



Improved pastures for slightly saline paddocks



Project Snapshot

Land Manager Name:	Nathan Davey
Property Size:	4523 ha
Location:	Konnongorring
Annual Rainfall (mm):	330 mm
Enterprise Mix:	60% crop, 40% Stock
Soil Type:	Robbies: Tea tree, Grays: Salmon and York Gum

Above: Nathan Davey and Natalie Hogg (DAFWA) inspecting the establishment of pastures in between saltbush rows

Key Messages

- Seeded pasture establishes better than seed that is spread.
- There are many salt land pasture options available to try.
- Slightly saline areas can be restored to provide a feed source to livestock.

Their story

Nathan became involved in the Caring for our Country funded project when he saw an advert to apply for wind erosion funding in the Wheatbelt NRM newsletter. He decided to apply so that he could try out some new pastures on two of the farm's paddocks, Grays and Robbies, which are slightly saline. "This funding allowed us to try a mixture of plants in order to determine which ones would be the most suitable stock feed options", Nathan said.

Trialling the pasture options

To ensure the paddocks were clean prior to sowing the pasture species, Nathan waited for a weed germination and then went in with a knockdown. At both sites he seeded the Ballards saline mix (BALL-SalinA) at 15kg/ha. This pasture mix consisted of Burr Medic (Cavalier), Balansa Clover, Rocket Italian Ryegrass and Tetila Gold ryegrass, as well as ALOSCA inoculant. Eyres green was also planted in alleys in Robbies paddock as this site is a little more saline than Grays. "I was keen to see how the Eyres green compared to Old man saltbush", Nathan explained.

Overall establishment in Grays was extremely good, with the medics doing exceptionally well. "It's had great production in such a short space of time [about 12 weeks]", Nathan mentioned. He added, "It will be interesting to see how it persists over the next few years and whether the different pasture varieties find their niche in the paddock". The Eyres green also grew really well in Robbies. "It took off straight away", Nathan recalled.

These promising results have given Nathan some hope for his saltland pastures. "My new found optimism has made me want to persevere with saltland pastures, especially for Robbies".

Right: Pasture mix of Burr medic (Cavalier), Balansa Clover, Rocket Italian Ryegrass and Tetila Gold ryegrass growing well at Davey's

Lessons Learnt

Previously Nathan spread seed across Robbies paddock rather than seeding it. The funding allowed Nathan to seed it and now he has converted his thinking. "It is definitely better to seed the pasture seed", he said. Sown pasture seeds have a more favourable environment for growth and this is evident with Nathan's surprise in how well the medics had gone. In all Nathan was happy with how the project went and would not do anything differently in hindsight.

Looking forward

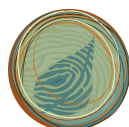
In the future Nathan plans to graze the Grays paddock and see how it holds up for stock feed given it is a slightly saline site. As for the Robbies paddock, Nathan plans to dry seed in some tall wheat grass to see how it compares with the Ballards salt land pasture mix. He will also monitor the paddock closely to see what the sheep do to the Eyres green. Nathan believes that what he has done on his farm could be done by other farmers in other areas.



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www.wheatbeltnrm.org.au

Wheatbelt NRM
75 York Road
PO Box 311
Northam WA 6401

Phone: (08) 9670 3100
Fax: (08) 9670 3140
Email: info@wheatbeltnrm.org.au