

Temperate grasses as a tool for dieback recovery?

John Imeson, Yorklea, Northern Rivers, NSW

Initial signs of pasture dieback

Before the onset of dieback, John's management approach included rotational grazing and annual fertiliser, while ensuring that standing dry matter was retained to address the winter feed gap.

John first noticed signs of dieback in 2022 within an established paddock of Rhodes and Bluegrass.

"We had a patch in the middle of [the paddock] that remained unaffected. Surrounding it, however, was completely taken. There was a distinct line along our fence line ... two and a half meters from the fence," John recalls.

Since then, John has reduced his reliance on regular fertiliser and he's decreased the quantity of bulk feed entering the winter months.

In response to the challenges of dieback in tropical grasses, a collaborative trial is exploring temperate species as potential alternatives.

Key question: Can Cocksfoot and Fescue establish and persist as a dominant perennial grass in the wet subtropics where dieback is present?



Yorklea trial site landscape, Sept 2024

Site overview

- 310ha Breeding Operation
- Black basaltic ridges - Sand clay loam flats
- 1050mm annual rainfall



Temperate grasses, June 2025

Trial details

In winter 2024, a plot trial and paddock scale demonstration was established to evaluate a range of tropical (plot trial only) and temperate grass species for their pasture re-establishment value following dieback incursion.

Observations after 12 months

In the controlled plots, the temperate species had good establishment and managed to persist. This was not reflected in the paddock-scale demonstration, with kangaroo grazing and pre-existing Bluegrass competition challenging early establishment.



Split plot trial top, adjacent to Cocksfoot and Fescue demonstrations, December 2024

Pasture dieback
resources

- Identification guide
- Case studies
- Videos



www.bit.ly/pasture-dieback