

## Upper North farmers testing stubble grazing techniques

Members of the Upper North Farming Systems group are running a trial looking at the effect of different grazing systems on stubbles, as part of a larger stubble management project funded by the GRDC.

The grazing trial will see if rotating sheep through blocks of stubble makes a difference to the amount of stubble and surface cover in a paddock, compared to an area that is continuously stocked.

Trial paddocks are divided into two, with half a mob of sheep remaining on one half of the paddock for around 3 weeks. The other half of the paddock is subdivided into 3 to 4 smaller areas with electric fencing and these areas are grazed in turn for about 4 to 5 days each over the 3 week period by the rest of the mob. Dry matter cuts are taken and ground cover is assessed before and after the sheep graze the area. Trial work elsewhere suggests that rotationally grazed areas are grazed more evenly and have less sheep tracks than continuously grazed areas.

Don Bottrall of Appila tried the 2 systems this year on a stubble / volunteer pasture in June just before sowing a wheat crop on the paddock. He found that while the amount of plant material (stubble and other plant residues) and surface cover left on the two grazed areas was the same, there was more of a "green pick" left on the rotationally grazed area.

Jim Higgins will put sheep onto a barley stubble at Willowie after harvest. He is interested in seeing if he can get better utilisation of the feed in a stubble paddock, without baring it out.

Measurements of dry matter and surface cover are being taken by Mary-Anne Young, Sustainable Agriculture Consultant with PIRSA's Rural Solutions SA. "Stubbles are handy feed for stock but keeping stubble cover is vital for protecting soils from erosion" she says. "If we can find ways of getting the best feed value out of stubbles and still keep enough cover to protect soils, that will be a bonus for farmers".

Attached photo: Don Bottrall on his trial paddock in June this year.

