

Irwin Hunter & Co.

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Progrow, Dargo and Roper ryegrasses boost stock numbers.

By the use of modern varieties of high producing ryegrass and clover in his pastures, Roland Ritson considers that the potential is now there to increase his carrying capacity by as much as 20 per cent.

Roland is the third generation of his family to farm this 1512ha of undulating, marri, jarrah and wondoo soils, near Boyup Brook. He is carrying a total of 11,000 super-fine wool Merinos, which include 4,000 breeding ewes. As well he is growing 160ha of barley and Canola in a 600mm rainfall area.



With the aim of increasing production, Roland is aiming to reduce the effect of the long dry summers and to improve his pastures, without having to go into a bigger cropping program, thus avoiding too much dust in the wool.

With the help of agronomist, Graham Laslett in conjunction with Boyup Brook Farm Supplies and his local farm advisory group, Roland has been broadcasting and harrowing in, recently released varieties of grasses and clovers, on paddocks that had been in crop.

"Last autumn, we sowed about 80ha of gently undulating country in a mixture which includes Dargo annual ryegrass, Progrow annual ryegrass, Roper perennial ryegrass and mainly Balansa clover, with 100kg/ha of superphosphate," he said.

"We stocked it lightly after establishment with about 8 DSE/ha of young sheep and took them off in early spring, when 8ha of this area was shut up for silage.

"In October, we harvested 260 rolls of silage, each measuring 1.22 by 1.524 metres, which I consider was a very good yield under our conditions. These rolls were put into a concrete bunker and covered with black plastic and ground limestone," he said.

Roland explained that they had a late start to the winter, but after May, good rains continued to fall until October. At this stage he had a huge amount of feed in all his paddocks.

But, in early December, 112mm of out-of-season rain fell, spoiling most of the dry feed. Since then it has been dry and we have been relying on silage, hay, lupins, greenfeed oats and 3ha of Lucerne to feed the sheep.

"By having on hand additional hay and silage from the higher producing ryegrasses and clovers we planted last autumn, we have not only been able to bridge the dry summer period, but the potential is there to increase out stock numbers by as much as 20 per cent," Roland said.

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