

Regional Landcare Facilitator Newsletter, March 2012

HOSTED BY THE WESTERN MURRAY LAND IMPROVEMENT GROUP

Issue 10,

Upcoming Events

Restdown Native Grasses Field Day - Bring Gum Boots!

A field day has been planned by the WMLIG for Tuesday 27th March 2012 at Restdown on the Perricoota Rd. at 11.30am.

At Restdown, participants will have lunch with our hosts Don and Jo Hearn, followed by a tour of the irrigated pasture sites, then a wetland walk.

Over the last seven years, the farm has been converted to native pastures. Don will cover;

- how the succession of

the farm to native pastures has progressed over time,

- Irrigation of native pastures - view recent trial.
- Indicative cost / benefit analysis for native pasture irrigation.
- How native grasses increase fodder diversity and stock health.

A free lunch will be provided by WMLIG at Restdown Wines as well as a selection of local farmhouse cheeses purchased at the Koondrook

- Barham Farmers Market. All people are welcome to attend.

For bookings phone 54 531 577 for catering purposes.



Picture: Healthy looking cattle feeding on native grasses at Restdown.

"Restdown has taken advantage of summer active native grasses by using irrigation"

**Don Hearn,
"Restdown"**

Farm Innovation Technology Expo - Deniliquin

The Farm Innovation Technology Expo to be held in Deniliquin on March 30-31st is getting close. The days will run from 9am to 4pm. The event will be held at Murray Valley Industry Park, on Todds Road Deniliquin.

Some of the themes include solar and new energy technologies, new farm technologies, opportunities in the areas of finance, carbon trading, education, careers and knowledge, innovation and commercialisation.

The Australian "Farmer of the Year" Roadshow will be attending which will have activities for children and rural families promoting rural living.

Guest speakers include Steve Tighe (futurist), Ben Keogh (Carbon Farming) and Glenys Zucco (Dairy Australia).

There will be over 80 exhibitors displaying the latest in agricultural and farm irrigation, cropping and machinery technologies.

Entry is \$10 per adult or \$20 per family.

On Friday night (30th March) there will be a jazz night from 6 - 9pm at the Deniliquin Waring Gardens.

At the jazz night people can experience mouth watering local produce and local wines from Organic One and Restdown Wines. Tickets are \$55.00 per head. For further information contact the FITE hotline on 0358813010.

The Western Murray Land Improvement Group will be on site on Friday for the event.

For more information visit:

www.murraynow.com.au/events/fite.

Special points of interest:

- NATIVE GRASSES GOOD FIT IN FARMING SYSTEM AT RESTDOWN
- MOULAMEIN CROPPING GROUP PLANS WINTER CROPPING TRIALS
- BESTWOOL / BESTLAMB GROUP PRESENTATION PROVIDES IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR GROWING YOUNG SHEEP

Recent Events

“Moorookyle” Native Vegetation Field Day



“Moorookyle” Native Vegetation Day” on Thursday 1st March had 18 participants.

“The native vegetation sites are just like hay stacks - you never know when you need them”

**Neil Gorey,
“Moorookyle”**



“WMLIG Direct seeder in action at Gorey’s on “soil you could eat”

“You haven’t got a plan unless it’s written on paper”

**Bruce Farquharson,
“Presenter”**



Bruce Farquharson presenting at Darren Hender’s shearing shed, in between very noisy periods of heavy rain.

A ‘Native Vegetation Field Day’ was held at “Moorookyle” on Thursday 1st March 2012.

Unfortunately the “Restdown” Native Grasses day had to be cancelled due to receiving 86mm of rain overnight. This day has been re-scheduled to Tuesday 27th March. See notes elsewhere.

“Moorookyle” had 76mm of rain the night before the field day. It was too late to cancel (as I could not eat 45 salad rolls myself) and it was decided we “wing it”. 18 people attended which was commendable considering the rain.

The attendees managed to get through the additional food catered for (averaged 3 salad rolls each!), so nothing wasted. - *I see the Moulamein Fishing comp. attendees*

tried to beat this feat. China’s Moulamein Notes last week stated 90 people ate 10 sheep, 300 steaks, etc...!

Moorookyle is a significant site because there is remnant vegetation which has been enhanced by diverse native vegetation plantings over an extended period of time. The vegetation provides connectivity of the property to Thule Creek, roadside vegetation and neighbouring farms.

The day covered the “house paddock” where shrubs have been planted to compliment existing remnant species. It was outlined how;

- biodiverse plantings increase the resilience of remnant sites from pest insects / disease attack etc.
- Acacia species fix nitrogen

which provides nutrients for other species.

- don’t panic if planted areas look sparse as gaps will be filled in by native species over time and grasses will fill immediate gaps which is good for biodiversity outcomes.
- a site that was deep ripped around old Bull Oak trees some time ago successfully promoted suckering from the roots.
- the importance of fallowing a proposed site a year before planting to improve germination success when direct seeding.

Thanks to Neil and Bev Gorey for hosting the day and the Murray Catchment Management Authority for technical input and assistance on the day.

BestWool / BestLamb Presentation “Growing Young Sheep”

The Central Murray BestWool / BestLamb Group hosted a presentation on “Growing Young Sheep” by Bruce Farquharson on Monday 20th February attended by 34 people. The day was funded the MLA and WMLIG.

The day started at Darren Hender’s shearing shed at Pental Island, followed by presentation and dinner (rack of lamb of course) at the Commercial Hotel.

The day was very informative with handouts and reference material provided, which was helpful as there was considerable information to be absorbed.

Topics covered included;

- Ram preparation
- Ram numbers to ewe ratio
- Optimal time of mating
- Critical mating weight
- Length of mating period
- Genetics improvement by purchase of good rams, removal of non-productive ewes and selling off poor performing lambs early
- Shearing times to reduce stress and improve lambing rates
- Importance of drinking water quality
- Vaccination at marking and weaning
- Lice control improvement initiatives
- Annual planning around your farming system

Some other notable information included using faecal egg counts to determine the best lambing paddocks.

The imperative of developing a plan that is on paper was highlighted. This is not just important for farm management purposes, but for social planning as well.



Contended participants listening intently to Bruce after a good feed of lamb.

Moulamein Cropping Group Winter Crop Planning Day

The planning day provided a wide range of information to participants. Topics covered the results of trials conducted by the Moulamein Cropping Group in 2011 as well as trial information from other DPI sites in the region, and topics relating to crop production. Speakers included John Smith, John Fowler and Sam North from Ag NSW and Damien Jones (Vic DPI, Kerang).

Some takeaway points were;

- Management of wheat for high yields has achieved 6.9t/ha and 6.5t/ha in 2010 and 2011 respectively over 180ha and greater than 7t/ha in the variety trials. In 2012 this will be expanded to include overhead and border check irrigation systems
- Durum wheat varieties achieved grain yields between 6.4 -7.4 t/ha however they were not able to achieve all quality criteria for the highest durum grade. Further work into the production of high grade durum will continue in 2012.
- Watering up wheat and barley provided up to 1t/ha grain yield advantage over the dryland equivalent. However, crusting that resulted from the watering up significant reduced the establishment and grain yield of Canola

- Grazing cereals not only provides fodder, but can also improve grain yield. One irrigated trial site had un-grazed yields of 5 t/ha, single event grazing had a yield of 5.15 t/ha and two grazes produced 6.5 t/ha.
- It must be remembered if cereals are grazed, maturity will be delayed each time, so could extend into late November and drier conditions could impact yield if it is a late variety.
- Wheat and barley offered the best compromise for dual purpose cereals in the dual purpose cropping trial in 2011. The dry matter production was not significantly different from the other cereals or forage brassica (although all forage types had low levels of production). However, the grain yield from wheat and barley was amongst the highest in the trials (at around 3 t/ha) and was significantly higher than some of the other forage types used.

Cereal diseases were covered to highlight the importance of considering disease risk in cropping activities and rotation. The main diseases for consideration include; crown rot, yellow leaf spot, stripe and stem rust and scald in barley.

A summary is provided below;

Crown rot: Identified by a brown / pink colour at the base of plant. It has become one of the main root diseases in the last few years due to the dry spring conditions. Durum wheat is very susceptible.

Yellow leaf spot: A fungal disease indicated by motley spots on leaf. A problem when there is cereal on cereal grown, such as wheat on wheat. Yellow leaf spot continues to grow on stubbles after harvest. Yield loss usually <15%.

Stripe rust: Main foliar disease around the area. Plan a foliar fungicide program. It is important to ensure the flag leaf is kept clean of stripe rust. No treatment will result in an approximate 30% yield loss. In recent times infestations have been getting earlier and earlier as summer rainfall provides the green bridge for fungal development.

Stem rust: Yitpi had some issues in the area because of its susceptibility to the disease. It is important to recognize that the treatment for stem rust and stripe rust are different because timing of the treatments can be very different.

Irrigation Systems (Sam North - DPI Research Hydrologist, Deniliquin):

Centre Pivot or Linear: Dispersive / sodic soils not well suited as more management to prevent crusting etc. required and subject to water-logging if there is heavy rain which will reduce yields. Growers should be targeting 6-7t/ha for machine viability.

In 2012 the Moulamein Cropping Group will be further expanding their trial activities to include a greater number of new varieties of wheat, barley and canola tested in our environment and under 3 different irrigation systems (dryland, pre-irrigation only and full irrigation). Forages will also be expanded to include grazed and un-grazed treatments for each of the varieties tested.



Damien Jones outlining cereal research results from DPI Kerang research site.

Funding

Australian Government Community Action Grants \$5,000-\$20,000 are open now <http://www.nrm.gov.au/funding/cag/index.html> closing 27 March 2012.

The grants are available to groups currently operating

in the environmental and sustainable land management sector.

Community Action Grants will fund activities such as;

- educating farmers in sustainable agricultural techniques

- holding field days

- recording and using traditional ecological knowledge

- developing natural resource management plans

- training in the latest prac-

tices for sustainable agriculture

- tree planting and other revegetation activities.

Funding - Continued

Junior Landcare "Go Green" Grants

Landcare Australia is proud to launch a \$75,000 grants program to fund environmental projects in schools and community groups across the country. Fifteen successful schools and groups will receive a Go Green Grant of up to \$5,000 to support innovative projects that bring about education in environmental issues, focus on sustainability, promote recycling initiatives or help improve the school's or local area's natural environment.

For information go to <http://www.juniorlandcare.com.au/grants-2/corporate-express-grant>

NRMA Insurance Community Grants Program

The NRMA Insurance Community Grants Program are offering grants of up to \$10,000 (including GST) to eligible community organisations in the categories of Crime Prevention, Road Safety, Emergency Readiness & Response and Environment.

For detailed information please download the Community Grants Information Booklet (PDF)

Applications close 4pm (AEDT) 30 March 2012.

<http://www.nrma.com.au/about-us/community/grants/index.shtml?ref=grants&ctype=edm&id=grants-edm-existing-nsw-apply>

Small Grants for Small Rural Communities

The Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal (FRRR) is again running the 'Small Grants for Small Rural Communities' program, offering up to \$5,000 for projects and activities that offer clear public benefit for communities, with populations of 10,000 or less in remote communities. The funds are to target social and community welfare, economic, environmental, health, education or cultural areas.

http://www.frrr.org.au/cb_pages/small_grants_for_small_communities.php



Photo of new bridge over the "Thule Creek" taken 17th March 2012. Unfortunately black water is currently coming out of the Koondrook Perricoota Forest with critically low dissolved oxygen levels (1.68 mg/L)

Roger Knight
Regional Landcare Facilitator
WMLIG
Barham Rest Centre
Phone (W): 54-531-577
(M): 0487-455-511
E-mail:
roger.knight@wmlig.org



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

Dates to Remember;

- *Tues 27th March, Native Grasses and Wetland Field Day - Restdown, 11.30am. Dinner provided.*
- *30-31st March, Farm Innovation Technology Expo (FITE), Deniliquin, 9am - 4pm.*
- *23rd April Central Murray BestWool/BestLamb Group Livestock Health Workshop with Dan Salmon, Barham Services Club, 4pm. Dinner provided.*