

CASE STUDY

Aubrey and Lisa Panizza - Badgingarra

THE establishment of 560ha of subtropical perennial grasses has enabled the Panizza family to boost their sheep numbers by 1,600 head.

Aubrey and Lisa Panizza run an extensive sheep enterprise on two properties, *Yerramullah Park* and *Stone End*, about 13km west of Badgingarra.

The 2,400ha on these two properties – of which 2,000ha is arable, supports 9,000 sheep.

About 200ha is cropped annually to a mix of oats and lupins to meet the Panizza's own grain needs for their sheep.

Located just 40km from the coast, frost is seldom an issue and the country is undulating.

Annual average rainfall is 600mm, with a varying amount of summer rainfall and soils are sandy with gravel ridges.

Aubrey runs 5,200 ewes and crosses 70 percent of ewes to AMS rams and the balance to terminal sires for the prime lamb market.

Ordinarily, Merinos lambs are dropped in May and cross-bred lambs in April.

Lambing rates are currently 93 percent but Aubrey is aiming to boost this figure to 100 percent.

“The problem relates to the period between birth and marking,” Aubrey says.



Aubrey Panizza

“We started feeding lupins and oats at 1kg per head per day, 10 days before lambing and then for six weeks, but it only lifted our numbers by 3 percent.”

He is now looking to run his ewes in smaller mobs of about 400.

Lambs are destined for the Midland saleyards, while wethers go for live export.

The Panizza family have been in the district for 25 years and are dedicated to the wool industry.

They entered the prime lamb market when the price of wool slumped but Aubrey admits he is not convinced that running some prime lambs is necessarily a good option.

Aubrey and Lisa Panizza - Badgingarra

“Merino wethers seem to be an easier option and they would probably fit better with our farming system,” he adds.

Aubrey and his brother, Phillip were founding members of the Evergreen Group and have been planting subtropical perennials grasses for the past 16 years.

Over these years, they have learnt much and assumed a great deal of risk.

These perennial grasses have been established on the least productive, sandy country on the two farms and have transformed these areas.

Experience has shown that subtropical perennial grasses must be sown before the first of September. These grasses are grazed during the winter months and up until November and spelled over the summer. They are only grazed over the summer months in the event of summer rains.

“We have had three inches of rain this summer and if we did not feed the grasses off, they would go rank and be wasted,” Aubrey says.

This grazing regime has resulted in a thickening of the stands of perennial grasses, presumably with some grasses self-seeding.

In addition, Aubrey has noticed regeneration of annuals such as Cadiz serradella that had been sown previously.

The grasses are fertilized annually with 80kg/ha of Coastal Super.

More than 50 percent of the Panizza’s land area is established to perennials – given the area of perennial grasses and the 400ha of remnant vegetation on the two properties.

“Having transformed the sandy areas with the perennial grasses, this permanent groundcover has to go a long way toward long term sustainability,” Aubrey says.



Some 560 ha on Yerramullah Park and Stone End has been established to subtropical perennial grasses

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