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Research to show grazing impacts



* Large grazing plots have been established around Fowlers Gap to measure their impacts.

After five years of research at Fowlers Gap, scientist Adam Munn is ready to present his findings on the impacts of native, domestic and feral grazing.

Mr Munn has been working out of the University of NSW's Fowlers Gap arid-zone research station, which is 110 kilometres north of Broken Hill on the Silver City Highway. He will give a public talk on his results there on Sunday morning.

One of his principle projects sought to establish large-scale grazing plots

so that different grazing scenarios can be examined, particularly in light of mixed-grazed systems.

"When we compared sheep and kangaroos, both in a large enclosure and out in the free range environment, we found that contrary to what previous estimates have been, which is that one kangaroo equals 70 percent of a sheep, one kangaroo really equals about 30 or 40 percent of a sheep," Mr Munn said.

The figures are based on the animal's energy use and food and water intake.

"On average, the sheep on the saltbush diet were drinking about 12 litres of water a day and kangaroos about one and a half," he said.

The goal was not to replace sheep with kangaroos, according to Mr Munn, but to learn how to manage the two together.

"At the very least, we're aiming to gather information necessary for people to make informed decisions about how they run their properties," he said.

Geoff Laan, Director of Planning and Environment at Broken

Hill City Council, said scientific research could help develop effective management plans.

"There's a very real need for scientific development and research to continue," he said.

Nicole Payne, Assistant Director and North West Manager of the Kangaroo Management Program for the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water said the sharing of scientific information around Fowlers Gap had been limited until now.

"There's a big yawning gap between what the

scientists know and talk to each other about and what filters down to the level of people who are making on the ground decisions," she said.

"The upcoming Fowlers Gap information event will be a chance to discuss ideas and future research projects that benefit local land managers and the community."

Mr Munn extended an invitation to everyone interested in his findings to come along to his talk on Sunday at 10am in the Fowlers Gap shearers' quarters.

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