### Wedgetail wheat grazing demonstration at Wilby

**Aim**

The aim of the trial was to:

1. Determine the grazing value of Wedgetail wheat for yearling steers.
2. Determine the impact of grazing on the grain yield of Wedgetail wheat.

**Method**

A dryland demonstration site was established at Wilby, Victoria, to determine the effect of grazing on wheat yield. Wedgetail wheat was sown on 5 April 2011 at 70kg/ha with 90kg/ha MAP on a 25cm spacing. Wedgetail was chosen for its grain quality and capacity to be grazed during early winter. Dry matter (DM) cuts were taken at GS30 to determine available biomass. On 1 August 2011, 190 Angus yearlings were introduced for 27 days (49 DSE/ha) and removed just as the crop nodes were leaving the ground (GS30-31). Following cattle removal the paddock was top dressed twice with a total amount of 130kg/ha nitrogen as urea. The crop was then grown to maturity and harvested for grain.

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**Key points**

- Wedgetail provided good grazing for yearling steers.
- The grazing effect on grain yield was not determined, however the grazed crop recovered to yield 4t/ha.

**Location:** Wilby, Victoria  
**Rainfall:**  
- **Annual:** 649mm (avg 508mm)  
- **GSR:** 209mm (avg 328mm)  
**Soil:**  
- **Type:** Brown loam over medium brown clay  
**Sowing information:**  
- **Variety:** Wedgetail wheat  
- **Sowing date:** 5 April 2011  
- **Sowing rate:** 70kg/ha  
- **Fertiliser:** 90 kg/ha MAP; 130 kg/ha nitrogen as urea (split application)  
- **Treatments:** Grazed (49 DSE/ha) and ungrazed  
**Row spacing:** 25cm  
**Paddock history:**  
- 2010 — wheat  
- 2009 — canola  
**Plot size:** 6m x 6m  
**Replicates:** 3

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**Photo:** Rohan Pay
TABLE 1  Dry matter and yield results for grazed and ungrazed Wedgetail wheat

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>DM (kg/ha)</th>
<th>Yield (t/ha)</th>
<th>Protein (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ungrazed</td>
<td>1451</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grazed</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results

At the time of grazing there was 1451 kg/ha DM (see Table 1). Plants were at seven-leaf, eight-tillers growth stage (GS30) and on most plants the node was not visible. On some advanced plants the node was 0.5 cm to 1.0 cm off the ground. During the grazing period the cattle trampled the exclusion cages so an ungrazed yield was not attainable. After the grazing period, most nodes were 1–2 cm off the ground.

Observations and comments

The cattle grazing Wedgetail wheat were estimated to have eaten 1100 kg of DM and did not graze the crop into the ground. This feed potentially grew 140 kg of beef/ha (assuming a feed conversion rate of 8:1). Due to the cattle trampling the exclusion cages it was not possible to determine the yield of the ungrazed plots.

SPONSORS

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Photo: Rohan Pay

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