

Irwin Hunter & Co.

Western Australia's Leading Seed Distributor

Suite 11/88 Forrest Street, Cottesloe

PO Box 232, Cottesloe WA 6011

Ph: 9383 4708 Fax 9384 8029

www.irwinhunter.com.au

Roper perennial ryegrass, Dargo and Progrow annual ryegrasses, increase production at Kojonup.

The Kojonup region of Western Australia has a proud Merino wool growing tradition, but in Kojonup as elsewhere in the WA farming community, huge gains in efficiency have changed age-old farming practices.

The Kojonup region of Western Australia has a proud Merino wool growing tradition, but in Kojonup as elsewhere in the WA farming community, huge gains in efficiency have changed age-old farming practices.

Andrew and Di Hassell of Mandalup Farm on the western edge of Kojonup are mixed farmers that run 4000 Merino ewes for wool, have a beef enterprise with 125 breeders and crop around 300ha of their 800ha property.



They have increased their stocking rate so that now they are running their sheep at 18DSE (dry sheep equivalent). To support the more intensive stocking rate, the Hassells require excellent pasture.

The pasture that they have chosen for the past three years has been a combination of Roper, Dargo and Progrow annual ryegrasses mixed with Balansa and Persian clovers and Seaton Park subclover.

"The quantity of hay from this mix has been outstanding," Mr Hassell said.

"The contractor that cut our silage works all around the place and he said he had never seen better."

Their pasture paddocks cut around 15tonnes of dry matter per hectare, or 13 rolls of silage to the acre.

"We need our land to produce more per hectare. We put more of our land into cropping; we carry more cattle and Merino ewes and so we need our pastures to work hard for us so that we can support that increase in production."

Last year alone the Hassells increased their stocking rate by 20 per cent.

Mr Hassell said the quality and quantity of the pasture mix made it possible for him to sleep at night.

"If you want to sleep at night you have to have good pasture, particularly with cattle."

The Hassells mix the ryegrasses and sub clovers themselves and sow it through a combine with superseeder points on 7 and a half inch spacings at a sowing rate of 20 kilos per hectare for the ryegrasses, and with 5kg/ha of Balansa clover; 3kg/ha of Persian clover and 5kg/ha of Seaton Park subclover.

Sometimes they add barley and oats to the mix if it is going to be cut later for silage.

"We find that the ryegrass can get too heavy and fall over. The oats hold it up so it is easier to cut."

They sow the pasture mix as soon as there is enough moisture in the soil and then apply 100kg/ha of Summit All-Star cropping fertiliser.

The fertiliser is a mixture of nitrogen, phosphorous, sulphur and trace elements. They occasionally give their pastures urea and in June pastures were given 34kg/ha of All Star. The pastures that had been earmarked for silage were given summit Grass Boost at 100kg/ha in early September – two weeks after shutting up. Grass Burst includes nitrogen, potassium and sulphur.

"We usually grow this ryegrass mix on land that has been used for cropping for four years."

"The first year we treat the pasture like a crop: we use knockdown spray, pesticides and then we cut it for silage.

"The second year we get regrowth and we start grazing it."

Last year the Hassells changed their management of the pasture and grazed it during the first year.

"The grazing in the first year did not harm the pasture – in fact we think it might have done it some good."

Last year the Hassells sowed the pasture seed in one paddock directly into raked barley stubble. The pasture was later cut for silage and produced good quality silage and an excellent quantity.

Mr Hassell said the secret to good pasture was to firstly select the right varieties, reduce the weed burden by using a good knockdown spray prior to sowing together with a pesticide spray for red-legged earth mite.

He advises against sowing too deep and considers that it is important to remain vigilant after sowing for any bugs. Nutrition is an important part of the pasture plan.

"If you expect high-performing pasture, you have to keep it fed," he said.

"Give the pasture nitrogen and potassium in early spring because be then it will need it."