

The latest news from the Barossa Improved Grazing Group

[View this email in your browser](#)



# The BIGG Bulletin

August 2021

## In this issue.....

- Soil Moisture Report
- BIGG Water Catchment Workshop- Take 2!
- Harvesting Rainwater Case Study
- Regional Water Security Report
- Containment Ewe Project Update
- Testing Parentage Collars for Sheep
- Save the Date- Producer Tech Group
- From the Inbox

## Soil moisture report - rain, rain rain!

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)

What a difference a drop (or two) make! The rain gauges on BIGG's four weather stations have certainly been working overtime recently, with the July totals all being 125mm+. Flaxman Valley recorded the highest amount with 184mm.

Growing season rainfall is now tracking well, along with soil moisture levels, which are currently at field capacity at Flaxman Valley, Keyneton and Moculta. Certainly a big jump compared to BIGG's last soil moisture report on 8<sup>th</sup> June, when moisture levels were 13-43%.

Site	Growing season rainfall (mm)	Estimated soil moisture in the profile (%)	
	2021*	8/6/21	10/8/21
Flaxman Valley	360	43	100
Keyneton	247	25	100
Koonunga	251	13	84
Moculta	227	33	100

\*Rainfall from 1/4/21-10/8/21

Further details about the soil moisture status of each weather station paddock, including what's been happening in each, can be found in BIGG's latest soil moisture report. It also explains why Koonunga has not yet reached field capacity.

The report can be viewed [here](#).

*This project is supported through funding by the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board.*

[View the full report](#)

## BIGG Water Catchment Workshop – it's back on!



After being postponed due to the recent tightening of COVID restrictions, BIGG has rescheduled its Water Catchment Workshop to **Friday 3rd September (2-4pm)**. The workshop will be held at the **Mt McKenzie hall** and will showcase and communicate the innovative rainwater capture strategy of on-farm lined catchments.

A lined catchment is a poly lined catchment area that runs into a dam, with rainwater being captured in any rainfall (or dew) event.

Earlier in the year several BIGG members attended a Livestock Water Security Field day in the Coorong region, which featured farmers who are successfully harvesting rainwater using lined catchments. The Water Catchment Workshop will feature representatives from the Coorong who have been at the forefront of lined catchment development in SA:

- Mark Scobie – leading Coorong farmer who was the first farmer in the region to gain approval to construct a lined catchment
- Tracey Strugnell – Coorong community engagement officer who was the key driver of the Coorong water security project that focused on the development of lined catchments

Brian Hughes, local PIRSA consultant will also share his knowledge on lined catchments at the workshop.

The workshop is free, but please RSVP. For the full workshop program, see this [flyer](#).

*This workshop is supported through funding from the Australian Governments Smart*

See the full Flyer!

## Harvesting rainwater proves invaluable during dry times- Local Case Study



To help promote the concept of lined catchments for BIGG's upcoming Water Catchment Workshop on 3<sup>rd</sup> September, we have developed a case study on the lined catchment Robertstown farmer, Dale Button constructed.

Dale constructed a lined catchment in 2018. The captured water runs into a dam, which is pumped to higher ground and gravitates to multiple header tanks and paddock troughs across a 400ha block on his property.

The case study outlines why Dale chose to construct a lined catchment, how he constructed it, how much rainwater it captures and the cost. His investment in a lined catchment has proven invaluable, simply because it allowed him to continue to run stock on his block - even in the drought years of 2018 and 2019.

Check out the case study [here](#) – its well worth a read!

## Regional Water Security - BIGG Survey





Earlier in the year, BIGG conducted a survey of local producers to improve understanding of on-farm water security in the region. Thanks to all those who filled out the survey as it established:

- The water sources producers rely on
- The water security issues producers are experiencing
- The water infrastructure improvements producers are planning in the future
- The barriers to undertaking these improvements

The major **water sources** relied upon by producers for their agricultural enterprises are; on-farm dams (86% of respondents), rainfall captured from house/sheds (79%) and bore water (76%).

The survey found that only 38% of producers have access to mains water, while 28% have previously had to cart water to satisfy their requirements.

A range of on-property **water security issues** have been experienced by producers, particularly low farm dam water supply (82% of respondents) and low rainfall capture (79%). In addition, bore water salinity levels (43%), low river/stream flow (36%), bore water supply (32%) and spring water supply (32%) were the other issues most faced.

Over the next three years, producers would like to undertake a range of **water infrastructure improvements** on their property, namely the installation of tanks (42% of respondents), piping (33%) and troughs (21%). In addition, 29% of respondents would like access to mains water.

The key **barrier** to undertaking water infrastructure improvements on property is the high cost of infrastructure (52% of respondents). The next major barriers were

The results and feedback from this survey substantiate the significance of water security for producers in the region. In particular, for graziers who rely on dam water for their livestock and don't have access to mains water.

The full survey report can be found [here](#). To dig a bit deeper into regional water security, BIGG will be conducting a follow-up survey next month.

*This survey is supported through funding from the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board*

[See Full Survey Report](#)

## Containment Ewe Project Update



The MLA Producer Demonstration Site Containment Ewe Project is progressing well with results of year 2 being collected at the moment. Ten sites have locked up ewes this year and have had good results and lambing percentages in most locations.

The major containment properties are currently being mapped to quantify the ground cover advantage and extra feed on offer which has been preserved by locking ewes up in containment. This is being done using remote monitoring satellite imagery through Cibo Labs.

Results will be available later in the year for the first 2 years of the project.

## Testing Parentage Collars for Sheep



The honours project add on to the Containment ewe project is progressing well.

Twin bearing stud ewes at Keyneton Station were individually condition scored leading up to lambing. We are looking at the variation in condition score and then collating this through to lambing status. We will be doing DNA parentage on all of the ewes and lambs to determine parentage and how many lambs were raised per ewe vs their condition score up to lambing.

As we're doing parentage anyway – we decided to also test out Shepherd collars which are a new commercial product being marketed to studs to enable parentage recording.

The Shepherd collars were put on ewes and lambs at lamb marking few weeks ago and the results have already come back showing parentage of ewes and lambs based on the location of lambs to ewes over the 48 hours they were wearing the collars. The parentage results of the Shepherd collars will be validated using the DNA parentage post weaning.

Full results of the honours project will be published once the project has been finalised.

## Save the Date- Producer Tech Group

**Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> September- 12:30pm**

**Venue TBA**

- Tech group remote monitoring day
- All welcome
- Remote Water Monitoring

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)

- [Smart Tags](#)

Please contact Deb Scammell for any further details

## From the Inbox

- AWI Breeding Leadership- Applications [Open Now!](#)
- Better Health for Better Wealth Livestock [Workshop](#)- Clare 18th August
- Have you signed up for the Northern and Yorke Landscapes Board Yakka News- great local info for events and land management ideas! [Subscribe](#)
- Check out the recent Sheep Connect- Feed Budgeting Workshop with Deb Scammell- [View](#)

## Your BIGG Contacts

### Executive Officer:

[Georgie Keynes](#): 0409 287 261

### Technical Facilitators:

[Brett Nietschke](#): 0432 804 389

[Deb Scammell](#): 0407 790 622

[Janie Evans](#): 0412 500 752

## Thanks to our BIGG Sponsors!



[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)**Gold Sponsor:**

of South Australia Inc.  
PATHWAY TO IMPROVEMENT

**Silver Sponsor:****Bronze Sponsor:****Commercial Sponsors:**

Facebook Website YouTube Email

Disclaimer: No warranty is made that this material is free from computer virus or any other defect or error. It is your responsibility to check this email and any attachments and links for viruses. Any loss/damage incurred by using this material is not the sender's responsibility. The sender's entire liability will be limited to resupplying the material.

Copyright © 2021 Barossa Improved Grazing Group, All rights reserved.