

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

March 2018

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You're Invited:

BIGG STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION

Friday 8th June

8.00am- 12pm Boiler Room, Yalumba

Please come along to share in how we develop BIGG to remain relevant and important for all.

RSVP: admin@biggroup.org.au

Local Soil Moisture Update

Dry conditions continue to persist locally, although hopefully you might have been able to jag a few 'mils' last night with the brief thunderstorm that came through (every bit helps!). Locally the growing season rainfall is currently running at about 'decile 3', so actually pretty similar to the same time last year.

As part of BIGGs *Soil Moisture Monitoring in Grazing Systems* project we continue to monitor the soil moisture status of three local paddocks; located at Flaxman Valley, Keyneton and Koonunga. A short report of each site can be viewed on the BIGG website [here](#).

Currently their soil water capacity (between 15-85cm depth) is:

- Flaxman Valley: 18%
- Keyneton: 43%
- Koonunga: 26%

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.



Grazing Strategies for a Dry Winter

Although pastures are greening, soil moisture levels are still very low. This

webinar will help you develop strategies to optimise dry matter production to ensure we make the most of our pastures through the winter and help set up spring feed.



[Click to Register for WEBINAR Monday 4th June 7.30pm](#)

Presented by Agribusiness Consultant Simon Vogt this webinar will provide:

- An understanding of the relationship between plant requirements, leaf emergence rates and pasture growth
- Measuring and predicting pasture growth
- Allocation of pasture on a dry matter basis relating to livestock requirements
- Strategies to optimise pasture production in the months ahead

The Regional Landcare Facilitator Program is supported by SA 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 Program and the NRM Levies.

2018 Koonunga Pasture Demonstration Site

In it's third year the Farmer Johns/ Pasture Genetics Pasture Demonstration Site at Koonunga is all set to provide some exciting information about different pasture varieties in our own local environment.

The lucerne's which were planted in 2016 are still producing large amounts of dry matter, particularly given the dry summer, demonstrating their persistence and ability to fill summer and autumn feed gaps. The perennial

grasses are also continuing to demonstrate their persistence given the dry summer. New fescue variety Tower has been sown this year. Tower is a continental fescue with a late heading date and palatability that makes it ideal for farmers wanting to achieve high animal performance. Tower is suited to most animals, but will have greatest benefit where high performance is required from stock (e.g. dairy cows, beef and lamb finishing).



Other new exciting Lucerne varieties were also sown on the 7th May, which have all germinated:

- Grazing Tolerant Lucerne 60 (GTL60) ideally suited as a dual-purpose variety for grazing and hay operations where persistence is more important than winter growth
- Seed Force 714Q Lucerne as a specialist Lucerne with excellent colour and quality necessary to target the premium Lucerne hay markets.
- Multileaf lucerne (ML99) has been developed to incorporate a new level of quality and production in winter active Lucerne.



In addition, the clovers and medics, sown in 2016, are demonstrating their seed production and regeneration ability as demonstrated by this photo of Narricup sub clover.



Prairie grasses which are sparking significant interest in the industry have also been sown this year.

- Matua Prairie Grass has a high autumn and winter production and tolerance to dryer sowing conditions. Highly suited to rotational grazing, this grass is considered an annual or short term perennial pasture species with the nutrition of an annual ryegrass but the growth habit of a perennial and a strong ability to regrow after a hard grazing.
- Jeronimo Prairie Grass is a new highly winter active prairie grass with a broad fit for pasture systems where rotational grazing is used. It has similar maturity to Matua and has excellent capacity for re-seeding into pasture swards. It can also be used as a component of cocksfoot or tall fescue based perennial pastures to provide re-seeding into the pasture sward, especially around stock camps. It can also be used in mixes with lucerne to provide balanced pasture with more winter production and no need for expensive winter cleaning.

Keep an eye out for spring pasture walks, or catch up with your local agronomist to discuss what varieties might fit your system.

Fleurieu Forward Farming Field Day



Georgie Keynes, Karl Zerner, Melissa Rebbeck, Bruce Hancock and Kate McCarthy, observing the Fleurieu Forward Farming pasture demonstrations....in the freezing cold!

Regenerative farming is becoming a more popular term within the Agricultural industry. On the 15th of May members of the BIGG group were able to attend the Fleurieu Forward Farming Field day as a part of the recent “AgEX Alliance 2018 PIRSA Grower Group Award”.

This workshop based on identifying the importance of soil health and appropriate water use and how they might tie into the term regenerative farming. This workshop was focused on a few key principles such as building resistance within your farming system, understanding chemical vs biological farming, hearing what practices have worked for local farmers to improve soil health and discussing if carbon credits can apply to these farming practices. In order for producers to gain a better grasp on some of these principles, six state or national speakers were brought together.

Dean Belfield from Regenerative Australian Farmers was the keynote speaker for

the day and he was able to talk about what the difference might be between Biological vs Chemical farming, if they can work together and is it possible to gain remuneration from improving soil carbon. Given that Dean is a part of Regenerative Australian Farmers it was clear that his passion lies within creating a holistic approach to farming. One comment made by Dean that stood out was “Healthy soils for a healthy life”. This comment reiterated that Dean believes there is a strong connection between the soil environment and how that can either positively or negatively impact production systems.

Gaining Carbon credits through the Emission Reduction Fund was another topic discussed in Dean’s presentation. Carbon credits is becoming topical in many industries however Dean feels that through carbon sequestration farmers will have the opportunity to be “paid to look after their soils”. Dean is an example of a farmer who is currently carbon farming involving himself in 10 carbon projects.

Melissa Rebbeck was another speaker who emphasised her belief that regenerative farming is of importance. Melissa spoke about the option of using alternative fertilisers and presented results from her recent study suggesting that biodynamic fertilisers are able to increase soil health.

Not only did this field day enable farmers to gain knowledge on soil health and water use it was also an opportunity to network with producers and advisors from various regions. Around 20 Soil health exhibitor displays were available providing attendees the opportunity to network with other professionals outside of their local area.

As a part of the field day there was also the chance see the local dryland soil health and plant available response trails that the Fleurieu Forward Farming group have been running.

Links to Field Day power points and various projects ran by the Fleurieu Forward Farming group:

- <https://fleurieuforwardfarming.com/field-days-and-presentations/>
- <https://fleurieuforwardfarming.com/projects/>

Local Soil Workshops.....

Soil health workshop

Come along to this **FREE** workshop and hear from soil expert Ash Martin from Microbiology Laboratories Australia. You will learn how to:

- ✓ Maximize soil health and sustainability
- ✓ Manage your soil to increase beneficial microbes
- ✓ Increase soil water infiltration and retention
- ✓ Improve the symbiotic relationship between soil microbes and plant roots
- ✓ Increase the uptake of locked up nutrients
- ✓ Work towards reducing fertilizer inputs
- ✓ Naturally increase soil nitrogen and carbon levels



When: Saturday 16 June **Time:** 8:30 am – 12:30 pm

Where: Paringa Park Dairy, Springhead Road, Charleston

Seats are limited, please email jemma.vandenbos@sa.gov.au with your details to register. For more information please contact Will Hannaford on 0419037303.

Merino Sire Evaluation Field Day



Same ewes, same environment, same management.
View progeny of 16 leading Stud Merinos side by sire.

Friday 22nd June 11am - 3pm
Keyneton Station: 1057 Stott Hwy, Keyneton

Guest Speakers, Trade Displays, Lunch and Inspection of 2017 Drop Progeny

More Information: Sire Coordinator: Anna Cameron acameron@yalumba.com

From the Inbox.....

- Dairy SA Innovation Day: [7 June Mt Gambier](#)
- Dung Beetle Field Day: Charleston June 18 [BOOK NOW](#)
- Best Wool/Best Lamb and Better Beef Conference: [Bendigo 26/27 June](#)
- National Landcare Stories including BIGG's bushfire recovery: [LANDCARE IN FOCUS](#)
- Secure Pollination through Revegetation; Lucerne, Canola and Fruit Trees [VIDEO](#)
- National Landcare Conference: 10-12 October: [REGISTRATIONS OPEN](#)

Your BIGG Contacts

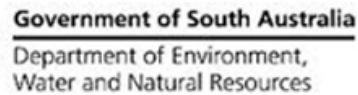
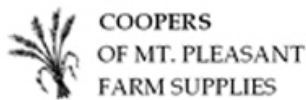
Technical Facilitators:

[Brett Nietschke](mailto:brett.nietschke@barossa.gov.au): 0432 804 389

[Georgie Keynes](mailto:georgie.keynes@barossa.gov.au): 0409 287 261

Communication Officer:

[Rebecca Barr](mailto:rebecca.barr@barossa.gov.au); 0402 788 526



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