



Department of
**Primary Industries and
Regional Development**

FEED365 farm demonstration sites to boost pasture research

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Groups to host the first three farm demonstration sites have been announced for a new research project assisting sheep producers to build more resilient and productive enterprises.

The FEED365 SheepLinks project, led by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) with co-investment from Meat and Livestock Australia, aims to create a year-round feed supply with less reliance on supplementary feeding.

Grower Group Alliance (GGA) members ASHEEP in Esperance and the West Midlands Group, along with the Wagin-Woodanilling Landcare Group will host the demonstration sites to test various grazing options under different soil and environmental conditions.

DPIRD will work with the groups over coming months to design paddock scale evaluation sites for the 2022 growing season.

The sites will complement DPIRD's trial at its Katanning Research Facility evaluating more than 60 species of perennial pastures, native grasses, annual legumes and herbs, annual grasses, cereals, summer crops and shrubs.

DPIRD senior research scientist Daniel Real said the FEED365 project would help sheep producers redesign forage systems with proven options to increase the edible feed on offer at critical livestock production periods.

"This project aims to look at the optimal combination of forage species and suitable agronomy to fill the feed gaps in different regions to maximise sheep production and profitability," Dr Real said.

"The treatments will be managed over several years through a series of pasture and crop sequences, enabling grain stubbles to be compared with other forage options.

"The plots will be grazed by Merino sheep, which will be assessed for weight and condition score responses to the available feed and how that impacts the value of the animal."

Two contrasting sites at the DPIRD research facility, one on gravelly sand soil and the other on valley floor sandy loam, were planted during 2021 with different species mixtures over more than 20 half hectare plots at each location.

Spring and summer sown forage crops will also be included in the trial if seasonal conditions are favourable.

Two rows of existing eucalypt trees at the research facility, 50 metres apart, have been incorporated into the research to evaluate the impact of alley farming on annual and perennial pasture productivity.

The placement of trees in the landscape will also be considered more widely as a means of carbon sequestration.

"With a variable climate impacting feed production and rising grain costs placing pressure on supplementary feeding, it makes sense for producers to get as much as possible out of their forage systems," Dr Real said.

"Improving the feed base for livestock will help increase whole farm profitability, with MIDAS and GrassGro modelling showing there is potential to boost profitability by at least 10 per cent."

DPIRD will work closely with the GGA during the project to assist producers to adopt the research findings.

“It has been extremely encouraging to see a strong field of WA grower group applicants in this competitive round for the FEED365 project,” GGA chief executive officer Rikki Foss said.

“The on-ground demonstration of different feedbase systems and management practices to address the priority issues for the successful groups and their members will be a boost for the grower group network and WA livestock industry.”

The project has already generated significant producer interest, demonstrated by the attendance at a field day at the Katanning Research Facility earlier this year. More field days are planned for 2022.

MLA group manager productivity and wellbeing David Beatty said the FEED365 investment responded to the research needs identified by the WA sheep industry.

“MLA’s consultation process through the WA Livestock Research Council continually highlights filling the summer/autumn feed gap as a key R&D priority for WA producers in the mixed farming zones,” he said.

“FEED365 will help address that issue and with its strong adoption focus aligns really well with MLA’s longer term strategy to deliver impact through adoption of R&D.”

For more information and updates on the project visit the DPIRD website www.agric.wa.gov.au/Feed365 .



DPIRD has planted more than 60 different species at its Katanning Research Facility for its FEED365 project with Meat and Livestock Australia to create a year-round feed supply for sheep.

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All Page Links

[1] <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/Feed365>

[2] <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/sites/gateway/files/FEED365%20Demo%20Sites%20-%20KRF%20aerial%20view.jpg>

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