



**Minister Steve Whan**

Minister for Primary Industries  
Minister for Emergency Services  
Minister for Rural Affairs

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Trainee agronomist at Wagga Wagga wins prestigious national award

Thursday, 5<sup>th</sup> August, 2010

The Minister for Primary Industries Steve Whan has congratulated a trainee research agronomist from Southern NSW, after he took out a major national award.

Matt Gardner, who is based at Industry & Investment NSW's Wagga Wagga Agricultural Institute, has won a \$5000 AW Howard Memorial Trust Research Fellowship.

"This is a great achievement and shows we have some of the best minds in the country working for our State's farmers," Minister Whan said.

"Matt Gardner is just 25-years-old, he is on track to achieve great things in this area and he's just one of our well trained, professional and respected frontline staff, which are based across our State.

"Following the completion of his science degree at Charles Sturt University, Matt has been working at Industry & Investment NSW with the pasture and feed-base research team since the end of February."

The AW Howard Memorial Trust was established by the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science and Technology in 1964, to commemorate the contribution of Amos Howard, a pasture improvement pioneer who promoted the use of subterranean clover as a pasture plant in Australia.

Mr Gardner will use funds from the award to support his PhD studies into the suitability of a chicory-subterranean clover mixture as a short-term pasture phase in mixed farming systems.

"I am very excited about winning the award as it holds a lot of prestige in the pasture community," Mr Gardner said.

"Chicory has the potential to be used as an alternative perennial pasture species to lucerne in areas where lucerne is poorly adapted, for example in acidic or water logged soils.

"My research is aimed at determining the nature and extent of nitrogen interactions between chicory and subterranean clover, and chicory and lucerne, and eventually creating a set of management principles to guide grower groups or farmers interested in trying the new pasture mix.

"The new mix could give farmers greater flexibility and better livestock production, while building up soil nitrogen content for the following cropping phase."

Wagga Wagga Agricultural Institute director, John Oliver, said the balance between the livestock and the cropping component to the farm enterprise is very important.

"What we have noticed during the past eight dry years, is that the returns from cropping have been quite variable, while livestock have helped stabilise farm incomes. So we see the research of the pasture and feed-base team as very important," Mr Oliver said.

"Matt's participation as a trainee research agronomist within the pasture team, while undertaking his own PhD studies, is an important succession plan strategy to make sure we don't lose impetus in this research area."

Mr Gardner's research is also being supported by the Future Farm Industries CRC.

**Media note: Photos of Mr Gardner are available.**

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