

Restoring farm productivity after the dry

Summary Decisions made now will affect the coming years. The first step is a farm pasture plan to get production back on track as soon as possible after it rains. Assess all paddocks and rank pastures on their condition - nurse the best pastures through the coming weeks, and undersow or renew damaged pastures.

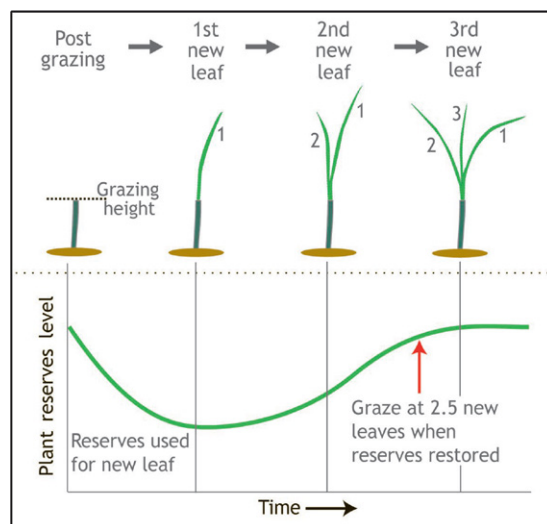
Aim Pasture fuels recovery. Once it rains, you need as much pasture growing as quick as possible. Grass will be your main feed for the next 12 months, so it's important to prepare now.

Farm assessment Walk the farm and put each paddock in one of 3 categories: *Category 1* pastures are likely to survive. *Category 2* you're not sure; *Category 3* pastures are unlikely to recover.

Category 1 *Category 1* pastures are the most important. They will re-grow the fastest after rain, and power up your farm again, so you must look after them.

These paddocks have a good population of live ryegrass plants. If in doubt pull some plants up and check if they are dead (dry and brown throughout) or alive (have green tillers inside). As these paddocks will power the farm back up look after them by:

- On/off graze - don't bare them out. Some length (5 cm) is essential for plant survival.
- Don't graze too soon after rain. Wait until ryegrass tillers have 2.5-3 leaves (see diagram).



Category 2 Watch and wait. They could end up as either *Category 1* or *Category 3*, but only time and rain will tell.

Category 3 These paddocks may be ex crop; or have opened up; or have <50% ryegrass cover; or are mainly clover; or contain a lot of weeds. These need acted on, otherwise you won't get the productivity you need in the 2025/26 season.

For *Category 3* paddocks there are several options. Undersowing is often a great cost-effective tool (see separate sheet); cultivating for a winter forage crop; cultivating for new pasture; and spray-drilling new pasture are often combined in a farm renewal plan.

Category 3 paddocks can be sacrificed for standing stock off, or feeding out, to protect *Category 1* paddocks. A few days feeding out on them can help prepare them for undersowing.

The important thing is to make sure there is a plan for all *Category 3* paddocks, regardless of whether it is short, medium or long term.

Your Barenbrug area manager can help with more advice on renewal planning and pasture management post drought.