



SEASONAL UPDATE WEBINAR - RECAP

December 2025

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Key messages & actions

- **Effective rainfall isn't just what's in the gauge.** Large events often lead to runoff and ponding, reducing plant-available water. Walk paddocks during rain and check drains to understand what's really infiltrating.
- **Ground prep in wet conditions has lasting impacts.** Cloddiness, compaction and crusting reduce infiltration and water use efficiency. If you've had to work soil hard, monitor infiltration closely and adjust irrigation strategy (little and often, double passes).
- **Pasture assessment matters.** Dry seasons leave legacy effects—bare patches, weeds, poor infiltration. Compare paddocks and speak to your agronomist about remedial options.
- **Know your crop factor.** Evapotranspiration (ET_o) is a guide, but crop coefficients vary by stage. Potatoes at canopy closure can exceed 1.1; peas mature at 1.15. Overestimating or underestimating water needs can cost yield.
- **Check your irrigation system now.** Pivot uniformity tests and nozzle checks are essential before peak season. What's on the screen may not match what's hitting the soil.
- **Don't fall behind on irrigation.** Conditions may not be ideal, but waiting for the "perfect" day often means missing critical windows. Back-to-back irrigations and irrigating during rain can improve infiltration and help you catch up.

Current Conditions & Regional Strategies

- **North West** – Similar soil moisture to last year, but rain has been better spaced, giving a 4–6 week buffer for pasture growth. Light sandy soils risk hydrophobicity so don't delay irrigation or you'll play catch-up. Watch hump and hollow paddocks: irrigate to the dry humps, not the wet hollows.
- **North East & Fingal Valley** – Soil moisture slightly behind last year, but timing of rain has been better. Lighter soils will dry quickly so start irrigating pastures early to avoid premature reproductive growth.
- **East Coast** – Behind last year for soil moisture, despite better spring growth. Summer finish will be rapid-monitor pastures for browning and irrigate proactively.
- **Northern Midlands** – About 6-week buffer compared to last year, but wet patches can mislead. Crops sown in autumn/winter are drawing moisture fast so don't skip irrigation based on forecasts. Ignore rain under 12mm.
- **Southern Midlands, Coal & Derwent Valley** – Tracking similar to last year, but no subsoil reserves. Irrigate to ETo plus a margin so there's something to fall back on. Fodder conservation is exhausted.
- **Flinders & King Islands** – Heavy soils holding recent rain well; light soils will dry quickly. August growth gave a good feed wedge, but watch for early reproductive shift reducing subsoil utilisation.

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Things to think / chat with your advisor about

- **Irrigation timing** – If water is limited, prioritise key growth stages and rank paddocks now. If water is adequate, wet the profile early for better infiltration later.
- **Soil structure** – Poor infiltration from clods or crusting? Use double irrigations or irrigate during rain to improve infiltration.
- **Monitoring** – Moisture probes are invaluable, but ground-truth with soil pits-especially diagonally under the plant in potato mounds.
- **Pasture health** – Legacy effects from previous dry seasons can reduce persistence and increase wet/dry patch variability.



Long-term effects on pasture of dry season include pasture performance, weed abundance and an increase in wet patches due to runoff from bare soil.



Typical Midlands duplex soil with sandy loam. The photo shows capping /crusting of the mound. Dries out quickly in the windy and dry weather results in preferential flow into the furrow.



Washout from an irrigator when what you are putting on, isn't going in due to run off.

3 Tools & next steps

- **Ag Logic Weather Station & Soil Probe Network**: Subscribe for real-time weather, soil moisture and ETo data. This supports more confident irrigation and fodder decisions, especially when conditions are changing rapidly. If you have requests for how you would like to see data displayed contact Ag Logic. Feedback helps improve how information is shared across the network.
- **Farming Forecaster**: Farming Forecaster gives pasture growth forecasts that can be linked to on farm measurements and soil moisture data. This helps match stocking rate, fodder conservation and irrigation plans to likely feed supply.
- **BOM resources for understanding weather and climate**: Learn about key factors that can affect Australia's weather and climate, such as blocking highs, east coast lows and cut-off lows as well as ENSO, IOD, SAM.
- **Ag Logic Online Resources**: Short videos and guides from Ag Logic explain how to interpret soil moisture graphs, reference evapotranspiration (ETo) and crop evapotranspiration (ETc). These resources support decisions on when to start, pause and resume irrigation.
- **Optimising irrigation resources**: Case studies, factsheets and associated short explainer videos can all be found on the TAS Farm Innovation Hub website and YouTube.
- **Irrigation maintenance tools**: Basic centre-pivot system performance check, pressure check how-to guide, and pre-season maintenance checklist.

Next month's webinar: Friday 9 January, 1pm.
Register online: tasfarmhub.com.au/events