

The latest news from the Barossa Improved Grazing Group

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Natural Resources
Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges



Natural Resources
SA Murray-Darling Basin



The BIGG Bulletin

October 2015

Sustainable Farm Dinner

Bring the family along to dinner to celebrate 2015 and gain some insight into sustainable farming.

- Fiona Koch shares her learnings from her trip to the US to learn from rancher Gabe Brown
- Georgie Keynes and Daniel Schuppan will wrap up the findings from the native pastures project, including launch of BIGGs case study booklet and video presenting graziers' experiences in recovering after bushfire
- Keep the kids entertained with natural resources activities
- And of course, a good old Barossa BBQ for the family!

The details:

- **Date:** Thursday 10 December
- **Time:** 5:00pm onwards
- **Where:** Eden Valley Institute, Murray Street, Eden Valley
- **Cost:** \$10 per family
- **RSVP:** Rebecca Barr by email admin@biggroup.org.au or txt to 0402 788 526

[Register Now](#)

American experience for Ian and Fiona

BIGG members Ian and Fiona Koch travelled to the US this month to study from sustainable agriculture pioneer Gabe Brown, at his [ranch in North Dakota](#).

The couple, supported by BIGG, were awarded an AW Howard memorial study grant to spend 10 days in the US, spending time on Gabe's ranch as well as meeting and learning from like-minded producers.

Gabe integrates no-till cropping, cover crops and grass-fed livestock, with a focus on regeneration of natural resources. Sustainable minimal-input farming is still a relatively new concept in Australian farming, and applications of these principles to mixed farming is even newer.

Gabe's principle of 'Holistic Management' which looks to solve problems in a natural and sustainable way using no-till, reduced chemical applications and strategic grazing, can provide new tools and techniques for BIGG members to improve the sustainability and profitability of their enterprises.

Ian and Fiona have been researching a number of topics including:

- Use of poultry for snail control, to reduce the reliance on snail bait. Snail bait is dangerous to native wildlife, can be ineffective and is expensive. Gabe uses chickens to control snails, however Ian and Fiona believe that there is potential to adapt this by using Guinea Fowl (which eliminates the problems associated with egg-laying). They intend to learn how Gabe uses the chickens and how effective his system has been, and adapt his techniques to the use of Guinea Fowl.
- Use of polycultures: After hearing Gabe present at an Angaston Ag Bureau forum, they implemented a concept he champions known as 'polycultures' – sowing up to 12 species into a pasture. Since using polycultures, the Koch's have found a reduction in scouring of the lambs at weaning and an increase in stocking rate. An objective from the visit is to optimise the use of polycultures by finding out what Gabe has found to work in his system.
- New ideas: Gabe's unique contribution is that he applies a whole land management approach with sustainability in mind, using multiple soil, plant and animal systems to create a natural balance. Rather than starting from scratch and learning by trial-and-error, Ian and Fiona will make use of Gabe's own trials and learning and bring his knowledge back to BIGG.

You can find out about what they learnt by coming along to the family Farm Dinner in December!

Young Producer Survey

Please complete our young producer survey and share with friends and family!

The results from the survey will be used by BIGG to make sure our projects and events are run the way you want, addressing the topics that you want to learn more about.

Complete the survey now at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BIGG>

Sub-clover expert headlines pasture walk

On September 21, Barossa Improved Grazing Group (BIGG) held its spring pasture walk. Forty participants travelled from as far as Victor Harbor and Snowtown to visit the BIGG trial sites and learn about pasture and natural resource management strategies.

The pasture walk included inspecting BIGG's research trial site at Moculta (on Ian Koch's property), which is investigating the effect of soil borne root diseases on local sub-clover productivity as part of a Producer Research Site project from [Meat & Livestock Australia](#) (MLA). The highlight was a talk by noted plant pathologist, Professor Martin Barbetti from The University of Western Australia who, along with his research team, is also conducting related trials at the Moculta site.

Professor Barbetti gave an overview of soil borne root diseases and outlined the research being conducted to improve the performance of sub-clover pastures. This included:

- Root disease in sub-clover is caused by a range of soil pathogens; particularly pythium, phytophthora, aphanomyces and rhizoctonia, with rhizoctonia being the key root disease occurring locally in sub-clover pastures;
- Large differences exist between sub-clover cultivars in their resistance to each of the root diseases;

- As the incidence of root disease in sub-clover plants increase, nodulation decreases;
- Good plant nutrition helps limit the impact of root disease in sub-clover;
- Prior to re-sowing a sub-clover pasture, consider cultivating as this reduces the incidence of root disease; and
- A long-term solution for managing sub-clover root diseases is breeding resistant cultivars.

Apart from visiting the sub-clover research trial site at Moculta, participants on the pasture walk inspected BIGG's nearby watercourse revegetation project (Murray and Ben Klemm's property) and a native pasture management project site at Sedan (Joe Keynes property). At Sedan the results of a trial measuring the effect of superphosphate fertiliser on pasture production and the extent of recovery of native grasses after the 2014 Eden Valley bushfire were observed.

Recent photos

We've included a few photos from BIGG's recent activities, including the Blockbuster pasture walk, and visits from state minister Ian Hunter, and federal member for Barker, Tony Pasin.



From the Inbox...

- Congratulations to Georgie Keynes and the Keynes family, winners of the Premier's Service to NRM award at last month's state Landcare conference!
- Grass Identification Workshop with SAMDB botanist Nicola Barnes: Friday 6 November, Cambrai. [Register now](#).
- GSSA Pasture Update: Lucindale, "There's money in dust!" Friday 6 November. [View the flyer](#). If you are interested in attending and would like a lift, contact Bruce Hancock on 0417 813 545.
- [Beef Webinars](#) will be held throughout November. Read more here.
- The Barossa Council and the Mid Murray council have launched the [Eden Valley bushfire diary](#), containing personal stories and reflections from people affected by the fire.
- BIGG has launched a new strategic plan, which can be found [on our website](#). This plan will direct BIGG's investments and projects over the next three years.
- Agriculture and NRM: Working Together. [Read the 2014-2017 Action Plan](#) developed by PPSA.
- Survey: The university of Queensland are assessing beef producers' appetite to market their beef to domestic and international markets. [Complete the survey here](#).
- Survey: Take part in a research project about farmer attitudes towards climate change in Australia by completing a survey for James Cook university researchers. [Access the survey here](#).

Your BIGG Contacts

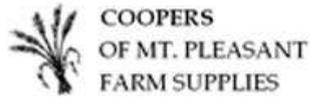
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Government of South Australia
Department of Environment,
Water and Natural Resources

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