

The latest news from the Barossa Improved Grazing Group

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The BIGG Bulletin

September 2018

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Working with the Season
WORKSHOP



Hamish Dickson (AgriParner Consulting), Eliza Rieger (NR SAMDB), Graham Keynes (BIGG), Julianne Fiebig (RBS), Chris Scheid (ProAdvice) and Taryn Mangelsdorf (NR AMLR)

Over thirty producers attended BIGG's 'Working with the Season' Workshop in early September which was aimed at facilitating proactive decision making to create an effective strategy for the upcoming 'dry times'.

BIGG's Brett Nietschke set the scene by showing the current soil moisture and plant available water which is being recorded at the three local BIGG sites. As we all know, levels are more than 50% below where we would expect them to be at this time of year, indicating a short and quick end to spring pasture growth.

As a result of these conditions, Hamish Dickson, AgriPartner Consulting, urged producers to develop a feed budget to work out what feed they have available as a basis for developing a livestock plan. There are many resources available to help with this process. When developing a supplementary feeding budget he commented on the importance of comparing feeds on a dry matter basis to ensure the costs are equivalent with what livestock will actually get out of the feeds, this also involves checking the energy, protein and fibre content. Taking a feed test is an important tool which can help with this process.

Chris Scheid, Proadvice, presented a list of producer's experiences from the 2006 drought which included:

- 'early decisions are the best and have a big impact'
- 'the importance of having goals to keep you focused'
- 'containment areas were useful'
- having a 'hit list' so you can quit livestock

He then challenged the group to develop a plan with aims and strategies around the livestock, the people, the land and the business. This allows you to make decisions

early, increase communication and provide motivation. He commented that 'hope is not a plan'. This was a powerful message which all producers took on board, motivating them to be proactive.

The day concluded with a panel session of producers who had used containment areas to discuss how they work practically. The most important thing with containment areas is that they are set up correctly to start with and that you have a plan in place when using them around livestock condition, feed budgeting and operational aspects. There was no right or wrong method- it was down to what worked with the individual producers system.

The workshop also included a session on looking after the people from Health SA and Julianne Fiebig from Rural Business Support who's message was 'the sooner you get help the more options that are available'.

Presentations from the day are available on the [BIGG website](#)

This event is supported by Barossa Improved Grazing Group, Angaston Agriculture Bureau, and is jointly funded by Meat and Livestock Australia, the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board and the South Australian Murray-Darling Basin Natural Resources Management Board through the NRM Levies.

Exciting Pasture Demonstration Site Results

The MLA Producer Demonstration Site Project is in it's final 6 months after three years of measuring local pastures. The major sites provide the opportunity to observe many different pasture varieties and how they respond to the local environment.

Koonunga Pasture Demonstration Site Visit



The Koonunga site which is hosted by Farmer Johns and Pasture Genetics. The majority of the perennial varieties, clovers and medics were sown in 2016 with different annuals included through 2017 and 2018.

Twenty producers attended the Pasture Site visit on Wednesday 26th September as a part of the Koonunga Ag Bureaus annual crop walk.

Anthony Ellis, Farmer Johns, told the group the overall growing season rainfall was just 202mm, way below the annual average of 500mm!

Considering this, there are some outstanding results which were demonstrated to the group with Anthony and Rehn Freebairn (Pasture Genetics):

- All three of the lucerne varieties (L71/ L56 and L71+ Balance Chicory) planted

in 2016 were producing over 5 tonnes of Dry Matter/Ha, they were maintaining a growth rate of over 60kg/DM/day as a result of their deep root system which can draw up moisture from up to 2 metres below the soil.

- The Farmer Johns 450mm rainfall perennial mix which contains phalaris, cocksfoot, fescue and clovers was producing 3.4 tonnes of Dry Matter/Ha indicating the importance of choosing mixes which have been designed for the local rainfall environment. In comparison the 550mm mix, which produced over 4 tonnes of Dry Matter/Ha last year was only producing 1.2 tonnes this year.
- A new lucerne variety, Multileaf 99, is a highly winter active variety which has a higher proportion of leaflets compared to other lucernes, allowing it to have high production for a large proportion of the year. This was sown in 2018 and will be monitored through the upcoming years.
- In addition new lucerne variety GTL60 was sown this year. It is a variety which has a prostate crown so is very tolerant to grazing.
- Tower fescue is also a new perennial variety to be sown in 2018, this is a high quality and productive variety which is best suited to higher rainfall conditions. Considering this, the establishment and production of over 2 tonnes Dry Matter/Ha is great. In addition, the pet lamb that continued to sneak under the gate into the site would make a bee line for this plot and was often found selectively grazing this plot over all of the others!

Thanks to Glen Becker for hosting the site for the past three years, without enthusiastic producers these sites would not go ahead.

Please contact Anthony Ellis (anthony@farmerjohns.com.au/ 0438488606) from Farmer Johns for more information, or to duck in to check out the site!

Mt Pleasant Pasture Demonstration Site



The Mt Pleasant Pasture Demonstration Site contains over 100 different pasture varieties including ryegrasses, forage cereals, annual and sub clovers, lucernes and spring sown brassicas. This site is a new site and was sown in May 2018.

The site is managed by Coopers Farm Supplies, Pasture Genetics, Heritage Seeds and AGF Seeds. Over 20 producers attended a field day on Wednesday 26th September which allowed them to check out the different varieties, and see hay baling machinery.

The site has received 275mm of rain which is way below the annual average rainfall of 600-650mm. The cereals within the site were also heavily affected by bird damage after the initial sowing and were resown in late June.

- Considering the late sowing the forage cereals were still performing well with most producing over 2.5 tonnes of dry matter/ha when measured in mid September.
- With the warmer soil temperatures and longer day lengths the annual ryegrasses have dramatically increased dry matter production, with some varieties producing over 5 tonnes of dry matter/ ha.
- The combination of cereals and ryegrasses can be very complementary with cereals producing early bulk feeds, especially in dry seasons such as this one, and then ryegrasses which will provide high production through the spring, when the cereals drop in production.
- Including later variety ryegrasses within a mix can be beneficial, particularly to make the most of any later spring rainfall....if it comes this year!!
- spring sown brassicas have germinated, however it will be interesting to see how long they hold on for if there is no rainfall. They have a big tap root which is beneficial for breaking up soil compaction or rhizobium layers and also for

accessing deeper soil moisture.

For further information on the site or to pop in and take a look please contact the team at Coopers Farm Supplies, Craig 0404 452 541 or Adam 0409 628 207.

Keeping an eye out for Oestrogenic Clovers



With the warmer soil temperatures and reducing soil moisture, many of the sub clovers are starting to flower.....which means it's the best time to identify oestrogenic clovers.

Some older sub clover varieties can cause infertility in sheep and low lambing percentages. These varieties were well regarded pasture plants and widely sown in Australia from the 1930's up until the late 1960's. Although not planted for many years, like all subclovers they produce a percentage of hard seed that results in carryover and regeneration following cropping rotations. If you have older sub clover based pastures, there could be some oestrogenic clovers (MacKillop Farm Management Good Clover, Bad Clover Fact Sheet).

The best way to find out is to identify the subclovers, and if the oestrogenic varieties are present, rank your paddocks to determine the likely impact they are having on your sheep production system. These clovers do not affect cattle.

For more information please check out these great factsheets from Sheep Connect and MacKillop Farm Management Group:

- [Good Clover, Bad Clover Identification](#)
- [Good Clover, Bad Clover Information](#)
- [Sub Clover Article, Uni of WA- BIGG website](#)

BIGG are incredibly excited to be a finalist for a National Landcare Award for 'Excellence in Sustainable Farm Practices' which will be awarded at the National Landcare Conference in October.

You can get involved and vote for us for the PEOPLES CHOICE AWARD- [Click to VOTE!](#)

From the Inbox.....

- Ram Check- workshop on improving productivity by monitoring ram health...Kapunda 10th October [MORE INFO](#)
- Dry Times Resources Website- Natural Resources SAMDB [Check it Out!](#)
- Strong Sheep, Strong Business- Mintaro- 5 October [More Info](#)- BOOK TODAY!
- National Landcare Conference: 10-12 October: [REGISTRATIONS OPEN](#)
- Experts in Residence Program- Murraylands and Riverlands- October [MORE INFO](#)

Your BIGG Contacts

Technical Facilitators:

[Brett Nietschke](#): 0432 804 389

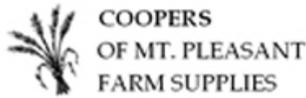
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