

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Reversing pasture rundown in southern Queensland

The benefits to production delivered by fertilising pastures will be clearly demonstrated at a field day in the Meandarra area on March 23.

Queensland Murray-Darling Committee (QMDC) Grazing Land Management Officer Sid Cook said the day, organised by Tara Landcare as part of QMDC's Maranoa LSP (Landcare Sustainable Practices) Grazing Project, would outline how producers could improve pasture production.

"Fertility rundown in grass pasture is a widespread problem in southern Queensland so QMDC has a range of trials across the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin to find ways that decline can be reversed," Dr Cook said.

"Research has shown that, with long term pastures, fertility rundown is basically related to soil nitrogen (N) becoming unavailable for grass growth as the ratio of carbon to nitrogen in the soil organic matter pool increases with the age of the pasture."

Dr Cook said while the amount would vary depending on climatic conditions and soils, it has been estimated buffel grass pastures require 60-120kg of N per hectare, per year to offset a rundown in fertility.

"There is a need to find out what quantities of nitrogen are required to maintain the production and health of buffel grass pastures in the Maranoa," he said.

"The role of phosphorus is often overlooked when fertility rundown in grass pastures is considered.

"The trial at *Tregona* aims to answer some of the questions relating to the amount of N required for sustainable production, as well as investigation whether phosphorus plays any role in the rundown of buffel grass pastures."

Dr Cook said on various trial plots on *Tregona*, N was applied to buffel grass pastures in January at rates ranging from 60kg/ha to 120kg/ha and the field day would contrast dry matter production from these sites with control sites.

"Following good rains, the average daily growth rates of pastures fertilised with N (urea) between January 15 and February 18 was 135kg of dry matter per hectare, per day. The unfertilised control site grew at only 35kg of dry matter per hectare, per day," Dr Cook said.

"On February 18, the amount of pasture ranged from 3,500kg/ha on the unfertilised areas to an average 6,800kg/ha on the areas fertilised with N, which has some obvious implications for livestock production rates."

Speakers on the day include Mac Plant, *Tregona*, Meandarra, DEEDI Agri-Science Queensland Principal Experimentalist Brian Johnson and Dr Cook.

Contact Tara Landcare Coordinator Carissa Hallinan on 0407 039 659 to RSVP for catering purposes or visit [www.qmdc.org.au](http://www.qmdc.org.au) to find a mud map in the events section.

The Queensland Murray-Darling Committee is a natural resource management organisation that supports communities within the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin to sustainably manage their natural resources.

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