



# Media Release

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## Flinders Farmers and Experts Examine Ways to Increase Production

Farmers on Flinders Island came together last week to learn more about ways to increase pasture production.

Around 20 farmers toured three properties with different soil types on Friday along with experts from the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA), Heritage Seeds and NRM North.

The event was organised by NRM North through the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

NRM North Regional Landcare Facilitator, Peter Heading, said the field tour was successful in bringing specialists and farmers together out in the paddock.

"The three main soil types on Flinders Island have different management issues and constraints in terms of pasture composition," Mr Heading said.

"Pasture establishment, grazing management and long-term resilience were discussed at the three farms."

At the first paddock visit, the dominant soils were light coastal sands on undulating country dominated by kikuyu grass.

"These coastal sands pastures can be very productive in the wetter late spring/summer conditions but can also tail off first in drier weather," Mr Heading said.

The landholder Dave Bellinger has been undergoing major pasture renovations on this country with some mixed results in certain paddocks with seed germination.

Mr Bellinger thought the sprayed-out kikuyu residue may have had an effect on inhibiting pasture seed germination when worked.

Heritage Seeds Area Manager, Rob Winter, suggested that as an alternative, to counter act this effect was to spray out the pasture in autumn, followed up with an early spring sowing.

"This would allow for any allelopathic effect being leached out by winter rains," Mr Winter said.

The second tour was a farm owned by John Cooper in the Lackrana region with soils dominated by peat/sand loam on what originally was low lying swamplands dominated by paperbarks.

These soils are relatively fertile but can be constrained by drainage and pugging issues.

TIA Soil Scientist, Dr Bill Cotching, said through improved surface and subsurface drainage, the carrying capacity could be improved significantly on the farm.

“The landholder would recoup their cost in any major drainage works within two years with the increased carrying capacity.”

The third farm visited was in the heart of what the islanders call the ‘Bootjack’ country. Alan Holloway has low lying country and the soils are very clay dominated and can be difficult to manage.

The soils experience extremes in condition from waterlogging in winter to hard, cracking ground in summer.

“Any rejuvenation of pastures would have to be undertaken with care and good planning with timing of works being critical,” Dr Cotching said.

NRM North received positive feedback from farmers who attended the field day, with some already indicating they would make changes to practices on their farm as a result.

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For more information contact:

Melissa Lewarn, Manager – Engagement & Communications, NRM North, 6333 7776 or 0427 354 058