green feed in December, January and February on 10 per cent of my farm - would that allow me to keep those lambs a bit longer or lamb at a different time in the year?"

"It's very good to run those simple scenarios, looking at what I've got and what I could have. You can look at all of those things in an hour or so in the office."

Geoff says some of the other tools are simple to use as well. For example, the fertiliser test strips are an often-overlooked tool and cost very little.

"Often people get very excited about improving pastures without having thought much about the end result - the animals that will use that pasture," he says.

"If you're going to change your pastures, you often need to change your animal production system to make use of the new pasture. There's no point in re-sowing pastures or applying fertiliser unless you've got a really good strategy for using that extra feed. You've got to have the animals and the system to respond to it. Unless you have those two synchronised then a lot of the benefit of the pasture improvement can be lost."

## KEY POINTS

- Maximising the quality and quantity of pasture opens up new options for sheep producers to improve production or even step up to a higher quality enterprise
- Turning pasture into profit is about aligning animal demand with pasture supply
- The three key factors affecting pastures are soil fertility, grazing management and species



PHOTO: EVERGRAZE

Make more from your pastures says EverGraze coordinator Geoff Saul.

Maximising the quality and quantity of pasture opens up new options for sheep producers to improve production or even step up to a higher quality enterprise.

"The three key factors affecting pastures are soil fertility, grazing management and species," Geoff says. "For example, on a pasture dominated by low quality grasses, you may only be able to run dry stock. Improving the quality by adding fertiliser and subclover means you could be able to run lactating ewes or turn off surplus wethers earlier."



## MORE INFORMATION

*Making More From Sheep* is a joint initiative of AWI and Meat & Livestock Australia developed with the input of nearly 250 leading sheep producers and technical experts to help sheep producers increase their productivity, profitability and overall satisfaction with their farming business. Since the launch of the program, more than 4500 sheep producers have attended Making More From Sheep workshops across Australia. The centrepiece, *Making More From Sheep - A sheep producer's manual*, is made up of 11 modules that cover all aspects of sheep management and production. In one handy reference the manual captures the experience of leading sheep producers and technical specialists and the latest recommendations from research and development to help users identify and improve the 20 per cent of decisions that have 80 per cent of the impact on business profitability and risk control.

*Making More From Sheep - A sheep producer's manual* costs \$65 + GST for AWI levy-payers and can be ordered from the AWI Helpline (1800 070 099) or from the program website

([www.makingmorefromsheep.com.au](http://www.makingmorefromsheep.com.au)).

Information on Making More From Sheep activities, forums and workshops can also be found on the website.

EverGraze - More livestock from perennials is a research and delivery partnership funded by Meat & Livestock Australia, AWI and the Future Farm Industries CRC. Full details of research and on-farm studies can be found at

[www.evergraze.com.au](http://www.evergraze.com.au)