



# INFORMATION SHEET

## SheepLinks FEED365

## Producer Participatory Research and Development

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### Background

The purpose of the FEED365 project is to redesign livestock forage systems to fill feed gaps in Mediterranean environments that are being challenged by climate change with increasingly hotter, drier and more variable seasons.

It is part of a portfolio of projects established under the SheepLinks Program – co-funded by Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) and Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) to support the WA sheep industry,

The project aims to develop a partnership between growers, scientists and extension workers to develop and test new feedbase options and integrate them into grazing systems. The goal is to enable farmers to increase livestock returns by grazing high quality forage all year round with minimal supplementary feeding.

During 2021 DPIRD researchers commenced the research component of the project at the Katanning Research Facility (KRF) designed to evaluate forage species from a selection of traditional and novel species under grazing including:

- Perennial legumes and grasses
- Annual legumes and grasses
- Winter forages
- Grazing crops
- Opportunistic summer crops
- Crop stubbles
- Shrubs

Information from these sites will be extended widely, but we are now seeking to select one grower group in a region of WA with less than 300 mm of annual rainfall to participate more formally in the project by hosting a satellite site. Groups can apply for financial support to trial a selection of the feedbase options in their own region at a paddock scale over three years (2023-2025).

## How it works?

- Grower groups are invited to submit an EOI form to participate in the project.
- It is a competitive process with one grower group to be selected in a low rainfall region of WA.

## Who can apply?

This initiative has been established for grower groups. Individual farmers who are not part of an existing group are also encouraged to join the FEED365 network to be able to receive all the research findings and extension up-dates, however they will be unable to host a satellite site on their property.

## What support is available to the groups and for how long?

A DPIRD FEED365 team member will be assigned to support the group along with other technical specialists to assist with the design, implementation and analysis of the research. There is financial support up to \$20,000 per year (over 3 years) available to the successful group to help with the implementation and running costs of the research. It is important in the application to be clear about the research topic and be realistic about the level of funding required.

## Process of engagement between grower groups and researchers

The planning of the research, collection of data and reporting of findings will be agreed between the group and DPIRD researchers. Results from all grower sites (including those successful in previous funding rounds) will be shared and extended to the wider industry network in a process of continuous discovery and learning.

## What is expected from grower groups and participating farmers?

- Participate actively in planning and review meetings. The group will drive the direction of the research.
- Undertake the work to establish and manage the research site and treatments.
- Provide records of site history – crop-pasture sequence, production and input costs.
- Accurate records of treatments imposed and management regime. A diary (digital/blog type) of the site - how the 'plots' are being managed; when and how they are grazed, etc. including any costs and time inputs associated with the treatments.
- Measure and record production results in a rigorous, quantitative way (e.g. what pasture production or animal production was achieved). These will vary according to the project but may include grazing days, weight and condition scoring of sheep, or visual assessment of the amount of 'pasture' produced.
- Keep site rainfall records.
- Be prepared to host field days or other extension activities on the site.

Farmers will manage their normal operations independently of the DPIRD FEED365 project team.

## What is expected from DPIRD's FEED365 project team?

- Provide design and technical support to the group to ensure the rigor of the experiment.
- Provide guidance for site characterisation (geo-reference, soil description, soil tests).
- Provide guidance for pasture measurements (visual and/or biomass cuts, feed quality) and protocols.
- Provide guidance for livestock measurements and protocols (livestock measurements Animal Ethics approval).
- Assessment of the value the participating farmers have derived from the project/site.
- Consideration of additional measurements that allow a more detailed understanding of the costs, benefits and significant processes associated with the treatments.

It is envisaged that a DPIRD FEED365 Officer will be able to provide on-going support to the group for at least the life of the project. This officer will have the support of other staff and resources to ensure that the data is collected and analysed.

The DPIRD Officer will assist in the reporting process.

## Where to send your application form?

Daniel Real

Email: [daniel.real@dpird.wa.gov.au](mailto:daniel.real@dpird.wa.gov.au)

## When are applications due?

Completed *Application Forms* and all supporting material are to be forwarded to the above address by the **closing date of 31 May 2022**.

**For further information contact Daniel Real on 9368 3879**