

7. PTN Trial Site Field Days and Stakeholder Engagement

7.1 Purpose

The Pasture Trials Network (PTN) manages a series of variety evaluation trials throughout temperate Australia to promote productivity improvements with developed cultivars for key grazing production areas.

Effectively communicating the purpose, function, and value of the PTN trials to the industry is crucial for raising awareness, engaging stakeholders, and improving pasture agronomy. Participants should use these trials as objective, seasonal pasture-production data to support informed forage seed purchases.

7.2 Strategy

Field days should primarily be held at key regional sites that meet the conditions outlined below:

- *PTN trial sites can be accessed by inviting stakeholders and individuals via notification to the PTN Executive Officer.*
- *Site engagement is to support trial improvements and feedback, species benefit and fit into local production systems.*
- *Target audiences at events include, but are not limited to:*
 - *An advisor who wholesales information to clients.*
 - *Agribusiness – awareness of PTN and benefits.*
 - *Producers in temperate Australia.*
 - *Seed resellers – those who commercially sell seed to producers independent of seed companies.*
- *Capture attendee information to support reporting and engagement statistics.*

7.3 Event site selection

Criteria for trials that can be selected for active field day input are to align with:

- *Ideally, trials conducted by independent trial co-operators*
 - *Provides no perceived industry bias.*
- *The site is to be presented in a tidy manner, with low to no background weeds in plots and surrounding buffers.*
 - *Suppose pest pressure is observed and represents sound agronomic results, and the impact of pest pressure demonstrates the value of species selection and endophytes. In that case, this is a discussion point at the field day.*
- *Ease of access and safety for attendees to park and traverse the site, and the site adheres to biosecurity protocols.*
- *Hosting at perennial trials (3-year trials) should occur only in the final year or in the post-trial period (preferably).*
- *Trials were to be audited approximately 6 months before the field day. See Trial Auditing.*

- *Safety concerns are to be considered and assessed in terms of the risk to event attendees.*

7.4 Site engagement

Site visitors are to:

- *Communicate with the PTN Executive Officer in fair advance (>14 days) of a field day or sufficient notice for a site visit by investing stakeholders.*
- *Trial cooperators are to be informed of pending site visits, with contact details available from the PTN Executive Officer.*
 - *PTN can assist with trial cooperator engagement.*
- *The trial cooperator or PTN is to ensure a sowing map is available.*
- *Trial cooperators **MUST** consider and inform visitors of safety issues, for example, holes, trip hazards, recent sprays and their withholding period/safe re-entry, and stock.*
- *Trial cooperators **MUST** liaise with the landholder regarding biosecurity issues and the management of field days, including footbaths and parking.*

7.5 Field day timing

Events are recommended to be held in the spring, ideally between September and November, for all species. However, the timing can be adjusted to coincide with local key grazing constraints, for example, to address the autumn feed gap.

It is recognised that some species may be at different stages of plant development. The site is to be harvested two (2) to three (3) weeks before the field day, and a nutrient application is to occur between the harvest and the field day.

7.6 Unblinding of plots

Criteria of lines to be unblinded include:

- *Only commercial lines are to be unblinded.*
- *All replicates of a line are to be unblinded.*
- *Breeder's lines are to be communicated as "breeder lines" with no inference supplied on the breeding organisation.*
 - *The presence of an endophyte can be confirmed, but no details on which endophyte.*

Unblinded plot signage for COMMERCIAL LINES is to comprise the following, where relevant:

- *Company name.*
- *Cultivar name.*
- *Ploidy (diploid or tetraploid).*
- *Endophyte*
- *Sub-species (Continental, intermediate or Mediterranean, etc.).*
- *Lucerne dormancy.*

Unblinded plot signage for BREEDER LINES is to comprise:

- *A label stating Breeder Line.*
- *Ploidy (diploid or tetraploid), where relevant.*

Plot signage must align with the Data Transparency Policy.

7.7 Field day communication plan

General field day discussion points are to be led by the trial cooperator with support from the PTN, which potentially include the following discussion points:

- Background to the PTN and its formation, including the transition from PVTN to PTN and objectives.
- Recognition of funding stakeholders.
- The PTN tool and seasonal data can support purchasing decisions.
- The general operation of the trials and quality expectations.
- Agronomy of pasture systems:
 - Value of improved cultivars with no focus on cultivar specifics.
 - Value of alternative species if trials are present, for example, the role of cocksfoot, fescues, etc., within the local grazing systems.
 - Local pests or issues have arisen during the trial.

In addition to the PTN program, raise potential awareness of:

- Variation in flowering timing and the impact of grazing quality in all species.
- What is the value of endophytes in assisting pasture persistence and variation in animal impact?
- Consultants can discuss and interpret the data and trial value in the local context of productivity performance.

All delivery materials must:

- Reference the [MLA eTools platform](#) and [Dairy Australia FVI](#) programs, and **must** be included on handouts or, at a minimum, made available to producers.
- Unblinded cultivars are to be identified by markers within the ground in at least one replicate.

7.8 Event statistics.

- Event statistics are vital to support funding from key stakeholders.
- At a minimum, the number of attendees to be recorded and which aspect of the industry they best align with.
- PTN can supply an event survey, or accessible via the [PTN Website](#).

7.9 Data presentation

Data communication focuses on unbiased, independently scrutinised cultivar performance, limiting the use of active-trial data.

- No raw or unanalysed data is to be communicated from active trials.
- In the absence of data:
 - Published trials from the region will be made available to promote the MLA PTN eTool.

- *An overall trial mean may be communicated for active trials, i.e., average yield per harvest event, total season, or annual production. No individual cultivar values are to be communicated.*

7.10 Evaluation and review

- *The policy is to be reviewed periodically in partnership with the PTN Board, TWG and CWG and approved by the PTN Board.*