Questions & Answers on licence DIR 176 – field trial of genetically modified (GM) white clover

What does this licence allow?

This licence allows PTM Solutions Australia (PTM) to grow field trials of white clover genetically modified for increased condensed tannins in the leaves. The GM white clover may be grown at up to four sites per year with a maximum area across all sites of 1 ha per year. Individual sites would be no larger than 0.3 ha.

Where will this GM white clover be grown?

The sites will be chosen from 117 LGAs across Queensland, NSW, Victoria and WA. The GM white clover may be grown until December 2026.

How has the GM white clover been modified?

The GM white clover has been modified to produce increased levels of condensed tannins in leaves. Higher condensed tannins may help to prevent bloat and improve animal production and may also help manage greenhouse gas emissions. The introduced gene comes from another clover species. Condensed tannins are found in a wide range of plants, including common crops and ornamental plants. White clover naturally produces condensed tannins but not at high levels in leaf tissue.

What is the purpose of the trial?

The aim of the trial is to assess how the GM white clover performs under field conditions. The GM white clover grown in the field trial will not be used in human food or animal feed.

What controls are imposed for this release?

The Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan (RARMP) for this application concludes that the field trial poses negligible risks to people or the environment. However, as this is a field trial, PTM must comply with a range of licence conditions that restrict when and where the trial can take place, limit the size of the trial, and stop GM white clover from spreading outside the trial. For example, there are conditions to isolate trial sites from other white clover, to securely transport and store the GM white clover, and to inspect the sites at the end of the trial to check that the GM white clover is destroyed. Full details of these control measures are in the licence.

Want more information?

A number of documents relating to this decision are available on the DIR 176 page of the OGTR website or via Freecall 1800 181 030. These documents include the finalised Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan (RARMP), a summary of the RARMP and the licence.

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