

AN INITIATIVE OF
Making More From Sheep



Turning Pasture into Product

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Typical Mallee pastures?

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- Growth rate?
- Quality?

- Lot of dead pasture
- Plenty of weeds
- Bare ground

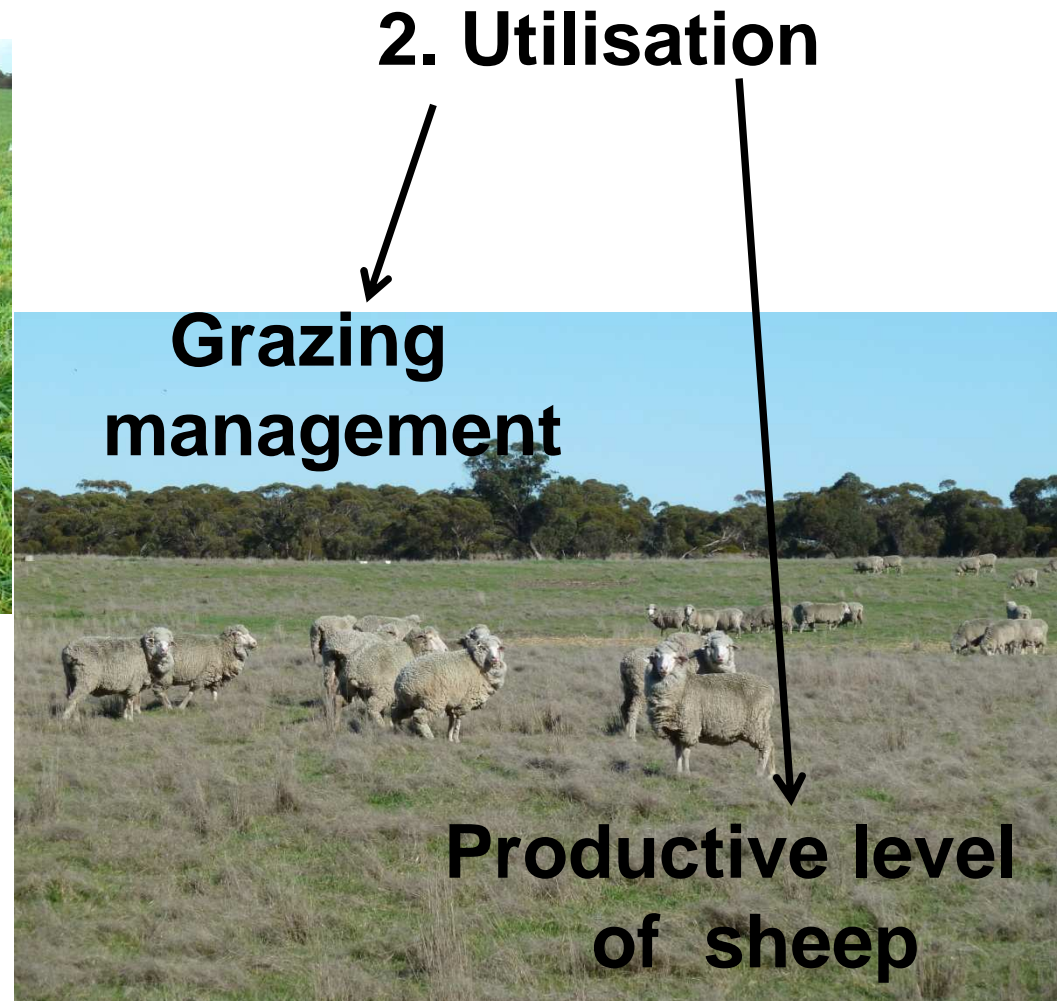
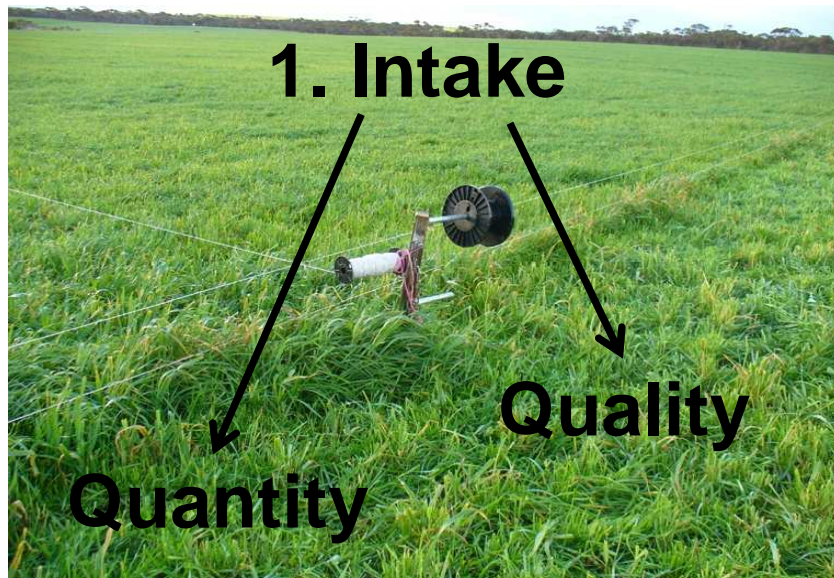


A potential Mallee pasture...



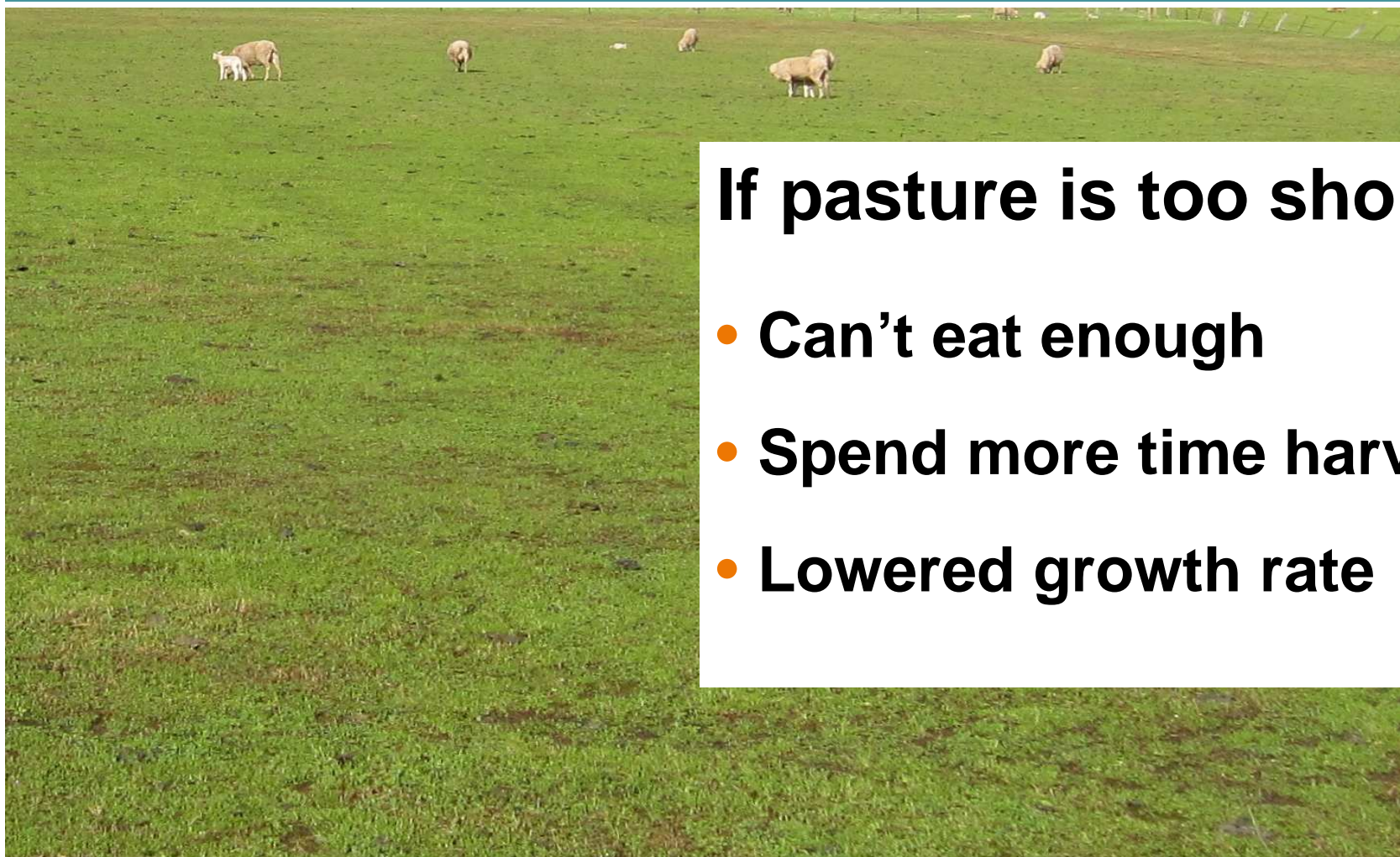
- Better growth (perhaps 3 times more)
- Better quality
- Fewer weeds
- Higher costs

Increasing feed utilisation



Quantity of Feed on Offer

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If pasture is too short:

- Can't eat enough
- Spend more time harvesting
- Lowered growth rate

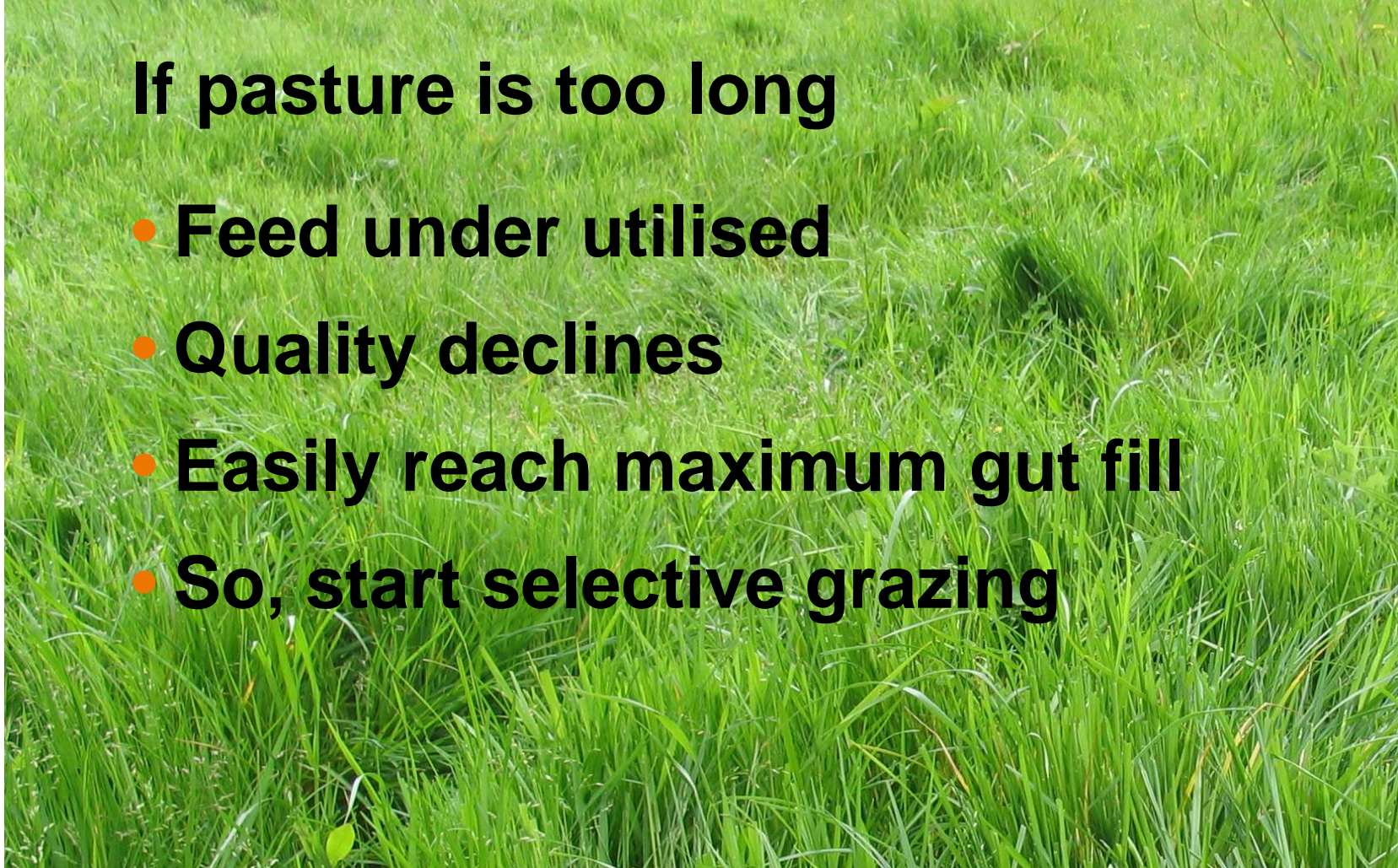
Quantity of Feed on Offer

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If pasture is too long

- **Feed under utilised**
- **Quality declines**
- **Easily reach maximum gut fill**
- **So, start selective grazing**



Grow more feed

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- **Soil fertility**
- Ground cover
- Plant density
- Plant species
- Pest & disease

Measure & Monitor

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800 kg DM



MLA Pasture Ruler
Pasture Height to Pasture Quality Indicator

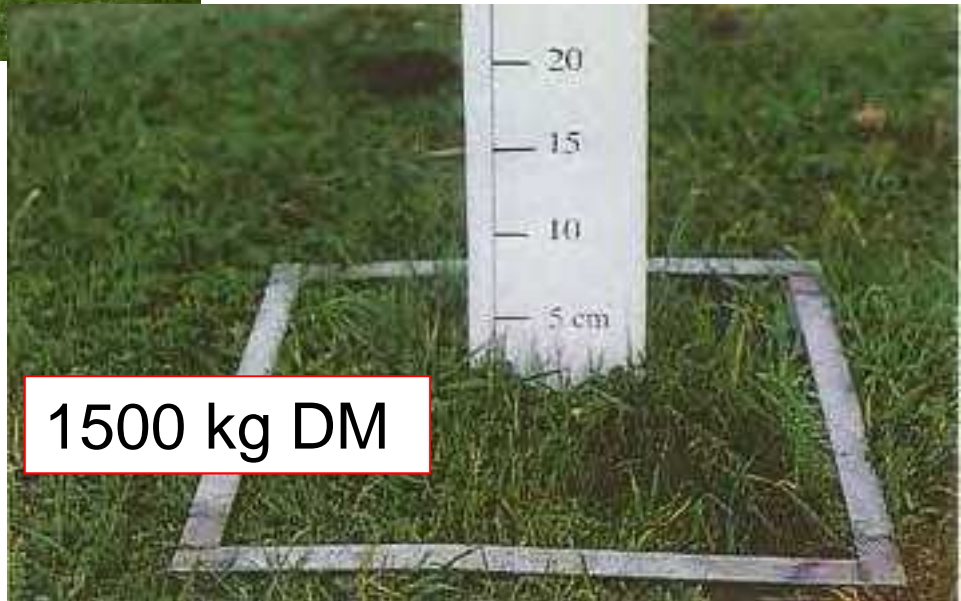
The color code of ruler and Tips & Tricks provided for interpretation assist you to use this ruler to predict animal performance and to adjust.

Pasture quantity is a consistently direct estimate of available pasture of kg green dry matter/ha.

Height (cm)	DM/ha	Quality
14	3000	Best quality - growth - stress, no soil additions to animals, quality excellent
12	2500	
10	2200	
8	1900	Preferred range of DM/ha for animal size and pasture production
7	1700	
6	1600	
5	1400	
4	1200	
3	1000	For low quality - energy - nutrients - water - stress - animal health
2	700	
1	400	

Always use this ruler in a sunny, shaded pasture and take a single cut to 40cm by hand. Check at the same height. Consistency with light pasture measurement. Environment not to be used for pasture measurement.

Downloaded by MLA Southern Past Program



1500 kg DM

Quality of Feed

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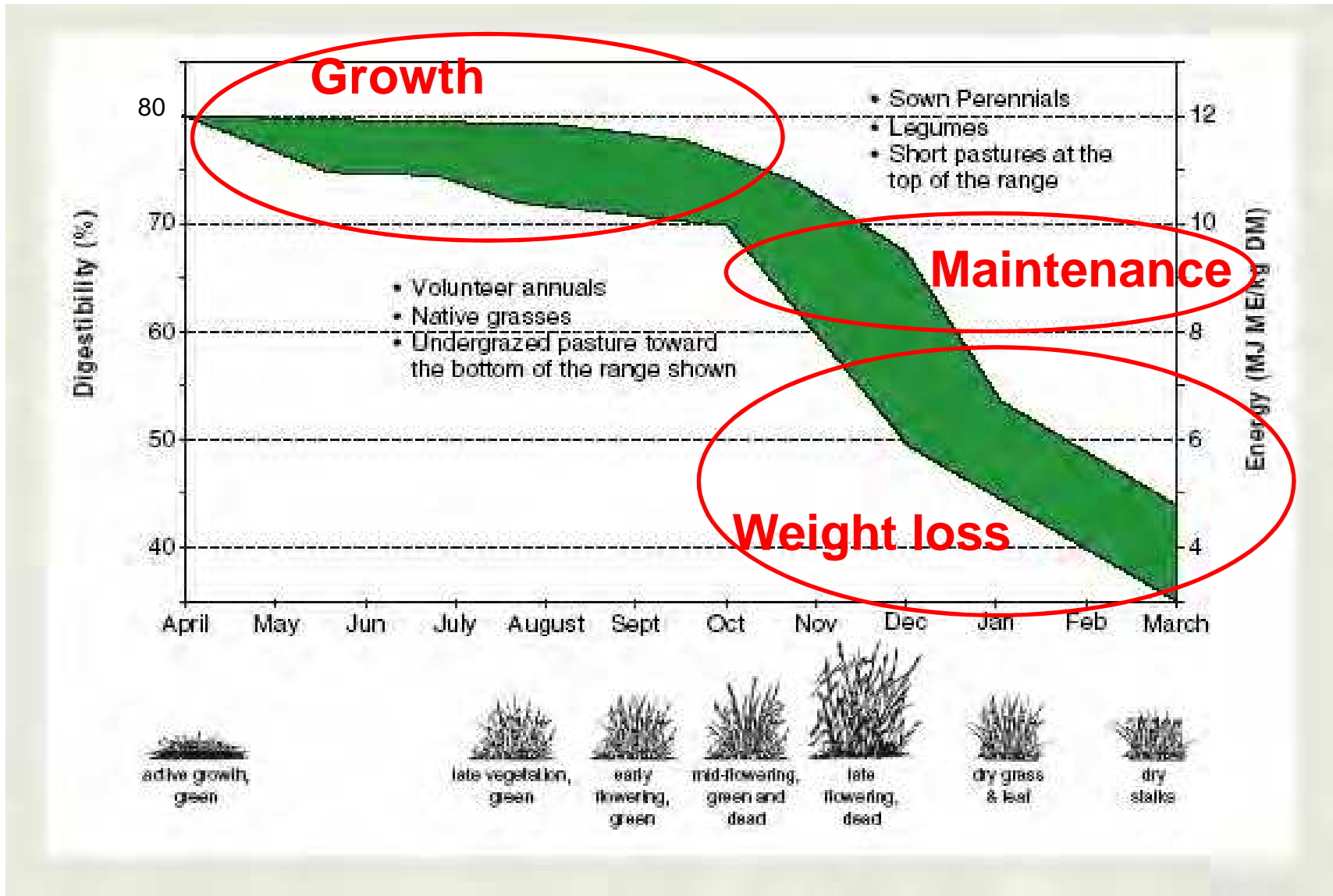
Australian Wool
Innovation Limited



- Feed quality is measured as metabolisable energy or digestibility.
- More energy/kg reduces time feed spends in the rumen.
- So, with higher quality pasture, intake can increase.
- Energy level is affected by:
 - pasture species
 - stage of growth
 - legume content.

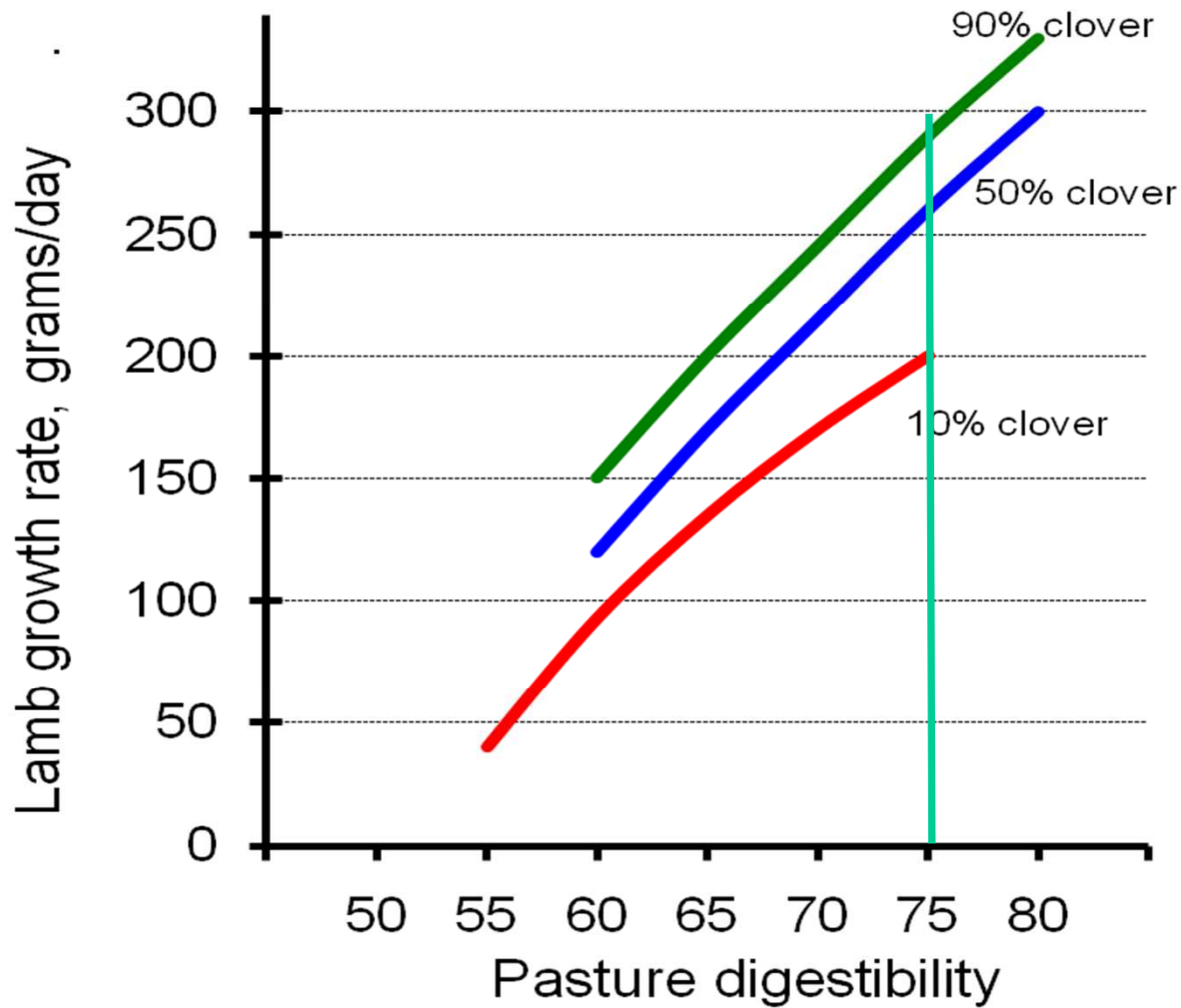
Quality falls as plants mature

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Legumes increase sheep growth

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Herbage benchmarks (kg of green dry matter/ha)

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Stock	High feed quality	Moderate feed quality	Poor feed quality
Dry ewe	400	600	1200

Herbage benchmarks (kg of green dry matter/ha)

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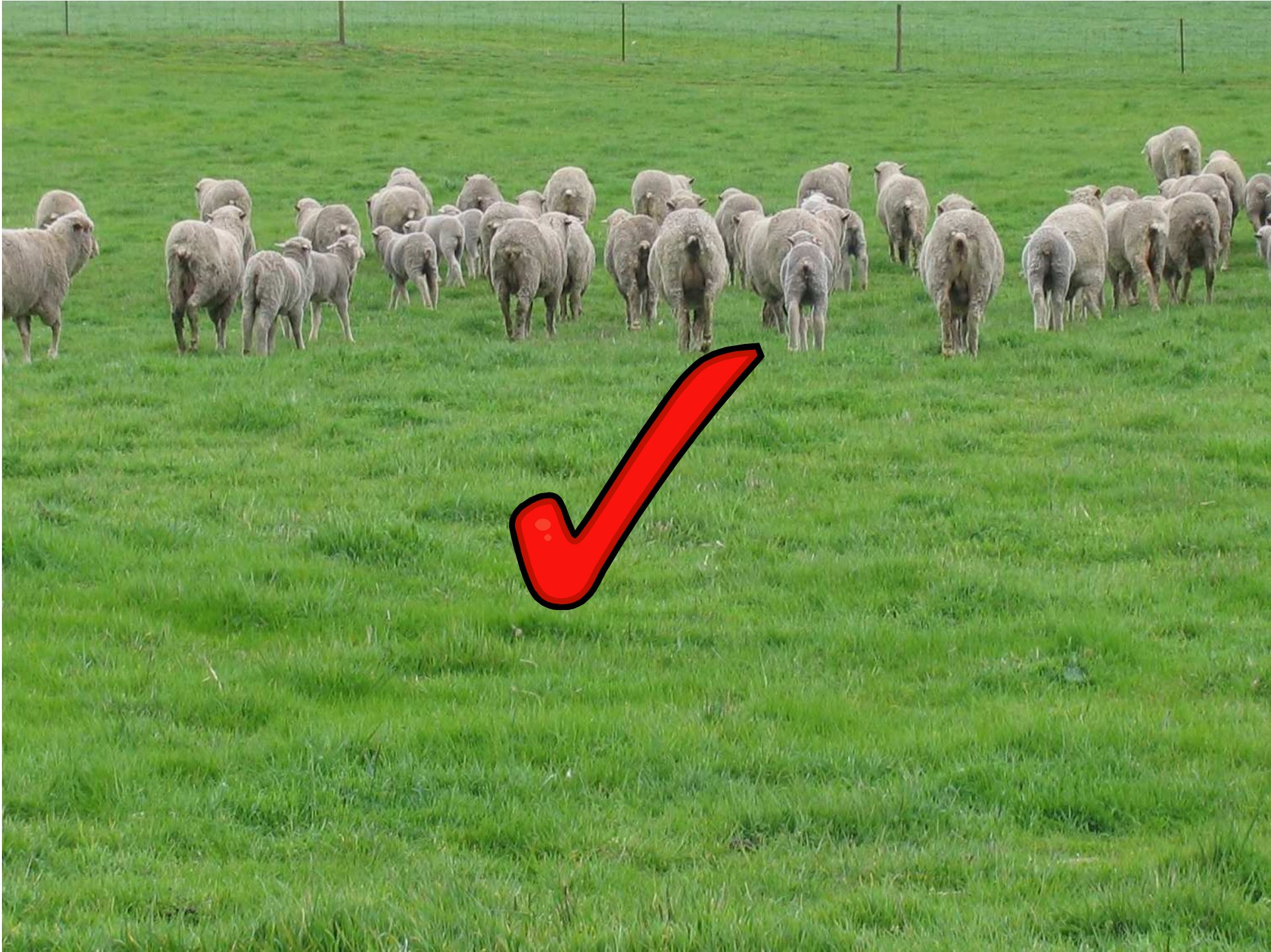
Stock	High feed quality	Moderate feed quality	Poor feed quality
Dry ewe	400	600	1200
Lactating ewes - singles	1000		
Lactating ewes - twins	1500		

Herbage benchmarks (kg of green dry matter/ha)

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Stock	High feed quality	Moderate feed quality	Poor feed quality
Dry ewe	400	600	1200
Lactating ewes - singles	1000	1700	Can't eat enough
Lactating ewes - twins	1500	2000	Can't eat enough



Grazing management

Set stocking or rotational grazing?

The evidence now quite clearly points to rotational grazing as the best option.

Basic Rotational Grazing System

- Mob grazes at least 4 paddocks.
- Move every 5-15 days.
- Pasture kept between 800 kg & 1800 kg DM/ha.
- ... but set stock from lambing to weaning.

Benefits = faster pasture growth & more even grazing

Grazing System

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- Can use bigger mobs (often free).
- Can use temporary electric fencing (lowish cost).
- **Water may become a limiting factor**



Stocking rate v stocking pressure

- Rotational grazing does **NOT** mean more sheep on the property.
- It just means more animals in a paddock at a given time.

Phases of Pasture Growth

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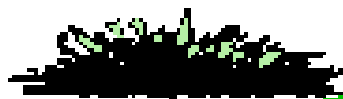
Quantity: Low
Quality: High

The “sweet spot”

Quantity: High
Quality: Low

PHASE I

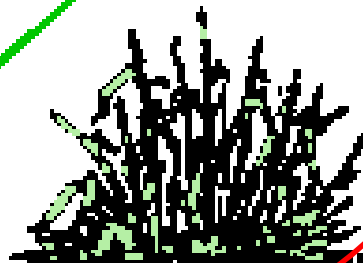
Slow growth after grazing



(800–1100kg/ha DM or 2–3cm)

PHASE II

Rapid growth due to high leaf area



(1800–2500kg/ha DM or 5.5–7.5cm)

PHASE III

Slow growth due to shading of growth points



TIME (weeks) →

Strategic grazing

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Keeping this paddock short in spring gave an extra 2 weeks of green feed.

The last link in the chain is

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Have productive sheep to utilise the feed

Priorities for change

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Priority	Cost	Example
1. Improve conversion	Low cost (perhaps \$10/ha)	Time of lambing Weaner management Genetics Flock structure
2. Existing pastures.	Moderate cost (\$50/ha)	Increase stocking rate Implement rotational grazing Increase fertiliser Fencing and water
3. Introducing more productive species	High cost & risk (\$250/ha)	Sowing new pasture varieties Renovating existing pastures

The next step – Feed Budgeting

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An example:

- Allow weaned lambs about 2 kg of dm/day
- Pastures in spring can grow at 80 kg dm/ha/day
- You can run 40 lambs/ha during spring.



Other factors to consider

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- **Risk & stress.** Increasing production increases risk & stress.
- **Luck.** Hitting a bad season in the first year of change - \$ spent but little return.
- **Skill.** Higher production systems demand better management skill – especially in tough seasons.
- **Scale.** Start with one or two paddocks and see the benefits/issues.

Sign Post

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lifetimewool
more lambs, better wool, healthy ewes



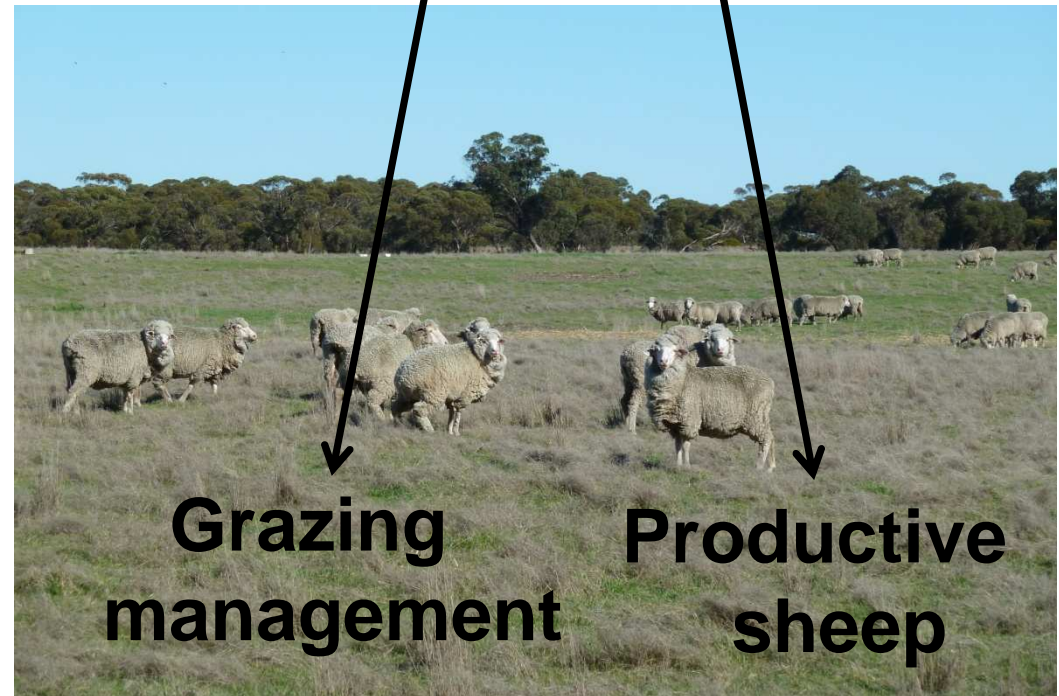
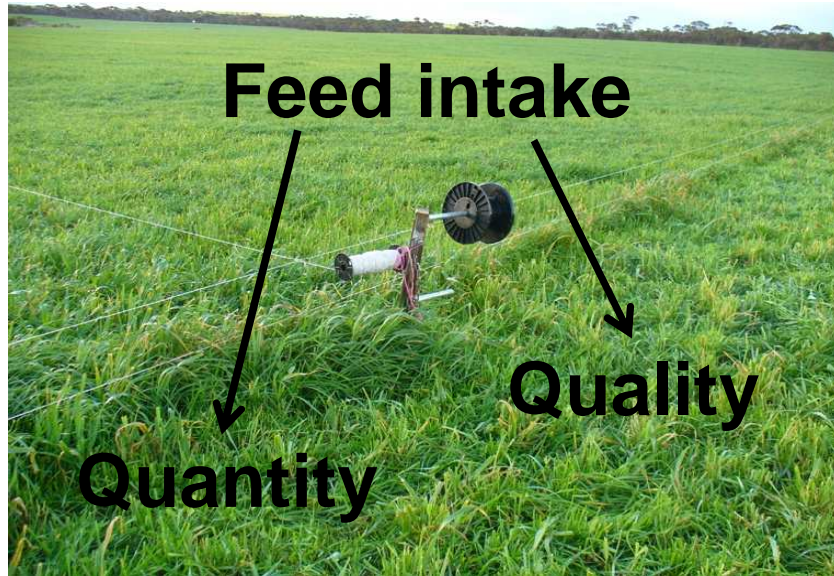
PROGRAZE
Profitable, sustainable grazing

**Making More from
Sheep manual**



Take home

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Take control