

95/T03



## Producer Research Support

### Identifying the best fodder crops

AMM Farm Advance Group



#### The project

The Agricultural Management and Marketing (AMM) group was formed in 1992. The general purpose of the group is for the members to work together to improve the productivity and profitability of each group member's grazing enterprise. At present there are about 34 members.

The project was undertaken because of a lack of information on livestock performance on fodder brassicas under Tasmanian conditions.

The productivity of members of the Farm Advance Group grazing forage brassicas would have increased as a result of a Producer Research Support project, if only by a small amount, an independent analysis concluded.

Tasmanian livestock producers have gained a better understanding of the differences between crops, farms and livestock classes. This will assist in crop selection for achieving target weights at specific times.

#### Objectives

1. Measure animal performance on a range of brassica fodder crops in Northern Tasmania, and in so doing to develop a better understanding of the differences between crops, farms and livestock classes. This will assist in crop selection for achieving target weights at specific times;
2. Collate information which will assist members in better understanding livestock performance on Brassica crops on their own properties; and
3. Be able to make between farm comparisons.

#### What was done

The trial was managed by Agricultural Management and Marketing (AMM) Pty Ltd. Production of the crops and the day-to-day management of the feeding trials was carried out by members of the group.

The project consisted of a trial to determine the liveweight gains of three livestock types - weaner Angus heifers, prime lambs and Merino ewe hoggets - grazed on the main commercially-used types of forage brassicas. The crops used in the trial were the commonly used varieties of rape, kale, swede and turnip. Feed quality (dry matter, crude protein, digestibility, and estimated metabolisable energy) was assessed just prior to the stock being introduced to the crops.

The animals were weighed prior to introduction and re-weighed six to eight weeks later.

The plan was to have ten groups of each livestock type on crops. This would allow weight gains for each livestock type to be determined across a range of crop types.

By running the trial for two years sufficient data was generated to enable conclusions to be drawn on the crops which best suited each livestock type.

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#### Key points

- It is important to allow crops to mature before introducing stock.
- It is important to allow stock access to a pasture run-off paddock or hay, either of which increases their dry matter intake and improves utilisation resulting in better liveweight gains.
- There were only minor differences in stock performance on the different types of forage brassicas used.

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## Producer Research Support

MLA Producer Research Support offers support funding of up to \$15,000 over three years for groups of producers keen to be active in on-farm research and demonstration trials.

These activities include:

- Producer Initiated Research and Development
- More Beef from Pastures demonstration trials
- Prime Time Wean More Lambs demonstration trials
- Sustainable and productive grazing grants.

Contact Stephen Feighan - MLA Project Manager, Producer Delivery and Adoption.  
Tel (02) 9463 9245 or  
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## Discussion

The results from the two-year trial were presented to group members at meetings, and an article on the project was published in the Tasmanian Country newspaper.

Group members gained much useful information on the performance of three types of stock on fodder brassicas and on ways to improve that performance by adjustments in the utilisation of the crops.

The practice changes that have occurred due to the conduct of the trial include the following:

- giving stock access to dry feed when they are grazing brassica crops;
- ensuring crops are mature before introducing stock;
- some group members are now growing fodder brassicas on a more regular basis;
- some members have changed the type of forage brassicas they grow; and
- the members who are finishing stock on fodder brassicas are monitoring liveweight gains more closely.

"As a general rule all of the above practice changes result in improved output from forage brassicas with little if any impact on inputs," the analysis concluded.

"Because of this it can be safely assumed that the productivity of group members using forage brassicas would have increased, if only by a small amount."