



PERENNIAL PASTURE SYSTEMS

MAKING PASTURE GO THE DISTANCE

PPS NEWS

PPS Management Committee; the Committee has continued to conduct monthly meetings through Zoom, ensuring that PPS administration and project management continues without interruption during the COVID-19 restrictions. This has been working well apart from the lack of Joel Hall cakes from Cheryl & Fiona for supper.

12th Annual Conference; the annual conference is planned for Thursday September 3rd at the Ararat Town Hall. At this stage PPS are planning for it to go ahead as scheduled; the venue is large enough to conduct social distancing and provided the COVID-19 restrictions have eased, it will proceed as planned. If this is not the case, the conference will be postponed to a later date. PPS has confirmed an impressive line up of presenters and is looking forward to hearing from them.

12th Annual Study Tour; The Tasmanian tour has been postponed until 2021. PPS is looking at the possibility of conducting a short Victorian study tour on the proposed dates; October 4th to 7th. Members will be kept informed of plans.

Beanstalk Drought Innovation Program; technology can help to future proof your farming operation, see details Pg 6.

Webinars; Due to the PPS event program being interrupted by the COVID-19 restrictions; PPS has implemented webinars to bring information to members. The first was held on May 12th in conjunction with the Ararat BWBL group and focused on improving lambing percentage with PPS member, Tim Leeming from Pigeon Ponds. 52 members and guests participated in a very informative session. The next webinar will be on Wednesday June 10th, looking at the use of silage as a tool for fodder conservation in drier regions. Michelle Jolliffe from Ag Vic, Hamilton will be the presenter and will bring her expertise to PPS.

A further webinar on oestrogenic clovers with Dr Kevin Foster from Uni of WA is being planned with the date yet to be confirmed. PPS thanks Tess McDougall from Ag Vic, Ararat for her valuable assistance in conducting the webinars. The webinars are supported by the GHCA and Wimmera CMA through the National Landcare Program.

Healthy Soils Project; PPS is halfway through the Healthy Soils workshops and the next one will be conducted when restrictions on meetings are eased. Helen Hayden from Ag Vic will be the presenter for a soil biology session and following that with a soil test information workshop with Lisa Warn. Dates will be finalised as soon as possible. The Healthy Soils program is supported by MLA.

Annals Project; PPS has completed the "High Production Annual Forage in Perennial Systems" project which focused on the strategic use of grazing cereals and annual ryegrass in regional grazing systems. The final report has been submitted to MLA and will be sent to members when approved. The 2019 results report is available on the PPS website. The project was funded by the MLA PDS program.

Gippsland Agricultural Group; PPS has formed an alliance with the Gippsland Ag Group to share newsletters and other information that could be mutually beneficial. The group is centred around Bairnsdale and they have access to a large research site; their newsletters will be linked on the PPS website. More information on the group at <https://gippslandag.com.au/>

Soil Test Digitalisation Project; Dr Nathan Robinson from Federation University has been using soil tests from member farms to get a demonstration of the project ready to bring to members. PPS proposes to launch it at one of the Healthy Soils sessions. The project has received funding from Landcare Victoria Grants through the Wimmera CMA. Federation University are also contributing through "in kind" funding.

PPS Girls & Grass Advisory Group; Girls & Grass hosted a morning coffee on the 11th March at the Willaura Bakery; then another via Zoom on the 29th April. The Advisory Group is looking forward to the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions to allow for the Xmas in July dinner. Pg 4 PPS Girls & Grass is supported by Rural Bank.



Greenfields Project

The PPS Greenfields project has been completed; details are on page 3 of this N/L.

Left; start of the pasture phase in 2014 at Elos-Merther; Glenlofty

Right; Greenfields phalaris pasture in May 2020



Bushfire Response

PPS were able to coordinate some assistance to farmers affected by the devastating summer bushfires. While it was only a small part of the whole response needed, PPS members provided hay & straw to contacts in Gippsland, Kangaroo Island & Lexton. Other members donated cash which assisted with the fuel costs for the K.I. loads (costs weren't covered in S.A. like they were in Victoria). Other cash helped with transport costs of fencing materials to K.I., some expenses for a PPS convoy to Gippsland & a donation to Mt Bolton Lions Club who provided catering for Blaze aid at Lexton.

Thanks to members Stuart Robinson, Steve & Ann Grieg who organised the response to Kangaroo Island and also to Jason Benson from Benson Freight who did the K.I. loads for fuel cost only. Also thanks to PPS member, Corey Price who did a lot of the organisation for the Gippsland effort, Corey also organised a cash donation from a cousin whose Genesis Gym franchise in Melbourne raised cash from clients which directly helped a Gippsland family who were experiencing great difficulty. Thanks also to Trevor Caithness from the Gippsland Ag Group & Jarrod Blandford who organised PPS hay deliveries in Gippsland. PPS received the note below from Brad & Jen Smith who stored the Gippsland hay drops & helped organise farm distributions.

Hi Rob and all the generous people at Perennial Pasture Systems.

It is with very full hearts that we write to you guys to express our absolute gratitude for your generosity in supplying fodder to us in our time of need. The hay was shared between several full time farmers in Clifton Creek and Tambo Crossing.

It really helped to give us time to make decisions around destocking. It was also good not to have to feed out all of our winter feed that we normally store in the high country.

Thanks again for your generosity and wiliness to help out fellow farmers. We are very appreciate and look forward to paying it forward.

Warm Regards

Brad and Jen Smith

PPS thanks members who donated, hay, straw, cash, transport and time for the bushfire relief.



Clockwise from left;

PPS members discussing tactics before a hay run to Gippsland

Tight squeeze for Jason from Benson Freight on the K.I. Ferry

Unloading PPS hay at Cliftons Creek in Gippsland;

PPS straw proving popular in Rick Morris's containment area on K.I.

Rick, along with other farmers visited on the 2018 PPS study tour, experienced severe damage from the fires



PPS "Annual Grass control in Perennial Pastures" project

PPS collected barley grass samples for chemical resistance testing during spring 2019. Eight member farms had samples submitted to Plant Science Consulting P/L in Adelaide where the seeds were grown out and then tested for resistance by Dr Peter Boutsalis. Two chemicals were tested on each sample. 2 samples were tested for Targa resistance (group K herbicide), 8 for paraquat (group L) and 5 for Glyphosate resistance (Group M). While the group K & M samples showed no resistance, one of the paddocks showed resistance to paraquat when tested. As the paddock has not had Group L chemical applied regularly, the result is surprising. Seeds from the sample will be grown out for retesting to confirm result.

3 samples were tested for Diuron resistance (group C herbicide) in lucerne pastures and while resistance was detected, Dr Boutsalis pointed out last year that the herbicide did not suppress barley grass at the rates of herbicide tested (830 g/Ha & 1660 g/Ha and higher rates would be required to control barley grass. Diuron is registered for rates up to 4,000 g/Ha. Ash de Clifford (agronomist, Tylers Rural), a member of the project advisory group noted that Diuron is used as a broadleaf spray post emergence rather than for grasses.

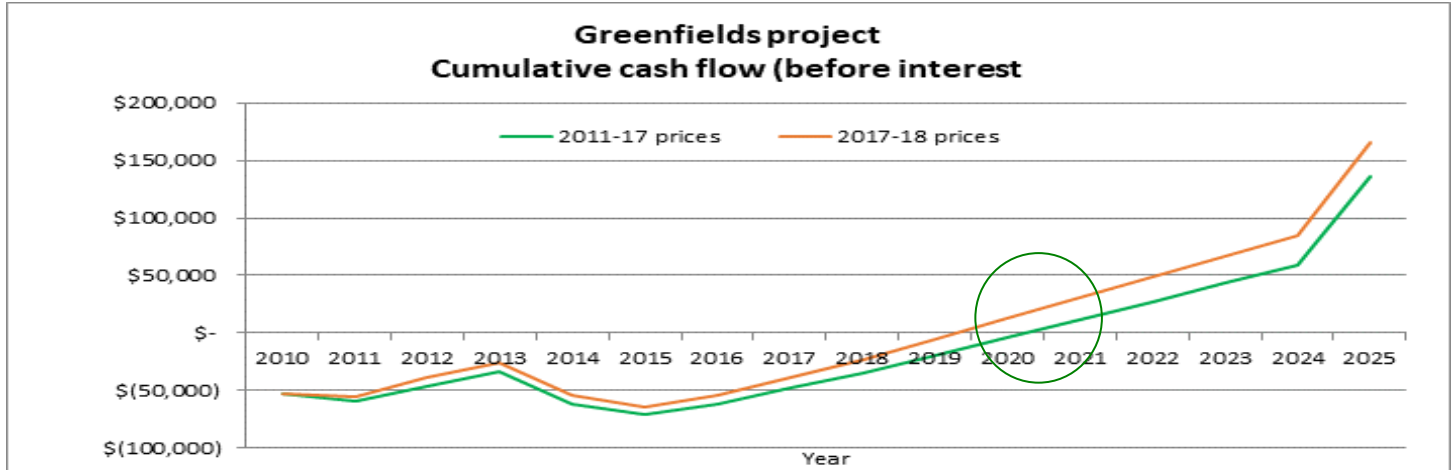
Plant Science Consulting provided the sampling at a price discount to assist the PPS project.

Chemical resistance testing is available through Plant Science Consulting and the current cost per sample is \$150 for two chemicals. Three chemicals cost \$245, four cost \$335 and prices are available for more chemical resistance tests. <http://www.plantscienceconsulting.com.au/>

Greenfields Project pays off

The Greenfields project is situated at Glenlofty, 10 km north west of Elmhurst on the Roberts family's Elos-Merther property. This project took a newly purchased low fertility, degraded paddock through pasture renovation, improved water supply and fencing for rotational grazing to demonstrate the best practice techniques to establish a productive perennial pasture system. All costs including land purchase price were included in the analysis.

The original paddock was sown to Holdfast GT phalaris and sub clover then divided into four separate paddocks. Project consultant, Lisa Warn, analysed the annual production, inputs and finance costs and provided the payback period from purchase to break even. Lisa estimates that the breakeven point using 2017-18 prices has been passed giving an eight year payback for the investment in the land and its improvements. If you decide to use the more conservative 2011 - 17 prices, there is another year to go. The 2011 - 2017 price figures show an internal rate of return (IRR) was 10.8% while the 2017- 2018 figures give an IRR of 13.3%. It was decided to use consistent sets of price data for the analysis to avoid week to week fluctuations that could have skewed the results. A full report is being produced and will be sent to members; it will be available on the PPS website at www.perennialpasturesystems.com.au



Kikuyu Demonstration

Two small Kikuyu demonstrations were established on member farms in spring 2018 to assess its suitability as a summer feed option in niche soils in our region. Kikuyu is suited to light, sandy soils and has been used successfully as a pasture species in East Gippsland, Kangaroo Island and other areas. Two sites were chosen, a sandy area close to the Grampians on the Kindred family's Pomonal block and a granite sand paddock at Harrington's at the foot of Ben Nevis.

There were issues at both sites, Matt Kindred had a few problems in bulking out the seed for sowing and while there was good germination, the result was a little patchy due to intermittent seed flow. Paul & Dennis Harrington had an even germination but the kikuyu was planted near a tree plot and there was competition for moisture in the dry spring. The trees won and around a third of the kikuyu didn't survive, the rest of the plants got through the first summer but remained small.

Kikuyu is rhizomatous and spreads by runners; both sites had good growth this summer and it has filled in many of the gaps in the demonstration sites. PPS will continue to assess the growth and persistence of the plants and monitor any issues with unintended spread of the kikuyu; observations and advice from growers in Gippsland and W.A. suggest that this is unlikely to be a problem in productive pasture systems with appropriate site selections for establishment.

PPS has a small amount of seed available for another demonstration of around 0.5 Ha; if any member is interested, contact the Project Manager.



Kikuyu at Mt Cole Creek in early April 2020



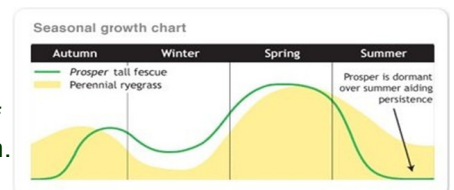
Fescue; A low rainfall pasture tool?

PPS is commencing a Producer Demonstration Site (PDS) project funded by MLA in 2020, looking at the use of winter active fescue in the <550mm rainfall zone. PPS is testing whether the winter growth pattern of the fescue can be utilised in pasture systems in drier regions by utilising the fescue in late winter and allowing other perennials to have reduced grazing pressure and produce extra feed in early spring. The winter growth pattern of fescue is shown in the graph below.

Two sites established in 2019 as a Flecha fescue/Uplands cocksfoot pasture will be measured for dry matter production and three sites have been established with Flecha this year.

The 2019 sites are at "Overdale" Concongella & "Mount Glen" at Joel South; the 2020 Sites are at "Overdale", "Rosehill" at Paradise and "Silver Gully" at Winjallock. Two other member sites will also be observed near Avoca and Horsham.

As well as measuring the performance of the fescue, PPS will be analysing the effect of adding fescue to systems which already have other perennials, mainly phalaris, on farm. PPS has appointed Lisa Warn of WarnAg to assist with the project analysis.



~ PPS DIARY DATES ~

PPS 12th Annual Conference; Thursday September 3rd; Ararat Town Hall
PPS 12th Annual Study Tour; October 4th - 7th to Tasmania cancelled due to COVID 19; other options being considered.
PPS Silage workshop; “Silage in drier areas workshop” Wednesday June 10th; Webinar; 7 pm start
PPS Healthy Soils; Soil biology & Interpreting soil test sessions to be held later in 2020. Project supported by MLA.
PPS Winter Farm Tour; PPS is still hoping to conduct the winter farm tour on Sunday July 26th.
 Planning and location are dependant on COVID - 19 restrictions.
Beanstalk Drought Innovation Program - Two online workshops, 5.30pm—7.pm June 16th and June 30th.
 More details on Page 6.



PPS Girls & Grass group; Depending on COVID-19 restrictions a coffee catch up on Saturday 27th June; details will be emailed and posted on PPS facebook page.
‘Xmas in July’ social dinner with guest speaker Georgina Gubbins on Wednesday 22nd July; Venue and time TBA.

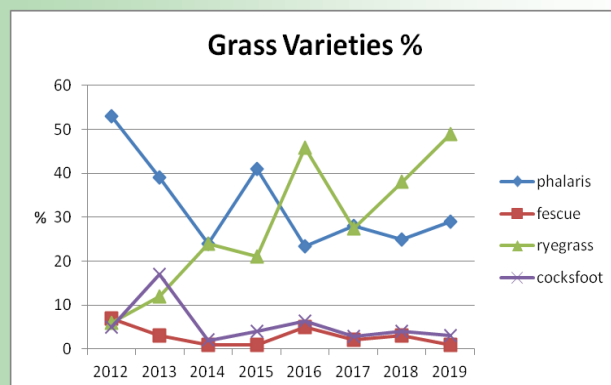
PPS 8th Annual Pasture Establishment Survey

The results from the annual pasture survey, which were in the March newsletter created interest from contacts interstate and overseas. PPS had a couple of notes from contacts in NSW & NZ who receive the newsletter wanting clarification on the sharp increase in ryegrass establishment since 2012.

A question was asked in the survey on the area of ryegrass established; if the answer was yes, a further question asked “what area was sown as a short term pasture (1—2 years).

The survey results showed that 1,506 ha of ryegrass was sown by those who responded and 81% (1,224 ha) of the total were “short term” cultivars.

The % of grass varieties in the PPS surveys are shown in the graph.



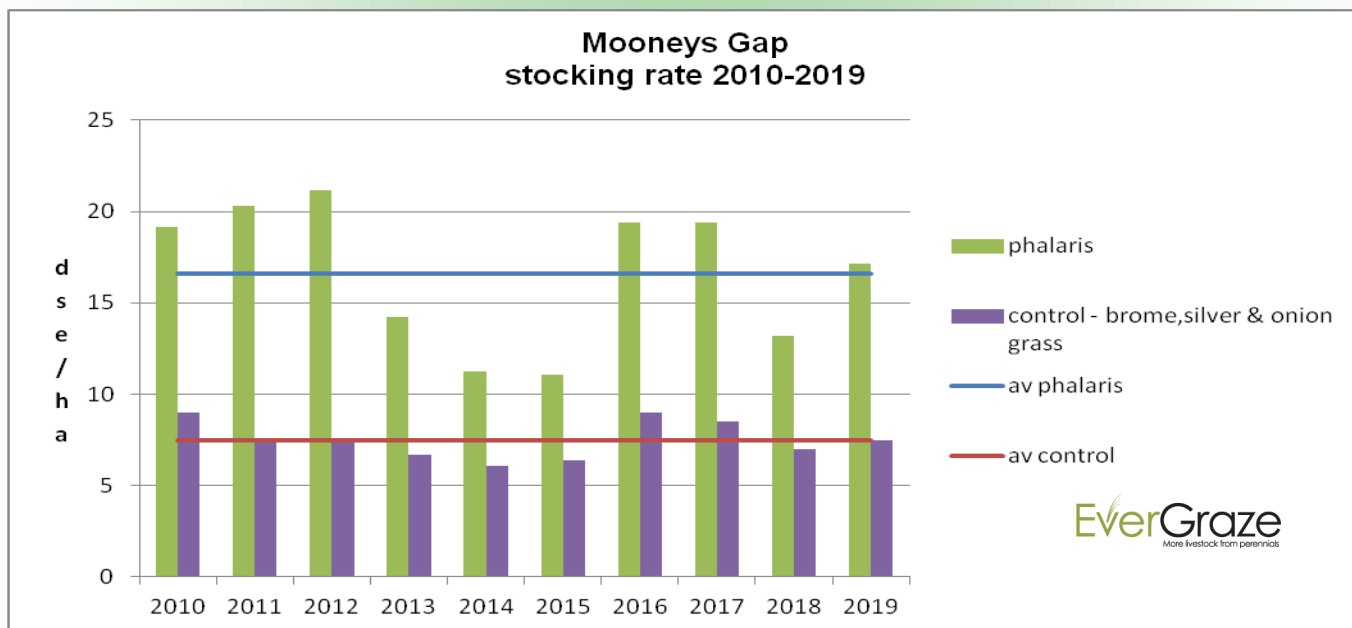
Mooneys Gap EverGraze site

The Mooneys Gap phalaris EverGraze site was established in 2009 and is still being measured for production performance. The Holdfast GT & Advanced AT phalaris along with subclovers has proved to be a persistent and productive mix.

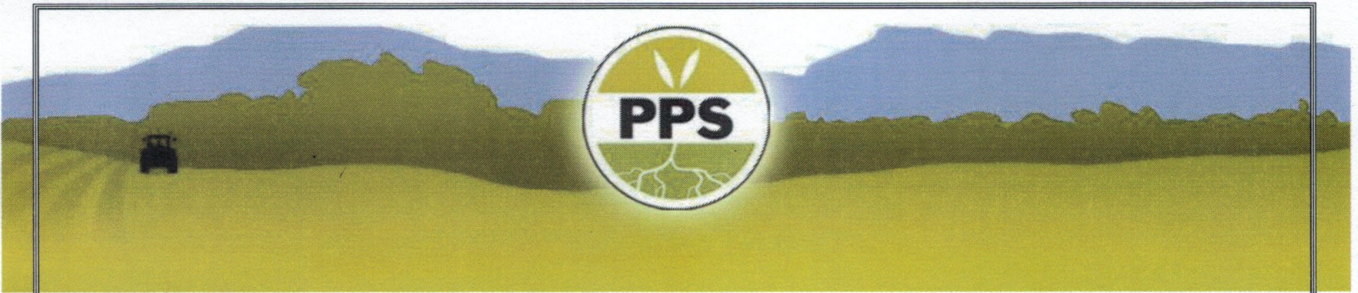
Rod & Xavier Vearing manage the grazing on a rotational basis and the paddock is destocked in summer when it reaches 800 - 900 kgDM/Ha; it is then ungrazed until after the autumn break.

While the pasture is still performing, the paddock does have a reasonable amount of barley grass in it and discussions are held annually on whether to use a chemical control or try to control it with grazing. Sheep grazing at a high stocking rate of 41 dse/Ha was imposed for 30 days in late August 2019 but the pasture still kept ahead of the sheep.

The stocking rate for the paddock is shown below with a comparison to a control pasture similar to the EverGraze paddock before pasture improvement. The averages for both pastures are also shown.



PPS Webinar Wednesday June 10th; 6.30 pm log in



Perennial Pasture Systems invite members & guests to join a silage webinar-



Topics

Silage in low rainfall regions; does it have a role?

Presenter: Michelle Jolliffe; Ag Vic, Hamilton

Silage, a tool for Barley Grass control?

Year 1 observations from PPS Weeds Project.

Presenter: Tess McDougall; Ag Vic, Ararat

Date: Wednesday 10th June, 2020

Time: 6.30 pm login, 7 pm start

Duration: 1 hour plus Q&A

No need to pre book, login details will be emailed, a reminder will be sent by txt message.



Beanstalk Drought Innovation Program

Do you use farming APPS, computer programs for paddock and/or stock records? Do you use drones for farm jobs or other technology? Then this series of two workshops could be for you.

PPS is partnering with the Wimmera CMA to investigate the use of technological tools for agriculture, what works well, what needs improving and what other suggestions do you have?

Refer to flier below and contact Debbie Shea 0418 205 353 or email debbiejshea@gmail.com if you are interested in participating.



BEANSTALK DROUGHT INNOVATION PROGRAM

A focus on sheep, wool and prime lamb producers in the Wimmera region

Why?

Climate variability has placed significant pressure on farm systems and the viability of farming businesses across Victoria. Whilst we've had some respite, there is a recognition that we are moving into a future with increased climate variability. As a result, it is key that we gain an understanding of new technologies that might be added to our toolbox to better manage a profitable farm business.

Meanwhile we have seen an explosion in the number and quality of different technologies that are being developed in Australia and globally that might be able to play a role in future proofing your farm through future climate variability events.

Your chance to understand how world leading technologies can help to future proof your farming operation.

What?

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|---|---|--------------------|
| 1 | SIGN UP HERE for this free program: funded by the Victorian Government Farming and Community Group Drought Funding Program
beanstalkagtech.com/wcma-droughtinnovation | By
12 June |
| 2 | WORKSHOP #1: Challenge Discovery - define your biggest drought challenges and opportunities to future proof through technology | 5.30pm*
16 June |
| 3 | BEANSTALK industry leading technology scout for leading solutions across Australia and globally | 17-29
June |
| 4 | WORKSHOP #2: Technology solution presentations and Q&A directly from the founders of the companies you select | 5.30pm*
30 June |

*Dates confirmed, but workshop times subject to group feedback

Register at
beanstalkagtech.com/wcma-droughtinnovation

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BEANSTALK

AGRICULTURE VICTORIA

