

Chairmans Report – Oliver Cay

The MFS AGM has seen some structural and positional changes made to the board. An extra producer board member has been added in the form of a past chair position. This will insure continuity and limit the loss of expertise with the changing of the chairperson.

A huge thank you to David Mitchell and Richard Taylor who have been the driving force behind the start up of MFS. David has been the ideas man and work horse for the past three years. He has ensured a strong membership of the most productive farmers on the Monaro, a sound funding base from private and government sources and he has made sure the relevant people know who MFS are. We are lucky to have David staying on the board to continue his knowledge transfer.

Richard managed to fit a MFS board position into his busy work life for the last three years and has brought industry contacts, technical expertise and credibility to the group. Thank you Richard and we look forward to your continued input as a member.

Welcome to the two new board members Alan McGufficke and Ron Houghton. Both will add strength to the producer representation and we look forward to their input.

2010 has seen some valuable projects grow legs. GrassGro, Monaro Mums and the Soils Club have been major contributors to building members knowledge base.

GrassGro has shown the native pasture parameters have been worth the time and effort invested by CSIRO, I & I, SRCMA and MFS. We now have a tool that can evaluate any number of management decisions. The presentation earlier in the year by Doug Alcock and Phil Graham was particularly interesting. It showed that under Monaro conditions there were negligible differences in profitability between sheep breeds but significant differences within breeds.

David Sacket and John Webware used GrassGro to show that even with the shifting ground in the sheep industry, stocking rate is still the key profit driver. These two messages are not rocket science but are important to keep our focus when it seems there are more distractions than ever.

MFS have two major projects underway that will go a long way to addressing these key messages over the next few years. In October Richard Simpson from CSIRO ran the first workshop for the P Tool. Richard is an excellent teacher

and this promises to be a successful first step in addressing the many issues of soil fertility on the Monaro.

The tool is designed to give producers an understanding of where their current fertility and stocking rates are and then analyse the sustainability of changing one or both of these factors.

The second project is a genetic evaluation (wether trial) to allow producers to understand where they fit within the merino breed and what can be done to make sure the grass being eaten is making the farm system as profitable as possible. With a large portion of our member base running self-replacing merino flocks this project will assist in making MFS members more profitable. Further details of how members can participate will emerge shortly.

2011 promises to be better than the last few years for production, prices and ground cover so MFS looks forward to your input and enthusiasm throughout the year.

Whats been going on?

- **MFS Spring Field day and AGM – 10th Sept 10**

This morning covered several grassgro presentations addressing issues such as feed budgeting for Spring, when is the best time to lamb on the Monaro? and looking at the impact of high meat prices on your livestock enterprises. If you would like a copy of the speakers notes, please contact Nancy (nancy@msanda.com.au).

- **Soil Club – P Tool – 21st Oct 10**

The first session was held at Bellevue and introduced the Phosphorus Tool and the 5 easy steps to developing soil fertility management plans. The session also focussed on linking stocking rate increases to fertiliser applications. The 2nd session (see below) will move on to interpreting the soil tests and incorporating results into setting soil fertility targets and stocking rates and critically analysing your fertiliser investment in terms of productivity increases.

Funding success – MFS have secured a further \$18,300 through Community Action Grants for Soil Club activities and following some further negotiations, we expect to receive some further funding through MLA (Producer Demonstration Site).

***CSIRO Dual Purpose Cropping Trial – Thurs 9th Dec 2010, Delegate**

Approx 20 producers walked the plots with CSIRO Crop and Livestock Scientists, D John Kirkegaard and Dr Hugh Dove – this trial is showing some very useful comparisons between varieties of cereals and canola and their grain and graze yield potentials. **Final report** will be distributed in Feb 2011 following harvesting, yield analysis etc.

Preliminary findings....

CEREALS

1. Sown 11 March 2010 [with 150 kg/ha Granulok 15 + Impact]
2. Good establishment and biomass production by mid-April (no grazing yet) (150-200 pl/m²)
3. Full ground cover 5 May (grazing could commence) 1.5 – 2.5 t/ha of biomass
4. Post grazing 1 (grazed 14-29 June) → Regrowth by 21 July
5. Grazing 2 occurred 17-24 August – post grazing [Total biomass removed G1+G2 = 1.5 to 3 t/ha]
6. **Average estimated lamb production from grazing cereals 490 kg/ha**
7. By November 8, all winter types had recovered well from grazing

6. Crops had recovered by Nov 8 but impact of grazing remained evident


CANOLA

1. Sown 11 March 2010 [with 150 kg/ha Granulok 15 + Impact]
2. Biomass production by 5 May – grazing could commence [1.2 – 2.6 t/ha biomass]
3. After 1st (and only) grazing 14-29 June – grazing was quite hard [1.2 to 5.2 t/ha removed]
4. By 24 August re growth was still very slow, without any further grazing
5. **Average estimated lamb production from canola (1 graze) 270 kg/ha**

Upcoming Events
*** Oct 2011 Merino Genetic Comparison Trial – Tombong**

Call for teams of 15 merino wethers...open to ALL Merino Wool producers....call for entries NOW, please contact Nancy to book in a team (02 6458 4946).

*** 2nd Soil Club Session – Nimmitabel Country Club, Thurs afternoon 16th Dec, 1.30pm**

Interpreting your soil test, discussing local trends, putting a soil fertility management plan into practice, making decisions for your 2011 fertiliser investment and setting stocking rate targets....

***Building Family Farm Resilience – 23rd Feb 2011,**

Two priorities resulting from the “Women in MFS” survey some time ago were accountancy and family communication. We have had a farm accountancy workshop (Boyce) in Feb 2010 and now we have finally been successful in receiving funding to follow up the 2nd priority. Dr Rob Napier is an internationally renowned communication specialist and will be coming to the Monaro in Feb 2011 to deliver the 1st of two sessions looking at strengthening the family farm unit, strategic planning and getting the “people” side of your business right.



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***Useful websites**

<http://www.sheepcsrc.org.au/>

Ram Value Calculator - (contact Nancy if you would like the links and files to run the calculator)

-this calculator was developed to estimate and compare the economic value of rams within a commercial flock and estimates the consequences (in genetic & economic terms) of individual rams mated to a base ewe flock. It does this by modeling the flow of genes from each ram through generations of ewes using breeding values and other flock information.

<http://www.evergraze.com.au/>

(Evergraze newsletters have interesting articles on the best use of perennials in pasture systems)

****More useful Weather sites****

www.metvuw.com

<http://www.nwmangum.com/NOGAPS.phtml>



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Lamb and Mutton Comparison Data

The following data on trade versus restocker lamb prices has been provided by Richie Taylor. The graph in **Table 1** (see next page) shows the difference in c/kg carcass weight between store lambs (12 to 16 kg carcass wt) and trade lambs (20 to 22 kg carcass wt).

For the majority of the period the trade price has been higher than the restocker price, with an average of app 40 c/kg carcass. The current situation based on sales over the last month is giving a different picture. The price being paid for restocker lambs is well above the trade lamb price. The current trade lamb price is 501 c/kg carcass and buyers have been paying between 170 to 300 c/kg carcass more for restocker lambs (\$6.70 to \$8.00 /kg carcass or \$3.35 lwt for 22 kg lambs). These price differences have not been seen in the 2001 to 2009 data. It is hard to see where the profit is going to come from at these prices for the finishers but are great for people with stores for sale.

Below are the 5 year percentile tables for trade lamb and mutton based on the weekly market prices. The 50% figure is the median, that is there has been as many weeks above this figure as below it.

NSW Mutton Prices	
Data Included from 1 Dec 2005 to 3 Dec 2010	
Highest Price on Record	412 Sept 2010
10%	365.0
20%	301.0
30%	269.0
40%	205.0
50% (median price)	196.0
60%	188.0
70%	175.0
80%	162.0
90%	129.0
100% of the time prices were above	48 Dec 2006

NSW Trade Lamb Prices	
Data Included from 1 Dec 2005 to 3 Dec 2010	
Highest Price on Record	540 Aug 2010
10%	495.0
20%	474.0
30%	445.0
40%	405.0
50% (median price)	379.0
60%	365.0
70%	345.0
80%	332.0
90%	304.0
100% of the time prices were above	236 Oct 2007

**This data shows that the increase in mutton prices has been stronger than the increase in lamb. Look at the jump from the 50% figure to the highest price.

Table 1

