

## Improving pasture productivity - story brief

<b>Topic</b>	Improving pasture productivity
<b>Channels:</b>	<i>Magazine style</i>
	<i>Newsletter style</i>
	<i>Radio</i>
	<i>Print media</i>

### ABOUT THE TOPIC

**Did you know that for most sheep and cattle producers, pasture utilisation is only 30% of what it could be?**

Grazing management skills are the foundation of productive and profitable livestock businesses. There is great potential for most producers to improve their pasture management. Investing in upskilling and learning more about how pastures grow and how best to graze them provides livestock producers with an opportunity to reassess their management and lift their business performance.

Bruce Ablitt from Fairview Dairies at Redpa and Piers Dumaresq from Mt Ireh Estate at Longford are two producers who have recently undertaken training and upskilled in pasture management. Bruce wanted to *“get back to basics and re-look at how he was doing things and where the opportunities were for him to improve”*. Piers wanted to *“learn the science principles behind their on-farm practices, so he could work out where they could make improvements to turn livestock into a high value part of their mixed farming operation”*.

Both Piers and Bruce have been able to apply the new skills in their own businesses and improve how they run their livestock. Bruce says, *“you need to have an open mind, work out what things you can change, and you need to measure things on your farm”*. For Piers, upskilling has enabled him to value feed differently, *“we now really know the true value in cents per kg of dry matter of all the feed we produce, and this means we can make informed decisions to optimise how we use it”*. Two years after completing his last training course, Piers has been able to lift ewe stocking rate from 15DSE/ha to 18DSE/ha, which has resulted in an increase in gross margin of \$70/ha.

Rural Business Tasmania and Macquarie Franklin, with funding from the Australian Government, have produced a short video featuring Bruce and Piers telling their stories about upskilling in pasture management. To view the video go to Rural Business Tasmania [www.ruralbusiness Tasmania.org.au](http://www.ruralbusiness Tasmania.org.au) or Macquarie Franklin [www.macquariefranklin.com.au/resources/](http://www.macquariefranklin.com.au/resources/)

As part of the same project, tools for the Tasmanian livestock industry have been developed, to assist producers with making key feed base management decisions:

- Brassica Forage Crop Planner
- Livestock Trading Calculators (sheep and beef)
- Feed Cost Calculator

These tools provide guidance on planning stock numbers and the time to finish animals on brassica crops; making the decision of whether to sell livestock now or later, and assessing the true cost to produce different types of feed within livestock production systems (e.g. dryland pasture, irrigated pasture, grain, silage, etc).

These tools are freely available for anyone in the industry to use – go to either of the following websites to download them:

Rural Business Tasmania [www.ruralbusiness Tasmania.org.au](http://www.ruralbusiness Tasmania.org.au)

Macquarie Franklin [www.macquariefranklin.com.au/resources/](http://www.macquariefranklin.com.au/resources/)

## SO WHAT?

This topic is important to *livestock producers* because:

- There is considerable potential for most livestock producers to get more production from the same resource base through better grazing management.
- Grazing management practices have a major influence on the amount of fodder or grass that can be grown, eaten and converted into liveweight gain or milk production.
- Being more proactive in managing pastures means livestock producers can plan ahead and be well prepared to manage feed surpluses or deficits. It also makes businesses more resilient to drought, able to recover from drought faster and better equipped to maximise production in good years.
- Learning with other producers provides an opportunity to challenge yourself on why you do things the way you do them, as well as learn from others. It can help you to re-assess what you do, why you do it and how you do it.

## WHO

Interviewees	Bruce Abblitt Fairview Dairies 0408351504 babblitt64@gmail.com	Piers Dumaresq Mount Ireh Estate 0408 460 968 piers.dumaresq@mountireh.com	Susan Nolan Rural Business Tasmania 0447 990 160 Susan.Nolan@ruralbusinesstasmania.org.au

## MORE INFORMATION

Additional resources available to livestock producers include:

- [www.macquariefranklin.com.au](http://www.macquariefranklin.com.au)
- [www.ruralbusinesstasmania.org.au/](http://www.ruralbusinesstasmania.org.au/)
- [www.mla.com.au/extension-training-and-tools/profitable-grazing-systems/](http://www.mla.com.au/extension-training-and-tools/profitable-grazing-systems/)
- [www.mla.com.au/extension-training-and-tools/more-beef-from-pastures/](http://www.mla.com.au/extension-training-and-tools/more-beef-from-pastures/)
- <http://www.makingmorefromsheep.com.au/>
- <http://rist.edu.au/lifetime-ewe-management.php>