



The Hon Katrina Hodgkinson MP

Minister for Primary Industries

Minister for Small Business

MEDIA RELEASE

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NEW LEGUME TRIALS FOR NSW

Trials of new perennial legume cultivars may boost southern Australia's high rainfall permanent pastures, NSW Minister for Primary Industries, Katrina Hodgkinson said today.

It is the first time the new cultivars of *Lotus corniculatus* have been trialled in eastern Australia with sowing occurring at Yass, Goulburn, Braidwood, Holbrook and Bathurst this month.

"The aim of the project is to develop management systems for lotus grown in southern Australian environments receiving between 600 and 850 mm of average rainfall," Katrina Hodgkinson said.

"In high rainfall permanent pastures the soils are often too acidic for lucerne and the summers are so hot and dry they exclude the use of white clover – so in these circumstances, no perennial legume options are available.

"If this research is successful it will provide farmers with a perennial legume option.

"Having a legume is particularly important as their nitrogen fixation capacity drives grass production, which improves total pasture production and carrying capacity."

The trials are being conducted by NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI) in partnership with the Graham Centre (an alliance between NSW DPI and Charles Sturt University), and the Future Farm Industry Cooperative Research Centre, who have funded the research with a \$450,000 grant across three years.

Head of the project, NSW DPI Research Scientist, Graeme Sandral, said the new varieties of lotus being used in the trials have been developed specifically for southern acidic or water-logged soils and can be sown as companion species with Phalaris, Cocksfoot or Tall Fescue.

"Interestingly, research conducted in New Zealand on some of the older varieties of lotus has shown that it can reduce methane output in cattle by up to 30 per cent," he said.

"The trials will look at new establishment techniques such as monoculture row sowings compared with traditional mixed sowings across a three-year period.

"We'll sow the lotus as a pure row next to a pure row of Phalaris, for example, as opposed to the traditional practise of sowing two or more species in the same row."

Editor's note: A pasture legume is a plant that fixes its own nitrogen and provides a higher feed value to livestock than many grasses.