



meatup FORUM

**For the latest in red meat research and development
Northam, WA – 12 August 2026**

Producer Demonstration Sites – Productive Saltland Pastures 2022-27 “Bridging the Summer-Autumn Feed Gap”

Hilary Watterson - Gillamii Centre Project Officer

Sam Lehmann - Landholder

About The Gillamii Centre

Our purpose is “to lead, inspire & support, productive agriculture, rural communities and healthy natural ecosystems”

Community-led not-for-profit organisation (est. 1994) two project officers, known widely for our saltland work, including the development of the Saltland Genie Web APP with DPIRD & CSIRO.

Based in Cranbrook, representing the Kent Frankland subregion. Servicing Broomehill-Tambellup, Cranbrook and Frankland River.

Currently delivering projects in:

- Salinity management
- Livestock production
- Soil health & climate resilience
- Biodiversity & revegetation
- Grain legumes
- Sub surface drainage



About The Grower - Sam Lehmann

- Farms north of Cranbrook on the border of Tambellup shire.
- Average annual rainfall of 400-425mm
- Mixed sheep & cropping enterprise 50/50
- Farming challenge - farming around the Cranbrook salt lakes & the bottom of the Stirling Range valley floor with deep sands
- Farming achievement - developing saltbush-based grazing systems that transform saline land into productive paddocks. First saltbush planted in 1984. Participate in trial work with CSIRO & DPIRD.

Gillamii committee member and Gillamii MLA PDS project mentor



About the Project (2022 – 2027) What is the issue?



Wansbrough Demonstration Site - Tambellup

About the Project (2022 – 2027)

Aim is to transform salt-affected land into **productive, profitable and sustainable grazing systems** using locally demonstrated salt-tolerant pasture species.

Project Objectives:

- Establish approximately **150 hectares** of salt-tolerant forage systems.
- Increase late summer–autumn biomass production.
- Improve soil organic carbon.
- Monitor livestock productivity.
- Compare economics across different pasture systems.
- Build producer confidence and encourage adoption.



The Demonstration Network

Tomlinson Property (Cranbrook) – 13ha
Saltbush alleys (4m apart) with perennial pasture

Standish Property (Cranbrook) – 9ha
Saltbush seedlings integrated with existing native vegetation
sheoaks, paperbark & Yate eucalyptus creek line

Addis Property (Cranbrook) – Site 1: 40ha, Site 2: 58ha
Comparison of mixed perennial and highly saline systems.
One site saltbush alleys (4m apart)

House Property (Gnowangerup) – Site 1: 20ha Site 2: 36ha
Productive perennial systems plus saline pasture mix.



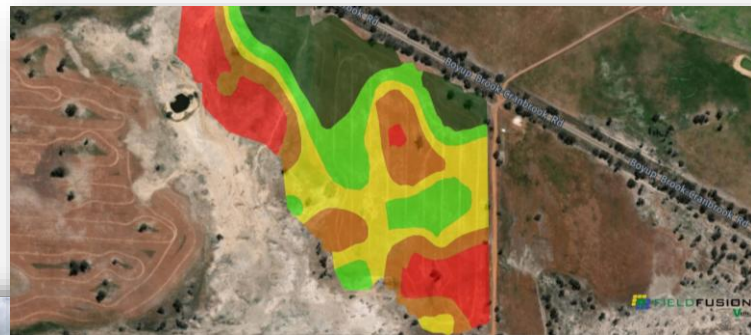
Site Design: Not One Recipe!

Each site was designed around:

- salinity
- drainage
- waterlogging
- grazing system
- landholder goals

Every site received:

- baseline soil analysis (Veris U3/iScan)
- baseline biomass monitoring (NDVI & nutrition)
- baseline photo points



Preparing the Site

- 1st time trial species on a small site
- Weed control
- Seedbed preparation
- Soil constraint consideration
- Timing with seasonal conditions
- Pest control



"Preparation determines establishment success."

Species Selection

Site	Species
Tomlinson	Tall Wheat Grass, Puccinellia, Kikuyu, Rhodes Grass, Balansa Clover, Saltbush rows 4m spacing
Standish	Old Man Saltbush, <i>flat topped yate</i> , sheoak, <i>saltwater paperbark</i> , existing Puccinellia
Addis	Chicory, Panic, Cocksfoot, Tall Wheat Grass, Clover, Puccinellia, Saltbush Rows 4m spacing
House	Lucerne, Tall Fescue, Chicory, Panic, Cocksfoot, Tall Wheat Grass, Puccinellia, existing Saltbush oldman & wavy leaf



House site 2 – Establishment 2022

“No single species suits every paddock.”

Tomlinson Site – Lowest Cost, Highest Return



13ha

Autum feed for May lambing

- Bottom of farms basin
- Salt scald breaking out
- Saltbush alleys
- Perennial understorey

Tomlinson Site – Lowest Cost, Highest Return

- ✓ Lowest establishment cost
- ✓ Biggest summer/autumn biomass increase
- ✓ Saltbush shelter for lambing

“Chris anticipates for the 2027 mid May lambing season - protection while lambing, particularly from the tall wheat grass, seems to be just as valuable as the food”



Tomlinson site - March 2025

Standish Site - More than just feed



9ha

Flexibility to graze in late summer

- Bottom of shallow valley, start of creek line
- Salt scald & water logging
- Incorporating saltbush with native trees (yates, sheoaks & saltwater paperbarks)
- Perennial understorey

Standish Site - More than just feed

- ✓ Previously unproductive saline land returned to grazing
- ✓ Saltbush and perennial understorey provided valuable feed and shelter
- ✓ Native species e.g. eucalypts, sheoaks & melaleuca paperbarks, enhanced biodiversity and protected waterways

NOTE – incorporating native tree species will take much longer to establish the site prior to grazing



2022 Baseline



2023

Key Message: *Productive saltland can deliver both livestock and environmental outcomes when managed with strategic grazing and adequate rest periods.*

Addis Site - Not every demonstration site succeeded.



Site 1 40ha

Mixed perennials
& saline pasture
mix

Addis Site - Not every demonstration site succeeded.



Site 2 58ha

Mixed
perennials &
saline pasture
mix with
saltbush alleys

Addis Site - Not every demonstration site succeeded.



2022 Baseline



2024

Lesson:

Saltland pasture establishment requires the same level of planning as any high-value crop.

Reasons

- Site preparation
- Weed competition
- Seasonal conditions



Excess vegetation on mounds



Poorly formed mounds

House - Making Saltland Work



On marginal land House has setup a series of small lambing paddocks, note drains & existing saltbush in clumps. Plan to establish perennial systems plus saline pasture mix.

Site 1 20ha (left) Site 2 36ha (above)

House - Making Saltland Work



2022 Baseline



2022 Germination

- ✓ **March lambing** supported by grazing saltbush and perennial pastures, providing feed and shelter when feed is traditionally limited.
- ✓ **Different pasture mixes matched to different salinity zones**, demonstrating that species selection should reflect landscape variability rather than a single recipe.
- ✓ **Tall wheat grass proved highly resilient**, providing persistent groundcover, reducing salt scald expansion and maintaining feed after grazing.

Did it Pay?

Economic metrics were calculated using the Saltland Genie economic calculator, using project-specific establishment costs and grazing records.

How was grazing value calculated?

Livestock numbers × DSE × grazing days × \$/DSE/day (sheep agistment rate)

Eg. House Site 1 in 2022:

500 ewes in/with lamb × 1.2 DSE × 4 days × \$0.18

= \$432 grazing value

Grazing Value ≠ Profit



Did it Pay?

Economic metrics were calculated using the Saltland Genie economic calculator, using project-specific establishment costs and grazing records.

Site	Establishment cost (2022)	Days grazed to date (2022-26) During Nov–Apr	Grazing value to date (2022-26)	Grazing value to date per ha (2022-26)
Tomlinson (13ha)	\$6,065	7	\$3,811	\$293/ha
Standish (9ha)	\$2,652	40	\$3,543	\$394/ha
Addis 1 (40ha)	\$4,125	-	-	-
Addis 2 (58ha)	\$14,550	-	-	-
House 1 (20ha)	\$7,380	60	\$10,818	\$541/ha
House 2 (36ha)	\$15,848	114	\$19,532	\$543/ha

NB. Establishment cost doesn't include site preparation & fencing.

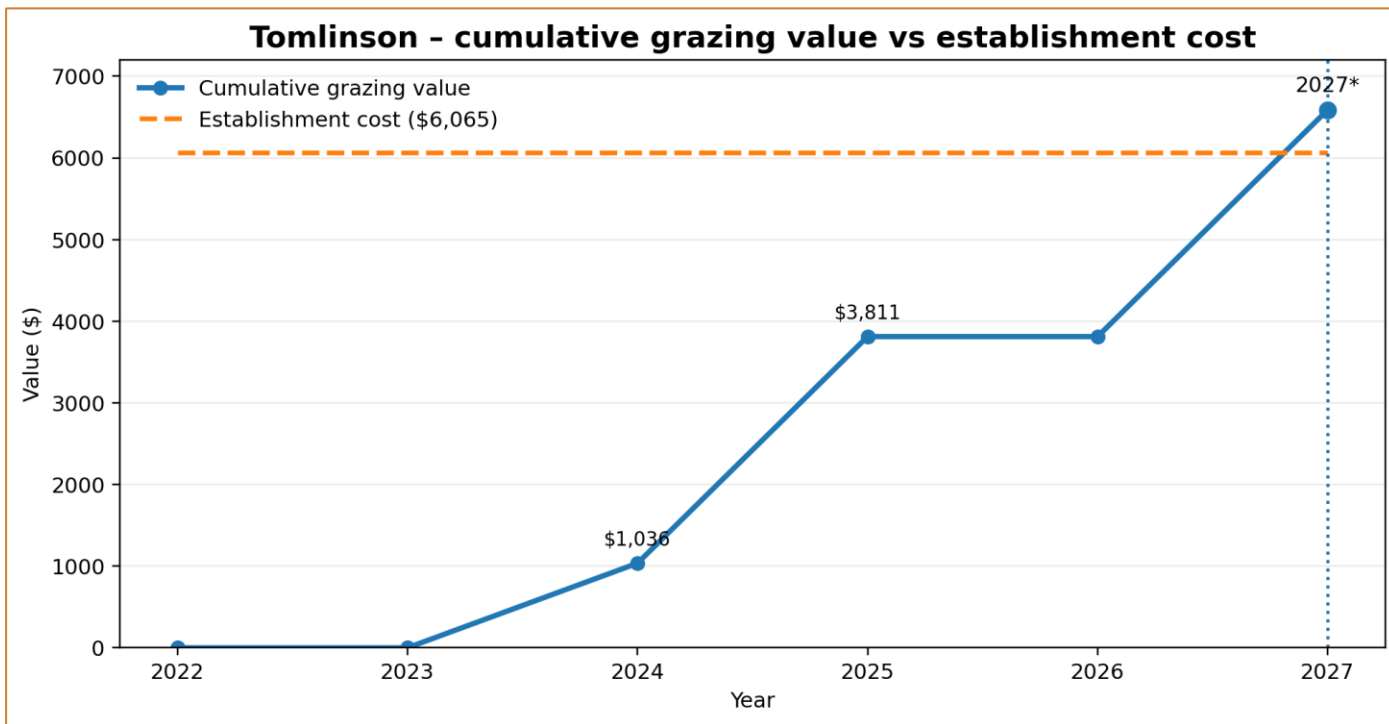
Tomlinson: How Long Until It Pays Back?

Tomlinson – 13 ha

**Establishment
investment:
\$6,065**

**Grazing value
generated to date:
\$3,811**

**Value still to
recover: \$2,254**



NB. Site not grazed in 2026 year.

Lessons Learned from Producers

Invest in site preparation

- Effective weed control before sowing was critical to successful establishment. Allow sufficient time from spray to planting to make sure all weeds are under control.

Match species to the landscape

- There is no one-size-fits-all pasture mix.
- Select species according to locality, salinity, pH, soil type and intended grazing system.
- Time factor (tall wheat grass clumps, kikuyu establishment, saltbush establishment, seed vs. seedling)



Sam Lehmann – August 2026 Lambing

Lessons Learned from Producers

Manage grazing for persistence

- Delay grazing until pastures are well established.
- Strategic grazing and adequate rest periods improved pasture longevity and productivity.

Think beyond feed

- Saltbush provided valuable shelter for lambing as well as supplementary feed.
- Productive saltland systems also improved groundcover, biodiversity and landscape function.

Take a long-term view

- Benefits increased over time as perennial pastures matured.
- Productive saltland should be viewed as an investment in whole-farm resilience, not just short-term feed.



Tomlinson site – July 2026

MLA and relevant tools and resources



Saltland Genie

Species selection
& economics

www.saltlandgenie.com



Gillamii Centre

Local support &
extension

www.gillamii.org.au



MLA PDS Program

Producer
resources

www.mla.com.au

‘Salt-affected land doesn't have to be a liability. With the right species, preparation and management, it can become a productive part of your farming system.’

Hilary Watterson & Sam Lehmann

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