

Western Division newsletter

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Child safety on farms

by Laurie Stiller, Farm Safe Australia

Farms can be a great place to bring up your kids, but as many who work on the land know, the farm can be quite a hazardous environment, especially for children. Nearly 600 children are hospitalized every year due to farm related injuries and approximately 30 children die as a result of injuries. This equates to 10 children being admitted to hospital each week and one death every 10 days. These deaths make up almost one fifth of all injury related fatalities on farms.

Child Safety on Farms is a program of Farmsafe Australia, a nationally representative farmer led organization and is funded by the Department of Health and Ageing. The Child Safety on Farms Program aims to highlight issues of child safety, especially toddlers as a high risk group. Research conducted through the Australian Centre for Agricultural Health and Safety has identified key issues and preventative solutions.

The biggest hazards facing young children on farms are:

- Drowning
- Injury associated with farm machinery
- Injury associated with 2 and 4 wheeled motorcycles
- Injury associated with other farm vehicles
- Horse-related injury

Each of these hazards affects one or more age groups, drowning being the biggest hazard for 0-5 year olds while from 5

years and over, injuries associated with farm machinery and motorcycles are the largest threat.

Some preventative steps can be taken to help reduce the risk of farm related injury and death for children. A checklist has been designed to help farming families identify and prioritise the possible hazards for children on the farm. This allows them to act on the hazards and design solutions for the problem which will vary to the individual's situation and needs.

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Produced for landholders in the Western Division of NSW



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Peter Jessop
Rangelands Officer, NSW
Department of Primary
Industries, Dareton

Hi everyone and welcome to the July-August edition of the Western Division Newsletter.

Hopefully most of you would have received some of the recent rain with lots more to come. The rain brought a sudden halt to a recent field trip I was on which hasn't happened for quite some time, but I am not complaining. It's amazing the optimism from people that just a little bit of rain produces.

July will be an interesting time for many with the amalgamation of NSW Agriculture, Mines and Resources, State Forests and Fisheries into a new super Department of Primary Industries and the introduction of the National Livestock Identification Scheme.

In this newsletter I haven't focused on any particular theme but have included a variety of articles on different topics. So there should be something of interest for everyone. Included is an important article on child safety on farms which includes a child farm safety checklist. Updates on the establishment of the Western and Lower Murray Darling Catchment Management

Authorities, a warning to be vigilant for locusts in the coming spring, the launch of the West 2000 Plus Young Farmer Finance Scheme, kangaroo management program update and more articles on other topics. Two upcoming events for the diary are the Murrumbidgee Landcare Association Forum in Hay and the Western Division Young Farmers Forum in Broken Hill.

Please keep the articles coming especially from those on the land who we really enjoy hearing from.



NSW DEPARTMENT OF
PRIMARY INDUSTRIES



Department of
Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources

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\$1 million for young farmers

by Tim Ferraro, Executive Officer, WEST 2000 Plus

The future for young Western Division landholders is now more secure, following the launch of the WEST 2000 Plus Young Farmer Finance Scheme.

The pilot \$1 million scheme aims to encourage the entry and retention of 18–35 year olds in the Western Division.

The Scheme has three components:

1. Raising general awareness about young farmer issues and succession planning;
2. Building the skills of young farmers, mentoring, leadership and developing farm entry strategies and;
3. A grant of up to \$50,000 to assist young people get a start in farming. This can be used for a range of purposes including property lease, setting up a share-farming enterprise, etc.

The initial idea for the scheme came from young Western Division farmers themselves, through the WEST 2000 Plus YouthLink West Forum, which brought together 150 young landholders in March 2002. (The 2004 Youth Forum will be held on 14–15 September in Broken Hill, see article page 11.) WEST 2000 Plus then worked with the NSW and Commonwealth Governments and a small group of young farmers to develop the pilot Scheme.

The innovative and integrated nature of the scheme means that it is truly an Australian first and it will be very interesting to see its results.

Western Division grazier and Deputy Chair of the WEST 2000 Plus Management Board, Graham Morphett, was an enthusiastic supporter of the scheme and formally announced the launch of the scheme during a WEST 2000 Plus Management Board meeting in Hillston.

Mr Morphett said 'The development of the pilot Young Farmer Assistance Scheme has been a challenging process, but I am



The 2002 YouthLink West Committee:

(Back L-R) Tim Ferraro, Rachael Williams, Terry Smith, Pauline Kuhner, Ben Mannix
(Front L-R) Vanessa McFarland, Tara Homfray and Chrissy Brown

confident that the final product will help keep young people associated with the Western Division in the Western Division.

'The Scheme addresses the key issues affecting young farmers and the reasons that many of them don't stay on the land. Its integrated nature will ensure that the Western Division has a committed, vibrant and skilled group of farmers in the long term.

The ongoing training and support provided under the Scheme and its eligibility requirements means that the Scheme moves past the emotive issues around young people leaving the land and will deliver real results for the Western Division.

'The Scheme is a pilot and we know that the NSW and Commonwealth Governments will be watching closely to see what outcomes we deliver. We are determined to make it work well and hopefully that will lead on to bigger and better things.

'We are delighted to be launching such an innovative scheme. It is yet another example of the positive outcomes WEST 2000 Plus has delivered for the Western Division,' Mr Morphett said.

The pilot scheme is part of the WEST 2000 Plus program and is jointly funded by the NSW and Commonwealth Governments.

Interested people should contact WEST 2000 Plus on 1800 068 072 for more information.

For more Child Safety on
Farms information, visit
www.farmsafe.org.au or
contact Farmsafe
Australia on
(02) 6752 8218

The measures most likely to be effective in preventing child injury and death on farms are:

- Create a safe play area that separates children from unsupervised access to the farm workplace and hazards. This should be supported by safety rules about out-of-bounds areas/activities and by active adult supervision. Younger children should stay in the safe play area unless an adult takes them out and looks after them
- Children wear seatbelts when in cars, utes and trucks
- Children do not ride on tractors, quadrunners or on the back of utes
- Children always wear helmets when riding motorbikes, pedal bikes or horses

By using the checklist below you may be able to identify some areas of your property that can be improved to make it safer for children.

A Safe Place to Play

Is there a safe play area (e.g. a fenced houseyard) for small children which is securely separated from farm machinery, vehicles, work activities and other hazards?

Does the safe play area have shade and interesting things for children to do?

Are there 'out-of-bounds' rules, for children who are not with a supervising adult, which are regularly reinforced?

Do 'out-of-bounds' areas include all hazardous places (e.g. water storages, machinery and vehicles, silos, workshops and areas where stock are yarded)?

Water

Are swimming pools, effluent ponds, channels or dams near the house securely fenced?

Are tanks, wells and troughs near the house fitted with lids/mesh when children are around or could wander off into water?

Do you know how to resuscitate a drowning child?

Farm Motorcycles

Are children appropriately trained and supervised when learning to ride two-wheeled motorcycles?

Do all riders always wear a correctly fitted motorcycle helmet, long pants, and sturdy footwear when riding farm motorbikes?

Does the farm adopt manufacturers' recommendations and:

- Prevent children under 16 from riding quadrunners?
- Prevent passengers riding on quadrunners?

Horses

Are children only allowed to ride horses suited to their age and riding ability?

Are children appropriately instructed and supervised on your property when learning to ride horses?

Do children on the farm always wear well fitting riding helmets and smooth-soled riding boots when riding horses?

Tractors and Machinery

Do you prevent children from riding as passengers on tractors and mobile plant?

Are children encouraged to keep away from tractors and machinery on your farm or rural property?

Farm Vehicles

Do children always use seatbelts and proper restraints and never ride in the back of utilities?

Are drivers careful when moving vehicles near the house in case children are present?

Are keys kept out of reach of children when vehicles are not in use?

Other Hazards

Have other hazards (e.g. firearms, chemicals, electrical, noise, silos) that children could access on your farm or rural property, been identified and addressed?

Plague locust outlook

by Andrew Pile, Agricultural Protection Officer,
NSW Department of Primary Industries, Broken Hill

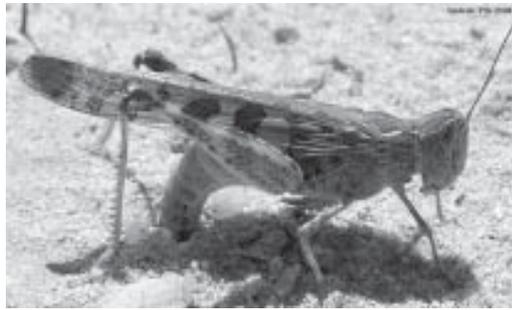
The current outlook suggests there is the potential for serious Plague Locust problems as a result of the widespread egg laying that occurred in autumn, and the expected subsequent hatchings in spring.

In view of the widespread locust activity across most of north western NSW during autumn, and the likelihood of a major outbreak in spring, it is important that all landholders are aware of control operations and responsibilities.

The impact of locusts in the coming season is compounded by the fact that many landholders are still suffering from the effects of the ongoing drought.

However, as a result of the recent rain, there should be some feed in the spring. Unfortunately, this could also provide suitable soil moisture conditions to stimulate locust hatchings.

It is vital that landholders do their part to assist organisations such as NSW Department of Primary Industries (formerly NSW Agriculture) and the RLPBs by inspecting traditional egg bed sites for hatchings in the spring, and being generally alert for the signs of locusts in the nymph stage. The reality is that we



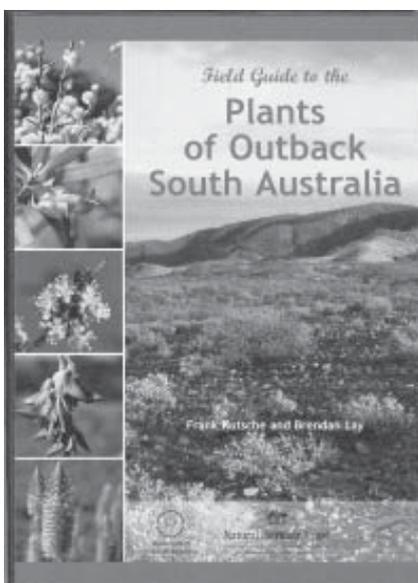
have less chance of providing timely and effective control before significant damage occurs without this type of assistance from land holders.

At the first signs of hatchings, people should report them to their local Rural Lands Protection Board (RLPB) and/or Australian Plague Locust Commission (APLC). Landholders are required under the *Rural Lands Protection Act 1998* to report the presence of plague locusts (and other pest insects).

Banding of the nymph locusts usually occurs about the third instar stage around three to four weeks after hatching. Ground control of bands is the most effective with minimal use of the insecticides and reduced buffer distances from environmentally sensitive areas, in comparison with aerial operations.

Suitable chemicals are available free of charge from the Local RLPB to control Plague Locusts during the banding stage.

Further information may be obtained from the NSW Department of Primary Industries web site (www.agric.nsw.gov.au), Australian Plague Locust Commission web site (www.affa.gov.au/aplc) and through your local RLPB.



New Rangelands Plant Book 'Field Guide to the Plants of Outback South Australia'

Peter Jessop, Rangelands Officer, NSW Department of Primary Industries

For those of you interested in rangeland plants a new book has recently been released by the South Australian Government. This book has a similar format to the well known Plants of Western New South Wales and more recently the Glove Box Guide to the Plants of the NSW Rangelands.

The Guide (15 x 21cm) has been written by scientific staff of the SA Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation with input from South Australian pastoral land managers.

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Western Catchment Management Authority appointments

by Rory Treweeke, Chair of the Western Catchment Management Authority

Three board members and a General Manager have been appointed to the Western Catchment Management Authority.

The board members are Peter Cottle, Max Hams and Jenny McLellan, all of whom have extensive experience in natural resource management in the Western Catchment.



Peter Cottle is the General Manager of Cotton Operations for Clyde Agriculture Ltd, based in Bourke. He has been a member of the Cotton Australia Board since 1996. He is the Chair of the Mungindi-Menindee Advisory Council and was a member of the Socio-Economic Working Group on the Barwon-Darling River Management Committee.



Max Hams is a landholder from Little Topar, (between Broken Hill and Wilcannia). He has been very active at the grass-roots level of Landcare, being a founding member of the Topar Rangecare Group. He has represented the Pastoralists' Association of West Darling on the Woody Weeds Task Force and is the Chair of the Broken Hill Rural Lands Protection Board. He previously served on the Western Catchment Management Committee and Board.



Jenny McLellan is a landholder from the Brewarrina area. Jenny was the Chair of Western Catchment Management Committee and Board, most recent past President of the Western Division Group of Shires, and was the first female Director of a Rural Lands Protection Board. She has served on the WEST 2000 and WEST 2000 Plus boards as well as many other community organisations.

At least one more board member will join the Authority in the future.



Daryl Green has been appointed to the position of General Manager, which allows for the recruitment of further staff and enables the Authority to

become a fully functioning organisation.

Daryl has spent thirty years working in Western NSW with the Soil Conservation Service and the predecessor agencies to the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources.

During that time he has earned the trust and respect of his professional colleagues, and importantly, the landholders with whom he has worked. His knowledge of rangeland issues is recognised Australia-wide.

The 13 Catchment Management Authorities established across NSW will be community-driven organisations which will take responsibility for local natural resource management and services.

The Catchment Management Authorities will build on the natural resource management work already undertaken and in developing catchment action plans, will integrate the existing regional vegetation management plans, catchment blueprints and investment strategies. They will also work with local landholders to develop Property Vegetation Plans.

News from the Lower Murray Darling Catchment Authority

by Pixie Jonasson, Natural Resource Project Officer, DIPNR

Mark King has been appointed Chair of the Lower Murray Darling Catchment Management Authority. Mark is from Pomona and operates a horticulture and wine business and is currently a councillor with Wentworth Shire Council. He is an active community member involved in promoting local and regional initiatives. Mark was the Chair of the former Lower Murray Darling Catchment Management Board. The Lower Murray-Darling CMA has offices in Buronga/Gol Gol and Broken Hill.

General Manager:

Paul Dixon

Other members of the LMD CMA are:

- Patty Byrnes;
- Stan Dineen;
- Gary Doyle;
- Howard Jones; and
- Leigh Watmuff.

LMD CMA Projects

Projects for the current financial year include:

- The completion of the Menindee Lakes and Darling Anabranch Management Plan Environmental Impact Statements which will lead to capital works to improve reliability and quality of water supplies to the Darling Anabranch, Menindee and Broken Hill;
- Soil, Cropping and Recharge Project which includes erosion monitoring in the dryland cropping areas of the catchment;
- Water quality and implementation of the Thegoa Lagoon Management Plan in conjunction with the Wentworth Shire Council;
- Wetland Rehabilitation; and

- Continued funding for the Lower Murray Irrigation Area Land and Water Management Plan.

LMD CMA Investment Strategy

This financial year (2003–04), \$4.05M has been committed to projects in the LMD Catchment, most of which are currently underway.

The three year 2004–2007 Investment Strategy has been approved to the value of \$17.2M from National Action Plan, National Heritage Trust and sustainability Trust funds. This is an impressive funding outcome for this catchment, in excess of the previous funding, and shows the quality of the Catchment Blueprint and the funding proposal submitted. A range of projects will commence later this year covering key target areas of riverine health, salinity, regional outcomes and vegetation.

New building in Wilcannia

Jacki Roberts, Senior Public Affairs Officer NPWS/DEC

The National Parks and Wildlife Service is now using its new workshop for the Paroo-Darling National Park. Looming large in Wilcannia, the workshop is a major infrastructure investment in the town and will be a vital building for servicing the southern section of Paroo-Darling National Park. Meanwhile tenders have closed for the construction of a new visitor's centre at White Cliffs. The Visitor Centre will provide a gateway for visitors to the 230,000 hectare Paroo-Darling National Park.



MLA Forum – Hay 2004

‘Finding the Balance - Production and Sustainability’

by Renae Collier,
Community Support Officer,
DIPNR

This years Murrumbidgee Landcare Association (MLA) Forum will be held in Hay at the Hay Services Club on the 22–24 August 2004.

The Forum will kick off on Sunday with a welcome BBQ, followed by some options to explore the Hay area. Monday will include a day of interesting and provocative speakers addressing topics such as ‘Impacts of changing water regimes’, ‘The future of farming’, ‘Wetland Management’, ‘Achievements of Landcare’, ‘Managing Pastoral Country’ and many more. Among the line up of well accomplished speakers are Dr David Tongway - Landscape Ecologist, CSIRO; Mr Terry Korn - Manager NPWS Western Region; Dr Ron Hacker - Director, NSW Agriculture Rangeland Program and Dr Richard Kingsford - Principal Research Scientists, NPWS, to mention a few.

Monday night is set to be a great fun night with a formal dinner being held at the Lions Club Room. The evening will

include live entertainment and lucky door prizes with the winners taking home some great John Williamson merchandise.

Tuesday will present another interesting day with a field tour set to visit an intensive irrigation property, a Lowbidgee floodplain enterprise and Toogimbie Station, a recently declared Indigenous Protected Area.

The Landcare forum is a great way to increase your knowledge and understanding of the many aspects of Natural Resource Management as well as finding out what’s happening in other areas around the catchment. The Forum program and information will be publicised as soon as confirmed, so I would encourage you all to record the Forum date on your calendars so you won’t miss out!!

Registration forms will be sent out closer to the Forum date. If you require any further information please phone Renae on (02) 6993 1306 or Nerida on (02) 6993 2176.

‘New Rangelands Plant Book’
continued from page 5

If you’re like me and enjoy identifying and learning about rangeland plants then you might want to consider purchasing this book. The Guide as its title implies refers to the plants of outback South Australia but also covers many of the plants growing in the rangelands of Western New South Wales.

The guide written in simple English contains 437 common rangeland plants arranged into their various life forms with 356 of these having good descriptions and plenty of excellent colour pictures.

The guide also provides comments on the plants’ pastoral value, land types, general interest and aboriginal usage.

Title: F. Kutsche and B. Lay. (2003). Field Guide to the Plants of Outback South Australia. ISBN 0 7590 1052 8
Cost: \$39.50

Where can you buy it?

Books can be ordered from Lyn Taylor of the SA Pastoral Program (08) 8204 9433.

Rangeland change in the hard red range-type

by Russell Grant, Rangeland Assessment Program, DIPNR

About 300 pastoral landholders throughout western New South Wales have been participating in the Rangeland Assessment Program (RAP) over the past 14 years. They provide annual rainfall records and management information relating to one or two pegged RAP sites in their paddocks. Once a year, a staff member photographs the site as well as taking measurements on pasture, shrub and tree growth. The program aims to gather factual information on changes in natural resource condition as a basis for better decisions by both pastoralists, Catchment Management Authorities and Government.

14 years of monitoring data is providing a good regional picture of change in the western rangelands.

Since 1989, the region has experienced the full spectrum of high rainfall years, drought and average years. Trends are emerging on:

- The diversity of plant species in pastures
- The biomass of pastures and individual pasture species
- The canopy cover of trees and shrubs
- The germination of woody shrub species
- The extent of vegetation cover, bare soil, lichen crusts and erosion

Trends in the hard red range-type

To provide feedback to landholders on these regional trends, DIPNR has produced a new brochure 'Rangeland change in the Hard Red Range-type'.



Assessing a Rangeland Assessment Program site

The Hard Red range-type is one of seven broad types of country where monitoring sites are located. It consists of the bumble box-cypress pine-mulga country on the area often termed as the Cobar Penneplain.

The brochure presents general trends during the period 1989–2002:

- Rainfall was below average for four years, average for three years and above average for seven years. Changes in cover and pasture yield have been driven by rainfall.
- Generally more than 60 per cent of the soil surface has had vegetation and cryptogam cover. Less than 20 per cent of the surface has been bare of cover for most of the time.
- Pasture yield has been consistently less than 1 tonne per hectare except in 2000, when speargrass was the main component.
- Shrub cover changed little at most sites, but has increased at some. Where cover was increasing, it progressed regardless of seasonal conditions.
- Shrub establishment peaked in years of above average rainfall. However, shrub seedlings were present in all except the driest years.
- Plant species diversity varied according to season but the range remained stable over time.

Further brochures are planned to present the results of monitoring to date on the other six range-types.

Availability

Copies of the brochure will be mailed to those landholders on Hard Red country who are participating in the RAP program. It will also be available free of charge from DIPNR offices at Cobar, Condobolin, Bourke, Broken Hill, Dubbo, Nyngan and Walgett.

Decisions on stock made

easier – A DSE workshop for livestock producers

Sally Ware, Rangelands
Officer, NSW Department of
Primary Industries, Hay
Ph: (02) 6993 3481;
sally.ware@agric.nsw.gov.au

The workshop ‘Decisions on Stock Made Easier’ has been designed by NSW DPI Livestock Officers to assist producers deal with drought. Using software called ‘StockPlan’, producers are able to explore management options that arise before or during the drought period.

In brief, there are three StockPlan tools:

Drought Pack: this software assesses the cost of feeding and allows the producer to determine the break even price for both cattle and sheep. One of the features of this package is the calculation of nutritional requirements of livestock based on energy needs. Producers can assess the cash flow implications of management options such as the sale or purchase of stock, the agistment of stock and the feeding of stock.

FSA Pack: after working out the costs of feeding (usually high) with the drought package, the producer can now work out some scenarios on how to reduce the projected feed cost. FSA stands for ‘feed,

sell or agist’ and the producer can start to look at options for individual classes of stock to help reduce the potential feed cost.

Im Pack: helps graziers assess the impact of various restocking strategies. Breeding, selling and buying back stock options can all be examined with the package calculating the age structure, production and cash flow consequences of each sale.

The workshop goes for one day and each participant receives a manual and the DSE software. Over 200 producers through out NSW have participated in a DSE workshop to date. The cost of the workshop is \$250 per enterprise. Producers interested in having a workshop run in their area need to gather together about 12 producers and call their local NSW Department of Primary Industries office (formerly NSW Agriculture).

StockPlan is a valuable tool to have before and during a drought to help make those hard decisions.

Bestprac in the Western Division

Alison Rowlands,
Rangelands Extension
Officer, NSW Department of
Primary Industries, Bourke
ph: (02) 6872 2077

Would you like to work within a group of people to share information and knowledge to increase productivity and profitability?

Are you looking to try and lift your business profit, environment and wellbeing over the next couple of years?

Would you like to have more access to new technology and management approaches?

‘Bestprac is aimed at focussing people on identifying areas in their enterprise to improve through working with and encouraging a supportive group to achieve that’ says Alison Rowlands, Rangelands Officer and Bestprac Facilitator with NSW Agriculture in Bourke.

The Bestprac program is funded through Australian Wool Innovation and Meat & Livestock Australia. This funding is available for a group of generally 5–7 producers within a reasonable distance from each other. With the assistance of a facilitator and a benchmarking exercise, the group identifies areas of their businesses that they would like to improve. Then through activities such as targeted training sessions, on-farm projects and discussion and planning within the group develop the skills and confidence required to implement the change.

WD Young Farmers Forum

'Expanding the Western Horizon' 14–15 September, 2004 Broken Hill

It's on again! After the success of the 2002 YouthLink WEST Forum 'Western Division – Young People's Vision' WEST 2000 Plus have agreed to fund a second forum for young farmers, graziers and people in the agricultural industry in the Western Division. 'Expanding the Western Horizon' will be held in Broken Hill on the 14–15 September 2004.

The steering team already has a great line-up of presentations including:

- How to run a successful business and have a life
- Succession Planning: Avoiding the Pitfalls
- Financial Planning and Risk Management
- Jeff McMullen (ex 60 Minutes) as the after dinner speaker

The Forum will once again be subsidised to those eligible people living in the Western Division and aged between 18–35

years. People interested in attending should act quickly, as there is limited space, by contacting Rachael Williams or one of the steering team members listed below:

Rachael Williams, Phone: 02 6925 0939
Mobile: 0416 201 643
Email: rawilliams@csu.edu.au

Terry Smith (Chair), Broken Hill
Phone: (08) 8091 9408
Mobile: 0427 919408

Jessica Cohen, Bourke
Phone: (02) 6872 2144

Mandy Tripcony, Balranald
Phone/Fax: (03) 5020 6876

Tim Ferraro or Pauline Kuhner,
WEST 2000 Plus
Phone: 1800 068 072

Ben Mannix, Bourke
Phone: (02) 6874 7523

Craig Bell, Menindee
Phone: (08) 8091 7688

Groups within the Bestprac program also have the opportunity to meet in different locations to increase their network of contacts and further share their knowledge.

'Some of the benefits that have come out of being in a Bestprac group for us are things like saving money by changing our ram joining percentage; having quality data on our business to help in making management decisions and getting inspiration from others in the group' said Mog Davies and Mark Etheridge from the Wilcannia Bestprac Group.

If you would like more information or are interested in getting a group going in your area, please contact Alison Rowlands.

Judging dilemma at Hay Sheep Show



Despite good entries at the June Hay Merino Sheep Show, there was one class, where the Sheep Show Committee just had to improvise! Pictured here with handlers, Simon Booth, Peter Thomson and Rowan Housten with Caleb Thomson judging are three 'special drought drop sheep!'.

People from far and wide at Agfair

by Maree Barnes,
Communications Officer,
DIPNR

What do 677 native plants, 457 pins and ten stuffed animals have in common?

They were stars of the Agfair display by the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources, Western and Lower Murray-Darling Catchment Management Authorities and WEST 2000 Plus.

An interactive flavour including competitions, a mystery touch box, mobile native nursery, and mounted exhibits of 'catchment creatures' attracted hundreds of people attending the Broken Hill Field Days to visit the display and get the latest information on natural resource management issues.

The newly established Catchment Management Authorities were of particular interest and the Chairs of both Authorities, Rory Treweeke and Mark King, were present and available to meet and answer questions from interested members of the public.

A floor to ceiling satellite image and other maps allowed people to 'pinpoint their place' to identify which catchment they belong to, with surprisingly far-flung results.

Of the 457 people who placed a pin in the maps: 155 were from Broken Hill; a further 101 from the Western Catchment; 80 from the Lower Murray-Darling; 3 from Central West; 2 from Murray; 1 from Lachlan; and a further 40 from Eastern NSW. There were 47 South Australian residents; 16 from Victoria; and 3 each from Tasmania and Queensland.

A testament to the drawing-power of Agfair was the surprising number of international visitors, with the maps registering residents of the United States of America, United Kingdom, France, Germany, New Zealand, South Africa and Kenya.



Megan and Joshua Gander get up close and personal with some catchment creatures.



DIPNR staff members Geoff Wise and Peter Campigli with the mobile native nursery.



Caroline Sandral (far left) assists Western Catchment residents to 'pinpoint their place'.

The organisers of Agfair deserve congratulations for producing such an outstanding and successful event.

What's all this 'blah' about the NLIS?

Aarn, District Vet, Nyngan RLPB

Cattle producers have quite reasonably expressed some concern about the National Livestock Identification Scheme (NLIS). Some overzealous estimates of the cost (up to \$37+/head!) and healthy suspicion of recent regulatory activities (e.g. OJD has had no impact on export lamb markets, but caused a lot of grief locally) haven't helped the NLIS rollout. I have yet to see an article that clearly states, for producers, the rationale behind the scheme, so here's my two bobs' worth.

World markets for human foodstuffs — driven by well-off, informed consumers in Asia, Europe and the USA — are demanding guarantees that what is eaten won't be harmful. Examples of failure to ensure food safety have led to significant public health disasters, including the Salmonella egg contamination scam in England in the 1980s, the contaminated smallgoods incident in South Australia in the 1990s, and of course the events leading to mad cow disease in England. Our own beef exports have been rocked by the discovery of unhealthy residues — helix in the 1980s, endosulphan in the 1990s — in exported product. Short-term economic damage was done with the suspension of markets (not merely batch withdrawal), but greater long-term damage was done to the image of Australia's 'clean/green' product. As 60% of our beef goes offshore, all producers are affected.

To comply with world demands, and stay in markets prepared to pay ever-higher prices, we need a two-fold strategy to discover and defuse any potential damage. Firstly, producers must be reminded that their future livelihood depends on the turn-off of quality-assured product. Secondly, we must convince our trading partners that

we do care — that we are looking for the earliest indications of problems, and that we have the mechanisms in place to nip any potential problem in the bud.

Thus we have national programs ensuring high standards of quarantine control against, and constant surveillance for, important diseases including mad cow, TB and anthrax. But we also have to be realistic — accidents do happen. We need systems to detect and correct minor instances before they blow-up into economic disasters. The NLIS will facilitate rapid identification and withdrawal of undesirable product, and locate the point source of the contaminant.

I can't promise you that on 1 July 2004 Japanese consumers are suddenly going to say 'we want twice as much clean/green Aussie beef, and will pay \$1/kg more for all you can supply'. I can warn you that the NLIS will not prevent foot-and-mouth disease. But for sure, we can henceforth promote our beef as a quality assured product second to none because Australia has the world's best-integrated system of animal quarantine, surveillance and traceback. Wouldn't you, with fellow producers, care to participate in this system, and share in its benefits?

Landholders taking up training in Sustainable Grazing Management

by Sheree Bradford,
Implementation Officer for
RMAP

The Rangeland Management Action Plan (RMAP), as part of a project working with the Lower Murray Darling Catchment Management Authority has a group of 16 landholders and agency staff taking part in Holistic Management Training with Mark Gardner.

Landholders in the region had the option of three training courses in Sustainable Grazing Management, including: Grazing for Profit, Holistic Management or Tactical Grazing. Funding of people to participate in the training has been provided through West 2000 Plus training and skills development or through the Catchment Management Authority.

The group commenced training in May, with the first module 'An introduction to Holistic Management', held in Coomealla. A follow up 'In Action' day was held two weeks later at Mullingar Station, via Pooncarie.

The participants of the program after the first module 'Can see how the course ties in with other projects we have planned for the property'. Course participants come from properties in the Balranald and Wentworth area and will take part in the next two modules of the course and another two 'In Action' days, which will be held on participant's properties. The other two modules look at 'Wealth Planning' and 'Grazing and Land Planning'. At the completion of the course participants will have developed a property map based on aerial photography and a Property Business Management Plan.

The course looks initially at developing a holistic GOAL, then shaping financial, personal and paddock goals to develop a property management and business plan. Holistic management is about YOU and YOUR goal, and making decisions towards that goal. The strength of Holistic Management is that it recognises that not everyone is the same, and people will have different goals and outcomes for their property.

If anyone else is interested in taking part in one of the courses on offer as part of funding to undertake training in Sustainable Grazing Management through the Catchment Management Authority, you can contact Sheree Bradford, Implementation Officer for RMAP on (03) 5027 2416.

Western Division model works for Mongolia

by Maree Barnes, Communications Officer, DIPNR

Mongolia may be half a world away from Western NSW, but common problems and a study tour have resulted in the Western Lands Act being used as a model for massive land reform in that country.

A delegation of Mongolian parliamentarians and land agency representatives visited Western NSW in December 2001 seeking answers to major problems in their country.

Mongolia has a semi-arid environment and a reliance on grazing agriculture, which is similar to the Western Division of NSW.

Mongolia produces 13 million sheep, 10 million goats, 3 million horses, 3 million cattle and 600,000 camels. It is the world's second largest producer of cashmere (behind China).

Since the collapse of the Communist State in Mongolia in 1990, land reform has become a major issue. Following the resignation of Mongolia's communist government, large cooperatives of herders with specified land areas were replaced by individual small-scale herders overgrazing.

This had resulted in ongoing degradation of the rangeland (as was experienced in the Western Division in the late 1800s).

The delegation met with departmental staff and WEST 2000 Plus personnel and travelled to Cobar where they visited Alistair and Lorraine McRobert's property 'Meryula' to see cattle grazing and the benefits of encouraging deep rooted perennial pastures.

At John and Pat Pollock's property 'Restdown' they saw sheep grazing and inspected a Rangeland Assessment Program site, one of 340 sites throughout



WEST 2000 Plus Executive Officer Tim Ferraro (front centre) with group members at the Western Plains Zoo's Przewalski horses in 2001.

the Western Division used for long-term monitoring of rangeland condition.

They also saw the Mongolian Przewalski horses being bred at the Western Plains Zoo.

The Mongolian officials hoped to apply some of the land management principles used in the Western Division. In particular, the issues they hoped to apply were: leasing government owned land; land management practices; and community and government agencies working together in a coordinated manner.

Using the model of the Western Lands Act and, in particular, the concept of perpetual leasehold, they made amendments to the National land law legislation which was passed by the Mongolian Parliament in June 2002.

Three years later, they report that the situation is slowly improving and say their visit to the Western Division resulted in a major breakthrough which resolved a ten-year-old problem with far-reaching consequences.

Western Lands administration news



by Peter Walker, Manager Consents, Regulations and Compliance, DIPNR

Amendments to the Mining Act

At the time of writing a Bill to amend the Mining Act is before the Legislative Council of the NSW Parliament.

The amendments provide for access for prospecting and mining on the opal fields to be granted under the Mining Act, separate from the Western Lands Act access arrangements. This will allow a clear separation of rights and responsibilities for Western Lands leaseholders and miners, and a framework of access arrangements for mining and prospecting to be put into place. The amendments also give a statutory basis for the property scale management plans for opal mining access, and provide immunity to leaseholders for all issues arising from mining activities.

The amendments will also require that fossickers obtain leaseholder consent before gaining access to Western Lands grazing leases. This does not include those individuals who hold valid mineral claims issued under the Mining Act.

More information will be provided once the Bill is passed.

Other access matters

The Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources and NSW Fisheries, along with landholder and fishing industry representatives, are endeavouring to develop a sensible access arrangement for those 21 people who hold commercial fishing licences to take yabbies and carp in western NSW.

The group has developed a draft code of practice, to be attached to fishing licences

to protect the interests of landholders, and is pursuing ways of addressing the public liability issues of access on leases.

We held a public meeting in March at Wanaaring and another at Tilpa in June to discuss access (and fishing access in particular).

There is need for more work on this, and also in relation to access for recreational fishing and forestry activities.

Department of Lands Interactions

Far West Region staff of DIPNR continue to administer the Western Lands Act and the Wentworth Irrigation Act, reporting ultimately to Minister Knowles. These staff also continue to administer the Crown Lands Acts, Roads Act, Commons Management Act and Aboriginal Land Rights Act throughout the Western Division on behalf of the Department of Lands, reporting through the General Manager Crown Lands NSW and the Director-General to Minister Kelly. Peter Walker represents the Region on the Crown Lands NSW Board of Management.

The Region relies on the Crown Lands Information Database and Land Revenue Branch to process transactions and send accounts. For this reason people will notice the Department of Lands logo on some correspondence and accounts. However, management responsibilities do remain with the Region.

Crown lands tenure review

A review of rents and conversion of some types of leases under the Crown Lands (Continued Tenures) Act was announced in

the Government's mini budget in March. These changes do not affect Western Lands Leases. They may apply to Crown Lands Licences, Conditional Leases, Homestead Selection Leases, Closer Settlement Leases, and some perpetual leases in the irrigation areas and Incomplete Purchases in the future.

Holders of these tenures will be advised of their options and opportunities once legislation has been made.

Weed and pest control

During the year the Region has been able to access funds from the Department of Lands for weed and feral animal control on Crown Lands, and for clearing rubbish and dangerous trees on Crown Land. Funds have also been directed to Reserve Trust and Rural Lands Protection Board projects.

This year's projects have included treatment of mesquite, African boxthorn along road reserves in the Unincorporated Area and at Canbelego Common, prickly pear at Gol Gol and Ivanhoe, Hudson pear at Lightning Ridge, and bitou bush at Menindee.

We hope to obtain more funds next year.

Unincorporated Area

The Department has recently contracted the Roads and Traffic Authority to replace a section of the gravel runway at Tibooburra aerodrome, and a local contractor has replaced the outer fence, by means of a capital funding grant from the State Government.

Four Tibooburra people have received training in Aerodrome Reporting, to provide backup for the Reporting Officer who looks after the aerodrome for the Department on a day-to-day basis.

Limited community facility funding was provided to Tiboobura and Silverton Village Committees, and a grant was

provided to Silverton Village Committee for the first stage of restoration of the historic mining Surveyor's Office.

Tibooburra now has a treated town water supply, and the Department is establishing a Private Irrigation District to provide a statutory mechanism for residents to operate the scheme.

White Cliffs dugouts project

At the request of locals, the Department has been working with them and with Central Darling Shire Council and other agencies to develop a more secure title system for people living in dugouts at White Cliffs.

Several meetings have been held and there is a high degree of interest in pursuing freehold or leasehold titles. The proposal will require survey of boundaries and provision of legal access.

A working group is progressing the project. For further information contact Andrew Bell on (02) 6883 3007.

Lightning Ridge residence leases

The Department is working with the Department of Mineral Resources to offer Western Lands Leases for residence to holders of residential mineral claims on the preserved opal fields around Lightning Ridge.

This is being done in stages, with invitations sent out to claim holders in two areas of the so-called Permissive Occupancy. Uptake rate has been slow so far.

For further information contact Rex Miller on (02) 6883 3015.

Dog fence signs spread the word

by Maree Barnes,
Communications Officer,
DIPNR

It's estimated that up to 30,000 people visit Cameron Corner every year.

In the future they will leave with a greater understanding of the history and role of the Dog Fence due to the erection of educational signage at the site.

The signage is a joint initiative between the Wild Dog Destruction Board and Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources.

The sign aims to give visitors and locals a summary of the history of the fence and its vital role in safe-guarding NSW's multi-million dollar grazing industry. It outlines the ongoing challenges of maintaining the fence and the contribution local landholders make to its survival.

In addition, it recognises that the fence is an Australian icon drawing local and international tourists, many of whom are under the mistaken impression that they are able to drive alongside the fence.

The sign clearly states that staff safety is vital and that due to the many blind spots on crests and curves, all vehicles are banned from driving along either side of the fence and on the adjoining maintenance track.

The Dog Fence stretches 5,400 km and is one of the longest man-made structures on earth.

Cameron Corner, the most north-westerly point of NSW, is roughly half-way along



Maree Barnes with the new dog fence sign.

the 584 km NSW section of the fence and midway along the entire structure.

The steady stream of holiday-makers to the area makes it an excellent position for the signage, however, it will also be available to those who don't make the 450 km trip from Broken Hill.

A copy of the sign was displayed at Broken Hill's Agfair and received very positive feedback.

Well known Outback Artist, Roxanne Minchin, requested a copy of the sign to display in her Broken Hill gallery to accompany artworks depicting the fence, further exposing people to the information about the Dog Fence and the communities who support and rely upon it.

NPWS trials a new method of pest control

by Ross McDonnell, NPWS
Regional Manager, Riverina

A new method of aerial pest control using a helicopter and an aeroplane has proven successful during a recent goat management program by the National Parks and Wildlife Service on reserves near Hillston.

The two-pronged approach enables a spotter to be stationed in the high flying Cessna which guides the helicopter to the feral animal mobs.

The method was trialled over several days at Nombinnie and Round Hill Nature Reserves during May and resulted in the removal of more than 190 goats.

The benefits of the method are that the Cessna can continue to track where the mobs are and where they go, following dispersal.

Kangaroo Management Program update

by Nicole Payne, Manager Kangaroo Management Program

The NSW Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) is responsible for licensing commercial kangaroo harvesting and non-commercial kangaroo culling in accordance with the National Parks and Wildlife Act and the NSW Kangaroo Management Program 2002–2006.

Manager of the Kangaroo Management Program (KMP), Nicole Payne addressed the Pastoralist's Association of West Darling Annual General Meeting recently, giving an update on the program.

Key information from her presentation included:

- The latest data on tag allocation and commercial harvest is available on the KMP web page (www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au follow links through nature and conservation, conservation management plans and policies to the Kangaroo Management Program)
- The new Kangaroo Management Advisory Panel is in the process of being convened. Nominations are now with the Minister.
 - Membership will reflect a range of community interests

- Hope to appoint member organisations and representatives in June and hold inaugural meeting in July
- Terms of Reference will be finalised with the new panel
- A New Kangaroo Management System has been implemented
 - 4 month licences instead of 3 months
 - Allows DEC to keep better track of data
 - Allows easier auditing of data to ensure returns are received, etc.
- Administrative Appeals Tribunal appeal of Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia kangaroo management programs has begun.
 - Outcome may have implications for NSW KMP when reviewed for 2007
- Review of Fauna Dealers Wholesalers licensing policy
 - Consultant's report was open for public comment until 25 June
 - Capacity for meeting with stakeholder groups to explain report/discuss recommendations
 - Decision will be made following consultation period and assessment of submissions
- South East NSW trial zone
 - Approved as 4-year trial, 2004–2007
 - Currently one processor, about 8 chillers, about 14 Trappers
 - Taking pet food carcasses only

If you would like further information on the Program, please contact the Kangaroo Management Program on (02) 6883 5343.

Its part of an ongoing commitment to pest management in the NPWS Riverina Region, where recent culls in Cocoparra and Willandra National Parks have helped take the tally of goats removed from Riverina Reserves to more than 500 during May.

In addition, aerial and ground fox baiting programs have also been showing some good results. In Nombinnie and Round Hill the latest round of regular fox baiting has been completed with ground bait takes still less

than 5%. On the new reserves at Norwood and Darcoola fox baiting has been occurring every two months. While takes were initially around 75% they are now down to 50% and falling. NPWS is aiming to have the take down to 5%.

Rabbit warren surveys have also been conducted at Darcoola and Norwood with 900 warrens found at Norwood and 400 at Darcoola. Ripping work on these warrens is expected to occur in the next few months.

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To the Landholder



Western Division newsletter

The editors of the WDN welcome contributions

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