

The latest news from the Barossa Improved Grazing Group

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Government of South Australia
Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges
Natural Resources Management Board



CARING
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OUR
COUNTRY



The BIGG Bulletin

August 2014

Native Grass Pasture Scoping Workshop

Following our success in obtaining funding for the new project "Recovery and management of native pastures after the 2014 Eden Valley bushfire" we're holding a workshop to identify gaps and priorities for future work. We're very interested in hearing your thoughts and suggestions, so please join us next week.

When: 3rd September

Where: PIRSA Nuriootpa- Research Rd

Time: 7.30pm to 10pm

RSVP to facilitator [Daniel Schuppan](#) (0477 315 931)

Your contribution will be appreciated so before the night could you please think about the following:

- Are you competent in identifying native grasses?
- What is your grazing management? how do native grasses fit into your livestock system?
- What are your issues with managing native grasses?
- How are you going to manage the native pastures that were burnt in the future?
- Pasture quantity & quality - How many kilograms of dry matter per hectare do you produce annually and what is the feed quality?
- What is your carrying capacity on native grass pastures? Do you want to increase carrying capacity? What are the factors limiting increasing carrying capacity?

For further info please contact Daniel Schuppan or [Georgie Keynes](#) (0409 287 261)

BIGG Pasture Walk – September 19

BIGG's *Barossa Pasture Challenge* Project, which has seen the five producer groups which comprise BIGG facing off in a pasture improvement competition, is nearing its completion.

Six pasture paddocks have been improved throughout the 2014 growing season with each being monitored for production, including recently for pasture quality.

On August 13 a pasture sample was collected from each paddock and tested for dry matter, crude protein, digestibility and metabolisable energy (ME). Of these ME is the most important because it is a measure of the pastures 'feed energy' and determines whether livestock grazing the pasture are receiving enough energy for maintenance or production.

ME results ranged significantly between paddocks (see table), with the highest ME being recorded at Jamie Nietschke's property (11.3 megajoules/kg). This result likely reflects the good feed value of (green) barley grass, which currently dominates the lucerne permanently growing in this paddock.

Producer Group (landholder)	Species	% 13/8/14	Metabolisable Energy (MJ/kg)
Angaston Ag Bureau (Anthony Steinert)	Phalaris	45	10.0
	Clover	28	
	Silver grass	11	
	Cocksfoot/plantain	11	
	Capeweed	5	
Angaston Ag Bureau (Jen Light)	Clover	41	10.8
	Ryegrass/silver grass	23	
	Phalaris	18	
	Capeweed	6	
	(Bare ground)	12	
Koonunga Ag Bureau (Jamie Nietschke)	Barley grass	59	11.3
	Ryegrass/silver grass	23	
	Lucerne	6	
	Clover	6	
	Capeweed	6	
Barossa Mid North Dairy Discussion (Andrew Koch)	Clover	54	9.9
	Barley grass	36	
	Phalaris	11	
Mt Pleasant Beef (Vic Patrick)	Phalaris	39	9.7
	Ryegrass/barley grass	39	
	Clover	17	
	Salvation jane	5	
North Rhine Sheep (Graham Keynes)	Salvation jane/geranium	57	8.1
	Phalaris	16	
	Barley Grass	16	
	(Dry litter)	11	

Want to judge the pastures for yourself?

On Friday, **September 19, 12.30-5pm** BIGG will be holding a pasture walk visiting each of the Pasture Challenge paddocks to showcase how they have been improved. See the [pasture walk flyer](#) for further information about the walk which will begin at Jamie Nietschke's paddock, Ebenezer (near corner of Belvidere and Kapunda-Truro Rd). The walk will include a visit to BIGG's MLA-funded trial site at Eden Valley, which is investigating the effect of root diseases on the productivity of sub-clover pasture.

As part of the Pasture Walk, consultant Tim Prance will judge each of the Barossa Pasture Challenge paddocks, with various prizes being awarded at the end of the day while we relax at Jen Light's shearing shed over drinks. The prizes have been kindly sponsored by **Heritage Seeds, Nufarm, Farmer Johns** and **Coopers Farm Supplies** and will include the coveted award for Barossa's most improved pasture!

Soil Moisture Monitoring Monthly Report

Welcome
Rebecca!

BIGG is continuing to monitor and analyse soil moisture data as part of our project "Monitoring Soil Moisture to Improve Productivity and NRM in Grazing Systems" thanks to funding from Caring for our Country and NRM Adelaide Mt Lofty Ranges. While you can access the data anytime at [our website](#), below is Brett's monthly report.



Flaxman Valley (Evans)

(click on image to see full-size graph)



There seems to be a widespread pattern, that after an exceptional autumn break, winter rainfall has shut down rapidly. This certainly looks the case on the Flaxman Valley site where only 6mm of rain has been received in the last three weeks.

The slowdown in rainfall and the gradual lengthening of

BIGG has recently obtained a grant to fill the role of Communication Officer, and have employed Rebecca Barr from AgCommunicators to perform the role. Rebecca is relatively new to the Barossa, having moved to Eden Valley in 2013 with her husband Scott to own and operate Fernfield Wines while also working as an agricultural communicator.

Bec is a science writer for the Grains Research Development Corporation, as well as the administration officer for local farming group the Mid North Young Guns,

the days means we can start to see daily water use by the pasture. As a consequence, plant available water (PAW) has fallen from 112 millimetres to 108mm.

The daily water use is still pretty small, but as the weather warms we will see it climb. As this happens, I will start to present readings through the soil profile, to show the depths from which the plants are drawing water. A lot of farmers currently have their eyes on the weather prediction services, as a dry spring will have a dramatic impact on dry matter production over the coming summer months.

The data:

Growing season rain: 458mm

Estimated % of PAWC: 99%

Soil Type: Sandy loam over clay

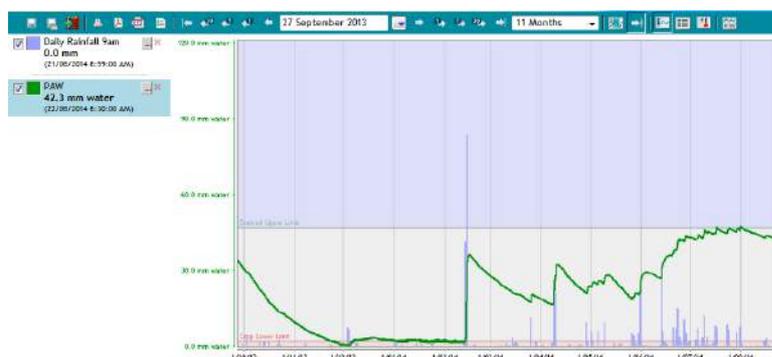
Pasture type Phalaris/ryegrass/clover based pasture

Current pasture composition: Phalaris 57%, Clover 17%, Ryegrass 9%, Broadleaf weeds (mostly capeweed) 17%

Current estimated feed on offer: 1100 kg dry matter/ha

Paddock and grazing management: Paddock grazed for two days (240 ewes + lambs) in mid August down to 1500kg DM/ha. Immediately after 80kg/ha of urea was applied to the paddock.

Keyneton (Keynes)



The 6mm of rain received after August 13 is quite visible on the PAW graph but has not been enough to keep the profile full.

Although PAW has fallen, it is not yet clear how much of this is due to slow drainage through the profile and how much is water use by the pasture. At this stage I suspect that the former dominates, as when the PAW is examined on a shorter time span (e.g. 2 weeks) there is just a gradual fall in moisture rather than the

and is the secretary of the Eden Valley Tourism and Promotional Group.

As the BIGG communication officer, Bec will be taking over our monthly newsletters, administering the group's [website](#) and (new) [Facebook page](#), coordinating grant and award applications, and promoting BIGG events and projects.

From the Inbox...

1. There's not much time left to vote in the National Landcare Awards! Our very own Georgie Keynes has been nominated for the Westpac Agribusiness Innovative Young Landcare Leader Award. [Vote for Georgie now](#) or [view the other awards and nominees](#) at [landcareonline](#).
2. [Learn how to manage Cape Tulip](#): Free field day hosted by NRM Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges at Eden Valley, September 4, 2pm-4pm.

Your BIGG Contacts

stepping which characterises crop water use.

The data:

Growing season rain: 302mm

Estimated % of plant available water capacity (PAWC): 92%

Soil Type: Red loam over clay

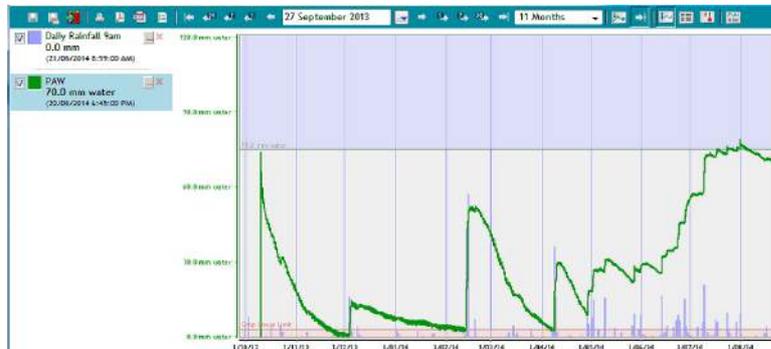
Pasture type: Ryegrass/sub-clover based pasture, including some phalaris

Current pasture composition: Phalaris 16%, Barley grass 16%, Broadleaf weeds (salvation jane/geranium) 57%, Dry litter 11%

Current estimated feed on offer: 900kg DM/ha

Paddock and grazing management: There has been no grazing in the paddock since July 24.

Koonunga (Kleinig)



The reduction in PAW is greater at this site than the other two. A look at the daily change in PAW shows a clear pattern of daily steps: crop water use, during the day and flat-lining at night. This is a clear sign that the pasture at the site is well and truly active. Reviewing the readings from the individual sensors, the water use is (as expected) all in the top 15cm of the profile.

The 5mm of rain received earlier in the month can be seen as a boost in PAW as it infiltrated into the soil. At high levels of soil moisture, it is difficult to know what percentage of rain infiltrates and what runs off. As moisture levels fall, more rain should infiltrate and at this time we will start to fine tune the probe calibration to make the indicated PAW as accurate as possible.

The data:

Growing season rain: 298mm

Estimated % of PAWC: 91%

Soil Type: Red brown earth soil

Technical Facilitator / Coordinators:

[Brett Nietschke](#)
0432 804 389

[Georgie Keynes](#)
0409 287 261

Communication Officer:

[Rebecca Barr](#)
0402 788 526

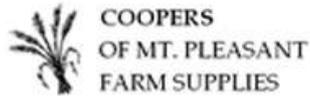
Pasture type Barley/oats/ryegrass/clover based

pasture, sown in 2013

Current pasture composition: Clover 36%, Ryegrass 57%, Dry little (barley/oats stubble) 2%

Current estimated feed on offer: 2300kg DM/ha

Paddock and grazing management: There has been no grazing in the paddock since July 21.



Government of South Australia
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