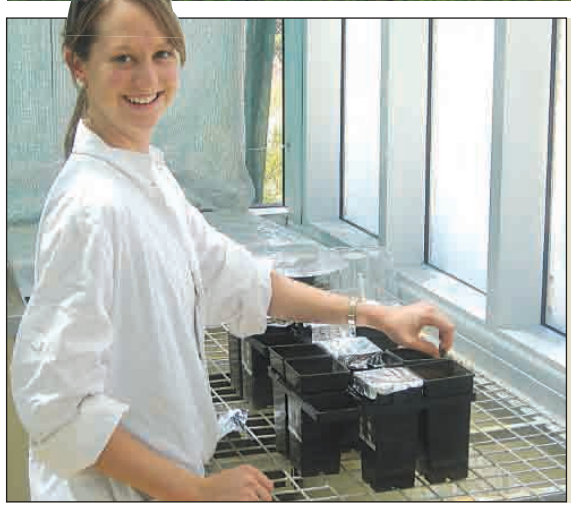
# Seeds and pastures



**AGRICULTURE honours student Holly Swarbrick prepares a topdressing trial being conducted at the Centre for Rhizobium Studies, Murdoch University. The controlled environment studies are preliminaries to field evaluations in the 2007 growing season, which will be part of Holly's honours project. She is also conducting survey to table grower experience in topdressing ALOSCA inoculants. Holly would like to hear from farmers who top-dressed ALOSCA last season. Email her at swarbh01@student.uwa.edu.au**

## Versatile inoculant for legumes

MANY common pasture establishment problems faced by growers can be addressed with ALOSCA Technologies innovative legume inoculant range.

ALOSCA technical manager Chris Poole said Rhizobia delivery products reliant on cool and moist seeding conditions to maintain viability were often left prone to failure under the constraints of evolving farming systems.

"These changes present circumstances where a compromise in the seeding program is required to ensure the peat-based system works properly," Mr Poole said.

Good work has been done by WA research agencies and companies to produce new and innovative pasture and nitrogen fixing bacteria technologies, but often without addressing the need to deliver inoculants in less than perfect seeding conditions that often prevail.

"Many of the new generation small seeded pastures species have a shallow seeding requirement, which makes ALOSCA inoculants very compatible as soil surfaces commonly dry out following seeding," Mr Poole said.

"One of the key advantages of the ALOSCA dry granule inoculant range is its provision for growers to sow under marginal or dry sowing conditions without loss of inoculant viability.

"This allow emerging pastures to take advantage early season rain and the warmers conditions that typically prevail during late autumn early winter.

"The properties of the clay-based granule also buffers against the harmful effects of pesticide seed dressings need to combat early insect infestation.

"Top dressing ALOSCA onto existing pasture seed banks to rejuvenate the nitrogen fixing efficiency of the paddock is another initiative we are looking at closely."

**❒ More information: ALOSCA, phone Chris Poole on 0429 815 638.**

❒ CSBP pastures market development manager Kirk Reynolds (right) and Bevan Bignell at Rylington Park community research farm near Boyup Brook.

## Match topdressing to stocking rates

WA livestock producers planning similar or increased stocking rates to previous years have been urged to maintain their fertiliser applications accordingly this season.

Newly appointed CSBP pastures market development manager Kirk Reynolds said it was understandable that 2007 inputs were being put under the microscope after the difficult conditions last year.

But Mr Reynolds cautioned that fertiliser treatments should not be altered if producers intended running similar stocking rates.

He said the direct correlation between stocking rate and profitability had been proven, and so lower stocking rates this season would also result in lower profits.

"Growers considering reducing pasture topdressing should also factor in the impact to their farming enterprise in the longer term," Mr Reynolds said.

"Particularly in relation to their stock-carrying capacity over the full season and the effect on soil nitrogen supply for crop production in subsequent years.

"Farmers hoping to lift stocking rates if the season is kind, will need to adjust fertiliser applications accordingly to provide for the extra numbers."

Mr Reynolds reminded producers of the benefits of topdressing early, which were highlighted by CSBP trials at the Rylington Park community research farm near Boyup Brook last year.

Coordinated grazings were conducted during the trial, showing that higher Super Phos applications also allowed for higher stocking rates – at up to 3.8 DSE/ha more for the 300kg/ha application compared with the nil plot.

Mr Reynolds said it equated to the popular profit measure of $25/ha gross margin for every DSE, the extra carrying capacity achieved with the highest Super Phos application would result in a $95/ha gross margin increase, in what was a very poor season.

Rylington Park producer Bevan Bignell said he was amazed by the pasture response to the earlier applications and to the higher treatments over the course of the season, considering the poor conditions.

"The pasture really got away and it hung on longer," Mr Bignell said.

"We were brought up with the thinking not to topdress too early because with a heavy rain it could wash off and you lose it.

"There was certainly a big advantage with the early applications and we will be putting it on earlier here now."

**❒ More information: CSBP phone 9411 8777 or visit www.csbp.com.au**



## New clover for weed control

**AGRICULTURE Department plant scientists have successfully bred the first cultivar of eastern star clover released in the agricultural world.**

**The variety Agwest Sothis was bred by the department's Pasture Science Group.**

**It was officially released yesterday for seed bulk-up and will be commercially available to growers in 2008.**

**Agwest Sothis will be an important new tool in controlling troublesome and herbicide-resistant crop weeds in Wheatbelt regions with 325-450mm annual rainfall.**

**The new cultivar germinates late in the season compared to traditional pasture legumes and weeds.**

**This allows farmers to use non-selective herbicides or intensively graze stock for three to six weeks after the break of season to control weeds without compromising production.**

**Delayed sowing to allow consecutive knockdowns with non-selective herbicides usually reduces pasture establishment and can limit winter production of the legume, decreasing herbage and seed yield.**

**The yield penalty for Agwest Sothis, however, appears to be much less than for current pasture legume species.**

**It grows rapidly in late winter/early spring to produce a productive legume-dominant pasture for grazing or forage conservation.**

**This upright habit makes it an ideal plant for mixtures with grasses that can be used later in the season for conserving silage or hay.**

**Agwest Sothis can be grown on acidic and alkaline sandy-loam and loamy soils (pH 5-8).**

**The exciting new variety offers farmers an opportunity to control weeds during the pasture phase compared to traditional pasture legumes that germinate rapidly at the break of season.**

**❒ More information: Your local Agriculture Department staff.**