

# Merino Matters



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## Grazing Crops in 2012

A GOOD start to the season in 2012 may be reducing your need for early feed for your sheep.

However crops will still have the jump over most establishing pastures in terms of feed availability.

Pastures that are deferred now will also perform better through the cold winter months.

Grazing crops is not just about sheep and pastures.

The comparatively early start (earlier than last year) may mean that some crops are sown before their optimum date.

Grazing biomass from a crop can retard maturity and flowering time so for early sown crops, grazing is a tool to help diversify the frost risk in your program.

Good starts and continued wet conditions are great for generating thick and wet canopies which are ideal for fungal disease issues especially in barley.

Grazing can help lighten the canopy reducing its suitability for fungal attack and can also be used to eat affected leaves from the crop, effectively removing the diseased material and reducing the wet conditions in the canopy.

Some simple grazing crop tips are:

- Graze existing crop varieties that are suited to your area.
- Use pinch and twist test to commence grazing cereals (canola 6-8 leaf).

When sheep can't easily pull plants out of the ground, they are safe to graze.

- Apply nitrogen fertilisers post grazing and be aware of chemical withholding periods.
- Ensure sheep are up to date with vaccinations and try to fill their gut prior to introducing them to lush crops.
- In wheat provide ad-lib equal parts of salt, crushed limestone and causmag.

In canola provide a fibre source such as straw or hay.

- Do not graze past the white line (at the base of the green leaf material) or after elongation commences (GS 30 in cereals).
- Be aware that grazing weedy crops may increase weed competition and increase weed seed set issues and reducing yields.

**For more information contact your local DAFWA office, consult with your agronomist or visit [westernaustralia.grainandgraze2.com.au](http://westernaustralia.grainandgraze2.com.au).**

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