

## Book review

### Stylos for Better Beef

By IAN PARTRIDGE, COL MIDDLETON and KEV SHAW. Published by Queensland Department of Primary Industries, 1996. 32pp. ISBN 0-7242-5977-5.

'Almost all you have ever wanted to know about stylos.' This is one way of describing this booklet, which has been produced as part of the QDPI Information Series with funding from the Meat Research Corporation and the Tropical Grassland Society of Australia Inc.

The authors, who are involved in pasture research and extension with QDPI, have done an excellent job of collating information on stylos, which have become important in pasture improvement programs throughout northern Australia.

This information is presented in an easily readable, question-and-answer format. Most questions which would be asked by people interested in pasture improvement are addressed, such as:

- why plant stylos?
- which stylo to plant?
- where did stylos come from?
- what about anthracnose?
- how are stylos established?
- how should stylos be managed?
- when should phosphorus be provided? and
- what about seed production?

In addition to providing technical information, the authors present case studies of three graziers from Queensland, who have successfully introduced stylos into their native pastures. These producers list increased branding rates, better growth rates for an extended period, reduced age of turnoff and increased stocking rates as some of the benefits which followed the introduction of stylos. With markets demanding high quality carcasses from younger animals, oversowing with stylos provided these graziers with an important component of the management strategy needed to achieve this end.

This booklet is both informative and most attractive, with numerous coloured photographs

to illustrate the points being made. This includes maps showing broadly the areas of Queensland to which the various stylos are suited. This may seem a little parochial to some readers. Involvement of authors from the Northern Territory and Western Australia could have seen these maps extended to cover the whole of northern Australia.

The authors do not venture into the area of economics of planting stylos and the likely pay-back periods with different establishment strategies, different levels of fertiliser application etc. The value of the booklet to the reader would have been enhanced if general indications of these aspects had been given from producer experiences.

The only real concern I have with the booklet is the general impression that is given that sowing of stylos will permit a *doubling of sustainable stocking rate*. This would not be a universal outcome. In their review of northern Australia's pasture lands, John Tothill and Col Gillies indicated that there is *widespread deterioration in most pasture communities in Queensland*. The black speargrass community is particularly at risk of overgrazing, a pasture community which is ideally suited to the introduction of stylos. Graziers would be well advised initially to concentrate on the promised 40–50kg extra liveweight gain per head per year. Any increases in stocking rates should be governed by the current state of their native pastures and existing stocking rates.

*Stylos for Better Beef* is a must for any persons interested in beef production and pasture improvement in northern Australia. It will provide very interesting reading for graziers, agricultural consultants, agribusiness people, students, stock and station agents and extension officers.

Lyle Winks

Editor

Tropical Grasslands