

Hummer tall fescue handles the pressure at Guyra



Bob Williamson, 'Neeworra', Guyra, has found Hummer tall fescue pastures well suited to the New England Tableland.

A new perennial pasture is producing the goods at Bob Williamson's 'Neeworra' beef and sheep property near Guyra this summer.

The soft-leaf tall fescue variety, Hummer, is shifting the pasture base away from pastures dominated by ryegrass mixes, thanks to its hardy nature and the quality of feed produced.

Already, Bob and Belinda, with son Chad, have around 45 hectares of Hummer fescue with a mix of red and white clover and chicory.

They are among a handful of graziers who grew trial quantities of AusWest Seeds' new summer active tall fescue prior to its release this season, to test its value in a range of environments.

Mr Williamson found it well suited to the New England Tableland.

"It is a hardy sort of pasture that can tolerate dry conditions and high stocking rates," he said.

"Our first 13 hectare Hummer paddock, sown in 2013, carried 350 ewes with lambs for three and a half months when I had nowhere else to put them," he said.

"Its ability to carry a high stocking rate in a very poor season without losing plants is exceptional.

"Hummer also produces great hay when given the opportunity," he said.

Hummer tall fescue is now widely available for dairy, beef and sheep grazing across Australia.

The pasture offers fine, soft leaves to encourage grazing and increase utilisation.

The new summer active perennial pasture also contains the MaxP® endophyte to help it handle pest attacks and moisture stress.

Last May, the Williamsons planted another paddock with the Hummer fescue and legume pasture mix, following a crop of potatoes.

Now in early 2015, with some rain arriving in January, they have 450 prime lambs grazing the 14 hectare Hummer paddock.

“With the red clover and chicory it makes quality feed for lambs,” Mr Williamson said.

“Hummer tends to perform best in early spring, which coincides with the peak demand for feed on the farm.

“We’ve got ewes lambing then and need to have pastures ready to go,” he said.

The Williamsons run mainly sheep and cattle on their 1,000 hectare farm, with prime lambs from cross bred ewes to Dorset or Suffolk rams, as well as vealers, steers and some heifers for Woolworths.

In the past, they have relied on ryegrass, red and white clover and phalaris pastures, but that’s now starting to change.

“The ryegrass is fantastic if the weather goes with you, but if it doesn’t, it seems to burn off quickly and it doesn’t last,” he said.

“The first Hummer paddock had a hard time in its first year and the stock have probably eaten out the clovers a bit, but the fescue remains dominant and has thrived.

“It will be interesting to see how it looks next spring, but it certainly had a tough first year.”

This year, the Williamsons are planning to plant a couple of larger paddocks to a Hummer, clover and chicory pasture mix later in February and March.

“We usually rejuvenate about 50 hectares each year and we’ll be looking to put some more Hummer in,” he said.

For more information on Hummer tall fescue with MaxP® endophyte contact your local seed distributor.