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The BIGG Bulletin

March 2018

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Livestock E-tech for NRM Angaston Ag Bureau Hogget Competition

Kate McCarthy- Graduate Consultant, Rural Solutions SA:PIRSA



E-technology for natural resource management (NRM) within the Livestock industry was the key focus of the forum of The Angaston Annual Hogget Competition which was held on Friday the 23rd of March at Keyneton.

Virtual fencing is currently a topic of great interest in the Livestock industry and is proving to be beneficial for a variety of reasons, particularly, NRM practices.

Dr Danila Marini from the CSIRO / University of New England, NSW began the forum with an intuitive presentation on her work in developing a virtual fence within the sheep industry. Given that this is a relatively new idea within this industry her work is still very much focused on research and development. The overall aim of this product is to ensure greater grazing control and improved weed management through the use of technology. Danila's main research interests are focused on animal behavior and welfare around the collar to ensure that the welfare of the sheep is never jeopardised. Danila explained how she went about teaching the sheep to respond to the collar. The technology uses sound and an aversive stimulus to encourage the animals to keep within a designated boundary. It was shown that the sheep learnt quickly to respond to the stimulus however there were certain variables such as animal temperament which influenced how quickly the animals learnt. This technology still requires greater development however it is a product that will be beneficial to the sheep industry moving forward.

Although virtual fencing is yet to be implemented in the sheep industry it has definitely found its place in the cattle industry. Poppy McBain from Agersons was

another keynote speaker who was able to provide insight on how the eShepherd is helping to evolve the cattle industry through virtual fencing. The eShepherd is a welfare friendly device that is allowing farmers to essentially monitor and muster livestock using a smartphone anywhere at any time. This product has also had a lot of interest from NRM bodies due to the benefits it has when managing riparian systems. Keeping cattle away from waterways and rivers is essential in order to reduce erosion and improve water quality and the eShepherd is able to create effective boundaries around these areas in a reasonably low cost and efficient manner. The commercial product will be launched at the 'Beef Australia' event in QLD in May and will be available to producers after this.

The day also included interactive sessions with Michelle Cousins (Cousins Merino Services) who demonstrated electronic tagging for sheep and Pete Treloar who discussed how he has implemented the technology on his own property.

Thank you to the Angaston Ag Bureau who ran this brilliant event highlighting innovative ways we will be managing our livestock in the future. The day was supported by SPAA (Society of Precision Agriculture Australia) and the 'Community Action Grant' made available by the NRM Levy paid by all ratepayers within the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges region.

Picking Pastures for the Upcoming Season



With increasingly variable seasons, picking the right pasture varieties can play a role in filling certain feed gaps to increase total annual dry matter production. The MLA PDS Project has just completed the second year of measurements of how different annual, perennial and pasture blends perform in the local environment and can be

used to help with pasture selection for the 2018 season.

The results from the 2017 season indicated:

- In a short growing season, earlier varieties which establish and grow vigorously through the winter and early spring, produce high levels of dry matter and grazing days before the spring dries out.
- In the second year of production Lucerne varieties were producing over 6 tons Dry Matter per Hectare.
- Lucerne blended with chicory was producing the highest amount of Dry Matter per Hectare which was 1200Kg of Dry Matter per hectare more than the average for all Lucerne varieties. The chicory helps prevent bloat and provides additional vitamins and nutrients.
- The second- year perennial grass plots demonstrated the importance in having a mix of varieties to help increase annual grazing days. Both Farmer Johns blends for 550ml rainfall and 450 ml rainfall which contain mixtures of perennial grasses and clovers were producing the greatest dry matter per hectare over 700 kg/Dm/Ha above the average at the Koonunga site.
- Including ryegrasses with forage cereal varieties increases the total dry matter production, improves quality and provides opportunities for further grazing later in the season.
- Increasing the seeding rate for a ryegrass hay and silage mix past 40kg/Ha will result in a decrease in dry matter, as will a low seeding rate below 10 kg/Ha.
- Using varieties which utilise current plant available water will increase number of grazing days and fodder conservation opportunities.
- Taking advantage of the above average year in 2016, when there is a large quantity of available pasture, provides the opportunity to allow annual sown paddocks to set seed, providing cheap pasture opportunities for the following year.

Always consult any decision with your local agronomist available at Farmer Johns (Nuriootpa) or Coopers Farm Supplies (Mt Pleasant).

For MORE INFO check out the Complete Final Report [HERE](#)

New BIGG faces



Two new local graduates, Jackson Adams (Left) and Kate McCarthy (Right) are keen to get involved in local Ag projects. They will both be working with BIGG on the MLA PDS project, working one-on-one with producers on the 'minor' paddock sites.

Introducing Jackson Adams:

I am 23 years old and from a non-farming background. Whilst I did not grow up on a farm, I have been surrounded by agriculture from a very young age. I started my first job on a dairy when I was 11 but was working for the love of Agriculture for years prior.

I have a Bachelor of Agricultural Science with Honours in Animal and Veterinary Science. I am currently in an internship with the University of Adelaide co-funded by Meat and Livestock Australia to train in Livestock Consultancy.

My interests are primarily in the production of sheep, particularly Merino's, however, I also have interests in the production of Beef and pastures for grazing considering they are all generally a part of very dynamic and collaborative system.

In 2018 you will more than likely see me cruising around the Barossa assisting Georgie and the crew at BIGG roll out the balance of the minor producer demonstration sites for this grazing season. So, don't be a stranger, come and say g'day!

Introducing Kate McCarthy:

In January 2018 I moved from Bathurst NSW to Nuriootpa in the Barossa to pursue a career in Agricultural and begin my position as a Graduate consultant in Sustainable Agriculture with Rural Solutions SA:PIRSA.

I have a strong passion for the livestock industry and have spent time working within various sheep and cattle production systems. I am also very interested in soil health and pasture production as I believe that both play an essential role in agricultural systems.

Prior to beginning as a Graduate consultant I completed a Bachelor's degree in Animal Science at Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga. After completing this degree I had developed a strong interest in research and development and was offered and honours project by CSU to study the effect of maternal Vitamin D3 and calcium supplementation on improving bone mineralisation disorders in suckling lambs. I am very much looking forward to getting involved with the BIGG and Barossa communities, getting to know the local producers as well as enjoying some local scenery and sports.

Pasture Principles Workshop



With the current dry conditions, it is going to be extremely important to proactively manage pastures after the breaking rains. Not rushing in at the first sign of green pick, but allowing pastures the chance to get going and accumulate dry matter is going to be essential to ensure plant persistence, maximise livestock intake and limit any negative metabolic effects.

Pasture management is the fundamental skill that determines the financial performance of pasture based grazing systems. Managers that exhibit a high degree of pasture management skill are far more profitable than those with less developed skills.

The Pasture Principles program aims to provide producers with a set of guiding principles that will allow them to manage their pastures confidently regardless of the season, situation or system. The program was developed by Basil Doonan, Principle Consultant at Macquarie Franklin, in conjunction with valuable input from a range of

experience individuals and is delivered in South Australia by Simon Vogt of Rural Directions. A key strength of the Pasture Principles package is the focus on the pasture : animal interface and also the in-field coaching sessions to assist with implementation. An excellent manual is provided to all participants.

The program is offered in a group training environment, an initial two day workshop is followed by a highly valued 12 month program consisting of six on-farm, group based coaching sessions that put the theory into practice, develop key skills in pasture management and the pasture : animal interface.

Rural Directions are delivering the Pasture Principles program in the Barossa on Monday 16th and Tuesday 17th April. If you are interested in improving your pasture management skills, to confidently manage your pasture system regardless of the season, situation or system, please don't hesitate to get in contact with Rural Directions for more information and to register for our Barossa Pasture Principles program. Please note that Rural Directions will be delivering a limited number of Pasture Principles groups each year, with an annual invitation for new groups in the Autumn of each year. The next opportunity to be involved in a new group won't be made available until the Autumn of 2019....so we encourage you to make the most of the current 2018 opportunity!

For more information about Pasture Principles or to register, please contact Rural Directions Pty Ltd on 08 8841 4500 or email admin@ruraldirections.com

[FLYER FOR PASTURE PRINCIPLES](#)

Local Sheepy Workshops.....



LAMBS ALIVE

Lambs Alive is designed to give producers the knowledge and skills to better manage lambing with the primary aim of improving lamb survival by optimising whole farm resource allocation. This requires specific attention to management between total flock scanning and lamb marking, with a major focus given to preparing the ewes and their lambing paddocks to enable better paddock allocation for lambing. The program is delivered on demonstration farms so participants can follow the best management practice in a practical hands-on way. The combination of 'One-on-One' coaching and workshop sessions is deemed to be the best mix of delivery methodologies.

First Session- 18 April 2018.

MORE INFO in the [FLYER](#)

BAROSSA SHEEP'S BACK BENCHMARKING

The Barossa Sheep's Back Benchmarking Workshop will allow a group of producers to discuss your individual and the group benchmarking results which will allow you to assess what is and isn't working and to help develop your own on farm action plan.

Working with experienced livestock consultant Daniel Schuppan who will take you through the process of developing your gross margin and benchmarking with the group.

Starting date TBA however likely to occur in June 2018.

Please indicate your interest to Daniel Schuppan: 0477 315 931/
daniel.schuppan@landmark.com.au

From the Inbox.....

- Fleurieu Forward Farming [Soil Health and Water Use Field Day](#) 15 May 2018..... contact [BIGG](#) for carpooling options
- BIGG's Soil Borne Diseases of Sub Clover Project: 2- page snapshot [summary](#) and full [project report](#).
- Producer feedback needed: Online survey for livestock biosecurity [DAIRY](#) or [SHEEP](#) or [CATTLE](#)
- Native Grass and Production in the Mallee Workshop: Mid Murray Landcare 10 April at Meldanda (Cambrai) Contact [Aimee Linke](#)

- Sheepy Webinars: Making More From Sheep [SUMMER SERIES](#)
- SAMDB Soil Matters [APRIL Newsletter](#)

Your BIGG Contacts

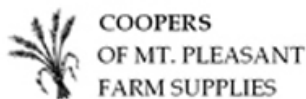
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