

Shelterbelts produce mill logs

BY RICHARD MOORE

In May 1986 a survey of pine shelterbelts in the Esperance region, by a team from the CALM Research Station in Busselton, found that on suitable sites, pinus pinaster and pinus radiata grows into trees large enough to sell as mill logs.

The survey sought to estimate the volume and value of these mill logs, had they been suitably managed.

This information is important because farmers in the region are interested in shelterbelts producing saleable timber as well as controlling erosion of soil by wind and providing shelter for stock and crops.

Hundreds of kilometres of pine shelterbelts have been planted in the Esperance region during the past 60 years.

The Forests Department helped plant many roadside

shelterbelts during the sixties under a joint scheme with the Esperance Shire.

However, they have proved to be inadequate during times of real need, such as during a severe storm in 1981.

One farmer lost about 3400 lambs and 575 ewes at this time and the loss to the District was more than \$9 million.

Consequently a new style of shelterbelts commenced.

Instead of being along the boundaries of paddocks, perhaps two or three or even more kilometres apart, the new

shelterbelts were planted 50 to 200 metres apart.

Pine is the favoured type of tree because it establishes more easily than eucalypts, it is tall and it retains much of its foliage.

Also, as some farmers in New Zealand have shown, pine shelterbelts that are suitably managed (pruned) can produce saleable timber.

The recent survey indicated value of timber in a 30 year old pine shelterbelt is up to \$6000 a kilometre.

Provided trees are pruned and a market develops, therefore, farmers may receive a return when their shelterbelts are mature, rather than having to pay money to have them knocked over.

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