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BDPO Landcare, Omeo Pasture Trial – Round 2 - 2020

Written by Lisa Lee, 26/8/2020 with feedback from the Pasture Trial Team

The second round of the BDPO's Pasture Trial is proving much more successful than the Spring 2019 round. The recent milder and wetter winter has seen an increase in the pasture growth and now, in August, we're at the point where grazing is possible.

A couple of years ago, a few local farmers got talking after an Agriculture Victoria's Pasture Workshop, expressing an interest in trialling pasture species that have possibly not been sown in this area before. We wanted to get first hand knowledge and data on pasture growth in our colder, Omeo climate. In 2019, under the auspice of the Landcare Group, Greg and Lisa Lee offered a 144 x 144 meter or 2 ha section of their paddock, for an ongoing trial, at the top of The Gap, south of Omeo, on the Great Alpine Road. This area generally picks up much of its rain from the south and from east coast lows.

Much of what the Group has done so far has been self funded, with local farmers using their own time and machinery to fence, spray, cultivate and sow. Southern Farming Systems kicked in some money to cover fertiliser and feed test costs. Omeo Rural & Hardware provided some fencing materials and S&W Seed Company (formally Pasture Genetics), AGS Seeds, Barenbrug (formally Heritage Seeds) and Stephen Pasture Seeds have covered all our seed costs so far.

The purpose of this Winter 2020 trial, is to provide supplementary feed during the Winter Feed Gap in the High Country. It was cultivated and later sown in April by David Pooley and Simon Lawlor. Three different blends were developed, consisting of a mixture of ryegrass, clover, brassicas, oats and/or barley as listed below.

PLOT 1 Nearest Omeo	Tetila Annual Ryegrass	15kg/ha
	Bouncer Leafy Turnip	2kg/ha
	Zulamax Arrowleaf Clover	6kg/ha
	Ryecorn	25kg/ha
PLOT 2	Perun Festulolium	15kg/ha
	Subzero Forage Rape	2kg/ha
	Cobra Balansa Clover	5kg/ha
	Barley	25kg/ha
PLOT 3	Mona Italian Ryegrass	15kg/ha
	Smart Radish	3kg/ha
	Turbo Persian Clover	6kg/ha
	Oats	25kg/ha

Bulk at 8/8/2020. After 4 months, Plot 1 absolutely had the most bulk of all 3 plots, with Ryecorn making up for most of the bulk. This was done by sampling 1m² of leafy foliage across all 3 plots.

Wet weight at 8/8/2020. 1m² of foliage was cut from each of the 3 plots and weighed. The heaviest was Plot 1, weighing 1,663 grams. The Ryecorn made up much of this weight. Plot 3 had the second heaviest weight at 1,206 grams and Plot 2 was 1,003 grams.



Above. Smart Radish and Turnip at **July 22**.



Above. Inspecting the trial on **August 2**.

Dry Matter/Ha at 8/8/2020

	Wet Weight	Moisture	Dry matter per ha calculation at first grazing (8/8/2020)	Tonnes/Ha
Plot 1	1,663 grams	85.8%	$0.142 \times 1663 = 236 \text{ grams} \times 10,000 \div 1000 = 2,361.5 \text{ kg}$ of dry matter per ha	2.3 tn/ha
Plot 2	1,003 grams	83.7%	$0.163 \times 1003 = 163 \text{ grams} \times 10,000 \div 1000 = 1,630 \text{ kg/ha}$	1.63 tn/ha
Plot 3	1,206 grams	88.1%	$0.119 \times 1206 = 143.5 \text{ grams} \times 10,000 \div 1,000 = 1,435 \text{ kg/ha}$	1.43 tn/ha

Other figures at 8/8/2020

	Metabolisable Energy	NDF Neutral Detergent Fibre	Crude Protein
Plot 1	12.3 MJ/kg DM	35.5%	22.1%
Plot 2	13.8 MJ/kg DM	27.1%	23.2%
Plot 3	13.6 MJ/kg DM	23.9 %	23.8%

Grazing at of 25/8/2020. Cattle were let in to graze one-quarter of each of the 3 plots for 3 days. Observations on the third day include:

- Cattle selected the ryecorn and ryegrass species first, before the brassicas. A lot of the leafy matter was grazed, however had it been grazed earlier, more of the ryecorn, which was now < 90 cm's tall and heading to seed, would not have been flattened and left on the ground.
- Cattle selected the brassicas second. They grazed the tops well to the ground. Only a few tap roots were pulled from the ground and left.
- The tops of the Smart Radish were grazed. The tap roots were also well anchored into the soil and left. Tap roots will rot into the soil, releasing nutrients and leaving space for water penetration and retention.

Considering the FeedTest results, additional fibre would need to be added into this type of ration. That could consist of cheap straw hay. We will strip graze the remaining crop, but leave a little of each to go through to dry out and then

we'll retest it. If we'd grown 30 ha of Plot 1, 100 head of cattle could potentially graze the full 30 ha for 18.2 days. If we fenced 100 cattle into 1 ha/day, that could give the 1st grazed area to regrow, so the cattle could almost be rotated through the 30 ha for some time.



Above, boarder collie in the Ryecorn at 25/8/2020



Above, Smart Radish after the 1st graze.



ABOVE. Nicole Frost with a Smart Radish plant, showing lateral roots and foliage at **2 August**.