

Safeguard, ARGV resistant annual at Quairading.

SEVERAL years ago Murray Williams concluded that the running of livestock and cropping were not complimentary on his property, south east of Quairading.

SEVERAL years ago Murray Williams concluded that the running of livestock and cropping were not complementary on his property, south east of Quairading.

He could see a conflict of interest as he manipulated pastures to keep grasses out of the cropping country, but at the expense of stock feed. "While commodity prices favoured the cropping side of the farming mix, I could not retain the clover content in the pasture," he said.



Consequently Murray has decided to designate set areas to pasture and cropping for extended periods on his 2000ha property. He runs 200 Red Poll cattle, 3000 Merino sheep using Merino and some Suffolk rams and crops 800ha.

"Ryegrass is the obvious pasture option, but Annual Ryegrass Toxicity has resulted in stock deaths in the district for 25 years." Murray is unaware of ARGV on his property in recent years but knows the problem has existed in the past so he opted to sow the ARGV-resistant Safeguard ryegrass as a preventative measure in the last two seasons.

"I wanted all the benefits of ryegrass without taking on the risk of ARGV," he said.

"Safeguard is not a cure-all, but I will be using it as a preventative measure." He has had mixed success with the 80ha sown to Safeguard over the past two seasons. "2002 was a disastrous season, but I resowed the area in 2003," Murray said. Because the paddock was prone to wind and erosion, he sowed 4kg/ha of

Safeguard, 3kg/ha Dalkeith sub clover with 30kg/ha of wheat as a cover crop. "There were two areas with enough Safeguard established in 2002 to cut hay and I cut 130 rolls off 10ha," he said.

"That has convinced me that ryegrass has good potential for productivity. The Safeguard flowered at a similar time to Wimmera and generated a good bulk of growth." Murray fertilised the Safeguard paddock with cropping fertiliser Astar Extra at 70kg/ha at seeding and applied 50kg/ha urea post emergence. The wheat yielded 1t/ha, which Murray says helped offset the cost of establishment but more importantly, I wanted to be sure there was some cover in case the grasses did not establish properly, he said. "The clover was dominated by the ryegrass."

Murray acknowledges that he has much to learn about Safeguard, in particular about grazing management. He says he does not have a typical cropping rotation, but it will remain flexible to take account of commodity prices, seasonal conditions and herbicide resistance. "I intend to leave the parts of the farm that have been set aside for pasture production in pasture for five to six years," he said.

Irwin Hunter & Co, Suite 11/88 Forrest Street, Cottesloe,
Western Australia 6011. Phone 9383 4708