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The latest news from the Barossa Improved Grazing Group

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# The BIGG Bulletin

December 2017

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**B I G G   C O N F E R E N C E   2 0 1 8**



In the lead up to the Barossa Improved Grazing Group 2018 Conference "Building Resilience", we will explore the different aspects of resilience that you can build in your grazing system.

Former Nuffield Scholar Mark Branson has good reasons to focus on resilience on his 1200ha mixed cropping and sheep enterprise. His family's Tarlee farm was wiped out in the 2015 Pinery fire, including the loss of 1600 ewes. This was the second time his farm was devastated after a fire in 1996.

Mark employs a range of digital technologies including soil moisture monitoring, precision agriculture and drone monitoring, following a 2005 Nuffield scholarship where he studies precision and conservation agriculture.

Mark will talk at the conference about using soil moisture and climate information to manage risk and adapt to climate change. He will also be one of our subject-matter-experts, working directly with you to develop a management plan for your pastures.

[Register now](#) to hear from Mark, along with our keynote speaker Mark Aiston and our other subject matter experts David Hardwick, Brian Hughes, Peter Toome and Rehn Freebairn, with our own technical experts Georgie Keynes and Brett Nietschke.

Building Resilience is supported by Meat and Livestock Australia, and the South Australian Murray-Darling Basin Natural Resources Management Board and the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme and the NRM Levies.



**VENUE:** Lambert Estate, Angaston

**DATE:** Thursday 22 February 2018, 1pm for a 1:30 start

**COST:** \$50. Includes presentations, afternoon tea and dinner

**DOWNLOAD:** The [Flyer](#) or [Programme](#)

Buy your ticket Now

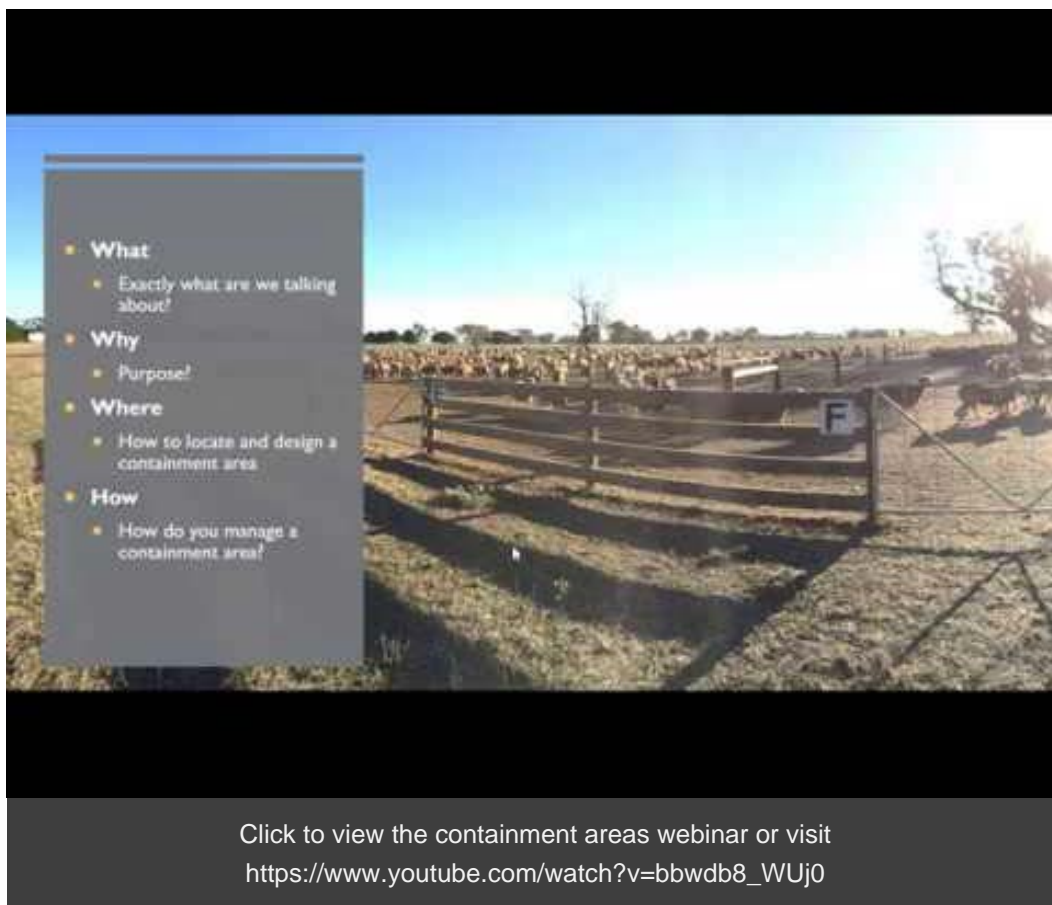
## Containment Areas Webinar

Containment Areas should be considered as part of a property management plan to be used when paddock feed is limiting such as during droughts, late breaks or early spring finishes. They allow livestock to be taken out of the paddock during these times which reduces erosion, maintains ground cover and pastures and also saves labour

Check out the BIGG Containment Areas webinar which provides practical and relevant information on the development and use of an area.

For more information see the Containment Areas Factsheet or click the button below if you are interested in attending a local workshop.

I'm interested in a Containment Areas WORKSHOP



• <b>What</b>
• Exactly what are we talking about?
• <b>Why</b>
• Purpose!
• <b>Where</b>
• How to locate and design a containment area
• <b>How</b>
• How do you manage a containment area?

Click to view the containment areas webinar or visit [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bbwdb8\\_WUj0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bbwdb8_WUj0)

## Soil moisture monitoring report

*15 December 2017*

The monthly soil moisture report for the three paddocks (located at Flaxman Valley, Keyneton and Koonunga) BIGG is monitoring as part of our Soil Moisture Monitoring project can be found [here](#) (note the graphs in the report comparing soil moisture use in 2017 to 2016 for each site).

As of today (15 December), the **soil water capacity** of each site is very similar to the last report on 24 November:

- Flaxman Valley: 15% (*12% on 24 November*)
- Keyneton: 47% (*45% on 24 November*)
- Koonunga: 33% (*40% on 24 November*)

As for other happenings in the project, last week we added a **Sheep Flystrike Risk Index** to the BIGG website to help predict the local incidence of flystrike. Further information about the index can be found in an [article](#) that appeared in last weeks Stock Journal.

The index is based on data from each of the sites weather stations, so to check out

the current flystrike risk levels just click on your nearest weather station and scroll down to the 'Sheep Flystrike' graph:

- [Flaxman Valley](#)
- [Keyneton](#)
- [Koonunga](#)

Also for those of you crop harvesting, don't forget to view the **Fire Danger Index** to help determine when conditions are safe for harvest. Again just click on your nearest weather station and scroll down do the 'Grassland Fire Danger Index' graph. Its that easy!

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*This project is supported by the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board's Sustainable Agriculture Industry Support scheme and the SA Murray-Darling Basin Natural Resources Management Board through the NRM Levies.*

[Read the 15 December paddock report](#)

## Spray Drones in action

**By Jackson Adams, Livestock Consulting Intern, the University of Adelaide**

Many of us would be familiar with the multitask that is eating your lunch whilst operating machinery to get the job done. Well imagine doing this whilst flying! Whilst slightly unbelievable this is not far from reality for the lads at Revolution AG with their innovative technology which is of course spray drones.

On Tuesday the 31st of October, Charles and his team from Revolution AG stopped by the PIRSA office in Nuriootpa not only for a cuppa and an egg and bacon sandwich, but to also introduce this new innovative technology to around 30 keen tech fans from all walks of life.



**Figure One:** XGEOMATICS C2000 Surveying Drone



**Figure Two:** P20 2017 Crop Protection UAV

The first drone Charles introduced to us all was the XGEOMATICS C2000 (Figure One) which is a low-altitude quadcopter capable of collecting orthophoto map, topography, landform, high-definition geographical information, altimetric data and multispectral images. With a flight time of 40 minutes, the C2000 can map up to 133 hectares of land in a single flight.

The second drone Charles introduced to us was the P20 2017 Crop Protection UAV (Figure Two) which was far more spectacular in terms of being able to visually see its capabilities. We all watched in amazement as the UAV tracked and sprayed vineyards with centimetre accuracy thanks to GNSS RTK positioning technology. With precision variable rate spraying at an efficiency of 5.1ha/hour, the opportunities for local growers in the Barossa region and beyond is extremely exciting.



P20 2017 Crop Protection UAV tracking, spraying and approaching the end of a vineyard row.



Revolution AG's "techy" Alex unloading both the C2000 Surveying drone and the P20 2017 Crop Protection drone with all associated GNSS RTK Positional guidance equipment.

## Work Health and Safety Policy

Did you know that more than a quarter of workplace deaths in Australia occur on-farm?

Working in ag can be dangerous so it's important to us that we provide a safe and healthy working environment for our technical facilitators, our volunteers and everyone who participates in our projects or events.

Luckily for us, BIGG advisory committee member Alan Jackson is a risk specialist and volunteered to develop a health and safety policy for BIGG and the Angaston Ag Bureau.

Thanks to NRM Volunteer Small Grants which are supported by the SA Murray-Darling Basin Natural Resources Management Board through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme and the NRM Levies, BIGG now has a full set of policies, procedures and tools that our team can use to ensure

we all stay safe.

All the documents are available online at <http://biggroup.org.au/whs/>

Visit FarmSafe <http://www.farmsafe.org.au/> for more information about farm safety.

Thanks to Alan for the many hours of in-kind work he put in to develop our safety systems.

## Merry Christmas from BIGG

*From Graham Keynes, BIGG Chair*

What a BIGG year we have had!!

As Christmas fast approaches and 2018 is on our doorstep, I thought that it would be appropriate to look back at some of our achievements over the past year. Firstly though, I would like to acknowledge the efforts of our previous chairperson, Mark Grossman, who held the position until July of this year. As the inaugural chairperson, Mark was instrumental in the establishment of BIGG and helped determine its best direction.

So, we commenced 2017 with the successful Perfect Pastures Conference held at Lambert Estate in February, followed by the Climate Variability Workshop in June. Three pasture walks were conducted over the Spring period, with over 80 producers attending. Topics covered included 'Performance of Pasture Varieties in Local Environments', 'Oestrogenic Clover Identification' and 'Forage Cereal and Annual Ryegrass Varieties and Their Production'.

Three very informative webinars were held this year to discuss 'Matching Pastures with Production', 'Working with Season to Boost Production' and 'Containment Areas'. These events were very well supported, with 180 participants from across Australia .

Two new projects have recently commenced 'Soil moisture and climate information to better manage climate variability' and 'Improving community skills, knowledge and engagement in sustainable farming practices' and work will continue on them throughout 2018, thanks to Natural Resources AMLR and SAMDB for funding these projects.

The highlight of the year was receiving the *Australian Government Excellence in Sustainable Farm Practices Award* at the State Landcare Awards held in Clare on 12th September. 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’.

Of course BIGG are only able to achieve the things we do because of our supporters - there are too many to name so have a look at our header and footer to see the organisations that provide support, both funding and in-kind, to the work we do.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our technical facilitators, Brett Nietschke and Georgina Keynes for all their assistance throughout the year in planning , facilitating and advertising our events and promoting the BIGG community as a whole. Thanks also to Rebecca Barr and the team at AgCommunicators for their able assistance with all things communications-related.

On behalf of the BIGG Committee, I wish you a Merry Christmas and look forward to an even BIGGer year in 2018!

## From the Inbox...

- MLA Sheep productivity and profitability [webinars series](#)- continuing through summer.....
- [Thriving Women's Conference](#)- 19/20 February, Hahndorf
- Safe Ag Systems- [Top 10 Blogs for Farmers](#)
- World Merino Conference at Uruguay Fellowship 2018- [Merino SA](#)
- Better Farm Management Workshop- Beginning 23 Feb [Mid North Young Guns](#)
- Native Grass ID Guide - [Natural Resources AMLR](#)

## Your BIGG Contacts

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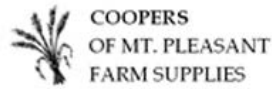


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