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Natural Resources
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Natural Resources
SA Murray-Darling Basin



The BIGG Bulletin

September 2017

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The MLA Livestock Productivity and Profitability Webinar Series kicks off
TOMORROW 28 September on:
'Assessing pasture using visual clues' 7.30pm (SA time) Click [TO REGISTER](#)

BIGG's on a Winner!



The State Landcare Awards were held in Clare on 12th September where BIGG won the *Australian Government Excellence in Sustainable Farm Practices Award*.

The award recognises an 'individual, group or organisation that has demonstrated excellence and leadership in implementing integrated land management practices to a farm property or properties that protect soils, water and vegetation'. The award was accepted on behalf of BIGG by BIGG technical facilitator, Brett Nietschke (pictured).

The award is also strong recognition for Angaston Ag Bureau, who has operational and monitoring oversight of BIGG's projects. Since BIGG's inception in 2012, support from the local NRM boards (Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges, SA Murray-Darling Basin) has also helped ensure BIGG delivers innovative projects that respond to the needs of local producers.

BIGG will now represent SA in the *Sustainable Farm Practices* category at the 2018 National Landcare Awards. Well done team BIGG!

Successful Spring Pasture Walks

With the spring sunshine finally starting the break through, and the soil moisture buckets full, pastures are starting to grow, demonstrating their spring growth potential. Local producers have been out and about to observe this....

KOONUNGA STICKY BEAK PASTURE WALK 20 Sept



The Koonunga sticky beak pasture walk was held on 20th September with Anthony Ellis, Farmer Johns and Rehn Freebairn, Pasture Genetics, presenting to the final session of the Koonunga Ag Bureau's crop walk day:

- In the second year of production Lucerne varieties were producing over 6 tons Dry Matter per Hectare. The plots which were grazed twice over August and September demonstrated an increase in 500kg Dry Matter per hectare and were growing over 140grams per day.
- Lucerne blended with chicory was producing the highest amount of Dry Matter per Hectare which was 1200Kg of Dry Matter per hectare more than the average for all Lucerne varieties. The chicory helps prevent bloat and provides additional vitamins and nutrients.

- The second year perennial grass plots demonstrated the importance in having a mix of varieties to help increase annual grazing days. Both Farmer Johns blends for 550ml rainfall and 450 ml rainfall which contain mixtures of perennial grasses and clovers were producing the greatest dry matter per hectare over 700 kg/Dm/Ha above the average.
- Early forage cereal varieties such as Moby barley provide high quantities of dry matter through winter. They also provide the opportunity to be ensiled or the seed to be harvested. In addition, Moby barley is awnless so can be grazed directly as a standing crop.
- To increase annual grazing days it's important to consider a range of varieties which will respond to seasonal conditions. This can include early cereal varieties, high quality annual ryegrasses which produce through spring and later maturing clovers such as arrow leaf clover.

SPRING STICKY BEAK PASTURE WALK 12 September



The Spring sticky beak was held on 14th September with presentations from Craig John, Coopers Farm Supplies and Kirk Berhaut, Heritage Seeds. The group which included 9 producers from NSW noted the following key messages:

- Forage cereal varieties provide huge opportunities for producing early feed. Value adding with ryegrasses or brassicas can help to increase the quality and the quantity of pasture.
- Opportunities available for sowing and grazing new varieties such as sorghum and brassicas to fill summer feed gaps.
- Cereals provide early growth and grazing opportunities and can fill early winter

feed gaps if they are sown early. They can also be 'bulked' up with legume varieties such as clovers or vetch to provide high quality weaning paddocks for spring

- Good preparation is critical for the establishment of fodder crops, this should involve spray topping or full fallow the previous year to control annual weeds.
- To increase production and persistence of perennial grasses phalaris should be grazed at the four leaf stage and perennial ryegrasses at the three leaf stage. This often takes a lot of discipline however does increase overall annual grazing days.

A massive thanks from the Cranbury Landcare 'SA travellers' to BIGG and the farmers and local Ag company reps who made us so welcome at the Spring Sticky Beak Pasture walk. While your rainfall, climate, and soils differ from ours in the end all farming comes down to the same thing, growing stuff and making a buck out of it.

Thanks again, Lawrence Balcomb Tour organizer/Chairperson of Cranbury Landcare

Brassicas- filling a summer feed gap

Case Study- Toby Rosenzweig, Keyneton



Second graze in late December- before and after grazing (before is after a 3 week rest period)



Recovery of brassicas three weeks after a 4 week graze with 900 ewes and lambs.

With wet conditions last spring, Toby Rosenzweig, located at Keyneton, sowed a Leafmore brassica forage crop with an aim to provide green summer feed to ewe hoggets.

The brassicas were originally sown into a 30Ha paddock, on the 5th of September at 3kg/ha with barley added to increase the bulk of feed. Due to the wet, cold conditions they had poor establishment so were resown on the 12th October.

In December, Toby divided the paddock into three cells using the Rappa temporary electric fence system. On the 21st December, 10 weeks after sowing, he drafted off 500 of his lightest ewe hoggets and allowed them to graze the first cell. These ewes remained on the brassica paddock, being rotated through the cells twice, for a total of 43 days at an average stocking rate of 4.7 DSE/Ha. They were then run on improved pasture through February to June which was low quality as a result of the season.

When compared with the remainder of the mob, this 'lighter' brassica mob were 0.5kg heavier and cut 300 grams more wool which resulted in 152kg extra wool cut, or almost one extra bale of wool.

Toby found that it was critical to supply good quality hay while the ewes were grazing the brassica, to ensure they have adequate fibre. He also had to crutch the mob and 'click' them to prevent fly strike while they were grazing the pasture.

The brassicas continued to grow through winter with some residual ryegrass, providing feed for over 900 ewes with lambs at foot through late July and has recently been grazed with 1000 ewes prior to the pasture being sprayed out ready for next year's cereal hay crop.

Barossa Lifetime Ewe Group



Six Barossa based producers have recently completed a Lifetime Ewe Course, each making significant changes within their production system to improve their overall on-farm increases.

The group covered a diverse range of management systems, including vineyards, cropping and grazing enterprises with a variety of ewes including merinos, dohne's and corriedales. The group were also spread across the entire Barossa with properties ranging from Gomersal to Flaxmans Valley to Keyneton.

The course ran for a year, led by Daniel Schuppan, Livestock Consultant from Landmark, and involved practical elements including condition scoring ewes, pasture cuts and also theory sessions to help set targets and ensure the ewes were receiving correct nutrition.

The course allowed all participants to make improvements to their system as follows:

- Understanding energy requirements which resulted in supplementary feeding the twin ewe mob earlier than normal which resulted in the best lamb survival rate recorded on the property at 77% lamb survival rate.
- Increase in lamb marking percentage to 114% through condition scoring ewes and matching their condition to their energy requirements.

- Understanding supplementary feeding requirements which has resulted in purchasing feeders to facilitate this. With the increase in lamb marking percentage this is easily justified.
- Slightly increasing Food on Offer to the Lifetime Ewe mob gave an increase of 26% lamb marking percentage compared to other grown sheep on the same property.
- Ensuring good nutrition to the Lifetime Ewe mob resulted in an increase in performance of lambs, which were growing an average of 320g per day.
- Working closer with the stock agent to target the market and understand where the best fit is.

The group will continue to meet in the future to continue benchmarking and working together to improve this system.

If you are interested in attending a Lifetime Ewe Productivity Group, please contact [Georgie](#).

From the Inbox...

- MLA Sheep productivity and profitability [webinars series](#)- starting tomorrow!!
- Are you interested in monitoring your pasture growth using drones? A pilot project is being developed, contact [Andy Chambers](#), Seed Consulting
- Applications for the '[Breeding Leadership](#)' 2018 Program- designed for budding wool industry leaders.

Your BIGG Contacts

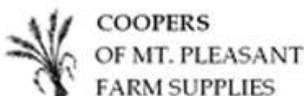
Technical Facilitators:

[Brett Nietschke](#): 0432 804 389

[Georgie Keynes](#): 0409 287 261

Communication Officer:

[Rebecca Barr](#); 0402 788 526



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