

# Regional Landcare Facilitator Newsletter, April 2012

HOSTED BY THE WESTERN MURRAY LAND IMPROVEMENT GROUP

Issue 11,

## Recent Activities -

### Restdown Native Grasses Field Day



Don Hearn discussing the journey to conversion to native grasses at "Restdown" Native Grasses Field Day".

*"Our goal is to have 35-40 native grass species at Restdown"*

**Don Hearn, "Restdown"**



Photo of site being irrigated in early January to replicate a summer storm event and promote summer active native grasses.

A 'Native Grasses Field Day' was held at "Restdown" on The 27th March 2012 with 30 people in attendance.

Don Hearn gave the group an overview of the "Restdown" property and an inspection of the irrigated native grasses site.

Don has been able to rotate 70 breeding cows and 45 weaners 12 months old through the irrigated 45 ha summer native pastures and other areas of the farm between January to March this year. This varied the diet of the stock over summer and spelled the dry paddocks.

There were two irrigations starting in early January. Don uses irrigation to replicate the effect of high intensity summer storms which the summer active native C4 grasses take advantage of.

The property has existing irrigation infrastructure and water was cheap this year. That being said, the property will be looking at drying the native stand out in certain years.

There are no other input costs, and he hasn't needed to drench

the cattle for seven years.

There were discussions around future trials with irrigation in the future, such as starting the first watering in December, rather than January as occurred this year, and discussion about the pros and cons of earlier watering, such as whether additional feed may be at the cost of the structure of the native grasses changing to more rush type varieties. We will follow up with any outcomes next year.

Other questions were around grazing strategies to promote native grass establishment.

Thanks to Don and Jo Hearn for hosting the day (and treating us to some lovely wine tasting) and the Australian Government Caring for Country and Murray Catchment Management Authority for funding.

*"The cutoff point for making profit when grazing cattle on irrigated native pastures worked out to be @ \$200/ML. There are no other input costs except the price of water"*

**Don Hearn, "Restdown"**



The dryland section of the wetland



The wetland section of the wetland.

### Farm Innovation Technology Expo - Deniliquin

The **Farm Innovation Technology Expo** was held in Deniliquin on March 30-31 at Murray Valley Industry Park, on Todds Road Deniliquin.

The WMLIG, Murrumbidgee Landcare and RGA had a site adjacent to the MCMA Seed Bank stand.

I could only make the Friday which was unfortunate, as I ran out of time skipping between listening to the brilliant presenters on offer, and having a yarn to people in the different stands containing a host of innovators and businesses. I did not quite make it around all events, nor hear all presenters before the day ended.

The crowds were down a bit on expectation I suspect, but it was the first year the event was held, and a takeaway message to the organisers was that it was a very busy time of year for farmers with Rice Harvest and winter cereal crop preparations.

#### Special points of interest:

- NATIVE GRASSES GOOD FIT IN FARMING SYSTEM AT RESTDOWN
- BESTWOOL / BESTLAMB GROUP PRESENTATION ON LIVESTOCK DISEASE RISK MANAGEMENT
- CENTRAL MURRAY BESTWOOL / BESTLAMB GROUP PLANS WINTER FORAGE TRIALS

# Recent Activities - *Continued*

## BestWool / BestLamb Preparation of Forage Trial Site



Rick Ellis and Dean Harrington filling the seed-box.

The Central Murray Best-Wool / BestLamb Group started sowing the trial sites at McKindlay's property "Mooloomoon" and Ettershank's property "Murray View". The aim of the trials is to fill the traditional winter feed gap many farms have,

and to demonstrate which species are most palatable, and to determine weight gains of sheep feeding on the different varieties.

Dry matter cuts, and initial weigh in of sheep prior to grazing the demonstration

site will be undertaken in late May. Field days will be advised later in the season.

The trial is being funded by the Murray Catchment Management Authority.

The below tables are a summary of forage varieties and sowing rates at the two sites;

### Moulamein Trial Site

Sown : 4.4.12

Plot 1 : Titan Rape	4 kg/Ha
Plot 2 : Greenland Rape	4 kg/Ha
Plot 3 : Appin Turnip	4 kg/Ha
Plot 4: Diamond T Rye	20 kg/Ha
Plot 5 : Tetila Rye	20 kg/Ha
Plot 6 : Sungrazer T	20 kg/Ha
Plot 7 : Cooee Oats	80 kg/Ha
Plot 8 : Moby Barley	80 kg/Ha
Plot 9 : Urambie Barley	80 kg/Ha

### Murrabit Trial Site

Sown : 5.4.12

Plot 1 : Cooee Oats	80 kg/Ha
Plot 2 : Wedgetail Wheat	80 kg/Ha
Plot 3 : Urambie Barley	80 kg/Ha
Plot 4: Southern Green R/C	65 kg/Ha
Plot 5 : Ryecorn/Rape/Rye	80 kg/Ha
Plot 6 : Titan Rape	4 kg/Ha
Plot 7 : Greenland Rape	4 kg/Ha



Sowing into the pre-irrigated site at McKindlays property "Mooloomoon".

## Get on board for National Tree Day!

*"If there is a topic that people would like covered on sustainable agriculture or Natural Resource Management, do not hesitate to contact the Western Murray Land Improvement Group.*

**Rick Ellis,**  
Secretary WMLIG

Planet Ark is calling on environment groups, community groups, councils, schools and businesses to get involved in National Tree Day and help inspire people in their communities to learn about their natural environment and do something positive to help protect it for future generations.

This year, National Tree Day is on Sunday 29th July 2012, with Schools Tree Day scheduled for Friday 27th July – however, you may register a site or activity on any day that suits you.

National Tree Day is a fantastic opportunity for groups to:

- be part of a high profile national campaign showcase the work they do.
- engage their local community in the care and protection of their natural environment, and;
- recruit volunteers to help with a large environmental repair project and / or ongoing work.
- National Tree Day is not just about tree planting – you can register other activities such as follow-up maintenance at a previous planting site, weed con-

trol, bush regeneration or seed collecting.

### How to get involved

To register a National Tree Day activity or find out more about what's involved, visit the Tree Day website at **[treeday.planetark.org](http://treeday.planetark.org)** or call the National Tree Day Hotline on **1300 88 5000 (Liz Rummary)**



## Central Murray BestWool / BestLamb Livestock Health Workshop #2

The Central Murray BestWool / BestLamb Group held the second of the Livestock Health presentations by Dan Salmon from the Livestock Health and Pest Authority on Monday evening 23rd April at the Barham Services Club.

Key messages were that the majority of diseases brought on to a farm are from livestock.

Some methods of reducing the risk of bringing disease on to your property are to;

- Conduct enquiries before purchasing stock. Ask agents, LHPA staff, people you may know from an area if there were any local disease issues.
- As a rule of thumb, stock sourced from the north of the Murray River and west of the Newell highway has a lower risk

of disease.

- Ensure an Animal Health Statement is provided to cover the disease status of stock. The assurance should state such information as no footrot for 12 months, no lice at last shearing, the drenches used in the last 12 months etc.
- History of stock is important, not only that they have been vaccinated. In the case of BJD, this is especially important because although they can be vaccinated to stop infected stock from getting sick, this will not stop them being carriers.
- Source stock from a breeder in the paddock if possible. If sourcing from a saleyard, reduce risk by checking there is not high grass or wet conditions. Better if the yards

are cement, especially for rams purchases.

- Vaccinate and quarantine new stock when they arrive, and isolate for as long as possible.
- Maintain good dialogue with your neighbour. Look to have an agreement with across fence returns. Better to return strays to owner so that stock can be isolated from the rest of the flock, or slaughter.
- Draught suspect mobs last and / or shear last. Best to have a terminal sheep paddock to only use before slaughter.

To reduce the risk with agistment;

- Check the property for fence condition, condition of neighbours stock. A good sign is the amount of grass, especially in the stockyards as this provides an indication on length of time since it was previously stocked.

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## Funding

### ***Thinking about purchasing conservation tillage equipment?***

The Australian Government will provide a 15% refundable tax offset for eligible conservation tillage equipment installed between 1 July 2012 and 30 June 2015, through the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. Exact details are yet to be released.

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**Coles Junior Landcare Grants** - 101 schools around Australia will receive grants of up to \$1000 from round 3 to assist with the development of various garden projects, not only

educating children about fresh fruit and vegetables, but also the importance of looking after the environment.

Schools, kindergartens, day care centres and youth groups looking to start their own garden program can apply for a Coles Junior Landcare garden grant by registering with Junior Landcare. Visit [www.juniorlandcare.com.au](http://www.juniorlandcare.com.au) or [www.coles.com.au](http://www.coles.com.au). 2012 Grants are now open. Round 2 closes 4 May and Round 3 in June 2012.

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### **Farm Ready Grants re-open –**

The program re-opened on 1 July 2011 and changes will be introduced to extend the availability

of funds and make the program accessible to more primary producers. Each primary producer can still claim up to a maximum \$1500 each financial year, with funding up to \$500 also available to assist with travel, accommodation and child care expenses. The arrangements for indigenous land managers will not change and they will be eligible for a 100% reimbursement of the cost of approved training courses up to the maximum of \$1500 annually. For further information about FarmReady visit: [www.daff.gov.au/farmready](http://www.daff.gov.au/farmready)

**The 'Private Conservation Grants (PLCG) Program'** is a partnership initiative of the Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife, Paddy Pallin Foundation, Humane Society International Wildlife Land Trust and the Office of Environment & Heritage. Applications Close 15th April

The PLCG Program aims to encourage and support private landholders with long term voluntary conservation commitments to undertake on-ground conservation works on their property. It also recognises that landholders already invest significant personal time and resources in their ongoing management of conservation values on their property. The program can help give a financial boost to

support a particular conservation project.

You may have given some thought about what needs to be done to enhance conservation of wildlife and its habitats on your property. Maybe some part of your management needs a funding boost in order to address a particular issue. It could be with just a little extra support you could make a big difference to sustaining the wildlife and natural heritage values of your property.

There is a link to the online application and a cover letter attached. There are a range of categories, including a new one targeted at people who have an in-perpetuity incentive PVP.

<http://www.fnpw.org.au/foundation-grants/private-land-grants/application-form>

#### **The Capacity Building Initiative -**

Applications are now open for a fundraising and resource development program designed to empower not-for-profit organisations to develop and implement revenue generating strategies. The Capacity Building Initiative is a free peer-mentorship program that provides continuing professional development, training and education for not-for-profits needing to build up and sustain strong fund raising practices. Applications for the 2012-2013 program are now open, go to [www.capacitybuilding.com.au](http://www.capacitybuilding.com.au) for further information.



Photo of the Western Murray Land Improvement Group Office in the Barham Rest Centre

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Photo of flooded Billabong Ck below the Murgha - Windouran Rd Bridge in April 2012.

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#### **Dates to Remember;**

- Early June, BestWool / BestLamb weigh in at trial sites. Further info. To follow.
- 26th June, RGA Livestock Field Day Pretty Pine. Times and further info. to follow.