

# Perennials thrive at “Taarblin” John Paul Collins

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DAFWA have commenced a perennial pasture demonstration in collaboration with the Facey Group, Global Pasture Consulting, Ballard Seeds and the Facey Group on the property of Greg and Nathan Astbury. The demonstration is being managed jointly by the Astburys and the DAFWA “SGSL” team. The team comprises Justin Hardy, Arjen Ryder, John Borger, John Paul Collins and Bindi Isbister. Following the completion of the 5 year nationally funded SGSL project, the team have secured funding through SWCC to establish 7 demonstration sites showcasing options to utilise salt affected land. The Astbury project consists of 2 sites:

### Site 1:

An 8 ha ‘ridge’ section of the paddock consisting of ‘fresh’ land at risk of salinity was sown to a perennial mix of resolute fescue (7kg/ha), sirosa phalaris (3 kg/ha), puna chicory (2 kg/ha) and L90 lucerne (2 kg/ha). The rest of the paddock (20 ha) was mild to highly salt affected and was sown to a mix of old-man saltbush (0.25 kg/ha), river saltbush (0.25 kg/ha), dundas tall wheat grass (3 kg/ha), resolute fescue (3 kg/ha) and puna chicory (1kg/ha). A combine seed drill fitted with knife points was used to direct drill the perennial mixes. The paddock was seeded on the 18<sup>th</sup> June 2007 and the establishment was being severely hindered by weeds. A blanket wiper was used to attempt to control wild radish in mid-september and a pasture topper set at >15cm was used to control wild oats and ryegrass in mid-october. Current establishment is now good with fescue, tall wheat grass and chicory being the dominant perennials. The site has supported 60 prime lambs from 1<sup>st</sup> May ‘08 till 4<sup>th</sup> June ‘08 and then a further 150 rising 2 year old ewes until 23<sup>rd</sup> June.



Above: Good stand of chicory, tall fescue & tall wheatgrass

Left: Mark Brown (Project Manager, SWCC), John Paul Collins (Research Officer, DAFWA) and Sally Phelan (EO, Saltland Pastures Association)

### Site 2:

Strips were sown on 18<sup>th</sup> June ‘07 to phalaris, fescue, tall wheat grass, chicory, lucerne, medics (orion, sphere, burr, strand and disc), clovers (persian, prima gland and balansa), ryegrasses (kraka and rocket) and the BallSalina mix. Initial establishment was poor due to the salinity across the site so the site will be sown to tall wheat grass in ‘08. Other legume options to complement the tall wheat grass will be explored in ‘09.

## 2020 Vision: The Face of WA broadacre farming. Felicity Astbury

The opulent surrounds of the University Club at UWA was the home to farmers, researchers and agribusiness professionals alike on Friday June 27<sup>th</sup> 2008. Audrey, Maree, Gary and myself had been invited to attend an industry forum hosted by the Institute of Agriculture. The aims of this event were to: explore current and future trends in broad acre farming systems in WA and future research and development strategies for integrated cropping and livestock systems.

The day kicked off with Assoc Professor Ross Kingwell discussing his research paper on an “Economists’ thoughts on WA broadacre farming towards 2020”. The local interest started next with farmer presentations from Dawson Bradford, Narrogin, Colin Hutchinson, Wyalkatchem and our own Gary Lang. The farmers outlined their own current system ranging from continuous cropping with controlled traffic and the complete exclusion of livestock to cropping being the secondary enterprise to a hugely profitable livestock production and with Gary presenting on somewhere inbetween. With these “real” practices being presented to the researchers it was hoped that the gap between what happens in the lab and then how this information is extended to the paddock would be improved. The afternoon session focussed around the consultants and researchers views on the limits and future opportunities of our industry. We found this a balanced and extremely interesting forum that provided some relevant thoughts for us as a grower group on our future direction and role in the industry.

Copies of the presentations are available at the Facey Group Office if you are interested in reading further.