

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 2019

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Improving Soil Health in Grazing Systems

Soil is a critical factor within our grazing production system. This webinar will broaden your understanding of soil health by providing an introduction to the chemical, biological and physical soil properties and the opportunities available to improve them.

WEBINAR: This Wednesday 3rd April 8.00pm (SA time)

REGISTER HERE!

Presented by Tim Marshall, organic and biological agriculture consultant and trainer, the webinar will cover:

- Basic principles of soil health
- Alternatives to traditional fertilisers
- The use of biological inputs to improve soil health
- Increasing organic matter and the benefits



BIGG 4th Annual Conference



Taryn Mangelsdorf, NR AMLR, Lisa Nietschke and Catherine Harper, Barossa Vet Service



Josh Bottrall, Bruce Henderson, Emma Mcinerney and Brett Nietschke.

BIGG's 4th annual conference, Thriving into the Future was held at the Nuriootpa Sports & Function Centre on Thursday 21 March 2019 with a total of 49 attendees.

Producers shared their experiences and strategies for coping with tough times, demonstrating a positive attitude and readiness to make necessary changes in their businesses.

“Despite the tough times, there is a lot of optimism” said one participant in their conference evaluation.

The conference focused on strategies producers can adopt to help their enterprises thrive.

APAL Managing Director Ryan Walker discussed how producers can save fertiliser costs by using site specific soil sampling, while Barossa Veterinary Service’s Catherine Harper suggested cost saving options such as pregnancy testing reduce feed for dry animals and faecal egg counts to reduce drenching costs.

Farmer Johns’ Anthony Ellis explained factors to make the most of the season, and Rural Directions’ Simon Vogt demonstrated the difference in strategies that the most profitable businesses adopt.

There was also a fantastic session with a group of local 'Young Guns' who are blazing a name for themselves carrying out research, innovation and learning opportunities which support and improve our agricultural industry. It's great to know that there's enthusiasm coming up thorough the ranks!

Thanks to our major sponsors of the conference, 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.

All of the presentations from the conference are now available to view on our website www.biggroup.org.au

Heads Up! BIGG soil moisture survey

BIGG's monitoring stations record soil moisture and various weather data and later this week we will send you a short survey on how this data is being used for on farm decision making. Please take the time to fill it out when you receive it.

BIGG Bus Trip



All aboard the BIGG bus (plus a few hiding at the back!!), at Jane and Greg Kellock's property south of Burra.

Twenty-two producers and university students joined the Barossa Improved Grazing Group's (BIGG's) Bus Trip which took them on journey to improve their sheep business.

The first stop on the bus was Jamestown where the group joined the Meat and Livestock Australia and Australian Wool Innovation's '*It's Ewe Time!*' Forum.

This event provided access to a range of expert speakers who covered issues such as managing sheep in dry times. Key Take Home Messages included:

- The importance of condition scoring ewes, creating a management calendar to ensure you are on top of your jobs, implementing a feed budget and improving lamb survival.
- the importance of weaning to reduce stress and maintain lamb growth rates, this involves putting a plan in place now to work towards.
- Monitor changes in animal health and productivity and manage according to these findings
- Australia is now a major world exporter of non- mulsed wool and the premiums for non-mulsed wool is increasing
- In a dry time know the probability of the length of the dry period and develop a best and worst case scenario.

In addition to these learning opportunities, the group networked with over 100 other

producers who attended the forum.

The afternoon component of the bus trip facilitated a visit to Jane and Greg Kellock's property 'Kelvale' where they enthusiastically shared all components of their sheep business. The group were impressed by their focus on the 'people' side of their business with dedicated communication, management plans and strategic planning.

The farm visit also provided a practical aspect with a demonstration of the 'Combi-Clamp' which is a sheep management tool that clamps the sheep to allow treatments to be applied, weights taken, classing of the animals and condition scoring. Jane and Greg have also implemented electronic identification throughout their flock. They use the electronic tags to record fleece weight, condition score, liveweight, eye muscle depth, fat depth and pregnancy status. This individual information provides Jane and Greg with the opportunity to record production performance through the life of the ewe which improves their management system and allows them to keep the high-performance ewes and class out the low performers, which is particularly important in dry times.

The bus trip also provided the opportunity for networking and discussion along the route. Producers discussed their key take home messages from the day and the group of honours and PhD students from the Adelaide University discussed their projects which they were researching to improve sheep businesses.

The bus trip was supported by Natural Resources Adelaide Mt Lofty Ranges and the Ag Excellence Alliance.

Soil Acidity Survey



The National Landcare Program is conducting an online survey on soil acidity in the Adelaide Mt Lofty Ranges NRM region. The aim is to collect community knowledge on, and key issues with, treating soil acidity in the Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges

natural resources management region.

Soil acidity is a serious land degradation issue that affects soil and plant health. A recent analysis of data found a gap in knowledge of the extent and severity of soil acidity, and whether it is being recognised and treated, on non-commercial and semi-commercial land in this region.

Your participation in the survey will help us fill this gap in knowledge, and may help us discover new questions that need to be studied.

Please access the survey by clicking <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Z2KJYSJ> .

If you choose to enter your contact details you go into the draw to win one of two \$250 vouchers for an agricultural or environmental store of your choice. You can also register for information about possible free soil testing.

All survey responses are anonymous. Names and contact details will only be provided by If you have any questions, please contact me at rebecca.tonkin@sa.gov.au, or call 0400 488 786.

This project is supported by the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

From the Inbox.....

- No Kill Cropping with Bruce Maynard- Robertstown- Wednesday 3rd April- More Info- abrown@greeningaustralia.com.au
- Think.Digital- Immersive Technology in Agriculture- Freeling- Thursday 11 April [MORE](#)
- Ag Excellence Alliance Forum- (with a presentation from Georgie!)- Thursday 4th April [Registrations Closing!](#)
- Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme- Drought Affected Areas- [More Information](#)
- Are My Pastures Stuffed- see a great little MLA video and information [HERE](#)
- Dry Times Resources Website- Natural Resources SAMDB [Check it Out!](#)
- Rural Business Support Website- Get in touch with a counsellor, help with Farm Household Allowance application, Business Readiness Program workshops [WEBSITE](#)

Your BIGG Contacts

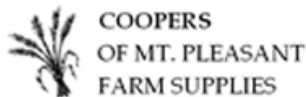
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