



Barossa Improved Grazing Group

Annual Report

2020



Barossa Improved Grazing Group Inc.

Our Vision

Resilient Landscapes and Land Managers



Our Mission

To Improve Farm Grazing Systems

2020 Snapshot

- Annual 'Beyond 2020' Conference-
80 Attendees
- Containment Ewe Bus Trip-
45 Attendees
- Soil Pit Video Series- 5 videos
- Winter and Spring Pasture Walks-
40 attendees
- Hosted three webinars reaching over
300 producers
- 2 Producer Surveys providing direction
for future projects
- 10 BIGG Bulletin e-news reaching
over 350 producers
- 3 new grant opportunities to extend
'on-the ground' projects





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About Us

Barossa Improved Grazing Group Board

Ian Koch (Moculta)	Chair
Vic Patrick (Flaxmans Valley)	Vice Chair
Sarah Weaver (Freeling)	Treasurer
Peter Mitchell (Angaston)	Board Member
Chris George (Mt Pleasant)	Board Member
Lisa Nietschke (Freeling)	Board Member
Craig John (Mt Pleasant)	Board Member
Taryn Mangelsdorf (Gawler)	Board Member
Georgie Keynes	Executive Officer
Brett Nietschke	Technical Facilitator
Deb Scammell	Technical Facilitator



Communications

Website	www.bigggroup.org.au
BIGG e-news	
Producer Case Studies	
Live Weather Station Information	
Producer Resources	
Events	
Facebook	@Barossaimprovedgrazing
YouTube	Barossa Improved Grazing Group

BIGG Partners:

Bursary Sponsor



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Project Sponsors



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2020 Networking and Learning Events

Beyond 2020 Conference

18 February

BIGG's 5th Annual Conference was the highlight of the year, with over 80 producers attending the afternoon session.

This year's conference focused on looking beyond 2020, to begin drought recovery, innovations to improve farm grazing systems and encourage positive attitude and thinking.



Highlights

- Seven speakers delivering a range of land, water and livestock presentations
- Fantastic sponsors display throughout the day
- Networking opportunities for producers, sponsors, local businesses and industry attendees
- A cohort of students from The Adelaide University
- Panel sessions with three 'young guns' and local producers
- Attendees rated the conference 9/10 for their business

Presentation from the day

<https://biggroup.org.au/resources/presentations>

BIGG Projects

Producer Demonstration Site: Ewe Containment Areas



The project has just entered its second year of three. It works with farmers to demonstrate and assess the use of on-farm 'containment areas' to:

- Maintain annual enterprise stocking rates
- Maintain ground cover
- Increase reproductive rate
- Maintain condition score of the ewe to increase lamb marking percentage and maintain wool cut

During this project we will:

- Conduct a cost benefit analysis to determine the economic performance of containment compared to non-containment areas.
- Upskill producers to increase their confidence in the use of electronic identification, condition scoring, ground cover monitoring and feed budgeting.
- Conduct extension activities to encourage adoption of key practices.



Highlights:

- 12 farmers were engaged (located across the Barossa, Eastern Mt Lofty Ranges and Lower Mid North) with their containment sites being monitored through 2020
- Containment Ewe Bus trip in April 2020 with 45 producers visiting containment sites (funded by Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board)
- Local case studies developed to facilitate farmer-farmer learning
- Tech- notes and webinars delivered

[Summer Feeding Ewes Webinar](#)

[Use of Minerals in Containment Tech Note](#)

[Tim Brown Producer Case Study](#)

[Containment Ewe Discussion and Case Study Webinar](#)

Monitoring Soil Moisture in Grazing Systems

This project continued to support BIGG's weather station network located across the Barossa, which provides real-time information on soil moisture and various weather parameters.

Highlights

- Soil Moisture reports for 4 local weather stations in the BIGG e-newsletter
- Webinar presented by Peter Toome, TOIP Pty Ltd (93 views)
 - ‘Interpreting weather station data to assist farm decision-making’ – 27/2/20
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGSBeqRCvcs>
- 1x webinar presented by Darren Ray, Consulting Climatologist (181 views)
 - ‘Local climatic outlook for this season’ – 8/4/20
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sU0lsm-DA3A>
- 1x video presented by Peter Toome, TOIP Pty (32 views)
 - ‘BIGG climate variability snapshot: rainfall and soil moisture’ – 30/4/20
<https://youtu.be/XNcoe6dwY8>
- 1x case study on Luke Clark, Jamestown farmer
 - ‘Soil moisture data and 100% groundcover drives decision-making’
<https://biggroup.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Luke-Clark-case-study-final.pdf>
- 2x articles in the local newspaper, The Leader and SA farming magazine INGRAIN
- Producer Survey demonstrating local farmers are using the weather station network to make 3-4 on farm decisions.



Soil Pit Field Days/ Videos

The aim of this day was to visit soil pits which were dug at the 4 BIGG weather station sites to:

- increase producer awareness on common local soil issues
- encourage producers to perform simple in-the field tests to monitor their own soil conditions
- link with individual soil testing results which producers performed through this project.

As a result of COVID, the field day session was changed to individual videos, which are on the [BIGG Youtube channel](#).

Highlights:

- Each video has been viewed on average 30 times- this is representative of the number of producers who would have attended each individual session
- The videos have also been shared through Landscape Boards communication networks and local Barossa networks such as Barossa Grape and Wine.



BIGG Youtube Channel:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3B8Y8_PDSRFxMQQ3fo5eA



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Gra\$\$ to Dollars

A pilot program, developed as a workshop of eleven sessions run from February to November 2020. Its aim was to:

- Upskill knowledge on pastures and animal performance for farm production.
- Provide valuable skills for producers and industry to determine how much pasture they grow, how to improve growth, how much an animal can eat and how to turn pasture into the maximum amount of meat and/or wool.
- Provide practical advice to take home to their own businesses to improve productivity and profitability.

Highlights

- 11 producers and local businesses participated in the workshop
- Vic Patrick, beef producer in Eden Valley described the course from his perspective, “After 50 years of farming I didn’t realise how much I didn’t know – the course is more than a refresher and extremely valuable.”
- Co-funding from Northern and Yorke Landscape Board allowed additional grazing and nutrition information to producers while upskilling local consultants.



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MEAT & LIVESTOCK AUSTRALIA

Pasture Walks

The return of pasture walks, BIGG's original flagship events, was a great addition to 2020. The aim of these events was to:

- See what pasture varieties are performing well in the local area- old or new
- Observe different areas of pasture management to increase production and livestock productivity (polycultures, lucerne systems, alternative fertilisers and weed control options, different approaches to grazing management)
- Observe and measure perennial pasture persistence and ground cover, especially after the last two drought years
- Refresh and upskilling pasture measurement techniques
- Understanding and observing feed test results to improve livestock production

These events always provide a fantastic networking opportunity for producers, with social opportunities provided at the end of the event.

Highlights

- Winter pasture walk- focused on multi-species varieties with over 20 producers observing varieties, which provide additional feed opportunities such as cereals mixed with ryegrasses, forage rape varieties and a total poly culture crop.
- Coopers Mt Pleasant spring pasture walk- over 20 producers were hailed on at the Coopers pasture demo site where there was a range of annual pasture varieties on display, followed by a perennial pasture and an innovative pasture renovation paddock.



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Livestock Technology Group

The group will run over two years, delivering a range of sessions to develop the capacity of producers to increase on-farm productivity. There has been one session delivered with another four scheduled for 2021 and 22.

Highlights:

- 8 livestock businesses have developed an on-farm technology plan to facilitate implementation on their farms
- Areas of focus include, individual EID, remote pasture monitoring, water monitoring and parentage/DNA technology.



SA Cattle
Industry
Fund

SA Sheep
Industry
Fund



2021 Opportunities

Equipping farmers with soil, water and climate decision making tools

The project will provide on-farm decision-making tools for farmers with linkages to BIGG's weather stations, new water quality testing and investigations to improve on-farm water storage and infrastructure.

The project will be completed through 2021 and will include:

- A bus trip visiting alternative methods of increasing water catchment and storage including sheeted catchments.
- On-farm water quality testing for local producers to monitor salinity levels
- Weather station and soil monitoring reports to provide local decision-making tools
- A producer survey to understand local water quality issues and opportunities



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2021 Events:

- Thursday 18th February- BIGG's 6th Annual Conference- Nuriootpa
- 1st Week March- Ewe Containment Bus Trip- Sedan, Cambrai
- Mid March- Livestock Technology Group
- April 2021- Break of the Season Pasture Walk



Thank you

To all producers, businesses and industry personnel who provide your time, knowledge and support for all things BIGG. BIGG **exists by producers for producers** and will continue to work from the 'ground up' in 2021!