



☐ Chester Giles (left) and Greg Sounness inspecting the quality spring production in year 3 of the Souwest pasture mix.

SOUWEST PASTURE MIX –

Proves a winner as pasture in Mount Barker

MT Barker farmers Robert and Pam Sounness and son Greg have discovered a winning seed mix that blends exceptional growth with strong reseeding capabilities and reasonable cost.

The Mt Barker mixed cattle, sheep, fat lamb and Dohne stud farming family has hit upon a pasture that has lasted three years without reseeding and has provided seemingly endless grazing for cows and calves, ewes and lambs and has still managed to cut an enviable amount of hay.

The mix they planted on 7.5ha in 2003 is the Irwin Hunter Interow mix, now Souwest Pasture Mix, a blend of annual ryegrass, Roper perennial ryegrass mix, Subterranean clovers (Riverina and Dalkeith), plus Crimson, Persian and Balansa clovers.

The subterranean clovers now included in the Souwest Pasture Mix are Urana, (replacing Dalkeith) and Riverina.

The Sounnesses chose the Interow mix to boost the production of an older pasture paddock that had not been performing.

They have been thrilled with the results.

For a start the pasture mix was sown at a cost-friendly 19kg/ha instead of the suggested sowing rate of 25kg/ha.

The light sowing rate didn't stop the pasture from grazing 25 weaners from mid-January to June 2004 or 33 cows and their calves for six weeks later the same year from mid-October.

The self-seeded pasture also supported another

19 weaners plus 50 ewes and their lambs from January 2005 to mid-June 2005.

Robert Sounness said the pasture had been grazed heavily at times and fertiliser rates had been light compared to the amount of fertiliser some farmers used on their pastures. "We could have fed the pastures more but it was pretty good without it," Mr Sounness said.

The Interow mix was seeded into a paddock that had been sprayed out with Glyphosate with 100kg/ha of 4 in 1 super potash. Weeds were sprayed out in July 2003 and the pasture fed again with 50kg/ha of urea in September. In November of that first year of the pasture the Sounnesses cut a small area for hay before allowing the pasture to self-seed. The vigorous pasture mix was fed with another 100kg/ha of super phosphate in June 2004 after supporting 19 weaners for six months. It was further boosted with an application of Spring burst fertiliser at 90kg/ha in September. The Interow mix was grazed again in October and November before being shut up for seed set. By mid-January the paddock was ready for more grazing and supported 19 weaners and 50 ewes and their lambs during the early months of the year before an application of a super, copper, zinc mixture in May 2005 at 100kg/ha. The pasture was shut for hay in August and a final boost of 80kg/ha of urea applied in the second week of September before it was cut for hay on November 15, 2005. After three years the pasture still had a good balance of ryegrass and

clovers and the quality of the hay was excellent. Mr Sounness was happy with the production too.

"It's done very well. We cut 70 five foot by six foot rolls – about 35t from 7.5ha and that was after grazing and without reseeding," Mr Sounness said.

He said the 939.8mm of rainfall the farm had received that year had clearly helped.

Other management of the pasture included two sprays for red legged earth mite in September 2004 and 2005.

"It proves the point: you can do it if you feed it and keep the bugs away," Mr Sounness said.

The Sounnesses had already proven the point with another small 1.4ha paddock sown to the same Interow pasture mixture. Mr Sounness said they had cut 19 rolls of 6 by 5's from that small area in November and the regrowth from the self-sown mix was already more than knee-height in January.

"If you can cut the pasture early enough you will get a better seed set and good growth," he said.

With the point firmly proven the Sounnesses are planning to plant more areas of their farm to the Souwest mix this year and they will also be reseeding their three-year-old Souwest pasture with another 4-5kg/ha of Souwest seed.

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