**Demonstration goal:** To increase the per hectare production of beef by filling the late autumn/early winter feed deficit using 1) high yielding, high quality fodder beet crops or 2) early sown grazing cereals.

**Site location:** Murmungee and Corryong (North East Victoria)

**Producer group:** Mudgegonga and Corryong BetterBeef Network (BBN) Groups

**Group coordinator**: Chris Mirams

**Agriculture Victoria coordinator:** Nick Linden

**Duration:** 2018–2021

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### Production from grrazing cereals will be compared with fodder beet

**What are we aiming to achieve and why?**

While fodder beet has the potential for large yields of high-quality forage, it’s an expensive crop to establish and maintain through to harvest due to the high costs of both the seed and herbicide/pesticide requirements. Achieving a favourable economic outcome relies on high yields. In contrast, while the overall production of grazing cereals is less than that of fodder beet, the establishment costs are considerably lower (less than 50% that of fodder beet). Finding the breakeven levels of production for either system is an important factor for producers when deciding which option is the most suitable for them to use to fill the late autumn/early winter feed gap, while still maintaining acceptable levels of animal production.

The project aims to:

* benchmark existing forage-based methods to fill an identified late autumn/early winter feed gap – including the use of early-sown grazing cereals
* equip producer group members with the skills required to establish and manage a fodder beet crop
* benchmark the production in kilograms of beef per hectare from fodder beets; key data points of fodder production (quality and quantity) will be assessed, in addition to measured changes in animal live weight and pasture growth
* promote demonstration findings to a wider audience through field days and engaging with local consultants, agronomists and agricultural retailers.

**Method**

This demonstration runs for two years. The first year involves benchmarking two existing strategies to fill a late autumn/early winter feed gap:

* summer-sown forages under irrigation
* early autumn-sown grazing cereals.

In the second year, three small-scale plantings (up to 2ha/site) of fodder beet crops will be sown to investigate:

* two varieties of fodder beet
* dryland versus irrigated fodder beet production
* fodder beet versus grazing cereals.

Monitoring will include crop establishment rates, herbage mass and nutritive characteristics of the crop and animal performance while grazing the crops. Where applicable, the subsequent reproductive performance of heifers will be monitored to compare heifers that have grazed the crop with heifers grazed on ‘normal/control’ pastures.

**Partners:** This demonstration is conducted with Agriculture Victoria and co-funded by Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA).

**Contact**

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**More information**

[agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/on-farm-demonstrations](http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/on-farm-demonstrations)

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