Media Release
Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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Dairy industry shows interest in new forage research

New research at the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA) is looking at how the inclusion of plantain in traditional ryegrass pastures can boost production and profitability for Tasmanian dairy farmers.

TIA Dairy Research Fellow Pieter Raedts and PhD candidate Adam Langworthy are leading the research and will be working closely with dairy farmers in the State’s North West and North East, with on-farm trials set to commence in October.

“TIA has previously undertaken research that found the inclusion of plantain, a forage herb, in ryegrass paddocks can boost cow pasture consumption rates and increase milk solid production. We are continuing this by looking at how farmers can effectively incorporate plantain into their current grazing practices,” Mr Langworthy said.

Four Tasmanian dairy farming businesses are participating in the on-farm trials and approximately 4.5 hectares has been set aside at each site to conduct the experiment. A trial site will also be established at TIA’s Dairy Research Facility at Elliott.

Mr Langworthy said dairy farmers had expressed strong interest and were eager to be involved in the research.

“We have selected trial paddocks and in a few months will begin sowing different rates of plantain seeds into existing ryegrass paddocks, comparing direct-drilling seed with broadcast using a fertiliser spreader. The aim is to identify the optimal method and coverage per hectare,” Mr Langworthy said.

“We will be monitoring the trials throughout summer and will compare the efficiency of the sowing methods, the impact on plant establishment and how much it contributes to overall dry matter. The aim is to identify the most effective way that plantain can be incorporated into existing ryegrass pasture to optimise home-grown feedbase.

“We know that plantain is nutritious, but it is also extremely palatable. For the cows, it’s like having lollies sprinkled through the paddock, and helps to increase their consumption as they eat more pasture while searching for the plantain.”

Mr Langworthy said plantain required similar management practices to ryegrass, which would make it easy to incorporate into existing operations.
The research is part of the Dairy on PAR project funded by Dairy Australia with in-kind support from TIA. The participating farmers are part of the Dairy on PAR feedbase network, run by the TIA Dairy Team.

TIA is a joint venture between the Tasmanian Government and the University of Tasmania.

Information released by:

The Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture
Phone: 03 6430 1655 or 0438 387 436
Email: tia.comms@utas.edu.au