

Book Review

Sown Pastures for the Seasonally Dry Tropics

Eds Ian J. Partridge and C.P. (Joe) Miller. Queensland Department of Primary Industries, Brisbane. 81 pp. A\$19 including postage or \$15 from QDPI country offices or QDPI bookshop in Brisbane.

This 81 page publication is attractively presented in a larger-than-life average print size, with sub-headings which break up the text for easy reading.

It contains the information presented at a workshop held in 1989. This workshop, convened by Dr. Barry Walker for the Meat Research Corporation, was designed to bring together the experience of researchers and graziers on the use of pasture improvement technology in five rainfall zones in northern Australia.

The publication divides into two sections — chapters 1–5, written by research and extension staff of the Queensland Department of Primary Industries, Northern Territory Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries, and CSIRO, and a longer chapter 6 which is subdivided to specifically address each of the five zones (range of mean annual rainfall from 600–1200 mm).

The first five chapters deal briefly, and therefore very broadly, with: the climate, soils and native pastures of the zones; the systems of beef production in each of the zones; the place for sown pastures and their productivity in relation to native pastures; the profitability of improved pastures — where it is concluded that it is rarely economic to borrow funds for pasture development; and the development and management of pastures.

Chapter 6 gives an overview for each of the five zones including current recommendations for pasture development and the experiences of eight commercial properties across the various zones.

I found these commercial experiences most enlightening. The producers who contributed material — Bob Wincen, Gordon Arnold, Ted Hart, Rodney Barrett, Ian Rebgetz, Bruce Chapman, Geof Bethel and Roy McLean — are to be warmly congratulated.

The length of the publication demanded that topics had to be handled in a general fashion but I felt that most aspects were adequately covered. On pages 26 and 31 reference is made to seed treatment, but no details are given to enable the grazier to do so to increase germination.

There is some overlap between chapters but this is not serious. A few references to the availability of more detailed information — eg *Native Pastures in Queensland* — QDPI Information Series Q18703 — may have helped readers to find further information if they wished.

Overall, this is a very worthwhile addition to our information on pastures and pasture development in the north which is concise, authoritative and easy to read.

The Preface to the handbook does not specify a target readership, but it is clear that primarily it is a handbook for graziers who may be interested in options for increasing the productivity of their properties. I am sure, however it will have a wider readership to include agricultural teachers and students, extension officers, stock and station agents, consultants, seed merchants and also bank managers! Researchers may also find it a useful source of background information and of the perceptions of graziers regarding the value of improved technology to their property development. At a cost of \$19 posted, it represents good value for money.

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