



AGRONOMY MATTERS

Mid Issue Update

May 2005

Defer grazing for better pastures by lot feeding sheep

The break of the season is a critical time of the year for pastures. Plants need to establish and grow quickly so they develop the leaf area needed to make the maximum use of available sunlight and moisture.

Deferring grazing by lot feeding sheep in an area away from germinating pasture for a short time at the break of the season can give pastures a good start and ensure maximum grazing later in the season.

Deferred grazing may not be expensive as the sheep would need to be hand fed in the paddock anyway. And feeding in a confined area is less time consuming than feeding in the paddock. Start deferred grazing at the break of the season to avoid paddocks becoming too bare.

Best results are obtained from feeding hoggets, wethers, or ewes in early pregnancy. It is not wise to lot-feed lambing ewes until lambing has finished and lambs have mothered up.

Feed a full maintenance ration so the sheep are released from the area in a reasonable condition. Keep the sheep confined until the pasture has enough growth to meet the needs of the sheep and to continue to grow over the winter. This may take 4-6 weeks from the break of the season.

Do not keep the sheep confined for too long or the pasture may become rank and weedy.

An alternative to deferred grazing is to feed sheep a full ration in the paddock. This will reduce the grazing pressure but sheep will still eat and trample some of the pasture.

Management

If sheep are in poor condition when the deferred grazing starts a better-quality ration is needed. If you are unsure about the quality of the feed, or the sheep slip in condition, increase the feeding rate or have the feed quality analysed.

Releasing sheep

When the sheep are released to the paddock there is a risk the change in diet will cause a break in the wool. This risk is much higher if the sheep have lost condition while in the feedlot.

Never release hungry sheep onto a paddock of green feed. Give them a normal full feed then let them out late in the afternoon. Continue feeding hay in the paddock for a week.

Example of rations: Adult dry sheep, or ewes in early pregnancy

Feed	Drought ration per head per week	Maintenance ration per head per week
Wheat, Barley or Triticale*	3.0 kg	3.6 kg
Oats*	3.3 kg	4.0 kg
Lupins, Peas, Beans*	3.0 kg	3.6 kg
Pasture hay	4.5 kg	5.5 kg
Cereal hay #	5.0 kg	6.0 kg
Straw +	7.0 kg	8.4 kg

* Grain-only rations are not recommended. They are shown so you can calculate combination rations.

Average cereal hay will be deficient in protein and the sheep may slip in condition unless grain is added.

+ Straw-only rations will not maintain the sheep so always add at least 2kg of grain a sheep a week.

What to feed

To use rations that are a combination of the examples above, calculate a proportion of each ration.

For example:

A full barley ration is 3.6 kg a sheep a week;

A full ration of cereal hay is 6 kg a sheep a week.

Therefore, the 50:50 ration is half of each:

1.8 kg of barley and 3 kg of hay a sheep a week.

Any combination of hay to grain can be calculated, however remember that once more than 50% of the ration is grain the sheep need:

- to be introduced to grain more carefully
- to have been vaccinated against enterotoxaemia
- to be supplemented with salt and limestone if they are fed for longer than a month.

Deferred grazing

More likely to be of benefit:	Less likely to be of benefit:	The reason
In a late break	In an early break	Early feed gets away quickly
If legume plant density is average	If legume plants are very dense, or very sparse	Dense pastures will meet the needs of the sheep quickly and be less damaged by grazing. Sparse pastures may not contain enough legume to benefit.
If there are few weeds	If pastures are weedy	Sheep can help control weeds
At higher stocking rates	At lower stocking rates	The more DSEs the more grazing pressure and the more damage to the plants
To medic pastures	To sub-clover pastures	Medic plants are more easily damaged by grazing

'Feeding Sheep' books are available free-of charge to farmers in the Broomrape Quarantine Area. Much of the information on this page has been extracted from this book.

“Doing It Better”



**Sweep Broomrape
out of the Mallee**

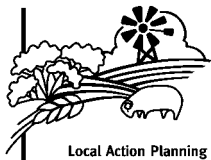


RURAL SOLUTIONS SA



www.msfp.org.au

MURRAY MALLEE



Local Action Planning Association Inc

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Although PIRSA has taken all reasonable care in preparing this advice, neither PIRSA nor its officers accept any liability resulting from the interpretation or use of the information set out in this document. Information contained in this document is subject to change without notice.

Agronomy Matters is edited and compiled at the Murray Bridge office. Any queries or comments can be directed to Mark Habner
Ph: 08 8535 6400
Fax: 08 8535 6427
OR
Email: habner.mark@saugov.sa.gov.au



WE'RE ALL EARS!!

Grazing management of cereals

Maximise your profits on forage cereals with sound grazing practices:

The decision to sow cereals should be made as soon as possible, especially in lower rainfall areas such as the Broomrape Quarantine Area. Need to consider the seed reserves from previous seasons – if there aren't many then definitely consider sowing cereals.

When sowing cereals for feed, you need to consider whether to sow oats, barley or wheat. Keep the following in mind:

- Barley is the quickest to establish.
- Oats are bulkier and provide more feed once established.
- Use a heavier sowing rate than normal (about double used for grain crops)
- Sow whatever fits into the rotation based on disease control rather than weed control. Weeds can be grazed or sprayed out, if a problem.
- Sow cereals with fertiliser nitrogen because you need to get good early establishment. This is vital to encourage good early establishment.
- If considering nitrogen top up at 3-leaf stage, graze no earlier than 20 days after the topdressing. The nitrogen needs time to be taken up by the crop otherwise it is likely to be wasted.

Grazing guidelines

The timing of the first grazing is critical to overall cereal production.

When grazing cereals it is best to wait until the cereals are at the 5-leaf stage. There is a need to establish some sort of grazing rotation – we suggest at least 2 paddocks of sown cereal. Graze one paddock down to 2-3cm growth before shifting.

If you are considering topdressing with nitrogen we suggest leaving one paddock without top-dressing so it can be grazed waiting the 20 days for nitrogen uptake.

We recommend working on using a stocking rate of 15 DSE/ha.

If waiting for pasture regeneration, be aware that...

20-25mm of rain over a week to 10 days will be required before we see good germination. Lighter soils may require less rain unless they are non-wetting (~20% of quarantine area is non-wetting).

Then it will be 4-6 weeks before any feed is available.

Consider how this compares to sowing cereals for grazing.

What about the erosion risk?

Given that many paddocks are pretty bare at the moment whilst waiting for the rain to get the season started properly, consider lot feeding some sheep to help them through the dry period until pastures are established.

Lambing ewes shouldn't go into a feedlot situation. Leave these on paddocks that are less prone to drift, whilst feeding dry ewes / weaner lambs.

- Need to have the stock to make the most of the extra input
- Wait for secondary roots to establish before first grazing
- For quick recovery do not graze too low
- Avoid grazing off the growing point located at the first node (or top node) of each tiller
- Ensure livestock are not hungry when going onto new feed
- Vaccinate with 5 in 1 prior to grazing cereals or other lush crops

STOP PRESS!!

If you receive this before May 31st—you can still make it!
Northern Mallee Feedlot Tour
commencing @ 9:30am
Peter Kroehn's property
(8km south of Waikerie).

Contact Chris McDonough for more details—0408 085 393

IN THE NEXT EDITION...

- What's bugging your crop—what to look for and control options
- The role of feedlotting
- Herbicide Resistance
- The effects of fumigation
- Field Day dates
- Weed in Profile—ryegrass