



## PRODUCTION & QUALITY OF NATIVE GRASS PASTURES

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The native grass survey carried out in the Southern Highlands in 1989 (D. Munnich and P. Simpson) revealed that year-long green perennial native grasses, Microlaena stipoides and various Danthonia spp. are widespread and abundant.

These grasses are drought tolerant, grow on acid soils, respond to increased fertility from both superphosphate and clovers, and are tolerant of increased stocking rates.

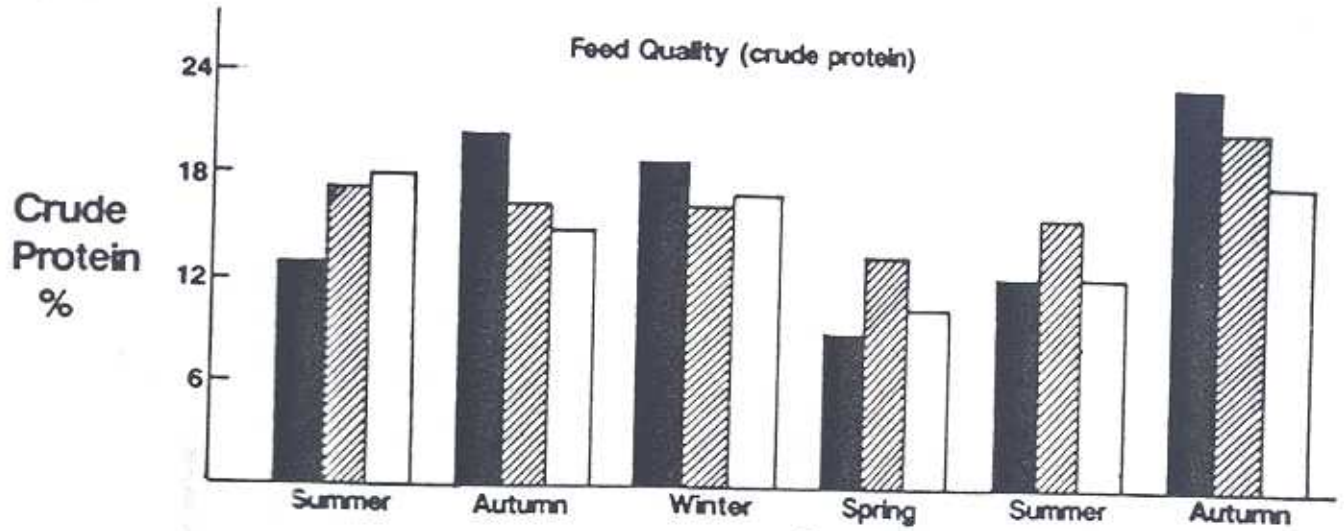
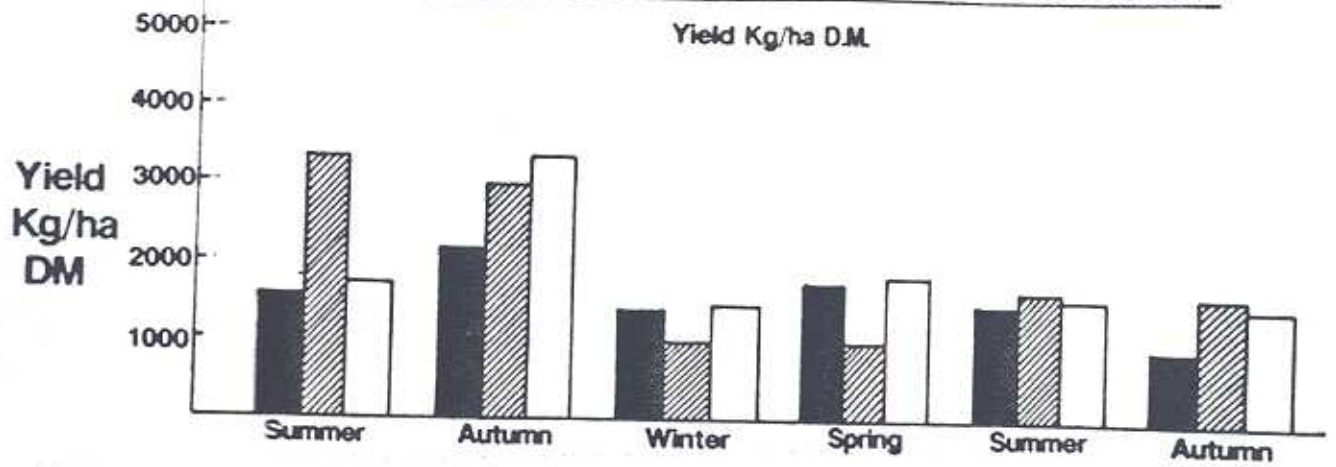
Local farmer experience indicates stocking rates of 5 to 9dse/ha are realistic on sub clover/native grass pastures. New England experience suggests heavier stocking rates (10-14dse) will result in a change from summer growing, frost sensitive species (such as Themeda and Bothriocloa) to frost tolerant yearlong green perennials such as microlaena and danthonia. Some graziers on the Southern Highlands survey were running up to 12-14dse/ha on more fertile soils dominated by Microlaena.

In 1988-90 pasture production and quality was recorded for growth of microlaena, danthonia and perennial ryegrass near Collector. Data were collected in each of the four seasons of the year and results shown in the graphs below:

Crude protein levels above 12% are adequate for lactating animals and there was little difference between the three grass species over the 18 months. Similarly the critical M.E. value for lactating stock is 9.5 and this value was generally attained by all grasses throughout the year measuring 3 months growth of green regeneration since the previous grazing/mowing.

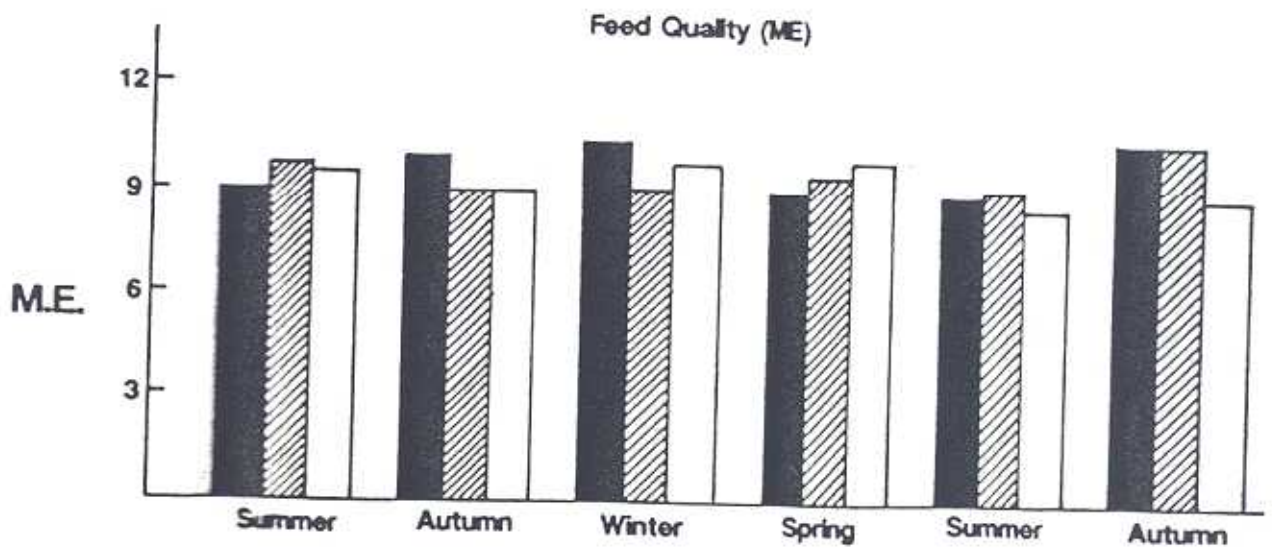
The two native grasses have produced as well as or better than ryegrass in most seasons. Summer 88/89 rainfall was above average but August-October 1989 was dry and the normal bulk of spring growth did not eventuate.

RYEGRASS- NATIVE GRASS COMPARISON 1988-90 GOULBURN



Minimum Requirements

	Cattle/Sheep
Survival	7-8
Pregnancy	9
Lactation	12
Growth	12-14



Minimum Requirements (ME)  
Cattle/Sheep

Survival	7
Pregnancy	8
Lactation	9.5
Growth	10

Ryegrass  
 Microlaena (weeping grass)  
 Danthonia (white top or wallaby grass)