

# Weed Warriors - Upper Murray host site

## Producer case study: Gladys Farrell

### What's happening?

We are assessing a range of weed management options to increase pasture productivity post-fire. This site is run as a 'paired paddock', using two side-by-side paddocks of uniform soil type and pasture composition. Both paddocks are on a hill slope and have been cut for hay since the fires.

One paddock is being subjected to 'normal' farm management, while the other is given normal farm management 'plus' – Normal Farm Practice + (NFP+) – whereby the plus is an extra level intervention not typically conducted over the farm.



**Figure 1: Sloping hill country used as a paired paddock demonstration at Cudgewa**

To quantify any gains in production, we will regularly monitor pasture composition and production.

### Paddock goal

To utilise a period of annual grass pasture to undertake chemical weed control, prior to establishing a long term, permanent perennial pasture.

### Normal Farm Practice '+'

Additional management practices to lift pasture production are primarily based on chemical weed control and soil fertility.

Chemical control options include an earlier spraying of summer grass weeds to enable saving of soil moisture for the annual ryegrass. There will also be a 'winter cleaning' during the annual grass phases, to remove broadleaf weeds.

Fertiliser applications will be customised in response to base line soil tests. Having identified low Potassium (K) levels, either a custom blended high K fertiliser will be used in the autumn, or there will be split fertiliser applications with a Potash-based fertiliser applied in spring after the usual P-based fertilisers are applied in autumn.

To assess the responsiveness of the pasture to differing levels of Nitrogen and Potash, fertiliser test strips at a range of rates will be applied.

## Pasture composition

Prior to resowing with an annual grass mix in autumn 2022, pasture species included low amounts of annual ryegrass and high percentages of summer grasses including paspalum. There was little evidence of sub clover with higher amounts of dock, flatweed and knotweed.

## Early results

Winter cleaning reduced broadleaf weeds from 15% to 3.5% of the total pasture by spring time. However, this difference in pasture composition did not result in a difference in the overall stocking rate that the pastures were able to sustain.

## Where to from here?

Paddocks will both have a second year of an annual ryegrass 'crop' prior to being sown down to a perennial pasture in autumn 2024. The North Demo (NFP+) paddock will be sprayed out earlier prior to sowing than the South Demo (NFP) paddock – and will also be winter cleaned for added broadleaf weed control. Fertiliser applications will be either split to include a Potash-based fertiliser applied in the spring, or a custom blend that incorporates both Phosphorus and Potassium to be used in autumn. Nitrogen and Potash test strips will be applied in early spring, 2023.

Pasture quality and composition will be monitored on a regular basis. Producers are welcome to come along and inspect the site and are encouraged to participate in assessments of herbage mass, feed quality and pasture composition. Where there's interest, the project team is happy to help producers assess their own paddocks.

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