

# Western Division newsletter

ISSN 0314 - 5352

Number 109

www.agric.nsw.gov.au/reader/wdn

Nov 05-Feb 06

Produced for landholders in  
the Western Division of NSW



In this issue ...

## Competition gets a lucky (seasonal) break

The drought might have knocked them down, but the Riverina's sheep producers are definitely not out.

And the resilience of the region's breeders and their sheep will be on display again at the 2006 Peppin-Shaw Ewe Flock Competition next February.

The contest is one of the biggest Merino judging competitions in the world and while winning is an honour, most entrants participate to learn.

The Peppin-Shaw Ewe Flock Competition has re-emerged after it was cancelled this year due to the unrelenting dry gripping the Riverina and the Western Division. But better seasonal conditions throughout this winter have encouraged the committee to run the competition again next year, on February 7 and 8.

Peppin-Shaw president Greg Rogers said everyone was keen to ensure the competition kept running.

'We know it is important that we keep this competition going so the district's Merino producers can continue to improve the quality of their flocks,' he said.

Mr Rogers said interest was already strong, with entries expected from a wide range of areas stretching from Booligal, Oxley, Wanganella, Gunbar, Booroorban, Hay and Carrathool.

He encouraged visitors from outside the region to put aside two days next February

to visit some of the best sheep flocks in the nation.


'Hay has a reputation as being one of the major store sheep selling venues in Australia and the Peppin-Shaw gives people the chance to visit these flocks and the stations they are run on,' Mr Rogers said.



Inspecting ewes at the 2004 competition at 'Merritop', Oxley.

'The competition provides a rare opportunity to tour the region, and when people are spending tens of thousands of dollars on replacement sheep, they can do a

Continued on page 2



**HAY MERINO BREEDERS INC**

**16th Peppin-Shaw  
Riverina Ewe Flock  
Competition**

**February Tuesday 7 and Wednesday 8 2006**

Book a seat on the bus now to see some of the best ewes  
in the Hay district – call Hay Travelscene ph: (02) 6993 4444  
or enquiries to President Greg Rogers ph: (02) 6993 8151

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by Bill Noad  
NSW DPI, Dubbo

**W**elcome to issue 109 of the Western Division Newsletter. It presents articles on a diverse range of topics which I hope you enjoy.

You may have noted an increasing proportion of advertising in the last three issues. Long may it continue as the revenue generated helps to pay some of the costs of publishing the newsletter.

We thank the advertisers who so far have considered our newsletter to be a worthwhile advertising medium and we hope that they achieve what they want by advertising through us. We also hope that our readers find the advertising interesting and relevant to their needs.

The good news, of course, is that we intend to continue to offer advertising space in forthcoming issues. If you are considering reaching an agricultural market in western NSW then we feel you could do well by advertising in the Western Division Newsletter. To discuss what we can do for advertisers would you please contact our Advertising Manager Sally Ware at the DPI office at Hay (02) 6993 1608. Our advertising rates are printed on page 13 of the newsletter.

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'Competition gets lucky  
(seasonal) break'  
continued from page 1

bit of homework by coming on the Peppin-Shaw and seeing where many of the sheep are bred.

'And besides that, the Peppin-Shaw is a great two days of touring some of the best sheep country in Australia, and we always have good fun.'

For more information contact Greg or Helen Rogers on (02) 6993 8151 or (0429) 938 151.



NSW DEPARTMENT OF  
**PRIMARY INDUSTRIES**



NSW Government  
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

The Western Division Newsletter is jointly produced by NSW Department of Primary Industries and the Department of Natural Resources with funding assistance from the Department of Environment and Conservation (NSW), the Western Catchment Management Authority and the Lower Murray Darling Catchment Management Authority.



# Questions and answers on NLIS for sheep in NSW

by Bill O'Halloran, Industry Leader, Sheepmeats, NSW DPI, Armidale

## What is NLIS Sheep?

The National Livestock Identification Scheme (NLIS) for sheep has been a voluntary scheme since 2002. It will now be compulsory from 1 January 2006. NLIS Sheep is an initiative of national industry. It has been developed in consultation with producers, processors, stock and station agents, saleyard operators and state regulators in response to a number of international animal health and food safety events.

## Who is involved, who can I contact?

NSW DPI has the role of implementing the scheme in NSW after consultation with

industry. You can contact NSW DPI about NSW Sheep NLIS by calling 1300 720 405.

Your local RLPB has the roles of :

- Certifying your property identification code and other details on orders for tags.
- Providing emergency tags for sheep which have lost tags or otherwise need to be tagged.
- Checking that the requirements of NLIS Sheep are met in saleyards.

You will find the contact details of your local RLPB in the white pages.

The NSW Sheep NLIS Implementation Advisory Committee has the role of advising the Minister for Primary Industries on how NLIS Sheep should be implemented in NSW. You can contact the NSW Sheep NLIS Implementation Committee by calling the Committee Executive Officer on (02) 6330 1202.

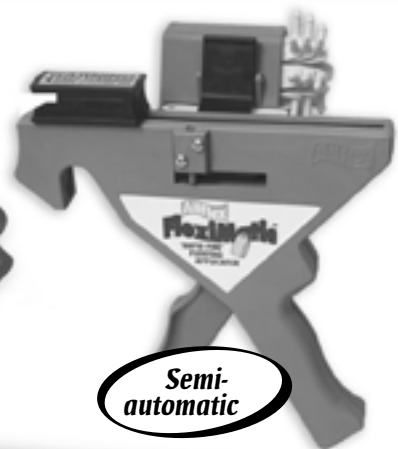
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<h1>NLIS SHEEP IDENTIFICATION</h1>	<b>Breeder Tag Year Colours</b>
<b>Mandatory identification of sheep is planned for Australia from January 2006 under the NLIS for Sheep.</b>	<b>Yellow 2005</b>
<b>Drovers Ay-One is authorised to supply NLIS approved sheep tags.</b>	<b>Red 2006</b>
<b>Drover's Ay-One Sheep Tags</b> Easy to Apply Easy to Read UV Stable Economic Self piercing One-Piece Sheep Tags	<b>Sky Blue 2007</b>
	<b>Black 2008</b>
	<b>White 2009</b>
	<b>Orange 2010</b>
<b>Drovers Ay-One Pty Ltd</b> P.O. Box 93 Dungog NSW 2420 (02) 4992 3111 fax (02) 4992 3244	<b>Light Green 2011</b>
	<b>Purple 2012</b>
	<b>For Sheep Not Bred on Property use Pink Tags</b>

### How do I participate in NLIS Sheep?

- **Obtain a property identification code (PIC)**

The first step for producers to become involved in NLIS Sheep is to ensure that they have a property identification code or PIC for their property. This number is assigned by the Rural Lands Protection Board. If you run cattle and already have a PIC (tail tag number), then you must use the same number.

- **Order tags**

Producers need to decide what type of tag they will use. Producers have the option of using either visual or electronic tags. Producers can order NLIS Sheep tags from, authorised resellers or manufacturers and some Rural Lands Protection Boards. The tag must have the PIC clearly printed on it. Tags that meet the national standards for

NLIS also have the NLIS logo stamped on them. It is strongly recommended that tags be ordered with the correct year of birth colour.

- **Eartag lambs or sheep when required with a visual tag**
- **Use a movement document when sheep or lambs leave your property** – as required. Record your PIC, the PIC numbers of any other tags in the sheep and other details required.

### What does it cost to be in the scheme?

The approximate cost of NLIS Sheep approved visually readable eartags is between \$0.28 and \$0.35.

For those producers who elect to use electronic tags the approximate cost is \$2.30 to \$2.60. These tags must have a visually readable PIC number printed on the tag.

There is also a cost associated with the purchase of the National Vendor Declaration (NVD).

### Is NLIS Sheep compulsory?

NLIS Sheep is compulsory from 1 January 2006, but the need for all sheep leaving a property to be tagged will be introduced in stages.

From 1 January 2006 all lambs born after that date and leaving the property of origin will need to be tagged, except for those lambs being consigned direct to an abattoir for slaughter. From 1 January 2009 all sheep leaving the farm will require NLIS Sheep tags.

# LMD CMA Rangeland Incentives

‘The Lower Murray Darling Catchment Management Authority is offering Rangeland Incentives in the form of stewardship payments and on-ground works payments’, said Mark King Chair of LMD CMA.’

‘The project aims to improve the condition of native vegetation, across the catchment and assist landholders in undertaking sustainable grazing management practices. The project also aims to increase the number of conservation reserves in the catchment all of which will deliver the Vegetation Catchment Target’.

Stewardship payments are available for conservation reserves which are actively managed and implementation of sustainable grazing schemes where an approved Sustainable Grazing Management Course has been completed. For further details contact LMD CMA (03) 5021 9460 for an information sheet.

On-ground works funded by incentives are

- Fencing for private conservation reserves and riparian reserves – Funding for fencing of reserves, rehabilitation reserves, riverine frontage, and wetlands. Total grazing exclusion fencing is only available for specified vegetation community types including Cypress Pine Woodland and Belah Rosewood Woodland.
- Water point management for conservation reserves and riparian reserves – Funding for the removal or decommissioning of ground tanks/dams, and the provision of controlled water points including provision of an alternative watering point in conjunction with fencing of riverine frontage.
- Rabbit control works funding is available for areas not previously ripped under the South West Rabbit Control Program 1996–2002.

- Weed control of exotic weeds as identified in the *Regional Weed Strategy – Lower Murray Darling Catchment* (Verbeek & Ash 2004) in conservation reserves; and control of Weeds of National Significance across the catchment (pending alternative funding becoming available).
- Training courses endorsed by the Lower Murray Darling Catchment Management Authority, including Biodiversity Assessment and Sustainable Grazing Management training, the latter of which includes options of Holistic Management, Tactical Grazing Management and Grazing for Profit. Planning for Profit training – a forward planning decision software tool developed by the LMD CMA will also be considered.

‘Incentives under NHT/NLP funding, other than Education and Training and Stewardship payments, require a minimum of 50% applicant contribution’, said Mark King, ‘The applicant’s labour component of a project will be considered as a contribution while maintenance of works is the responsibility of the landholder.’

A Property Vegetation Plan scoring system will be used to decide which landholder proposals provide the greatest improvement for the dollar.

For further information contact LMD CMA (03) 5021 9460 or e-mail [jacinta.cain@cma.nsw.gov.au](mailto:jacinta.cain@cma.nsw.gov.au)

# The Western Total Grazing Pressure (TGP) Project – Phase 1

by Ron Hacker,  
Research Leader (Pastures  
and Rangelands), Trangie  
Agricultural Research Centre

The 'Western TGP Project' was the first attempt to evaluate options for managing total grazing pressure by means of large-scale demonstrations in the Western Division. It involved a partnership between eight Western Division landholders, WEST2000/WEST 2000 Plus, NSW Department of Primary Industries, and Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources. Its aims were to:

- Evaluate possible options for managing total grazing pressure on Western Division properties and
- Communicate the outcomes to other interested pastoralists.

The project was initiated in November 1999 and the first phase was completed in May 2005. During this period the participating landholders, who had each proposed an innovative management practice for evaluation on their property, cooperated with agency and WEST 2000/WEST 2000 Plus staff to refine the design of their demonstration, erect the necessary infrastructure, and apply the treatments as seasonal conditions allowed. They also actively shared their experience with other project participants and the wider community through project workshops and a range of media activities. Agency

staff routinely collected vegetation data from the extensive monitoring systems established on each property.

During the first phase of the project poor seasonal condition, especially from 2002 onwards severely disrupted the operation of all the demonstrations and in fact prevented the implementation of some grazing treatments until very late in the period. As a result, analysis of the vegetation data collected to May 2005 revealed many examples of differences between grazed and ungrazed monitoring sites but no trends that could be clearly attributed to altered management practices.

Nevertheless, most project partners considered that they had gained valuable new knowledge and insight from the conduct of their demonstration and the interaction with other participants. In this respect, the project achieved considerable success. In the following article, and other articles to be published in future editions of the Western Division Newsletter, participants' experiences will be made available to the wider Western Division community. Hopefully, with a return to more favourable seasons, the original aims of the projects will be achieved if vegetation monitoring can be maintained for a few more years.

## The 'Furlong' Total Grazing Pressure Project

by Jonathon and Naomi Vagg,  
'Furlong'; Trudi Atkinson,  
Livestock Officer, NSW DPI,  
Broken Hill and Sally Ware,  
Rangelands Officer, NSW  
DPI, Hay

This story outlines the progress of the project situated at Jonathon and Naomi's property Furlong, which is situated near Hillston.

The objective of the trial at Furlong was to determine whether a **rotational grazing system** has beneficial effects on rangeland pasture, animal production and economic performance.

Four paddocks averaging approximately 200 ha in size were established for the trial. One paddock was set stocked and the other three were to be rotational grazed. Each paddock had two fenced exclosures and monitoring sites inside and outside the exclosures were established by DPI to monitor the response to grazing management.



The drought played havoc with stocking the paddocks. Rainfall for 2002 was only 125 mm (average is 337 mm) and this prevented the stocking of the trial until September 2003. Lambing then forced the rotations to stop from November until February 2004. By May 2004, the drought forced another destocking and the paddocks remained destocked until the end of the first phase of the project.

Plant sampling took place in both spring and autumn from the spring of 2002 until the autumn of 2005. Substantial fluctuations in botanical composition occurred over this time, in response to the extreme seasonal variations, with a notable decline in the perennial white top and spear grass and an increase in chenopods and forbs, including a large increase in goathead burr.

Not surprisingly, significant differences in ground cover and its components occurred between grazed and ungrazed sites, mostly with higher cover inside the exclosures.

Poor seasonal conditions up until autumn 2003 meant cover had dropped well below the desirable 'threshold' of 40% even in the exclosures. Cover increased to high levels by spring 2003 but thereafter deteriorated again, reaching values well below the desirable level by autumn 2005 in the grazed paddocks.

Bimonthly dyebanding of a sample of ewes from the continuous and rotational treatments was undertaken at Furlong in order to better understand the effect of the ewe's pregnancy status conditions on wool growth. The data clearly showed the effect of late pregnancy, lambing and lactation on reducing fibre diameter with ewes in the rotational group producing somewhat finer wool during the later of stages of lactation in particular. Once the lambs were weaned the fibre diameter of the ewe starts to increase.

One of the main reasons for running the trial was for the landholders, Jon and Naomi Vagg to gain a greater understanding of the available plant species and stock utilisation of them. Their



Jon and Bonnie Vagg collecting weather data from the meteorological station set up for the trial with NSW DPI Rangelands Officer Sally Ware

Photo: Trudi Atkinson, DPI, Broken Hill

understanding has been enhanced by the following features of the project:

- Input by Peter Milthorpe (DPI Research Agronomist, Condobolin) to identify key species and the plant identification day he conducted later with the Prac Group;
- Comprehensive discussion and feedback with NSW DPI staff after the six monthly plant sampling;
- Correlations between available feed and the other variables of sheep/wool production.

Naomi and Jon found the Vegetation Reports received after the samplings were very informative and they passed them onto the Hillston RLPB Ranger to assist with the drought declaration data. The marked change in the pasture composition that occurred during the trial is consistent with other observations over a longer period. Peter Milthorpe provided the comments below on the changes that were seen in the paddocks (and elsewhere on the property):

*'I think that climatic conditions often override managerial input. Over the past couple of years, there has been a swing in vegetation back to the chenopods and this has happened over a very wide area. Many of the stock routes around here now have an abundance of copperburrs (Sclerolaena sp.) and annual saltbushes (Atriplex sp.) – probably at the expense of grasses. It appears to me that wet summers promote grasses and wet winters (or maybe only dry summers promote the chenopods). The wet of the early-mid 1950s promoted grasses that died out in the 1960s and again the wet mid-70s promoted grasses that were later overtaken by chenopods in the late 1970s. The last wet period ended in 2000 and as relatively dry conditions have prevailed since then my expectations that chenopods dominate hold with earlier happenings'.*

In summary, Jon and Naomi found that given the drought conditions that plagued the trial, they would seriously question the sustainability of rotational grazing. While they agree it is certainly beneficial for pastures to be grazed and then rested for regeneration, they feel rotational grazing (based on either plant utilization or timed rotation) for 'whole property management' is only one of the many tools available.

# World first carbon credit program is underway

by Leanne Anderson, CO2 Australia, Wagga Wagga (02) 6921 2949

CO2 Australia, a subsidiary of the ASX listed CO2 Group, has its world first carbon credit program underway in NSW and is making its way towards the western part of the state.

CO2 Australia's first planting season has been completed with hundreds of thousands of tree seedlings making their way to various farms across the NSW wheat belt.

CO2 Australia is planting mallee eucalypts commercially for the purpose of creating carbon credits. The mallee eucalypts are planted in tree belts integrated into cropping and grazing systems. Once the carbon credits are created they are sold to greenhouse gas emitters. CO2 Australia has completed their 1000 hectares of mallee plantings for 2005. The plantings are extremely well suited to the many areas

across Western NSW and the program is gaining momentum.

The CO2 carbon credit program is ideally suited to the sands and red loamy soils of many parts of Western NSW. CO2 Australia's General Manager of Operations Aaron Soanes says 'We are working extensively across the NSW wheat belt and are heading further west because the soils are well suited to our project and the farming community is forward thinking. It's great to be able to offer a product that is environmentally sustainable and makes commercial sense'.

The program has significant positive effects on land including reducing salinity risk, reducing wind erosion, improving cropping productivity and increasing biodiversity. Financial benefits are paid to the landholder for use of their land.

The innovative landholders currently participating in the program are also bringing other benefits to their local communities. They bring positive environmental effects to the land and are boosting employment.

CO2 Australia's carbon credit program is set to increase in size and they are already sourcing land for the 2006 planting season. CO2 Australia is aiming to have up to 30,000 hectares of trees planted by 2012 across the NSW wheat belt.

CO2 Australia has done some preliminary research in the Western area and is seeking land for the program in areas such as Wentworth, Pooncarie, Balranald and Cobar. Currently the project is restricted to freehold land and CO2 is hopeful the program will be able to be rolled out into the Western Division within the next 6-12 months.

If you would like to find out more about this program and how it can help your land contact Leanne Anderson at the Wagga Wagga office on (02) 6921 2949.

## TREES ON LAND AT NO COST



CO2 Australia is seeking land in the Wentworth, Pooncarie, Balranald and Cobar areas for the establishment of integrated mallee eucalypt plantation belts for the creation of carbon credits. We pay all costs including land, site preparation, planting, seeds and seedlings, weed and pest management and monitoring.

Suitable land for the program:

- annual rainfall 290-600 mm per annum;
- cleared prior to 31 December 1989;
- not heavily treed;
- minimum freehold property size - 320 ha arable.

To learn more about this exciting opportunity, please contact Leanne Anderson at CO2 Australia on (02) 6921 2949.



# It's more than dust

The far reaching effects of mallee dust have focussed international researchers on a project initiated by the Lower Murray Darling Catchment Management Authority (LMD CMA).

Dust blown off local paddocks travels thousands of kilometres, ending up in destinations such as New Zealand and the Antarctic – with varied impacts on climate, health and the environment.

A collaborative research project between Japanese, Hong Kong and Australian scientists is preparing to measure the number and size of particles moving in an erosion event – the first time such sophisticated technology has been used in an agricultural area. The Japanese contribution to the project is \$250,000.

The international team is working with Dr John Leys (Dept of Natural Resources), who has been researching dust emissions and wind erosion for the LMD Catchment Management Authority.

Team leader Dr Mikami from Japan has recently visited the catchment to select sites for field trials planned for February 2006.

Scientists believe Australian dust may be contributing to the melting of New Zealand glaciers because when it settles, it reduces the reflectance of snow.

However, dust in clouds is also thought to act as a reflector – reducing radiation hitting the ground and therefore reducing global warming.

LMD CMA Chair Mark King said Dr Leys' work concentrates on issues closer to home – determining where erosion is a problem, how significant it is, and to what extent better land management is reducing dust emissions.

The CMA's target is to increase land in the catchment that is 'safe' from wind erosion from 90 percent in 1999 to 95 percent of an area of 315,000 ha. Over \$210,000 will be invested in monitoring, evaluation and



19 March 2003



20 March 2003

dryland cropping practices over three years, additional funds will support activities in rangeland areas. CMA funds are sourced from the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality and State Sustainability Fund.

'During a dust storm, 100,000 tonnes of Mallee dust can blow through a 100 kilometre window,' said Mr King. 'The record dust storm in October 2002 moved 5 million tonnes of soil.'

'That's valuable top soil our landholders can't afford to lose – but it also contributes to health problems and carries an economic cost in the clean-up, with electricity suppliers particularly affected,' he said.

'Research by the international scientists is now being watched closely to see how much dust is contributing to climate change.'

'Their work will test and improve the modelling already being done by research and monitoring within the catchment,' Mr King said.

# Draft Western Catchment Plan attracts attention

by Rory Treweek,  
Chair of Western CMA

Western Catchment residents turned out in force to give their views on the Draft Western Catchment Plan, with 160 people attending thirteen public meetings held during September and October.

The Western Catchment Plan is a ten-year plan for improving and managing natural resources in the Western Catchment.

The Plan specifies how the Western Catchment Management Authority will direct the \$19 million approved under the current three year investment strategy and future funding to manage the Catchment's natural resources, which include land, vegetation, rivers, groundwater and biodiversity.

Meetings to discuss the draft Plan were held in Tilpa, Wilcannia, White Cliffs, Fowlers Gap, Tibooburra, Wanaaring, Nymagee, Cobar, Enngonia, Bourke, Brewarrina, Lightning Ridge and Ivanhoe.

Approximately 35 people attended the Cobar meeting, while each of the other meetings attracted around a dozen residents.

In general, comments have been positive and there have been some very valuable comments about some of the specific Catchment and Management Targets.

For example, people have highlighted the need to recognise ephemeral streams and their value within the landscape, so we will ensure that is adequately addressed in the final Plan.

A consistent theme has been the need to resolve interstate and inter-catchment water-sharing issues as 85% of the flow in the Barwon-Darling River comes from outside the Western Catchment.

Top left:  
WCMA Catchment Officer, Paul Theakston with Keith Francisco 'Tindarey' at the Cobar meeting



Top right:  
Stuart Mosely 'Manuka', Kel Ellicott 'Kurrajongs' and WCMA General Manager, Daryl Green at the Cobar meeting



Bottom left:  
WCMA General Manager, Daryl Green, George Isbester 'Marigold' and Mark Ward 'Irisvale' at the Nymagee meeting



Bottom right:  
David Murray 'Woodlawn' and WCMA Catchment Officer, Claire Bergin at the Lightning Ridge meeting



There was also great interest in the new native vegetation legislation and many people also took the opportunity to give their comments on the recent round of incentive applications. Many of these suggestions will be incorporated into future funding rounds.

Input from the public is vital to the Western Catchment Plan's success.

A summary of the draft Western Catchment Plan was mailed to every household within the Catchment and all members of

the public were invited to provide their comments in writing or to attend a public meeting

The Western Catchment Management Authority will collate and evaluate information received to determine the changes needed to ensure the Plan reflects community concerns and priorities.

Summaries of the Draft Plan are available through the website at [www.western.cma.nsw.gov.au](http://www.western.cma.nsw.gov.au) or by ringing freecall 1800 101 032.

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# International Organics Conference

by Trudie Atkinson,  
Livestock Officer,  
NSW DPI, Broken Hill

In September, I attended the 15<sup>th</sup> IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements) Organic World Congress in Adelaide. The theme of the conference was 'Shaping Sustainable Systems'. Approximately 1000 delegates attended the conference, representing 50 different countries. Over 350 papers were presented during the three day conference.

The conference was an opportunity to promote organic lamb production in western NSW. Robyn Neeson (Organic Farming Liaison Officer), Geoff Duddy (Livestock Officer), Garry Hannigan (Churinga Station), Steve Cresswell (Annalara Station) and I presented a poster paper titled 'Rangeland Organics – Enhancing Productivity and Sustainability'. The poster highlighted the suitability of pastoral areas (such as western NSW) to organic production, how breeds such as the Dorper and Damara are well suited to organic production and the benefits organic lamb production is providing to local producers.

There were papers presented on a wide variety of topics from scientific and technical aspects of organic production through to regional case studies that demonstrated how organic production was helping develop rural communities.

The diversity of organic enterprises around the world was highlighted by papers presented by David Brook from OBE Beef in Australia and Ashwini and Moorthy from the Varanashi Research Foundation in India.

David Brook presented an overview of the OBE Beef company. OBE Beef is made up of a group of 20 cattle producers in the 'Channel Country' of Queensland, that market organic beef domestically and internationally. OBE Beef operates over 7 million hectares and has a herd of 75,000 certified organic cattle.

Ashwini and Moorthy presented a case-study on an Indian farm titled 'A successful organic farmer with a one-cow dairy'. The farm in the study was 1.5 hectares. The farmer grows 11 different crops (e.g. coconut, banana, cashew nut, vanilla) and operates a one-cow dairy. The cow is a very important part of the enterprise providing milk, gas for cooking/lighting, manure for crops and a cash income.

While vastly different enterprises both presentations emphasised that organic farming is contributing to the sustainability of their businesses.

The conference contained a lot of discussion based around the principles of organic agriculture and it was quickly evident that organic agriculture holds far more meaning than simply farming without the addition of artificial chemicals. It is surrounded by a dynamic/evolving set of principles. Organic production aims to maintain an ecological balance and look after the natural resource base (particularly soils), conserve water and energy and maintain/improve biodiversity. Ideally organic production improves the viability/sustainability of family farms and aids the development of rural communities and marketing produce locally is encouraged. The welfare of livestock is a high priority, production systems aim to meet all welfare requirements and to minimise stress. Based around these principles were discussions of how organic production fits with 'big business'.

A number of interesting papers were presented which focused on marketing of organic produce and why consumers purchase organic food. The reasons why consumers buy organic food are varied such as, perceived food safety, environmental, taste and health benefits. This makes marketing of organic food very complicated.

# Irrigation incentives offer

Incentives up to \$30,000 are being offered to landholders in the Lower Murray Darling Catchment Management Authority (LMD CMA) area, through funds allocated from the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP).

Incentives are aimed to encourage the adoption of Best Management Practices in irrigation areas outside of the Land & Water Management Plan area.

'The LMD CMA is seeking water savings and more efficient production/irrigation systems,' said Mark King, Chair of the LMD CMA Board, 'This relies on the provision of financial incentives to irrigators for irrigation system upgrades, irrigation scheduling equipment, irrigation and drainage management planning and irrigation management courses'.

Specifically, the aims of the incentives include:

- training programs to implement best management practices on-farm – \$120 per person.
- Irrigation Drainage Management Planning – to a maximum of \$7,500 per irrigator
- Irrigation system upgrade – for equipment up to a maximum of \$15,000 per irrigator; and
- Irrigation scheduling, the installation of soil moisture monitoring equipment – to a maximum of \$7,000 per irrigator.

Completion of the irrigation management training course is a prerequisite to accessing the other incentives. Participants will have confidence in adopting new technology by having a greater understanding of soil water principles, monitoring soil moisture, soil sampling and testing; drainage and salinity; field testing of irrigation systems; drainage management planning and irrigation scheduling.

A dollar for dollar contribution is required from landholders except for training where a combination of landholder cash and time (in-kind) is acceptable.

To be eligible for the incentives, irrigators must be outside of the Lower Murray Irrigation Area Land & Water Management Plan area, and works will only apply to areas that have not previously been funded by a government incentives project.

Enquiries and applications should be made to the Irrigation Officer, Department of Primary Industries, Dareton.

For additional information, contact: Jeremy Giddings  
NSW Department of Primary Industries  
PO Box 62, Dareton NSW 2717  
Ph: (03) 5019 8421 Fax: (03) 5027 4319  
Email: [jeremy.giddings@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:jeremy.giddings@dpi.nsw.gov.au)

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# Nomadic birds survey results

by Mark Ziembecki,  
School of Earth &  
Environmental Sciences,  
University of Adelaide

Back in the Sept-Oct 2003 issue of WDN I requested help to survey two nomadic birds, the Australian Bustard and Flock Bronzewing Pigeon. Many thanks to those of you that responded – your contribution was greatly appreciated. Here I report briefly on some of the findings from the survey.

The survey was conducted across the pastoral regions of Australia with 5012 survey forms sent to landholders and rangeland users. A total of 755 responses were received representing a response rate of just over 15%.

Among the more important findings of the study was that bustards seem to employ a variety of movement strategies across their range exhibiting underlying seasonal patterns in their occurrence and breeding activities in most regions in relation to rainfall patterns. Not surprisingly perhaps, the seasonality of bustard occurrence was generally more pronounced in regions characterised by predictable seasonal conditions. In the north monsoon-influenced regions, for example, bustard numbers peaked over the wet season and were lower in the dry. Seasonal patterns were also evident in more climatically unpredictable regions, although here they were increasingly overlaid by more unpredictable movements as a result of broader climatic cycles of rainfall and associated patterns of primary productivity. We found limited evidence that bustards respond to inter-regional irregularities in rainfall events suggesting that nomadic movements are generally not continental but rather occur within regions.

Higher than average rainfall was the most important factor associated with above average numbers of bustards in all regions. To a lesser degree and differently between regions respondents also associated bustards with fire, grasshopper outbreaks, crop agriculture and drought. Bustard numbers are most robust across the savannas of northern Australia extending

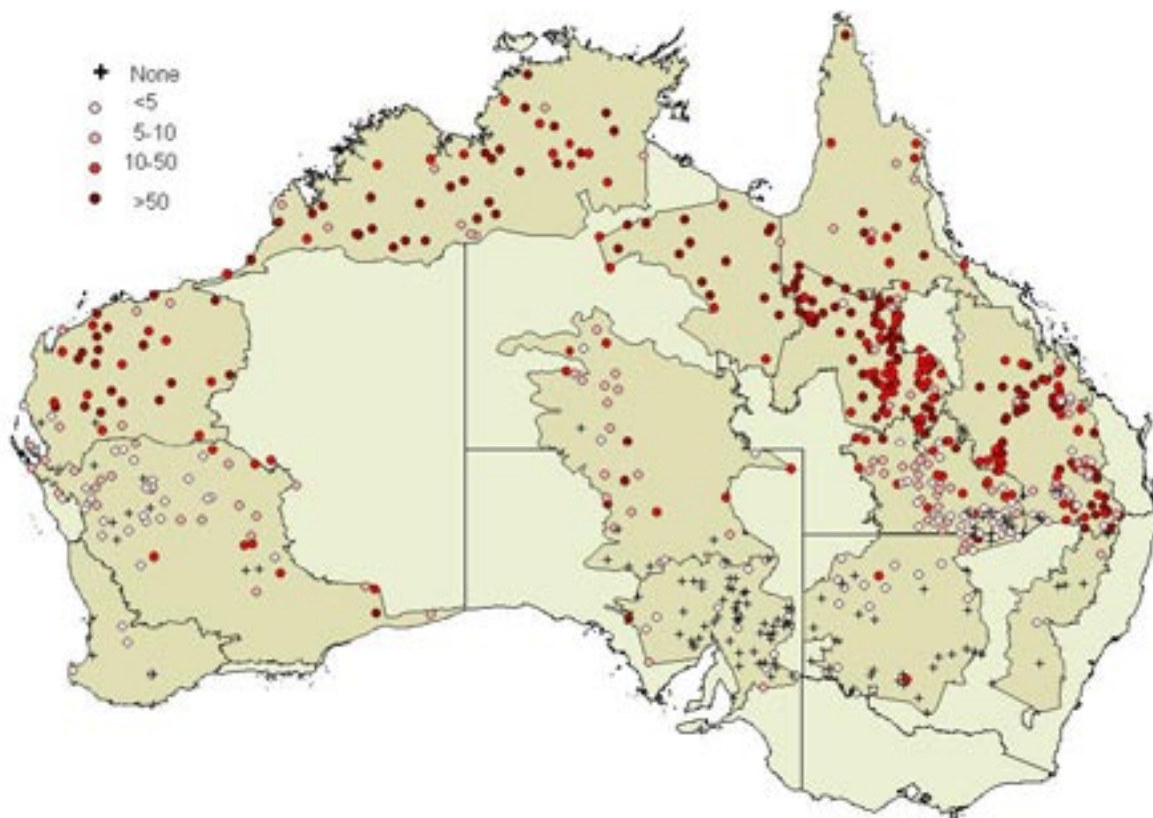
to parts of the Pilbara and recently cleared regions of the Brigalow Belt in eastern Queensland. Other regions, such as parts of central Australia and the Nullabor Plain in southern Australia also support high numbers of bustards. In southern Australia, bustards are perceived as short-term, irregular visitors whereas more permanent populations persist in northern and north-eastern regions.

Information on the Flock Bronzewing Pigeon was harder to come by. This species is relatively scarce over much of its range and most respondents had rarely seen it if ever or found it difficult to identify. The best areas for the pigeon proved to be the Mitchell grasslands of central Queensland and the Northern Territory. Only a few were sighted in western NSW.

Monitoring of nomadic birds or species that undergo large population fluctuations is inherently difficult. These problems are compounded in Australia by a low human population density and the concentration of people along southern and eastern coastlines. Most areas of inland Australia are therefore very difficult to monitor making it difficult to identify significant and potentially catastrophic declines in the populations of many plants and animals. The presence of landholders and rangeland users across most of Australia has largely been under-utilized to date and this study highlights the importance their contributions can make to our understanding of the Australian environment over broad scales.

Another round of mail surveys focussing on the Flock Bronzewing Pigeon is currently underway lead by Peter Dostine of the Australian National University. Further details about these surveys and more information about the 2003 survey can be found on the internet at: [http://savanna.cdu.edu.au/information/bird\\_survey.html](http://savanna.cdu.edu.au/information/bird_survey.html) or by contacting Peter on (08) 8944 8475 Email: [peter.dostine@nt.gov.au](mailto:peter.dostine@nt.gov.au)





Estimated number of bustards seen on each property in the 12 months preceding survey according to five categories of abundance.

# Mungo Festival

The ancient Willandra Lakes Region, including the Mungo National Park north of Mildura is about to celebrate 25 years since becoming one of Australia's first World Heritage Areas – and everyone's invited to the party in September 2006.

Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area was placed on the World Heritage list at the same time as the Great Barrier Reef and Kakadu.

A committee has been formed to put together a program of events for what's being called the Mungo Festival, which plans to highlight many of the achievements in the 25 years since World Heritage listing.

The Mungo Festival Committee includes and has the support of the three Traditional Tribal groups (Mutthi Mutthi, Ngiyampaa

and Paakantyi) as well as scientists, artists and educators.

The Committee would be pleased to hear from anyone who thinks they can help out – financial support, in-kind assistance, ideas and suggestions are all welcome

Planned are a range of fantastic events including a major educational event involving school children from around Australia; a scientific conference; an international conference on World Heritage; as well as concerts and exhibitions.

For more information please contact Ross O'Shea on (02) 6921 3588 or email [roshea@wagga.net.au](mailto:roshea@wagga.net.au) or Professor Jim Bowler on (03) 8344 6740.

# To the Landholder



# Western Division newsletter

The editors of the WDN welcome contributions

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